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**SERMONS BY**

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(1802 – 1869)

**Volume 5**

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## THE HEIR OF HEAVEN WALKING IN DARKNESS AND THE HEIR OF HELL WALKING IN LIGHT

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow" Isaiah 50:10, 11

The WORD OF GOD appears to me to resemble a vast and deep mine, in which precious metals of various kinds lie concealed. The rocks and mountains and the general surface of the ground above the mine, every eye may see; but "the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places" (Isa. 45:3) that lie beneath, are known to but few. And thus many letter-learned professors and wise doctors may understand the literal meaning of the Scriptures, and explain very correctly the connection and the historical sense of the text, who are as ignorant of the rich vein of experience that lies beneath the surface of the letter, as the mules in South America are of the nature and value of the silver which they draw up from the bottom of the mine. "Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it... The stones of it are the place of sapphires, and it hath dust of gold. There is a path" **that, namely, which lies through the mine** "which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye"—that is, the keen-sighted, but unclean professor (Lev. 11:14; Isa. 35:8)—"hath not seen" (Job 28:1; Job 28:6-7).

In this deep mine do God's spiritual labourers work, and as the blessed Spirit leads them into different veins of experimental truth, they bring forth "the precious things of the lasting hills," to the comfort and establishment of His people. Thus, to one of Christ's ambassadors is given a clear light upon the doctrines of grace, which have been riveted in his soul, and a door of utterance communicated to set them forth with unction and

power. On another sent servant of the Lord is bestowed a divine acquaintance with the depths of his own inward depravity, under which he groans, being burdened, and a tongue like the pen of a ready writer to unfold the secret recesses of a deceitful and desperately wicked heart. Whilst to another spiritual Laborer is given a heavenly light into the difference between natural and supernatural religion, and utterance bestowed to open up the various delusions whereby Satan. transformed into an angel of light, deceiveth the nations.

According, then, to the line which God the Holy Ghost has distributed to each of His own sent servants (2Cor. 10:13, 16), does He usually lead them to such parts of the Word as fall in with their own experience, and shine with the same light that has shone into their souls. Thus, they "see light in God's light," and as the blessed Spirit of all truth is pleased to shine upon a text, a peculiar light is thrown upon it, a peculiar entrance is given into it, a peculiar unction and savour rests upon it, a peculiar beauty, force, truth and power seems to shoot forth from every part of it, so that every word appears dipped in heavenly dew, and every expression to drop with honey.

Whenever a text has been thus opened to me, I have seen a ray of light shine as it were all through it, and it has seemed clothed with divine beauty and power. The words have perhaps been in my mind for days and have been bursting forth continually from my lips. I have seen a fullness and tasted a sweetness in them, which carried with it its own evidence, that they were the words of the ever-living God; and when I have gone with them into the pulpit, I have usually had a door of utterance set before me to unfold what I have seen in the text, and power has generally accompanied the word to the hearts of God's people. Whilst at other times, and those much more frequent, the same text, as well as every other, has been hidden in darkness, and I have groped for the wall like the blind, and groped as if I had no eyes.

But if my eyes have been opened to perceive anything aright, or to see wondrous things out of God's law, it is, I believe, to

discover somewhat of the difference between natural and spiritual religion. And thus, as you have probably perceived, I find myself led from time to time to speak from such texts as that which I have read, in which the strong line between what is of God and what is of not, what is of the Spirit and what is of the flesh, is clearly drawn.

In the two verses of the text, we find two distinct characters traced out by the hand of the blessed Spirit—the one, a child of God, the other, a child of the devil. The one an HEIR OF HEAVEN, the other an HEIR OF HELL. One of these characters is said "to walk in darkness, and to have no light,"—the other, "to compass himself about with sparks of his own kindling." One is encouraged "to trust in the name of the LORD, and to stay upon his God," against the other it is threatened that "he shall lie down in sorrow."

Now I by no means assert that the one character represents all the family of God, any more than that the other character represents all the offspring of Satan. But it has pleased the blessed Spirit to bring together two opposite characters, to set them side by side, and so place them in strong contrast with each other. And thus I feel myself led to unfold as God shall enable me, these two different characters: first, because I believe the one represents the experience of many children of God during well-nigh the whole, of some during a part, and of all during one period or other of their spiritual life—and, secondly, because I believe the other character traces out the beginning, middle and end of thousands of dead professors in the present day.

But as none can reasonably object, if I describe a character, to my giving him a name, that we may know him again, I shall call the one THE HEIR OF HEAVEN WALKING IN DARKNESS, and the other THE HEIR OF HELL WALKING IN LIGHT.

The HEIR of HEAVEN

The text opens a very striking and solemn way. It begins with a question, an appeal, as it were, to the consciences of those to whom it is addressed, "WHO IS AMONG YOU THAT FEARETH THE LORD?" Now the very form in which this striking question is put to the HEIR OF HEAVEN, when compared with the mode of address employed in the next verse to the heirs of hell, seems to show that the first of these characters is very rare, the second very frequent.

Thus, the question, "Who is there among you" is worded as if the blessed Spirit were selecting one person out of a crowd, as if He were pointing out a solitary character amidst a numerous company. Whilst the word "you"—"Who is there among you"—seems to show that this company is a troop of professors, the same who are afterwards addressed, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire." We have, then, a character pointed out by the finger of God Himself, separated by His distinguishing hand and sealed with His own divine mark as belonging to Himself. This living soul, this gracious character, this heir of heaven, whom God has here singled out, is stamped by the blessed Spirit with three marks. The first is, that "he fears the Lord;" the second, that "he obeys the voice of God's servant," the third, that "he walks in darkness, and has no light." We will, with God's blessing, then consider these three remarks separately.

1. He Feels God. The first mark, then, of that heir of heaven whose character we are endeavoring to trace is, that "HE FEARS GOD." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord?" But here the question at once arises: What sort of fear is this which the Holy Ghost has thus stamped with His divine approbation? "Is it of heaven or of men?" To err here is to stumble at the very outset, and to throw the whole into confusion. We must therefore, at the very threshold of our inquiry, lay it down as a positive principle, that the fear here spoken of is not a fruit of the flesh, but the work of the Spirit; not a product of nature, but the offspring of the Holy Ghost. And this distinction needs to be drawn, and to be insisted on, with greater carefulness, because there is a natural fear of God as well as a spiritual one.

The very devils believe and tremble. The children of Israel whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, feared God when they heard "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" (Ex. 19:16), "so that all the people that were in the camp trembled." Saul feared God when that awful sentence fell upon his ear: "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me," and "he fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel" (1Sam. 28:20). Felix feared God when "he trembled, as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and "judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). "Terrors are upon the hypocrite," said Zophar (Job 20:23, 25) when God casteth forth the fury of His wrath upon him, and the glittering sword cometh out of his gall." And "terrors," saith Bildad (Job 18:11), "shalt make the wicked afraid on every side, and shall drive him to His feet." The fear of the Lord, then, spoken of in the text is no natural dread of God, no fleshly alarm of a guilty conscience, no late remorse of an enlightened judgment, trembling at the wrath to come. Nor, again, is it any such fear of God as is impressed upon the mind by what is called "a religious education." Against this the Lord especially directs a sentence of condemnation: "Their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men." (Isa. 29:13).

The fear of God, then, which He has in the text and elsewhere stamped with His divine approbation, is that which He Himself implants with His own hand in the soul. As it is written, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40). This is the fear which is called "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10); and is said to be "the fountain of life," "the strong confidence" (Prov. 14:26-27), and "the treasure" (Isa. 33:6) of a child of God, and that which "endures forever" in his heart (Prov. 19:9).

But how is this divine fear, this godly awe, this holy trembling, produced in the soul? It is not sufficient to say: "It is implanted by the hand of God," and so leave it. The question arises: How does the blessed Spirit work it in the soul? To this I answer, that in producing it God works by certain means. A spiritual man is not

a steam-engine, or a piece of machinery, driven round and round by cogs and wheels in a certain mechanical course, without feeling and without consciousness. The grace of God indeed works invincibly and irresistibly upon the soul, and produces certain effects in it; but not in the same way as a weaver's loom makes a piece of cloth, or as a spinning 'jenny makes cotton thread. God works, then, by means. But by means I do not understand what are usually called "means of grace," such as preaching, praying, reading the Word, etc., which many persons speak of, as though, if made use of by carnal men, they would bring grace into their hearts almost as necessarily as a water-pipe carries water into a cistern. No. For though prayer and hearing the Word, etc., contain in them blessings for the spiritual, thousands have used what are called "the means of grace," who have lived and died without grace; for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." By "means," then, and "God's working by means," I understand not means on our part, but means on God's part. I intend by "the Word," those gracious and powerful operations of the blessed Spirit on the soul, which produce a certain effect and create a certain experience within.

Thus the means which God employs to raise up a holy fear of His great name in the soul, is to cast into it a ray of divine light out of the fulness of the Godhead. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," says Paul (2Cor. 4:6), "hath shined in our hearts." "In Thy light," says David (Ps. 36:9), "we see light;" and again: "The entrance of Thy words giveth light" (Ps. 119:130). Until, then, this supernatural light out of the fulness of God enters into the soul, a man has no knowledge of Jehovah. He may say his prayers, read his Bible, attend preaching, observe ordinances, "bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and give his body to be burned;" but he is as ignorant of God as the cattle that graze in the fields. He may call himself a Christian, and be thought such by others, may talk much about Jesus Christ, hold a sound creed, maintain a consistent profession, pray at a prayer meeting with

fluency and apparent feeling, may stand up in a pulpit and contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace, may excel hundreds of God's children in zeal, knowledge and conversation; and yet, if this ray of supernatural light has never shone into his soul he is only twofold more the child of hell than those who make no profession—"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." But the same ray of supernatural light which reveals to us that there is a God, manifests also His purity and holiness, His universal presence, His abhorrence of evil and His heart-searching eye. And this it manifests not as a mere doctrine, to form an article of a creed or a part of a system, but as a mighty truth, a divine conviction, lodged and planted in the depths of the soul, which becomes, so to speak, a part of ourselves, so as never more to be sundered from us or lost out of the heart.

But it may be asked, how are we to know whether we possess this spiritual and genuine fear of God, and how are we to distinguish it from all counterfeits? Like all other graces of the blessed Spirit, it must be seen in its own light, tasted in its own savour, and felt in its own power. But wherever this divine fruit of eternal election grows, it will be manifested by the effects which it produces. And thus, those children of God, who have not faith to believe, nor spiritual discernment to see, nor divine unction to feel, that they are true partakers of this heavenly fear, may have it manifested to their consciences that they really possess it, when they hear its effects and operations traced out, and have an inward witness that they have experienced the same. And this is the grand use of experimental preaching, against which so many proud professors shoot out their arrows, even bitter words; that, under the Spirit's unction, it sheds a light on the path of those that walk in darkness, removes stumbling stones out of the way of those that are ready to halt, strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees. To see the sun shining in the mid-day sky and to feel its cheering beams is the surest evidence that he is risen; but to see him reflected in the trembling waters of a brook, or to trace him dimly through clouds and mists, is a proof also that it is day.

And thus, those dear children of God, who cannot behold the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, nor feel His warmth in their souls, may see Him reflected in the experience of their trembling hearts, or trace His work within through the mists of unbelief. A child of God may not be able to see the fear itself, yet may feel that he has experienced its effects and operations, when he hears them traced out by a minister of Christ, who speaks out of the fulness of an exercised heart.

One evidence, then, of our being partakers of this godly fear is the INWARD FEELING OF GUILT and the SENSE OF OUR EXCEEDING VILENESS which always accompanies it. The same ray of divine light which manifests Jehovah to the soul, and raises up a spiritual fear of Him within, discovers to us also our inward depravity. Until we see heavenly light we know not what darkness is, until we view eternal purity we are ignorant of our own vileness, until we hear the voice of inflexible, Justice we feel no guilt; until we behold a heart-searching God we do not groan beneath our inward deceitfulness; and until we feel that He abhors evil we do not abhor ourselves.

Thus all supernatural communications from God and manifestations of Him show us, at the same moment and in the same light, a holy Jehovah and a fallen sinner, heavenly purity and creature vileness, God on the throne of light and a worm of the dust, a righteous Judge and a leper on the dunghill. The regenerate soul looks with the spiritual eye which the Holy Ghost has planted 'in it, first up unto God, then down into itself. So it was with Moses, when he heard "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words" and said, "exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb. 12:19, 21). Thus was it with Job, when he said: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). Isaiah, on a similar vision of the glory of the Lord cried out: "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Isa. 6:5). Daniel's "comeliness was turned in him into corruption" (Dan. 10:8), and John "fell at Christ's feet as dead" (Rev. 1:17). If you have never felt guilt, nor abhorred yourself in dust and ashes, you may

depend upon it that you have never "seen God" (3 John 1:11), and if you have never seen God with the spiritual eye of a living faith, you are dead in sins, or dead in a profession. As Job says: "Your excellency may mount up to the heavens, and your head reach unto the clouds" (Job 20:6); but if you have never felt in your mouth "the wormwood and the gall," have never groaned, being burdened, nor roared for very disquietness of heart; if you have never cried as a criminal for mercy, nor put your mouth into the dust—you are a dead branch, a rotten hypocrite, an empty professor. You may talk about the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, be one of those "prating fools that shall fall" (Prov. 10:10); but if the plague of leprosy has never broken out in you, and that "deeper than the skin" (Lev. 13:25); and if you have never as a loathsome wretch, a monster of inward pollution and iniquity, had your clothes rent, your head bare, and a covering upon you (Lev. 13:45), you have never tasted the love, nor felt the atoning blood of the Saviour. He is to you a name, not a person; an idea, not a reality; a Saviour in the letter, not a Saviour in the Spirit; a Christ in your Bible, not a Christ in your heart; an Immanuel of whom you have heard, but not an Immanuel whom you have seen. and who is "God with you."

Another evidence of the reality and genuineness of the fear of the Lord in the soul is THE WAY IN WHICH WE APPROACH GOD IN SECRET PRAYER. Until we see God in the light of His own manifestations, we cannot worship Him in spirit and in truth. We may utter prayers in public or in private, written or unwritten, taught in childhood or learned in age, repeated from memory or suggested at the moment; and yet, if we have never seen God in the light of His holiness, we have never prayed to Him in our lives. Some of you in this congregation may have had family prayers, and others of you may have prayed at prayer meetings, and been so pleased with your own gift and the applause of empty professors as to think yourself fit for the ministry, and have got your foot almost on the steps of a pulpit. And what advantage have you reaped by your fleshly prayers? Are you nearer to heaven or more acceptable to God? No. But on the

contrary, to the long, black catalogue of your sins you have added that blackest of all—presumption.

Instead of pleasing God, you have offended Him; instead of worshiping, you have mocked Him; and instead of taking so many steps nearer and nearer to heaven, you have only been taking so many steps nearer and nearer to hell. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth, they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isa. 1:14-15). "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matt. 23:14). Now the only cure for this awful presumption and hypocrisy is the fear of God planted by His own divine hand in the soul. He that is blessed with godly fear, as an internal, abiding principle, cannot mock God. He cannot offer Him the dead sacrifice, the stinking carcase of formality, superstition, tradition, hypocrisy and self-righteousness. He cannot go on, year after year, to mock the ever-living Jehovah to His face, as thousands do in the Church of England, and out of it, by confessing grief for sins for which they never felt sorry, asking for blessings which they never desired, and thanking God for mercies for which they have no gratitude. His soul will be, more or less deeply, and more or less frequently, penetrated with such an inward reverence, such a holy awe, such a realizing sense of the solemn presence of the great holy God of heaven and earth that he will confess his sins, not out of a Prayer Book, but out of the depth of a contrite heart; will beg for mercy, not as a child repeats his A B C, but as a sinking criminal at the bar of 'judgment; and will cry for the light of God's countenance, not as a Parish Clerk mumbles forth, "Hear us, good Lord," but as one in whom "the Spirit itself maketh intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered."

## 2. He Obeys The Voice Of His Servant

But that "he fears God" is not the only mark given in the text of that heir of heaven, whose path we are endeavoring to trace.

He is said also "TO OBEY THE VOICE OF HIS SERVANT." To discover whom the Holy Ghost means in this place by "the Servant of God" is perhaps not a matter of much difficulty. It is a name and an office which the adorable Redeemer Himself condescends to bear. "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1), was the title by which He was addressed by God the Father more than seven hundred years before He appeared upon earth. Again, it is said of Him (Isa 53:11): "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many," and not to multiply instances, the promise runs (Zec. 3:8): "Behold. I will bring forth My Servant, the Branch.' Thus the voice of God's Servant in the text may justly be explained to refer to that ever-blessed Mediator, 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" (Php. 2:6-7).

But what sort of voice is this? Is it the mere voice of Christ in the Scriptures? Is it the naked precept, the naked promise, or the naked invitation? No. What is the Bible more than any other book when it is not clothed by the Spirit with almighty power and irresistible energy? The Bible is nothing without the Spirit. It is in itself a mere list of words and syllables, an assemblage of vowels and consonants, a collection of printers' types and inks, which, without the Spirit's divine application, can no more convey life and light into the soul than a letter sent by the post can communicate its contents to the eyes of a man born blind. Unless the Eternal Spirit give a voice to the dumb letter, and take truth out of the Bible, and rivet it in our hearts, the Bible is no more to us than another book. If your religion is only in the Bible, and has no existence out of the Bible in your own soul, which is the case with thousands who are considered great Christians, the same fire that will at the last day bum up the Bible will bum up your religion with it. No, my friends, we must have the truths of the Bible, which were written there by the finger of the Holy Ghost,

taken out of the Bible, and written by the same Holy Ghost upon our hearts. To have the truth in the Bible only is like having the Ten Commandments written up at the east end of a church, which, with their gilt letters and flourished capitals, mightily please the eye of a Pharisee, but which differ as much from "the commandments's coming" with power (Rom. 7:9) as the prayer of a dead formalist differs from the cries and groans of a broken-hearted saint.

The Bible is a mighty magazine, a vast reservoir of blessed truth, but the precepts and promises of the Bible have no more power in themselves to convince or comfort the soul than the swords and muskets 'in the Tower of London have power to start from their places and kill the spectators. Both are merely dead instruments, lifeless weapons. and need a mighty hand and an outstretched arm to give them power and efficacy. "The words that I speak unto you," says the Redeemer (John 6:63), "they are spirit and they are life;" "Written not in tables of stone," says Paul (2 Cor. 3:3), "but in fleshy tables of the heart." Thus, "the voice of God's Servant," which those in the text said to "obey," is not the mere voice of Christ in the Scriptures, but such a voice, "powerful and full of majesty," as called Lazarus forth out of the tomb. This voice, heard by the sheep alone (John 10:27), raises up the dead in sins (John 5:25); penetrates the conscience (Heb. 4:12); casts a flood of light within, and carries conviction into the inmost recesses of the soul. Not that I mean any voice is heard by the outward ear; the voice that I speak of is the voice of Christ in the Scriptures, applied with divine authority and power to the soul by the Holy Ghost.

Thus, to some He applies by His Spirit a word of encouragement suited to their case. "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give, you rest," may be the voice of God's Servant to a burdened child. The suitability of the invitation to the wants of the weary soul, the tender kindness of the Speaker, the sweetness that distills from every word of the passage, all meet at once with hope springs up in the heart, strength is communicated to believe, a spirit of prayer rises up from the very

bottom of the soul, and strong desires after the enjoyment of Christ within, pour themselves forth in wrestling cries. But whatever be the word of encouragement which the voice of Jehovah's Servant speaks to him that fears God, the effect is one and the same.

That voice is as powerful, and as full of majesty now (Ps. 29:4), as when it said, "Let there be light, and there was light." But though it never speaks in vain, for "He spoke, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9); yet the different degrees of strength in which this voice speaks to the soul vary as much as the loudest voice from the feeblest whisper, or the strongest wind from the gentlest breeze. And just according to the strength in which that voice speaks to the soul will there be all the different degrees of encouragement and consolation, from the feeblest, faintest glimmering of hope to the full blaze of the assurance of faith. But promises are not the only parts of the Word which the voice of Christ addresses to those that fear God. The threatenings and warnings contained in the Scriptures He speaks home to the soul as well as the promises. The shepherd drives his flock at times before him, as well as draws them at others by going before them. The wise parent chastises his child when needful as well as fondles it. There is much presumption, pride, hypocrisy, deceit, delusion, formality, superstition, will-worship and self-righteousness to be purged out of the heart; and "as the blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil, so do stripes the inward parts of the belly" (Prov. 20:30). I look upon the road to heaven as a narrow path that lies between two hedges, and that on the other side of each hedge is a bottomless ditch. One of these ditches is despair, and the other is presumption. The hedge that keeps the soul from falling into the pit of despair is that of the promises; and the hedge that keeps the soul from sinking into the abyss of presumption is that of warnings, precepts and threatenings. Without the spiritual application of the promises the soul would lie down in despair, and without the spiritual application of the precepts and warnings it would be swollen with arrogance, puffed up with pride, and ready to burst with presumption.

But the voice of God's Servant that speaks to him that fears the Lord uses the precept not only in the way of conviction, as I have just described, but also in the way of direction. It not only accuses the soul for any breach of the precept, but also applies the precept itself with power, and enables the soul to obey it. Time will not allow me to mention all the various precepts which the voice of Christ applies to the conscience, but there is one above all others which He invariably speaks, sooner or later, to everyone that fears God so that I cannot pass it by, and that is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6:17). The people of God are often for a long time, but more especially in their spiritual infancy, when their faith is weak and their judgment ill-formed, mixed up with ungodly systems. On this point I can speak feelingly and experimentally—for how long was I, to my shame, buried in the corrupt, worldly system of the Church of England; and how many struggles and difficulties had I within before I could snatch myself from her!

When divine light enters into the soul, it finds some, as in my case, in the Establishment, others it finds amongst the Wesleyans, others amongst the General Dissenters, but all wrapped up, more or less, 'in some outward form, and mixed up with dead professors. Now, the very first entrance of divine light actually and really separates the heir of heaven from the herd of professors, with whom he is mingled. But as Lot "lingered" in Sodom, after "the angels hastened him, saying, Arise;" so do new-born souls often linger in ungodly systems, under dead ministers, and amidst a dead people, before they have strength given them to take up the cross, go without the camp, and bear the reproach of Christ. Some are prejudiced against God's people, others view with a kind of undefined suspicion Christ's sent ministers, others are afraid of the doctrines that they preach, and most cleave very close to their own dear reputation, and fear lest to be in "the outcasts of Israel" should injure their business, offend their customers, incense their relations, or tarnish their self-righteousness. But sooner or later every quickened vessel of mercy hears the voice of God's Servant speaking in the name and

with the authority of the Father, and bidding him to come out and be separate from all that He hateth.

The soul is now enlightened "to know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogues of Satan" (Rev. 2:9). The soul is taught "to try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1), and "to try them which say they are apostles, and are not, and finds them liars" (Rev. 2:2).

A little intercourse with the children of God dispels every prejudice and melts the soul into union with them. A few times hearing the experimental ministers of Christ makes him say, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace;" and the sweet kindlings of life within, amidst a living people and under a living minister, show him as with a ray of light the whited sepulchers—the dead people and the dead priest, amongst whom he has hitherto been walking. Thus his carnal fears about his good name and his worldly interests are scattered to the winds, and he says to the spiritual Israel, as Ruth of old said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest. I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

### 3. He Walketh In Darkness and Hath No Light

But there is a third mark with which the blessed Spirit in the text has stamped that heir of heaven whose character we are endeavoring to trace. "HE WALKETH IN DARKNESS, AND HATH NO LIGHT." This may well at first sight strike us with surprise. "is it possible," reason asks, "that one who fears God, and obeys the voice of His Servant, should be in this condition?" "Obedience brings light, disobedience is the only cause of darkness," sounds from a thousand pulpits.

"Live up to your privileges, cultivate holiness, be diligent in the performance of your duties, if you would enjoy the pleasures of a cheerful piety," cry aloud a thousand task-masters. Without denying that disobedience produces darkness of soul, for the experience of every believer testifies that 'sin separates between

him and his God' (Isa. 59:2), we cannot allow that it is the only cause, or that obedience necessarily produces light. To speak so is to go point blank against the text, is to ascribe merit to the creature, is "to sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag," and to boast like him of old: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent" (Isa. 10:13). We must go higher, then, than the creature, and trace it up to the sovereign will of the Creator, even to Him who says: "I form the light and create darkness" (Isa. 45:7).

Here, then, is a character whom God Himself declares to fear His great name, and to obey the voice of His Servant, and yet he is one "who walketh in darkness, and hath no light." Two things, we find, are here said of him:

**1** That he walketh in darkness.

**2** 'That he hath no light. We will consider each separately.

### **To Walk In Darkness:**

"To walk in darkness" implies something habitual. It is not that he feels darkness occasionally, that he is immersed in it for an hour or a day at a time, or that he has long seasons of it chequered with days and weeks of light. The expression "to walk" in Scripture always implies something continual, something habitual, something prolonged through a considerable space of time. Thus, some are said "to walk in pride," others "in a vain show," others "after their ungodly lust," others "after the flesh;" in all which places it means some habitual conduct, some course of action spread through a long period. The expression, therefore, of the text, "to walk in darkness," implies a long, unvaried, unbroken continuance in it. The figure is taken from a man journeying by night, who has neither moon nor stars to shine upon his path.

But the word "darkness" needs explanation likewise. It is not the darkness then of the unregenerate that is here meant, such as

David speaks of: "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness" (Ps. 82:5). Neither is it the darkness of sin, such as Paul speaks of: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). But it is a darkness of feeling, a darkness of inward experience, the darkness of a regenerate soul, and such as is peculiar to the elect. There are TWO KINDS OF DARKNESS. One such as has never given place to light, like the darkness of a deep cave or mine, into which the rays of the sun have never penetrated. The other a darkness produced by the absence or withdrawal of light. Thus the long, long night which brooded over the earth when "it was without form and void," before God said, "Let there be light," is an instance of the first kind of darkness. The first night which fell upon the earth when the sun set for the first time is an instance of the second. The first resembles the darkness of the ungodly, the second the darkness of the regenerate.

There was neither fruit, nor flower, nor beauty, nor ornament in the dark waters of chaos, as there is neither grace nor anything lovely in the dead soul. But after beauty had covered the earth under the creating hand of Jehovah, it was there still, though unseen and covered with darkness, when the new-born sun left for the first time his seat 'in the heavens. Thus after light has sprung up in the soul, and the hand of God has created it anew, though its faith and hope are hidden in darkness, still they are there. And this is the grand distinction between the darkness of the heir of heaven and the darkness of the heir of hell. Light has never visited the one, it is the withdrawal of light which causes the darkness of the other.

Thus spiritual darkness is only known to those who have enjoyed spiritual light, as the absence of God is only felt by those who have tasted His presence.

"To walk in darkness," then, is to feel light removed, hope faded away, faith at its last gasp, love withered out of the heart, God absent, salvation despaired of, evidences lost, ancient landmarks gone, anchorage failed, comfort changed into mourning, and

peace into despondency. To walk 'in darkness is to find the Bible a sealed book, prayer a burden, ordinances a weariness, spiritual conversation a task, and all religion an enigma. It is to be tossed up and down on a sea of doubts and fears, and to wander here and there amidst fogs of confusion and mists of perplexity. It is to feel ignorant of everything that we have once known, and to be at a loss what to think either of ourselves or of God, of His present dealings or past mercies, and to find one black night of confusion fallen upon our path, so that "if we go forward, God is not there, or backward, but we cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand that we cannot see Him" (Job 23:8-9). And as when God maketh darkness and it is night, all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. (Ps. 104:20), so in this darkness of soul do doubts and fears, jealousies and suspicions, temptations and lusts, vile passions and all the hidden filth and obscenity of the heart, enmity and rebellion, blasphemy and infidelity, atheism and despair, fretfulness and inward cursing, devilism and all the monsters as well as all the crawling reptiles of the carnal mind, all creep forth to harass and torment the soul.

### **To Have No Light**

But the blessed Spirit has added another expression to denote the experience which we are endeavoring to trace, "he hath no light." I cannot say that I am fond of alluding to the original Hebrew or Greek of the Bible, or of finding fault with the translation, as such petty criticism is much more often employed to display one's own half-knowledge than to edify the Church of God, and has often the evil effect of unsettling the minds of Christ's people, and of opening a door to the assaults of the enemy. I should not therefore take any notice of the true meaning of the word "light" in the text, if the force and beauty of the passage had not been much obscured by an imperfect translation. The word then translated "light" in the text means something more than mere light, and signifies rather brightness or shining. It is thus translated: "the shining of a flaming fire" (Isa. 4:5); "until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness" (Isa. 62:1); "the court was full of the brightness"

(Ezek. 10:4); "His brightness was as the light" (Hab. 3:4). Thus, when it says of the heir of heaven in the text, that "he hath no light," it means that he hath no shining light, no brightness, no radiancy. He has indeed light, yea, divine and supernatural light, and by this heavenly light he has seen God and has seen himself, knows good and evil. The veil upon his heart has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom. His "eyes have been opened, and he has been turned from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18).

If he literally and actually had no light, he would be dead in his sins. "Ye are all." says Paul—that is, babes as well as fathers—"ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day" (1 Thess. 5:5). "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). "Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

This heir of heaven, then, has light but not SHINING LIGHT. He has light to see sin and holiness, guilt and judgment, iniquities that reach unto heaven, and the flaming sword of justice stretched out against them; but he has not the brightness of divine manifestations. He has twilight, but not sunlight. But who knows not that the first glimmer of twilight which dawns upon the dark world comes from the sun, and is a part of the same beams which blaze in the midday sky? 'Tis the sun himself indeed is yet hidden beneath the earth, but his rays are refracted by the air, and bent down out of their course to enlighten the world, long before he himself rises in the east. And so the child of God, who has no sweet view of Jesus as his Saviour, is still enlightened by His beams; and as sure as "the day star has arisen in his heart" (2 Pet. 1:19), will "the Sun of Righteousness" one day arise upon him "with healing in His wings." Thus the heir of heaven in the text has light to see the evil of sin, but not brightness to enjoy the pardon of it. He therefore sees and feels the curse of the law, but not its removal out of the way; the pollution of all his thoughts, words and actions, but not the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; the leprosy, but not the cleansing of the leper; the malady, but not the remedy; the wound, but not the oil and the wine; the justice of God, but not His mercy; his own total

insolvency, but not the frank forgiveness of the debt; that God is his Master, but not that God is his Father (Mal. 1:6). Thus: "He is led, and brought into darkness, but not into light" (Lam. 3:2); "sits desolate on the ground" (Isa. 3:26), and not "with Christ in heavenly places;" mourns sore like the dove, but mounts not up with wings as eagles; feels himself black as the tents of Kedar, but not comely as the curtains of Solomon (Song. 1:5); sighs as a prisoner (Ps. 79:11), but does not leap as "a hind let loose" (Gen. 49:21); is lost and driven away and broken and sick, but is not yet sought out, brought back, bound up, and strengthened (Ezek. 34:16).

But what do I mean when I say that the heir of heaven has light to see guilt and wrath and condemnation, but not mercy, love and pardon? Do I mean that he merely sees these things as certain revealed truths, as a system of dry doctrines, just as our DEAD CALVINISTS that swarm through the country see everything and anything but their own ignorance'? No. I am speaking here not of a brain-religion, or head-knowledge, or tongue-work, or that miserable, dry, barren, marrowless, moonlight acquaintance with tile doctrines of grace which hardens the heart, sears the conscience, and lifts up the soul with presumption, to dash it down into the blackness of darkness for ever. The heir of heaven in the text is not one of those graceless professors who, like the caricatures that we sometimes see in the picture shops, are all head and no body, and who have neither a heart to love Christ, nor bowels of compassion to melt into godly sorrow, nor hands to touch Him, nor feet to run the way of His commandments. The heir of heaven has too much going on at home, too much soul-trouble, too much indoors work, too many temptations, difficulties and conflicts, to allow him to furnish his head with empty notions. He wants to have the gold, silver, and precious stones within, which the fire will not bum, and leaves to dead Calvinists the wood, hay and stubble of dry doctrines, vain contentions and unprofitable disputes. This is the character, then, whose experience we have endeavoured to trace, an heir of heaven walking in darkness. But we must not leave him here. God has not left this tried child of His without a word suitable to

his case. He has addressed to him an exhortation, which in fact is a promise: "LET HIM TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD." Now this exhortation is not addressed to this heir of heaven, as if he had any strength or power of his own to do that to which he is exhorted. If he could trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, his darkness would well nigh cease. His trouble, in these seasons of inward darkness is, that he cannot believe, that he cannot trust, but that unbelief, and doubt, and despondency so press him down that he cries, "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth" (Ps. 88:8). "But you ought to believe, you ought not to doubt, you ought not to give way to your unbelief," says one of those who sit in Moses' seat, one of those physicians of no value, who know the disease by theory only, and have never felt the malady for which they are prescribing. As well might they say to the criminal in the condemned cell, hand-cuffed and double-ironed, "You ought to come out;" or to a man up to his neck in a slough, "You ought not to give way to sinking," as lavish their oughts and ought-nots upon one who walks in "darkness and has no light."

God does not so mock one of His children, nor when he asks for bread does He give him a stone. But does not He say in the text, "Let him do this and that"? He does; but with the exhortation HE GIVES POWER to do what the exhortation bids. A king does not send his general to take a town without giving him soldiers to take it with. Thus the King of Zion, when He gives a precept, and exhortation, or an invitation, gives to His people ability to perform what He commands. "Where the word of a king is, there is power." It is ignorance of this truth in their own experience that makes so many letter-ministers lay heavy burdens on men's shoulders, which they themselves never touch with one of their fingers. It is the Lord, who in the text bids this child of His to trust in His Name, secretly but powerfully works this very trust in him to which He exhorts. There is 'in the midst of his darkness at times a WAITING for light. There is a secret resting upon the eternal arms which are underneath. What keeps the heir of heaven from the razor, the halter, or the pond, to which the devil and his own despairing heart would at times drive him? What

preserves him from the ale-house, the gambling table, or the brothel'? What holds him up in a consistent walk, day after day, in the midst of floods of temptation, when lust and passion fill every corner of his heart, and seem ready every moment to boil over and drown him in destruction and perdition?

What makes him sigh and groan, and hold on his way, with a tender conscience mid unblemished life'? Is there no faith here in operation? Is there no trusting in the Lord, and staying upon his God in the midst of his temptation'? Is it nature, mid unbelief, and a work of the flesh, and a delusion of the devil that hold him up'? Who that has eyes to see, and a heart to feel does not perceive that this heir of heaven, walking in darkness and having no light, has the same faith in exercise which Peter had when he walked upon the sea?

His faith is indeed hidden in the bottom of his heart, mid struggling for life and liberty, under the weight of temptations and trials, as the seed under the clods is pushing its roots downwards and its blade upwards, though pressed on every side with the stiff clay. I remarked that this exhortation contained a PROMISE suitable to the case of this tried soul. This promise is not expressed 'in so many words, but is wrapped up as it were, in the bosom of the exhortation. It is contained, I believe, in a little word of great meaning, in the little pronoun of three letters, "HIS." "Let him stay upon His God." It is by these little pronouns, overlooked by teamed doctors and heady professors, that salvation is sealed upon the soul, and made an eternal reality: "Who loved me," says Paul, "and gave himself for me." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." How many years of temptation, doubt and fear will often roll heavily on before "THEE" is sealed upon the heart, and before "ME" and "MINE" can drop from the lips! My Father, My Saviour, My God, hundreds of living souls cannot pronounce. "My" falters from the tongue, and dares not come forth, because "I have loved thee, I have redeemed thee, thou are Mine," and such similar testimonies, have not been yet spoken by the mouth of God to the soul. How different is this godly fear, this tender conscience of a living soul,

from the pealing voices that sound "Our Father," through the aisles of the Parish Church, speaking of the Holy Ghost who sanctifies them; and from the loud burst, "My Jesus hath done all things well," that swells in bass, tenor, and treble from the pews and galleries of the Independent Chapel. These presumptuous mockers will find on a dying pillow, when "their lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness," that it is one thing to call God their Father and Christ their Saviour out of a Prayer Book or a Hymn Book, and another thing "to receive the spirit of adoption," whereby living souls cry, "Abba, Father."

God, then, seals this heir of heaven as a son, by saying to him, "Let him stay upon his God;" as though He said to him; "Though thou canst not call Me thine, I call thee Mine; I am still thy God though thou canst not call Me, Father." He is thus encouraged to stay upon his God, and to hope in His mercy. Almost invisibly to himself, and in a deep, mysterious, incomprehensible manner, he is "holpen with a little help" (Dan. 11:34), and though he continually falls, he is not utterly cast down. "Though faint, he still pursues," though weary, he holds on his way; though often defeated by sin and Satan, he does not surrender; though foiled again and again, he still perseveres; though God gives no answer, he ceases not to cry; though "plunged again and again in the ditch" of heart-evil (Job 9:31), he cannot lie there, but struggles forth into the light of day; and though he expects that his corruptions will one day break forth to destroy him utterly, and sweep him away into despair beyond the mercy of God and beyond the pity of His people, he is still checked and restrained as if by an invisible hand. Sometimes he obtains a respite from his besetments just when they seem ripened into action; at others, providential interpositions restrain the outbreakings of inward temptations, when opportunity favours them most.

Conscience works at one time, the fear of man at another. Godly sorrow keeps him in this instance, and a sense and sight of the evil of sin in that. Now the fear of God, and now inward feelings of uprightness and integrity; at one moment the weight of guilt, and at another, fear of bringing a reproach on the cause of

Christ; today, a sense of God's goodness and mercy; to-morrow, earnest desires to live to His glory—these and similar workings, which none but gracious souls know, act as a counterpoise to the vile inquiries that seem pent up in his heart as water in a mill dam.

Thus he seems always working and counter-working, doing and on going, fighting and yielding; raging with inward passions, and softened into contrition; diving into all the pollution of a fallen nature, and rising up into the presence of a holy God; hating sin, and loving it; longing after the vilest iniquities, and pained at an idle word; feeding upon the filthiest garbage, and eating manna; revelling in a train of past sins, and abhorring himself as the vilest monster that crawls upon the earth. At times he feels earnestly desirous never to sin more, and would fain be as holy as an angel; at other times he feels as if the sins of thousands were pent up in his bosom, and as if his vile heart could lie down and wallow in all the abominations which have ever been conceived by the mind, uttered by the lips, or acted by the man. But mark, my friends, that all these are INWARD workings, not outward actions; God forbid! And forget not that all these hidden sins are locked up in the saint's own bosom, and though they roar and swell there, are kept down by the hand of God, as boiling water is kept by the top of the cauldron. God forbid that we should encourage sin, or lead anyone to think lightly of that abominable thing which God hateth. No. In his right mind a living soul would sooner die than that his corruptions should break forth into action, and his burden is that he feels such powerful workings of sin within. But all these things keep him low, mar his pride, crush his self-righteousness, cut the locks of his presumption, stain his self-conceit, stop his boasting, preserve him from despising others, make him take the lowest room, teach him to esteem others better than himself, drive him to earnest prayer, fit him for an object of mercy, break to pieces his free-will, and lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as one to be saved by sovereign grace alone.

Thus, the only wise God shows His children enough of themselves to keep them, and enough of His goodness to preserve them from despair. When the gale of free grace blows, the ballast of corruption keeps the vessel from pitching over; and when the storms of temptations arise, the anchor of hope holds her head from driving on the rocks of destruction. Thus the heir of heaven "sings of mercy and judgment;" has a thorn in the flesh, as well as manifestations of God; is kept as a wayfaring man in the highway of the redeemed, with "his eyes right on and his eye-lids straight before him" (Isa. 35:8-9; Prov. 4:25). And though for the most part he walks in darkness, and has no light, he is yet encouraged and enabled "to trust 'in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God.'" Thus have I laid open, as far as God hits enabled me, the experience of a living soul. Who here can say, "It is mine"? Who can "subscribe with his hand" (Isa. 44:5) that such things have passed within, in the secret depths of his heart betwixt him and God? But mark well, my friends, lest we have no shuffling, no taking up on one side and not on the other, no setting up a "vile" experience instead of a "precious one" (Jer. 15:19), no resting upon inward workings as marks of grace, unless they be such as "accompany salvation." Many will set up their sins, their fretfulness, their evil temper, their unbelief, their hardness of heart and deadness of soul as evidences. Now, I feel all these things as evidences against me, and not for me, and to make them witnesses in my behalf is like a criminal's making the evidence of his crimes so many witnesses in his favour. It is not sin, but the workings of grace under sin; it is not unbelief, but the strugglings of filth against unbelief, it is not inward evil, but sorrow for it; it is not iniquity, but the pardon of it; It is not lust, but deliverance from the power of it; it is not pride, but humility; it is not hardness of heart, but contrition; it is not deadness, but life; it is not man's rebellion, but God's mercy felt within,—that is the TRUE EVIDENCE of a work of grace. You are proud, you confess, but so is Satan; unbelieving, but so is the atheist; murmuring, but so are the reprobate (Isa. 8:21); covetous, but so is the worldling; doubting, but so is the hypocrite; despairing, but so was Judas; prayerless, but so are the carnal; hardened,

but so was Pharaoh; fearful, but so are the lost (Rev. 21:8); pierced with guilt, but so was Cain.

Let us take up the other side. Do you ever loathe yourself like Job, turn to the wall as Hezekiah, weep like Peter, put your mouth in the dust as Jeremiah, fear God as Joseph, pant after Him as David, find Him the strength of your heart as Asaph (Ps. 73:26), cry, "Woe is me!" as Isaiah (Isa. 6:5), have a tender heart as Josiah, wrestle with God as Jacob, are of a sorrowful spirit like Hannah, and obey the voice of the Lord's Servant as the heir of heaven in the text? You may find on a dying pillow, when conscience grasps you by the throat, that neither doubts nor fears are able to save, but the revelation of Christ to the soul, the sprinkling of His blood, and the manifestation of His righteousness.

II. But we now have to draw a different picture, the fearful picture of AN HEIR OF HELL WALKING IN LIGHT. Our materials for this sketch **for, of a character so various, so intricate. So ever-changing, so branching out into a thousand shapes and a million hues. Our description can only be a very feeble sketch** must be drawn from three sources:

**1** From Scripture.

**2** From observation of others.

**3** From what I know of the deceitful workings and delusions of my own heart.

To some who know neither their own deceitfulness and hypocrisy, nor the awful delusions of the devil as an angel of light, I may appear harsh, bitter, severe, bigoted, narrow-minded, and to deserve every other term of reproach which self-seekers and flesh-pleasers heap upon those who fearlessly hunt out their refuge of lies. To preach the gospel in our days is to preach to PLEASE EVERYBODY AND OFFEND NOBODY, to starve the children, and feed the bastards, to beat the heir, and caress the

dog, to call the children of God antinomians, and to call empty formalists decided Christians; to style opening up Satan's delusions "preaching in a bad spirit;" and wrapping up hypocrites, impostors, Pharisees, and self-deceivers in their delusions, "not preaching in the spirit of the gospel." This turning of things upside down, this calling good evil and evil good, and putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, may God ever keep me from, and may He enable me to speak boldly and faithfully, whether men will hear or forbear, that by manifestation of the truth I may commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

I called your attention in the beginning of this discourse to the different form of the address to the heir of heaven and the heirs of hell. The first, I observed, was singled out by the hand of God as a solitary individual out of a numerous company by the expression, "Who is there among you?" etc.; whilst the latter were stamped as an immense troop by the differently worded phrase, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire," etc. The road to heaven is "strait and narrow, and few there be that find it;" whilst "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat" (Matt. 7:13-14). Thus the heir of heaven is represented as a solitary traveller, a lonely pilgrim, journeying on amidst darkness and sorrow; but the heirs of hell as a merry troop, with their blood boiling high with confidence, and their spirits undismayed with fear.

The blessed Spirit, then, calls our attention by the expression, "**Behold** I" "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire," etc. Usually, I believe, whenever we find the word "Behold!" or the similar word "Lo!" prefixed to a passage of Scripture, it introduces something that is weighty and important. If a man says to us, "Look here or there!" we, of course, expect there is something strange, something worth seeing, something not of everyday occurrence. And thus the blessed Spirit seems in the text to call our attention to a strange sight, to something we should not expect to see, and which we might not observe, unless our notice was especially directed to it. And what is this strange sight, this spectacle, to

which the Holy Ghost calls our particular attention? It is to "a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12).

I may very simply arrange all that is said of the heirs of hell in the text under two heads:

1. Their **conduct**.

2. Their **sentence**.

1. We will consider, then, as God shall enable us, their CONDUCT first, that we may understand their crime before we hear their sentence. The catalogue of their offences is a very short, but it is a very black one. The sum total of their crimes is stated in a few words, but it is heavy enough to sink them down into hell. To give their complicated offences a single name, we will call it "HIGH TREASON AGAINST JEHOVAH;" this is to say, high treason, first, against God the Father, in presuming to call themselves His children, when He has never elected them. Secondly, against God the Son, in calling Him their Saviour, when He never redeemed them. Thirdly, against God the Holy Ghost, in walking in a light which He has not kindled, and resting in a confidence which He has not inspired.

The charge against them consists of two heads—the bill of indictment, so to speak, contains two counts: First, that "they kindle a fire." Secondly, that "they compass themselves about with sparks." The one is the origin of their crime, the other the continuation; the first is the bud, the second the fruit. The first accusation is, that "lust conceives and bringeth forth sin;" the second accusation is, "sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Let us trace up their crimes then to the fountainhead. They "kindle a fire."

This implies their taking hold of religion without religion taking hold of them; that they come to the law without the law coming with power to them. But here ties the core of their offence, this is

the turning point of their case, that they take up a **counterfeit** religion and call it the **true** one; that they kindle a **false** fire and say that it came down from heaven.

It would be a crime if the forgers of money were to coin **gold** and **silver** into sovereigns and shillings. It would be "an iniquity to be punished by the judge," to be guilty of such daring presumption as to stamp the king's head and superscription on coin that never came out of his mint. But to coin the king's head upon lead and copper, to gild or plate over these base imitations, so as to represent the gold and silver coins of the realm, to utter and pass them off as genuine, in order to defraud honest men, this multiplies the offence a hundred-fold.

According to the ancient laws of this land, therefore, the crime of forgery is high treason, and the punishment death.

Apply this to the crime of false professors. If it were possible for these forgers to procure for themselves the right religion, which they can never do, for God keeps that in His own hands, they would still be guilty of the most awful presumption in calling their religion the religion of God. But when, as is the true state of the case, their religion is nothing but a base counter-feit, nothing but, "a potsherd covered with silver dross" (Prov. 26:23), it multiplies the offence a thousand-fold. Let us, however, enter more clearly into their case, that Scripture may be fulfilled: "Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them," and again, "Whose hatred is covered with deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation." But as examples are more striking than mere assertions, and as it is better to describe living characters than hint a little here and a little there, which hints the right persons are never sure to take, I will, with God's help, try to sketch out a few likenesses, who may, if they have a mind, see their faces in the looking-glass which I shall hold up before their eyes.

I might point then, first, if I were minded so to waste my breath and your time, to the heathen, the Jew, the Roman Catholic, and

the Socinian, as all instances of men who "kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks," and shall at last "lie down in sorrow." But I am not fond of shooting my arrows where they are not likely to hit, and prefer coming a tittle closer home. To preach so is to beat the air, and imitate the high-church ministers of the Establishment, who are wonderfully severe against the Pharisees and Sadducees of old, and the Papists and the Unitarians of present times, and know not that they themselves equal the Pharisee for self-righteousness, the Sadducee for unbelief, the Roman Catholic for superstitious ceremonies, and the Socinian for hatred and contempt of the doctrines of grace and the mysteries of vital godliness.

We will leave, then, such false religions as Popery and Socinianism to the righteous judgment of God, who says of all such delusions: "Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up amongst My treasures? To Me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time" (Deut. 32:34-35). Let us rather pass on to such delusions as occur daily before our eyes. And I know not with whom we had better begin than the corrupt ministers of a carnal establishment. These take high ground, and put themselves forward as the only successors of the apostles, as the only ministers of Christ, the only stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. I once heard a minister of this stamp declare, in a sermon preached at Oxford before the Bishop and his assembled clergy, that there was no hope of salvation whatever for any man who wilfully separated or dissented from the Church of England. And this is, I believe, the received opinion amongst such clerical bigots. But what is all their religion made up of from the first to last? It is nothing else but a tissue of forms and ceremonies of man's invention. This is the fire which they have kindled, and these are the sparks with which they compass themselves. Their boast, for instance, that they receive their ministry in a direct line from the apostles, what is it but a spark of fire which they have kindled to warm themselves into a persuasion that they are the true ministers of Christ?

The distinguishing mark of all false religion is, that It commences with man and not with God. "Behold, all ye that **kindle** a fire," etc. So Aaron made the golden calf, so Nadab and Abihu offered false fire, so Korah, Dathan and Abiram took each man his censer, so Balak built seven altars and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar, so Gideon made an ephod in Ophrah, so Micah had a Levite for his priest, so Saul offered the burnt-offering Jeroboam set up the calves in Bethel, and the women wept for Tammuz at the door of the Lord's house (Ezek. 8:14).

Every form or system, therefore, which is based upon FREEWILL and the power of the creature is stamped at once as false fire. But where shall we find the power of the creature more daringly asserted than amongst the Ranters and Wesleyan Methodists! Their creed is, that man can turn to God of himself, can make himself a new heart, can come to Christ, can believe, hope, and love of his own free-will, and by the exercise of that natural strength which they assert that all men possess. Thus, free-will kindles a fire and presumption blows up the coals. So that all their religion, so far as it is the work of the creature, is nothing but a counterfeit of the work of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the elect. Natural belief supplies with them the place of supernatural faith creature confidence the place of divine assurance, cob-web hopes the place of a good hope through grace, fleshly convictions the place of godly sorrow, noise in prayer the place of the Spirit of supplications, and groans and shouts of "Amen" and "Lord, hear." the place of communion with God. Shouting to the top of the voice is with them preaching with power, singing hymns to ballad tunes is praising God, free-will exhortations to dead sinners is preaching the gospel, working a reformation in the life is conversion to Christ, fiery zeal against the doctrines of grace is earnestness 'in the cause of God, and going out of the world with a seared conscience is dying triumphantly in the full assurance of faith.

I once visited one of their converts, who was proclaimed all over the country as triumphing over death. He certainly had no fears of dying; but when I began to sound the foundation of his hope, I

found him ignorant of himself, ignorant of the curse of the law, ignorant that he deserved to be sent to hell; and therefore, though he talked about Jesus Christ, he was yet ignorant of the blood of sprinkling and the revelation of a justifying righteousness. Like all self-deceivers, he could not bear the probe. but after a few questions, turned away from me and returned no answer. Thus they begin in delusion, are trained up in it, and mostly die in it. The weekly confessional of the class-meeting kindles the fire of hypocrisy, each member not wishing to be behind another in experience. The love-feast, the watch night, by the excitement of lights, late hours and singing, the bawling of the preacher, and the groans and Amens of the hearers, kindle a fire which passes off for the love of God. The impassioned rant of a preacher, calling upon the wicked to turn to God, lights up a spark of natural feeling which they gladly seize as the meltings of the blessed Spirit. Zeal for John Wesley, or the cause of the Primitive Methodists, raises a fire within which blazed forth in the support of new chapels, local preachers, Arminian writings, and a thorough hatred of unconditional election, particular redemption, and imputed righteousness.

I remarked that false religion took a thousand different shapes and colors, and therefore we need not wonder if it sometimes clothes itself in a form the direct opposite to Arminianism. It matters little to Satan how the fire is lighted up, so long as the hand of God does not kindle it. DEAD CALVINISM is as good a kind of fuel with which to light up the flame of false religion as the rotten sticks of free-will and creature merit. Thus, a sound creed kindles the flame of pride over those whose judgments are not so well informed,—notions in the head light up the sparks of presumption; election floating in the brain sets on fire a false confidence; distinguishing mercy, received as a doctrine in the head and not felt as a truth in the soul, blows up the coals of arrogance; and sovereign grace itself, learned in a mechanical way like the lesson of a parrot, instead of melting the heart with flames of divine love, only hardens it like a piece of clay into stone.

Now all these dead Calvinists, these bastards and not sons, these children of the bond-woman and not the children of the free, however they may differ in their creed from the Arminians, resemble them in this—that they kindle a fire. It is not God that gives them either light or heat. They teach themselves the doctrines of grace, and do not receive them from heaven; and believe in election, particular redemption, imputed righteousness and final perseverance, not because any one of these truths has been sealed upon their hearts, but because they read of them in the Bible or hear them from the pulpit.

These, then, "kindle a fire," for I am sure if God had kindled one in their hearts, and "shut it up in their bones" (Jer. 20:9), it would soon burn them out of a carnal establishment. "The Articles of our venerable Establishment, our incomparable Liturgy, the wisdom and piety of the Reformers, the apostolic succession Bishops, the admirable mean between Popery on the one hand and enthusiasm on the other, the eminent men that have been ministers in the Church of England, the judicious Hooker, the holy Leighton, the spiritual Hervey, the evangelical Romaine, the sound Scott, the pious Newton"—who has not heard all these sparks rushing from the fire kindled and blown up by the mouth of evangelical preachers? These are the sparks at which they warm themselves, when any damp, chilling convictions of the badness of their cause arise in their minds; and with the same embers do they kindle a fire in the bosoms of their hearers. But who that has a spark of spiritual light does not see that all these pleas and excuses are a false fire, and that the question at the last day will be, not whether Newton, Romaine, or Hawker remained in a carnal system, but what warrant had their apologists to do evil that good might come, or refer to the example of men instead of the standard of truth given by the ever-living God?

But I should omit a large section of fire-kindlers if I did not take notice of another class of religious professors, namely, the General Dissenters. These call themselves Calvinists, but are really Arminians, profess free grace, but actually are advocates

for freewill. Sunk in carnality, buried in worldliness, steeped up to the lips in an empty profession, destitute of the life of God, these do indeed require the tinder-box of nature, the flint and steel of human exertion to procure some sparks of false fire. The Sunday morning prayer of the dead minister, furnished with overflowing supply of choice words and elegant phrases, and set off with a handsome gown and bands, easy action, soft manners, and a gold ring on each little finger, has a wondrous efficacy in lighting up the fire of natural religion which the busy week has well nigh quenched.

The spark being thus kindled, the nicely divided sermon proceeds to blow up the reviving embers by a lecture on the duty of believing, well seasoned with thunders from Mount Sinai, warnings against Antinomianism, and cautions against enthusiasm, and thoroughly spiced with human arguments, academic eloquence, appeals to reason, and quotations from authors. The drowsy prayer meeting, the monthly ordinance, the weekly lecture, the daily chapter, the formal family prayer, the legal author, the religious chit-chat, picked up by gossiping from house to house—all serve to blow up the dying spark of natural religion; and where these fail, aid is borrowed from the excitement of politics and the spirit of party, or burning zeal against what are called high doctrines, and the narrow-minded bigots that hold them. Thus a burning-glass is never wanting to kindle a fire, and bellows are always at hand to blow up the flame.

Now all these characters, however in other respects they differ, yet resemble each other in this particular, that they begin with God instead of God's beginning with them. Thus their religion is not of heaven, but of earth; not the work of the Holy Ghost, but the hard labor of the creature; not the fruit of free grace, but the offspring of free-will; not a heavenly principle born of God, but a spurious imitation, born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man.

But the characters we are describing are not only said to kindle a fire, but "to compass themselves also about with sparks." These sparks, of course, rise from the same fire which they have kindled, and come out of the flame when blown up to its due height. With these sparks they are said "to compass," that is, to surround themselves. Thus they stand in the midst of the flame, and the sparks that fly out of the fire on every side completely encircle them. But what is the effect of this fiery circle with which they are surrounded? It, of course, cuts off all view of everything beyond it. The sparks that fly up in every direction as the fire is blown, allow the kindlers of it to see nothing but the flame from which they proceed; and in proportion as the fuel burns and the sparks fly, does the blazing pile throw everything into darkness but itself and those on whom it glares.

Thus, all false religion, just in proportion as it seizes hold of the mind, blinds it to the truth, fills it with prejudice, sears the conscience, hardens the heart, inflames it with party zeal, and makes every faculty boil over with hatred, fury and bigotry against all that see not as it sees, and act not as it acts. Zeal for the false religion of the Church of Rome kindled the Smithfield fires in the days of bloody Mary, and zeal for the Church of England now inflames almost as violently the hearts of thousands against Dissenters. Zeal for the doctrines of Methodism warms some, zeal for moderate Calvinism, as it is termed, fires others. Each false sect has its own bonfire, and the light which comes from it, each is fully persuaded is the blaze of heavenly truth. 'The heat which is thrown out as the sparks fly upward increases the delusion by supplying a false warmth, a fiery zeal to put into action the erroneous persuasions which the light has kindled in the mind.

So that herein lies the counterfeit whereby false religion imitates the true. In true religion there is light to see and warmth to feel. In false religion there are just the same two properties. Does God cast a light into the hearts of the heirs of heaven? So does Satan cast a light into the heads of the heirs of hell. Does God communicate warmth, together with light, to make the hearts of

His people burn within them? So does Satan, by the sparks of natural religion, 'inflammeth' into bigotry, heat and zeal, the carnal minds of his children. Does the one see? So does the other. Does the one act from feeling? So does the other. Is the one convicted of truth? So is the other equally convinced of error. And does the one act from a desire to please God? So does the other think that by persecuting the saints he does God service. Thus, the more conscientious a man is, the greater enemy will he be to the Church of Christ if he compass himself about with sparks of false fire. The more that he acts from principle, the more determined will be his attacks; and the more that he is heated with false zeal, the more violent will be his opposition to the truth of God. Thus professors are far more bitter against the children of God than the profane; and those who have a false religion are much more violent against the truth than those who have no religion at all. Priests, therefore, have always been the greatest enemies of true religion in every age; and its greatest foes now are the corrupt priests in the Establishment and the false priests amongst

2. I said that I should consider, **first**, the conduct of the heirs of hell, and then their SENTENCE. Their sentence, then, as pronounced by the mouth of God in the text, is twofold. The first part is contained in the words. "Walk ye in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled." To be given up to judicial blindness is one of the most awful sentences that can issue from the mouth of God. And such is the first part of the punishment awarded against those who kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks. It is as though the mouth of the Judge of the whole earth spoke to them thus: "You have chosen to deceive yourselves; I will not undeceive you. You have kindled a false fire; I will not extinguish it that I may give you the true one. No. Walk in the light of your fire. Enjoy your false confidence, rest securely on your delusive hopes, foster your presumptuous faith, comfort yourselves with your rites, forms, and ceremonies, and be fully persuaded of the truth of your false doctrine. 'I also will choose your delusions' (Isa. 66:4). Thus go on to fill up the measure of your iniquities, to call evil good and good evil, and to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, until

you have neither eyes to see the one, nor taste to discern the other."

This, then, is the sentence of God against those heirs of wrath who are wrapped up in the delusions of false religion. And as is the sentence, so is the execution. The effects we see every day passing before our eyes, and taking place in well-nigh all the churches and chapels of the land. Thus the professor of natural religion walks in the light which he himself has kindled. Divine wrath in his soul against sin and the curse of the law in his conscience have never roused him from his dream of creature merit and fleshly righteousness. Carnal security holds him fast in her iron arms. Vain confidence has drugged him asleep with her opium dose. Neither guilt nor terror, doubt nor fear, ever disturbs his repose. Like the Dead Sea, there is in him the utter absence of life and motion. Pleased with himself, and charmed, like a youthful beauty, with the reflection of his own face, he glides securely on through life without cutting conviction, one piercing thought, one staggering doubt whether he be going to heaven. Or if such doubts should for a moment arise, the consistency of his past life, his attention to what he calls "the duties of religion," his kindness to the poor, and a thousand other such friendly suggestions, rise up in a body to expel the intruding doubt from his mind. He is cheerful, as having no trouble nor sorrow, and that is christened by the name of "cheerful piety." He is good tempered, and that is called "Christian meekness." He is friendly to all, and that is named "the spirit of a true Christian." He attends church or chapel, kneels at the sacrament, or sits at the ordinance, and that is considered "the essence Of religion." He has no doubt of his state, and that is called "enjoying a full assurance." He is liberal to the poor, and that is termed "love to Christ," He condemns nobody. and thinks well of everybody, and that is considered "walking in the spirit of the gospel." He reads the Bible much, and religious authors more, and that is called being "a most advanced Christian." He remembers texts and sermons for half a century back, and by repeating them continually passes Current as "a most established believer."

Thus all these sparks of natural virtue and fleshly religion furnish light and heat by which he walks, and at which he warms himself. "He is not in trouble as other men"—that is, Christ's men—"neither is he plagued like other men" (Ps. 73:5). He never feels cold, for his fire always burns; nor dark, for his sparks always give light. He never mourns, for he feels no sins to mourn for; nor is burdened with guilt, because his conscience was never made tender. He never grieves for the absence of God, because he has never felt His presence; nor cries that he may know Christ, for he thinks that he knows Him enough already. He never groans beneath temptation, because he has no new principle within to feel its load. The devil does not harass him, for he has him safe already; nor do the terrors of the Lord alarm him, for God has given him up to judicial blindness. Thus surrounded with prosperity, and furnished with more than heart can wish, "his house is safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon him; he sends forth his little ones like a flock, and his children dance; he takes the timbrel and harp, and rejoices at the sound of the organ" (Job 21:9-12).

But there is a second part of their sentence which remains to be considered: "This shall ye have of Mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." Of this sentence part is executed in this life, but sometimes its whole weight is deferred until the life to come. Thus, in some cases, the delusion which is spread over the heart is rent asunder on a dying pillow. The flattery of professors, the self-deceit of the heart, the delusions of Satan, all which had buoyed up the soul with empty hopes, vanish into air at the approach of the king of terrors. One flash of eternal fire in the conscience dissolves the dream into which he had been cheated. The sparks of Tophet ordained of old, which "the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle" (Isa. 30:33), bum up the wood, hay and stubble accumulated for years. The reality of death, the certainty of eternity, the stern justice of God, the impossibility of escape, the recollection of the past, the terror of the future, the clamor of a guilty conscience, rush in like a flood, and sweep away into despair all the refuge of lies so long sheltered in. Free-will snaps asunder, "as the thread of tow is

broken when it toucheth the fire" (Judg. 16:9); human merit disappears, "as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney" (Hos. 13:3); natural faith withers away "as the streams of brooks when it is hot are consumed out of their place" (Job 6:17), and despair swallows up vain hopes, as "drought and heat consume the snow waters."

He who thought that he was a great Christian now finds that he is no Christian at all. He who fondly imagined himself on the road to heaven, finds himself suddenly at the gates of hell. And now he learns that these doctrines are true which he either denied or held in unrighteousness. The iron gates of election, the deep impassable gulf of God's decrees, the brazen bars of that reprobation which lie once disbelieved and fought against, but which is now borne witness to by his gnawing conscience, the irreversible purpose of Jehovah "to have mercy on whom He will have mercy," and on them alone—all, all shut out hope, and drive the soul down fathoms deep into the agony of despair. "God now laughs at his calamity, and mocks when his fear cometh" (Prov. 1:26). He calls upon the Lord, but "He answers him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (1 Sam. 28:6). Thus, "he is brought into desolation as in a moment, and is utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. 73:19). So it was with Ahithophel, with whom David once took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God 'in company, who "when his counsel was not followed, gat him home to his house and hanged himself" (2 Sam. 17:23). So it was with Saul, when the Lord departed from him and became his enemy (1 Sam. 28:16), and "he took a sword and fell upon it" (1 Sam. 31:4). So it was with Judas, when he hanged himself in an agony of despair, and falling headlong his bowels gushed out. So it was with Francis Spira, at the time of the Reformation; and so have I known it myself in the death-bed of several professors.

But it is not always in this life that God executes this sentence, "Ye shall lie down in sorrow," against the heirs of hell. On the contrary, in the majority of cases, the criminal is respited and the

execution of the sentence deferred. This so stumbled Asaph, and made his steps well nigh to slip, that he saw the ungodly not only prospered in the world and increased in riches, but that even when they came to die, "there were no bands [that is, terrors] in their death," but even in that solemn hour that "their strength was firm." And thus it is continually now. Hundreds of professors die like lambs, whose everlasting portion will be amongst the goats.

"Our departed friend" **says a paragraph in some religious periodical** "could not boast of great manifestations. He was indeed on principle opposed to those death-bed displays of which some think so highly. But he was a consistent character, an affectionate father, a kind husband, a warm supporter of the church," or "a steady friend to dissent," as the case may be, "and he is doubtless gone to his reward." "So they wrap it up" (Mic. 7:3). When the real state of the case is that he began 'in delusion, continued in it, and died in it. The veil was not rent off his heart until the invisible state disclosed to him for the first time the awful reality that he had died with a lie in his right hand. Still the sentence is true, and executed to the letter, though deferred for a while. "This they have at God's hand, they lie down in sorrow:" if not on a bed of death, on the flaming pillows of eternal fire.

But none of the heirs of heaven shall lie down in sorrow. There may be gloom, doubts, and fears for a time on a death-bed, mid if there has been a previous manifestation of pardoning love and the inward revelation of Jesus, there may not be triumphant joy, but there will be a hope that anchors within the veil, a faith that rests on the finished work of the Saviour, and a love that goes out after God. "The end of the upright is peace;" "they rest on their beds," "have hope in their death" (Prov. 14:32), and find the rod and the staff of God to comfort them as they walk through the dark valley.

I have drawn two opposite characters their beginning, progress and end. Which are you? If an empty professor, unless grace

prevent, your sentence is recorded, that you shall lie down in sorrow. If a living soul, though now you are walking in darkness, and have no light, you shall one day behold the face of God with joy.

## HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY

Preached at Salem Chapel, Landport, Portsmouth, on Lord's Day Morning, August 22, 1841

"The Lord hear Thee in the day of trouble; the Name of the God of Jacob defend Thee; send Thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen Thee out of Zion." Psalm 20:1, 2

There can be no doubt that the Psalms testify much of Jesus. The Lord Himself, before He "opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures," said to His disciples, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and *in the Psalms*, concerning Me." (Luke 24:44.) The Lord of life and glory, whilst hanging on the cross, cried aloud from Psalm 22—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Nay, we find the very circumstances, which attended His crucifixion described in that Psalm with great minuteness; such as, "They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels." "They part My garments amongst them, and cast lots upon My vesture."

Now I believe that Psalm 20 refers mainly to the same subject, and that it is the prayer of the church offered up to God the Father on behalf of the Lord Jesus. The church foresaw, by the Spirit of prophecy, the sufferings of her Head; she looked forward to the agonies and distresses that the Lord Jesus was to undergo for her, and the benefits that were to arise out of them; and, foreseeing these things, in the Spirit of prophecy, she poured forth Psalm 20 as a prayer to the Father on His behalf. The Holy Ghost framed this prayer for her by way of anticipation; and thus, as the apostle speaks, "The Spirit of Christ which was in her testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:11.) Viewed in this light, how earnest and how suitable are her petitions! "The Lord hear Thee in the

day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend Thee; send Thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen Thee out of Zion."

That this interpretation of the Psalm is not imaginary or forced, is evident from several expressions in it, which have a clear reference to Jesus. Thus, ver. 3 (Ps. 20:3) it says, "Remember all Thy offerings, and *accept Thy burnt sacrifice*;" where the church prays the Father to accept that sacrifice which Christ was offering upon the cross. So ver. 4: (Ps. 20:4) "Grant Thee according to Thine own heart, and fulfil all Thy counsel." The "*heart*" of Christ was set upon the salvation of His church; and the "*counsel*" of Christ to be fulfilled was "the counsel of peace." (Zech. 6:13.) Nay, so certain was the church of Christ's success in His covenant undertakings, that she says, "We will rejoice in Thy salvation" (Ps. 20:5) even before He went forth in the travail of His soul for the salvation of His people. But as an additional confirmation that this Psalm testifies of Jesus, we find His very name mentioned (ver. 6) "Now know I that the Lord saveth His *anointed*;" He will hear Him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand." I need, perhaps, scarcely point out that the word "Christ" means "anointed," and that therefore we might read, "Now know I that the Lord saveth His Christ."

But I would by no means limit the interpretation of the Psalm to this one point. As the experience of Christ is the experience of the church, "He being tempted in all points like as we are," He having travelled in the road which we have to walk in, the same words are applicable also to the experience of believers. Thus, though the verses primarily, I believe, and mainly apply to Christ's experience, yet we may also apply them spiritually to the experience of every child of God who suffers with Christ. When, therefore, we have glanced a little at the primary meaning of the words, and shown how they refer to Christ Himself, we will then pass on to consider the text with reference to the experience of the people of Christ.

There was, then, "a day of trouble" to come upon Jesus; in fact, His whole life, from the cradle to the cross, was one continued

series of trouble. But He had certain seasons of more especial suffering; such as the garden scene, when He "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground;" and those six hours of agony, when He was nailed to the cross, and not merely endured the most dreadful anguish of body, but also the tremendous wrath of God in His soul. It was to this season of distress that the church looked forward when she said, "The Lord *hear Thee* in the day of trouble;" implying that in that solemn season of distress the Lord Jesus would cry unto the Father; as the apostle speaks, Heb. 5:7, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." In His conflict with the powers of darkness "the name of the God of Jacob defended" Him. In that trying hour "help was sent to Him from the sanctuary," and "strength was given Him out of Zion."

I could not pass over this primary meaning of the Psalm without thus briefly pointing it out; but having done so, I shall pass on to the secondary meaning, and consider the text as applicable to the experience of the children of God.

The reason why this Psalm, as well as others of a similar nature, bears this two-fold interpretation, springs from this, that the experience of Christ and of His church are similar in kind, though not in degree. "As He is, so are we in this world." "Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." The Lord, therefore, when the sons of Zebedee asked Him that they might "sit, one on His right hand, and the other on His left hand, in His glory," said to them, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" They said, "We can." And what was His answer? "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptised withal shall ye be baptised."

What this cup was, the Lord's own words declare, when, in the gloomy garden, "He prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." (Matt. 26:39.) This cup was the cup of suffering on account of imputed sin—the cup of God's wrath. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same." (Ps. 75:8.) "Stand up, O Jerusalem, which has drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury." (Isai. 51:17.) This cup Jesus drank to the very dregs; and some drops of it are tasted by every one of His people. His baptism, too, was a baptism, a complete immersion into, suffering; and with this too are His faithful followers baptised. It is, then, from this union of Christ and His people in suffering that the Psalm derives its two-fold meaning.

I.—"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." Viewing then these words as applicable to the experience of the child of God, we find mention made of "a day of trouble." All who shall be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation will have more or less of a day of trouble. This day of trouble may come upon some at their first setting out; on others in the middle of their course; and on others just before the end, before the Lord sweetly visits their souls, and takes them to eternal rest. But "a day of trouble" must come, sooner or later, upon every child of God. This is that day spoken of in Jeremiah. (Jer. 30:7.) "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it! it is even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it." This "day of trouble" is when sin is laid as a heavy burden upon a man's conscience; when guilt presses him down into the dust of death, when his iniquities stare him in the face, and seem more in number than the hairs of his head; when he fears he shall be cast for ever into the bottomless pit of hell, and have his portion with the hypocrites.

This "day of trouble" is not literally a day, a portion of time meted out by the rising or setting sun, a space of twenty-four hours. The hands of a clock, or the shadow of a dial, cannot regulate spiritual troubles. A day here means a season, be it long or short, be it a day, or a week, or a month, or a year. And as the season cannot

be measured in length, so the trouble cannot be measured in depth. The only wise God deals out various measures of affliction to His people. All do not sink to the same depth, as all do not rise to the same height. All do not drink equally deep of the cup; yet all, each in their measure, pass through this day of trouble, wherein their fleshly religion is pulled to pieces, their self-righteousness marred, their pleasing prospects of propitiating the favour of God broken, their presumptuous hopes crushed, and they brought into the state of the leper, to cry, "Unclean, unclean." Until a man has passed through this day of trouble, until he has experienced more or less of these exercises of soul, and known guilt and condemnation in his conscience, until he has struggled in this narrow pass, and had his rags of creature righteousness torn away from him, he can know nothing experimentally of the efficacy of Jesus' atoning blood, nor feel the power of Christ's resurrection.

Now in this day of trouble the living soul will groan, being burdened. The blessed Spirit who has convinced him of sin, is in him as a Spirit of grace and supplications, and enables him to sigh, and cry, and pray to the Lord out of the depths of a troubled conscience. And here we see a marked distinction between the convictions in the reprobate that end in despair, and the convictions in the child of God, that terminate in blessed deliverance. Whenever convictions fall upon the natural conscience of a vessel of wrath, there is in him no crying and sighing unto God for mercy. He may indeed "howl upon his bed," but he does not "cry unto God with his heart" (Hos. 7:14.) he has not received the Spirit of grace and of supplications so as to draw near the throne of grace, nor has he any of those feeble glimpses of hope, which encourage the quickened elect to cry still more after mercy. But with him all is one black, lowering cloud of despair, through which no beam of hope breaks, one scene of unmitigated anguish, such as we read of concerning Judas, who went out and hanged himself, without one cry for mercy and pardon.

But the elect, who pass through this "day of trouble," wherein their fleshly religion is broken to pieces, their towering presumption brought down and their fleshly hopes scattered, are not left to sullenness or despair. A spirit of prayer is given them; they are "led with supplications" **Jer 31:9** they "seek Him that turneth the shadow of death into the morning" (Amos 5:8) and "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for them with groanings—which cannot be uttered." They are thus enabled to pour out their souls before the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15) and speak to Him out of the abundance of their complaint and grief. Thus the children of Israel sighed by reason of bondage in Egypt (Ex. 2:23); thus Moses cried unto the Lord at the Red Sea; and thus Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven, in the presence-chamber of Artaxerxes the king. (Neh. 2:4) Being thus enabled spiritually to pray and cry, their groanings, desires, and breathings enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. This is implied in the words, "the Lord *hear thee.*" But the Lord will not, cannot hear any prayer that is not of His own inspiring. He bows down His gracious ear to the utterance of His own breath in the soul. In the living soul, then, during the day of trouble, it is not sullen silence, it is not reckless despair, it is not one black scene of unmitigated horror; but, amidst its trouble, there bursts forth the "well of water springing up into everlasting life;" there is the going forth of an inward spirit of supplication in the soul, with fervent wrestlings, at the throne of mercy.

Now, have your souls known anything of this day of trouble? I do not ask whether it commenced with the first work of grace upon your soul, nor how long it lasted, nor how deep it went. These are circumstances, which vary according to God's good pleasure. Paul had three days of trouble (Acts 9:9), the thief on the cross perhaps not three hours, the jailer at Philippi perhaps not three minutes; and Zion, as soon as she travailed, brought forth children. But I must ask, Has your soul known anything at all of this day of trouble? Now, if you have never known a day of trouble, you have never known what it was to pray in the Spirit, nor to have your prayers heard; for "the Lord hears in the day of trouble."

But what are the petitions that the soul puts up in the day of trouble? What are its chief wants and most urgent desires?

1. Its most pressing want, and its most importunate desire is *for the pardon of sin*; and this not merely viewed in the letter of God's Word, not merely received as a doctrine of the Scriptures, but inwardly revealed as an experimental reality, as a felt substance, as a divine testimony sealed in the court of conscience by God Himself. A man may for a long time try to stave off this deep sense of his own ruin and misery; but, sooner or later, the Holy Ghost will "lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," and make him feel in the depths of his conscience that unless pardon be spoken into his soul by the mouth of God Himself, unless peace be enjoyed through the blood of the Mediator, he must sink forever into the depths of endless woe. Then arises the cry for pardon, for the conscience to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, that it may be purged from guilt and condemnation, and from all dead works, to serve the living God.

2. Another urgent want and importunate cry of the soul in this "day of trouble" is after *the manifestation of Christ's righteousness*. The holy law of God curses and condemns it. This strips off all the rags of creature righteousness. The blessed Spirit then enlightens the eyes of the understanding to see Christ's righteousness in the Scriptures, shows the suitability and all-sufficiency of this glorious robe, and kindles fervent desires to receive it as a covering from the hands of God. The seeking soul thus becomes interested in that blessing—"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Nor can anything satisfy it but the manifestation of Christ's righteousness to justify it from the curse of the law and the guilt of sin, and clothe it with a robe in which it may stand accepted before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. If this be so, what must we say of those that fight against imputed righteousness—that with daring blasphemy call it "imputed nonsense?" Must we not say that all such testify to their own condemnation, and openly proclaim that

they never knew a day of trouble, and never hungered and thirsted after righteousness? For if they had seen what they were in the sight of God, had their heart been opened up to them in its true colours, and their "secret sins been set in the light of God's countenance," they would have been so pricked in their conscience—they would so have seen their own righteousness as filthy rags, that under the blessed Spirit's operations, they would have hungered and thirsted, panted and cried, after the manifestation of that glorious righteousness of Jesus "which is unto all, and upon all them that believe."

3. Another urgent want and pressing desire of the soul in the "day of trouble" is for *a special manifestation of Christ*. I will tell you, friends, what brings a man to cry after these manifestations and revelations, which the world calls enthusiasm and fanaticism, and professors say is mere delusion—it is having wants, exercises, doubts, fears and troubles; it is being brought into that spot where nothing can deliver the soul from the lowest hell but the personal, individual, experimental, supernatural manifestations of the mercy and grace of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now, till a man is brought more or less into "the day of trouble," he will trifle with God, he will sport and play with truth; and the solemn verities of eternity will be to him little less than idle tales. But when he is arrested, tried and condemned by God's holy law, and brought by the Spirit into those depths out of which he feels he cannot deliver himself, nor any human arm deliver him, *then* he is taught in the depths of his soul to sigh and sue after the manifestation and revelation of God's mercy and grace in the face of Jesus Christ. And until he gets these sweet manifestations in his conscience, he cannot taste the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

It is not, then, having passed through a day of natural trouble, which stamps us as Christians, for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7.) Nor is it altogether trouble about our souls that stamps us as Christians; for many have been

troubled about their souls, and it has been but the natural convictions of the reprobate. Nor is it having sighs and cries (*though these are, in a measure, an evidence of life*) that stamps a man fully and decidedly as a Christian, for we must wait the issue before it can be fully decided whether it is "the great and exceeding bitter cry" of Esau, or the spiritual sigh of the prisoner of hope. But those things stamp a man as a Christian, which do so in his own conscience. Those things seal a man outwardly that seal him inwardly—that is, receiving out of Christ's fulness some testimony of mercy and grace, some smile from His blessed countenance, some intimation of His special love.

II.—"The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." The word "*hear,*" in the preceding clause, implies that there was a petition put up; the word "*defend,*" in the present, implies that there were enemies, for if there were no enemies, why need the church pray—"The name of the God of Jacob *defend thee?*" The connection, then, of the two clauses of the verse shows that in "this day of trouble" there are enemies that attack the soul.

1. *Satan*, for instance, is an enemy, as his very name signifies, that takes advantage of this day to drive the soul into despair. His keen eye perceives what is going on. He sees the troubled countenance, the tottering knees, the downcast look; his sharp ear hears the lamentations poured forth, and therefore he comes in with all his infernal enmity and malice in order to sink the sinking soul, to strike the dying dead.

2. *Guilt*, with his knotted club, as Bunyan describes him, is another enemy that falls hard upon the soul in this day of trouble. His blows fall always upon the tenderest parts, and sadly bruise the conscience.

3. *Persecutors and professors of every kind* are enemies in the day of trouble. As Job speaks, "Those whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock"—"Now am I their song, yea, I am their byword; they mar my path, they set forward my calamity." (Job 30:1, 9, 13.) As the strong and fat

cattle thrust with side and shoulder and push all the diseased with their horns (Ezek. 34:21), so when a poor soul is smitten with pining sickness, all the presumptuous professors in the country butt at him. "Now," say they, "he is made manifest. He is proved to be a hypocrite, as we always thought him."

4. But even *some of the children of God* may prove to be enemies to the soul passing through the day of trouble. Job found it so when he cried, "My friends scorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God." **Job 16:20** Nay, the Lord's own disciples seem to 'have doubted Him when they said, "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." (Luke 24:21.)

From these and all other its outward and inward enemies, the soul needs defence. The church therefore prays, "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." But why should she use the expression, "*the name of the God of Jacob?*" For this reason; the "name of God" implies all those perfections and attributes that God hath revealed concerning Himself. We are known, each of us personally, by a name; and when the name is mentioned, it recalls to our mind not only the person himself, but all those peculiar features of character by which each individual is known. Thus "*the name of God*" in Scripture signifies everything that God has revealed concerning Himself. In this it is that "the name of God" differs from God. The infinite Jehovah is incomprehensible to finite creatures; but he has graciously revealed certain parts of His character, which they can comprehend when spiritually revealed. Thus the Lord told Moses, "There shall no man see Me and live;" and therefore He adds, "Thou shalt see My back parts, but My face shall not be seen." When the Lord, then, had put him into the cleft of the rock, we read that "He descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." (Ex. 34:5.) That is, all that might be known of His gracious and glorious character. So He says of the Angel (*i.e. Jesus, the Messenger of the covenant*), whom He would send before Moses to keep him in the way, "*My name is in Him*" (Ex. 23:21.) that is, all that may be known of Me, all My revealed attributes. When, therefore, the church prays for the travailing soul, "The name of

the God of Jacob defend thee," she asks the God of Jacob to put forth those gracious attributes and perfections which He has revealed concerning Himself. All these are enlisted on behalf of the Church of God.

1. For instance, there is the *mercy* of God. The mercy of God is a part of the name of God, for His name is merciful. He so proclaimed it in the ears of Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, *merciful* and gracious." This mercy, then, the church supplicates as the defence of the soul in the day of trouble. To "defend" a person is to interpose in his behalf, to throw a shield before him; thus there must be some interposition of mercy, some stepping forward of this gracious attribute, some flowing forth of the compassion of the eternal God, some visible appearance (*I mean visible to faith*) of this name of the Lord as a strong tower, or as a shield and buckler.

Sin gives *Satan* his power. Then, if mercy pardons sin, it defends the soul from his assaults; and the proclamation of mercy in the conscience beats him effectually back.

Sin arms *guilt* with his knotted club. Then if "mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13) it disarms this cruel enemy. But only manifested mercy can overcome manifested guilt; and therefore what the living soul wants is not merely to see mercy declared in the Word of God, but for this mercy to step forth out of the bosom of the Most High, and to flow into it through the atoning blood of Immanuel, that where sin hath abounded, there grace may much more abound.

2. Again, in the name of God is implied also *the faithfulness* of God; for this is one of His revealed attributes. He is therefore called "*the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy*" (Deut. 7:9) and the apostle says, "*God is faithful, by whom ye were called,*" etc. (1 Cor. 1:9.) It is declared of Him that "He cannot lie" (Titus 1:2) and He tells His Zion, "Yea, they may forget; yet will not I forget thee."

Now this faithfulness of God to His covenant, to His promises, to His oath, to everything which He has revealed on behalf of the poor and needy, stands forth to defend His children in the trying hour. Everything may fail, yet this faithfulness fails not. "Once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not lie unto David."

3. *Love* is another revealed attribute of God, and is therefore included in the name of God; for "God is love." But what so eager, so prompt to defend a beloved object as love! It is "strong as death," and triumphs over every foe. What more suitable, what more precious defence than a taste of this love! Therefore connected with the promise—"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (*that sight which kindles love*), we read, "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." (Isai. 33:16, 17.)

Time will not suffer me to enlarge upon the other revealed attributes of God which are contained "in the name of Jehovah;" but all are at different times needed to defend the timid, helpless soul. I have shown how this blessed name defends the soul from the assaults of *Satan* and *guilt*; but he needs a similar defence from his other enemies, such as *the taunting professors of religion*. This David felt when he said, "Let Thy mercies come unto me, O Lord; *so shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me*" (Ps. 119:41, 42). Perhaps in times past, as "evil communications corrupt good manners," he has, through an intimacy with vain, confident professors, learnt some of their evil ways; he has perhaps talked too boastingly, has walked too much in the footsteps of those who are at ease in Zion; has stood upon an eminence where God has not placed him. Now, when he is compelled with shame to take the lowest room, when he is brought to be low in a low place, he confesses with guilt and confusion of face how he has been led away, how he has been deluded, how he once thought himself safe, and now finds that that safety was nothing but carnal security.

When, then, he is brought down from unwavering confidence into doubts, fears, and suspicions lest the whole work should be unsound from the beginning, his eyes are opened to see where

his former associates are; and as he freely speaks what he deeply feels, it calls forth their wrath and contempt. Their taunts and jeers wound him, as they wounded David when he said, "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud." I must say for myself, that though for a short time I was connected with some of these vain, confident professors, I never could get into their security. I could not see where the fault lay, but there was a hardness about them, which always repelled me; and when I found the lives of some of the highest in faith were to the grossest degree immoral, the thread of our connection was soon broken. But it is not so with all; and when their taunts are painfully felt, it needs the name of the God of Jacob to defend the soul.

But why should it be the "name of **the God of Jacob?**" Because such is the name of a **covenant** God. We therefore read that "Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." It is only as a covenant Jehovah that the name of God can be known, or when known can defend the soul. Then, by "the God of Jacob" we are to understand the Three-One Jehovah in eternal covenant engagements; and by His "name" we are to understand all His revealed offices, attributes, and perfections, as engaged on behalf of the elect. This name of the Lord is a strong tower, and upon all the glory manifested in it shall be a defence.

III.—"Send thee help from the sanctuary." The church goes on with her prayer, supplicating help from Him from whom alone help comes. But whence is this help to spring? "**From the sanctuary.**" That is the place whence the help must come. Not from the exertions of free-will; not from attempts to work out a righteousness with which God may be well pleased; not from making one's self a Christian by taking up at random the opinions of others; not by plastering and white-washing ourselves over with "decided piety;" not by stealing an experience from others, and going about dressed up in borrowed plumes; not by resting upon doubts and fears, guilt and corruption, as evidences; not by pinning our eternal all-in-all upon the sleeve of some good man; not by creeping under the wing of a minister, and there getting

warmth and shelter. All these delusions and devices of Satan and the flesh are swept away when God puts forth His hand upon a man's conscience. It must **then** be "help from the sanctuary."

But what is the sanctuary? It is not any building made with hands, though the tabernacle under the Levitical dispensation was called by that name, but only so as a standing type of the human nature of Jesus, "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb 8:2). Paul therefore calls the Levitical tabernacle, "a worldly sanctuary" (Heb. 9:1) as opposed to the heavenly sanctuary. I therefore understand by "the sanctuary" in the text, not the typical sanctuary below, but the antitypical sanctuary above, the immediate presence of Jehovah, Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts; the eternal abode of light, life and glory; the throne of holiness, majesty and power; whence the eternal covenant, ordered in all things and sure, originated, and out of which everything that blesses, comforts, strengthens and satisfies the soul proceeds.

Now this is the place whence the child of God wants help. And if this help comes out of the sanctuary, it will be filled with the fragrance and odour of the sanctuary. Before the high priest, under the Levitical dispensation, entered into the most holy place on the great day of atonement, he was to take a censer full of burning coals from off the brazen altar, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil. He was then to put the incense upon the fire, that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat. (Lev. 6:12, 13) This was typical of the intercession of Jesus, now in the sanctuary as the "High Priest over the house of God." The incense of His mediatorial work fills and perfumes the court of heaven. But when the high priest came out of the sanctuary, did not his garments smell of the incense, which had filled the most holy place? Would he not come forth fragrant with the odour? And as the incense was only burnt before the mercy-seat, would not the fragrance which surrounded and came from him be a certain proof to the people that he had been within the veil? So it is with every blessing that comes out of the sanctuary, where Jesus now

sits at the right hand of God. It comes down as a good gift and a perfect gift from the Father of lights, and perfumed with the incense of the sanctuary. Coming from heaven, it breathes forth the air of heaven, and conveys a measure of heaven into the soul.

Thus it carries with it His own stamp; it bears with it His own signature. And it is this heavenly fragrance, which distinguishes all fancied blessings from real blessings; all presumptuous confidence from living faith; all false religion from true religion; all the delusions of enthusiasm and wild dreams of insanity, from the witness of the Holy Ghost in the soul. There is no fragrance, no savour, no power, no sweetness, no heavenly dew in any counterfeit that comes from Satan, from men, or from ourselves. They may imitate the shape and colour of the flower, but they cannot give it fragrance. But wherever help comes out of the sanctuary, out of the fulness of the church's covenant Head, out of the presence of God and the Lamb, out of the courts of heaven, directly and immediately into the soul, it comes laden with heavenly fragrance and divine odour. It therefore carries with it a reality, a sweetness and a savour, which nothing but a testimony from God Himself can communicate. Now here is a test to try your faith by. If you have no doubts about your state, and stand, as you believe, secure in Christ, whence arose that confidence? Did it spring from, and is it continued by, "help from the sanctuary?" And did this help come in the way of some word, some promise, some smile, some manifestation, some sweet discovery out of the courts of heaven into your conscience? And when it did so come, did it come down into your soul fragrant with holy odour? did it breathe a heavenly atmosphere? and, letting down a measure of Christ's presence into your heart, did it fill you with love to Him? You may well doubt whether you have received any testimony from God, unless it has wrought some of these effects in your soul. If it came down from heaven, it carried your soul up to heaven whence it came down. All true religion comes down from the Father of lights. Not one grain or atom of it did nature ever manufacture. Satan may counterfeit the operations of the blessed Spirit, and the imitation may be so near

the original as to perplex, if not deceive, the most discerning; but Satan cannot communicate what he does not possess, and what he cordially hates—the heavenly savour, sweetness, power and holiness, that accompany the Spirit's testimonies. These must be breathed into the soul from the lips of God Himself, or we can never have one grain or atom of them.

"Send thee help from the sanctuary." When the soul has to pass through the trying hour of temptation, it wants help from the sanctuary. And nothing but help from the sanctuary can ever stand it in any stead. All other help leaves the soul just where it found it. Now why does the Lord send help from the sanctuary, but because the soul to whom help is sent stands interested in the Father's love, the Saviour's blood, and the Spirit's teachings—interested in the eternal covenant transactions of the Three-One Jehovah. Help is sent him from the sanctuary, because his name has been from all eternity registered in the Lamb's book of life, graven upon the palms of His hands, borne on His shoulder, and worn on His heart. He was in the sanctuary when his covenant Head stood up on his behalf, and in the Lord's book all His members were written when as yet there was none of them. He was then **virtually** in the sanctuary before all time, and he will be **personally** in the sanctuary after all time. But he must be "made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." As he is predestinated to inhabit that sanctuary, he must have a nature suited for its holy delights. Now it is receiving help from the sanctuary that fits him to inhabit it.

Communications of life and grace out of it make him a new creature, and produce spirituality and heavenly mindedness. The breath of heaven in his soul draws his affections upward, weans him from earth, and makes him a pilgrim and a sojourner here below, "looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10.)

IV.—"And strengthen thee out of Zion." What is Zion? It is "the city of the living God" (Heb. 12:22) "the heavenly Jerusalem." Zion is the place, which God hath eternally blessed; to which His

eyes are from one end of the year to the other; and out of which He has promised every blessing that His loving heart can bestow. It is on this holy hill of Zion that He has set His King (Ps. 2:6); He hath chosen it, and said of it, "This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13, 14). It is out of Zion, then, thus blessed, that the Lord strengthens His saints. Through ignorance and self-righteousness, the newly quickened soul will often be looking for help to Mount Sinai; but that mountain is a mountain of curses. It was "the mount that burned with fire, and where was blackness, and darkness and tempest" (Heb. 12:18). No dew of God's favour, nor "small rain" of His tender mercy ever fell there; nor can **strength** ever come from that fiery mount. The law is weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3), and therefore cannot minister strength to those that are under it. It says, "Do, and live;" but it cannot give power to perform, nor communicate life. Every spiritual blessing and strength, then, comes out of Zion, for "there the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." All the treasures of grace and glory are in Mount Zion, and out of Zion do they therefore come into believing souls. God has blessed the church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3) and out of His fulness do all His members receive, and grace for grace. (John 1:16) One of these spiritual blessings is **strength**; and therefore the church says, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isai. 45:24). Yea, the Lord Himself is the strength of His people, as David says, "The Lord is the strength of my life" (Ps. 27:1) and "God is our refuge and strength" (Ps. 46:1).

But what does strength imply when spoken of as a communicated blessing? "The Lord strengthen thee out of Zion." Surely it implies weakness in the party strengthened. Just as mercy implies guilt, and can only suit the guilty, so strength implies weakness, and can only suit the weak. We therefore read of Jesus that He is "a strength **to the poor**, a strength **to the needy** in his distress." (Isa. 25:4.) "They that stumbled" (**that is, through tottering knees**) "are girt with strength" (1 Sam. 2:4) and again, "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isa. 40:29.)

Now we gather from this that there are testimonies from God in the soul, short of a full deliverance into the light and liberty of the glorious gospel. For if we look at the prayer offered up here, we read of **defence**, of **help**, of **strength**, and it would indeed be hard to say that there was no help nor strength communicated short of full deliverance. These things admit of degrees from their very nature, and are proportionate to the necessity of the case. There is a being "holpen with a little help" (Dan. 11:34) and strength according to the day (Deut. 33:25). Now, however men high in the letter of truth, but destitute of the feeling power, may jeer at everything short of a full deliverance and a constant assurance, the exercised children of God prize any testimony that comes from Him. Any coin that bears the stamp of Heaven's mint, any testimony that carries with it an evidence that it came from the courts of heaven, will be highly prized by the living soul. For what such want is **realities**. If the Lord is pleased to give him but a small coin, if it comes from the courts above, and bears the image and superscription of dying love, it makes him rich indeed; it is an evidence of eternal bliss, a sure testimony that his name is in the book of life.

But proud professors, who feel nothing of the difficulties of the way, who are never tried nor harassed with temptations, and know nothing of what it is to pour out their souls before God, despise the small coin, and would rather have a forged piece of money, provided it were bulky and large, than have a smaller piece stamped in heaven's own mint, which they could not make so great a display of.

I have sometimes said that if a thief come into a man's house, and see a sovereign and a halfpenny lying upon the mantel-piece, he will take the sovereign in preference to the halfpenny. And so you will find in religious matters that a hypocrite in Zion will rarely choose a little experience. He will steal the best he can lay his hands on, and the more deeply dyed in hypocrisy, the more will he usually boast of his depths and heights. You will never find professors in dead assurance prizing small testimonies. There is

no crying in their soul after a smile from the Lord, or a word from His gracious lips. Nor do such ever sigh after true humility, or tenderness of conscience, or brokenness of heart, or access unto God. Such things are too little and too low for them to prize. They cannot make a show with them before men, and that is all the religion they understand or care about; for they know nothing of being solemnly blessed in the depths of conscience.

Now I am well convinced that when the soul is passing through spiritual trouble, what it wants is something from God; but it never presumes to dictate to Him in what way the blessing shall come, nor how great it shall be. The living soul cannot go with daring presumption to the throne of grace to **claim** spiritual blessings; but its cry is that the Lord would bestow His favours in a way of mercy through the blood of the Mediator. And this it seeks and pleads for in a way of special manifestation, and that often in the smallest degree. Thus when pressed with guilt and shame, it seems brought often to this, that if God will give it but one word, it will for ever praise and bless His holy name; if He will bestow but one smile, it will ask no more; if He will but drop one sweet soft testimony, that will satisfy him of his adoption into the family of God.

"Ah! but," say our towering professors, "nothing but the full assurance of faith will ever do." Why, if the soul is in trouble and distress, and wants relief, strength, and help from God, it does not dare to prescribe to God how much to give. Does the beggar, standing at my door in rags, reject the copper coin? If he does, it shows he is an impostor, and only fit for the tread-wheel. No, if he is really what he professes to be, he will thankfully take a penny. So the child of God who knows what it is to be a beggar, spiritually to feel soul poverty, will not dare, with the presumptuous professor, to **claim** mercy and grace; but will come as a poor needy insolvent and bankrupt, thankful to receive any crumbs that may fall from God's table, or any drops from that river "which maketh glad the city of God." If the widow's mite was acceptable to God, as showing the widow's heart, shall not any token from God, however small (**though in reality no**

**gift from Him can be so called**), be acceptable to us as showing God's heart towards us?

The communication of strength is perhaps the least perceptible of God's gifts. We find it out often by the absence of it, as Samson "wist not that the Lord had departed from him," until the Philistines came upon him. Till the moment came for him to defend himself, he said, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." (Judges 16:19, 20.) And the Lord makes us sensibly, and often very painfully, feel that "without Him we can do nothing," before He leads us into that other and brighter mystery, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Let me run over the chief particulars that I have laid before you from the text, and see how truth and conscience can answer them throughout. Has the Lord then raised up in your hearts and mine some of the feelings that I have been attempting this morning to describe? And first, with respect to the day of trouble spoken of in the text, has this day passed upon you? I am not asking **when** it came, nor **how** it came. I am not going to inquire whether it came through some sermon heard, or passage of Scripture applied with power, or in a less marked manner. Such circumstances vary in nearly every case, and do not affect the reality and genuineness of the work. The most important point is, Has it come at all? Have you ever passed under God's rod? "Yes," say you, "I have known a day of trouble. I have passed through a season of spiritual distress."

Let us go now a step further. Let us have things as plain as we can make them. What were your feelings under this day of trouble? Had you any earnest groans and sighs for deliverance? Was there poured out upon you a Spirit of grace and of supplications, whereby you were enabled to pour out your hearts unto God? It was so with Hannah (1 Sam. 1:15), with David (Ps. 18:6), with Hezekiah (Isa. 38:2, 3), with Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55), and even with the Lord Himself in the days of His flesh (Heb. 5:7). And here lies the great difference between the elect in

trouble and the reprobate in trouble, that the former seek the Lord, but the latter do not; as Elihu speaks (Job 36:13), "The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; **they cry not when He bindeth them.**" Was this the experience of your soul in the day of trouble?

Again, when in the day of trouble, what did you petition the Lord for? Could anything satisfy you short of a testimony of His mercy? The conscience, when there is divine life in the soul, cannot be quieted with the mere act of prayer? It has no real peace until it is purged by the blood of sprinkling; and if the burden go off without it, it will return again and again until atoning blood speaks pardon. And we do well to remember that this help comes from the sanctuary, and this strength out of Zion. Many people's religion seems to be of this kind. They have passed through convictions, and from those convictions have received some deliverance, not, however, out of Zion, but out of Sinai. A few resolutions to mend their lives—if churchmen an attendance at the Sacrament, if Dissenters a getting themselves baptized and joining the church—some such reformation heals all the wounds of conscience. But this is obtaining a deliverance from Sinai, not from Zion. Nay, a person may have gospel language in his lips, and yet cleave to the law of works in his heart. He may profess to believe all the doctrines of grace, and never have felt the power of any one of them, may be sound in the letter of gospel truth, and never have been divorced from the first husband. Legality and self-righteousness are not confined to Arminians and Pharisees. They often come abroad in gospel attire, and reign and rule unsuspected where most loudly disclaimed.

To some here it may be now a day of trouble—I mean spiritual trouble; and as you are passing through it, many sighs and cries are going up out of your heart. "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." And may we not turn the prayer into a promise, and say to every mourner here present, "He will surely send thee help from the sanctuary, and will strengthen thee out of Zion."

## Heavenly Wisdom

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie St., London, on Thursday Evening, August 13, 1846

"But the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full, of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." James 3:17

The drift of the General Epistle of James has, I think, been much misunderstood. Isolated passages have been laid hold of by persons of a legal bias to prop up that God-dishonouring doctrine—*salvation by works*; whilst others who love and contend for free grace, have been so puzzled by the very same passages that legalists have laid hold of, that they have been unable to reconcile them to the express testimony of the Holy Ghost by the pen of Paul to the doctrine of *justification by faith*. We have a signal instance of this in Luther, who, at an early period of his life, was so stumbled by certain passages in this epistle that he actually cast it out of the canon of Scripture; in other words, denied its divine inspiration.

I think, however, it is very evident that the drift of James is not for a moment to set up, 'justification by works,' in opposition to that cardinal, fundamental point, justification by faith through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. But, as there were many base characters in his day (as is evident from the Second Epistle of Peter and that of Jude) who "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness," and "continued in sin that grace might abound," James writes this epistle to warn them against such soul-deceiving errors; and to shew that the faith whereby the soul is justified is of that living nature whence good works must necessarily flow. He therefore speaks of justification by works (2:24), not as a sinner's righteousness before God, nor as contradictory to, or destructive of, the doctrine of justification by faith, but as a proof and evidence of faith being genuine. Thus

the Lord represents the judgment of the great day as decided by works (Matt. 25:31-46), not because the blessed are saved by their works, for "the kingdom was prepared for them from the foundation of the world," but because their works were proofs and evidences that their faith and love were genuine.

That this is the meaning of James is, to my mind evident from two instances which he brings forward of the works, the good works, whereby two Old Testament believers were, according to him, justified, namely Abraham and Rahab. The very works which he brings forward as justifying the performers of them would be separated from that faith which produced them, in one case treason, and in the other murder. For does not James bring forth the case of Rahab the harlot who received the spies? "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (Jas. 2:25.) Isolate that case from the faith whence it sprang, was not Rahab guilty of treachery and treason against her country? And look also at Abraham's case, which he quotes. (2:21.) "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Isolate Abraham's offering up of his son from the faith which produced it—what would it be but the blackest murder, the cold-blooded slaughter of an only son by the hand of his own parent? James, therefore, in adducing these instances, brings them forward as fruits of living faith. For take these works in any other light than the fruits of living faith, and they are stamped as the blackest crimes. But springing out of faith their evil is taken away. Grace sanctifies them; and they are manifestations and fruits of the operation of faith in the soul. As he himself says, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God." (Jas. 2:22, 23.) He here brings forward the very same passage which Paul does to prove "justification by faith." (Rom. 4:3.)

But, apart from these controverted passages, there are two

places especially in James's Epistle, which cut down the unscriptural doctrine of 'salvation by works.' One is, the passage wherein he declares, that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (1:17.) Now, if it be true, that there is no good and no perfect gift but what cometh down from the Father of lights, what room is there for the works of the flesh? All creature merit is cut down effectually by such a solemn declaration of inspired truth. And the other passage, whereby all works are effectually swept away as regards justification, is the one before us, "The wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

James is here contrasting the wisdom which cometh from God with the wisdom which cometh from man. What is the decisive stamp which this great Apostle puts upon all human wisdom? He writes upon it three epithets as its distinctive marks; and thus condemns it to the lowest depth of abasement. Speaking of that vain-jangling profession which arises from an unhumbled heart and an unbridled tongue, he says, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." (James 3:14, 15.) *First*, then, this wisdom which springs from the creature and the flesh has its origin in the earth; and above that earth whence it has its source it can never rise. It must always, therefore, being earth-born, grovel on the ground; out of the earth it grows, and it can never rise above the mists and fogs which cover its native soil. *Secondly*, it is "*sensual*," or "*natural*," as we read in the margin. Thus, it is a wisdom adapted to our fallen nature; a wisdom which addresses itself entirely to our senses. It knows nothing of God, nothing of heavenly things, nothing of eternal realities, nothing of supernatural and revealed truth; but flows out of and is adapted to reason and sense, knowing only such objects as eye, ear, touch, taste, and smell are cognizant of, and conversant with. It is a wisdom, therefore, which begins in self, and ends in self, and never rises beyond the

fallen nature of ruined man. And *thirdly*, comes that word which debases and degrades all human wisdom, in the matter of salvation, to the lowest hell. By one word he puts upon it a fatal stamp, as though he would entirely reprobate it—"*devilish*." It seems as though he would say, 'Man, with all his boasted wisdom, is even exceeded by devils in that matter. The fallen spirits, those enemies of God and his people, who are waging eternal war against God and his dear Son, are the parents of that wisdom which is earthly and sensual; and thus are stamped upon it the very features of hell.' But bear in mind, that these epithets are applicable to human wisdom only so far as it interferes with divine matters. In its own province, human wisdom is useful and necessary. It is when it intrudes itself into divine things, and makes a bold entry into the sanctuary, bringing down sacred and heavenly realities to its own level, that it is to be condemned. James saw the fruits which it produces when carried into divine things; he therefore judged of it by these fruits, and condemned it accordingly. "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conservation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." (James 3:13-16.) It is because he saw that the carrying of natural wisdom into divine things produced such miserable fruits that he condemned it. He perceived that it produced bitter envying, strife, vain glory, lying against the truth, confusion, and every evil work; and therefore condemned its origin as *earthly*, its nature as *sensual*, and its end as *devilish*.

But having thus set aside all claims of human wisdom in matters relating to the kingdom of God, James proceeds in a simple and blessed way to unfold the character of that divine and supernatural wisdom, which has not its origin like human wisdom in the earth, but comes from above, and leads to that heaven whence it springs.

With God's blessing, then, this evening, I shall endeavour to show

the *origin, nature, and effects* of this divine and supernatural wisdom; and, in so doing, I shall take up one by one the epithets by which James has here described it. May the Lord enable those of us who desire to fear his Name to gather up some sweet testimony from himself, that he has made us the happy partakers of this heavenly wisdom.

I.—"*The wisdom which is from above.*" Its origin is here distinctly stated. It is no denizen of earth; its abode is in heaven; and it comes down as a spiritual visitant from on high. Man, then, in a state of nature, has not a grain of heavenly wisdom. He knows experimentally nothing of the way of salvation, nothing of his own ruin and misery, nothing of the grace of God, nothing of the Person and operations of the Lord the Comforter; nothing of his leadings, guidings, teachings, and anointings. He may indeed possess a large amount of earthly wisdom; and if a professor of religion, he may carry it up to the greatest height in the letter of truth; he may be wise in the Scriptures, wise in the plan of salvation, wise in comparing text with text, Scripture with Scripture, and passage with passage; but unless a measure of divine wisdom has dropped into his heart from the mouth of God, he has at present nothing but that wisdom which is "earthly, sensual, and devilish." But the wisdom which makes the soul wise unto salvation is "from above." It flows from the fulness of Jesus; for "of God he is made unto us *wisdom.*" It comes immediately from the mouth of God into the soul. "The Lord giveth wisdom. Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. 2:6.) It springs from the special teachings of God the Spirit; "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." (Isa. 54:13.) It proceeds from the sacred and secret operations of the holy Comforter in the hearts of God's elect. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (1 John 2:20.) "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come."

This, then, is its *origin*. It comes from heaven; it is the free gift of God to elect souls, and it is sent to make them wise unto

salvation, to deliver them from the wrath to come, to fit them for and take them to heaven. Of the *nature* of this wisdom James proceeds to give us a description.

1. First he says of it, that it is "*pure.*" It is thus opposed to earthly wisdom, which is "sensual and devilish." Heavenly wisdom we have seen to be pure in its origin. It comes down from the all-pure Jehovah; it descends from the eternal mansions of unsullied holiness. This John saw in vision. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1.) *There* was its source; *thence* it took its rise. "The throne of God and of the Lamb" was the fountain-head whence this "pure river of water of life" flowed. Ezekiel too saw this same heavenly river in vision. "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward; for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." (Ezek. 47:1.) This gives us an additional view of the nature of this divine stream, that whereas John saw it proceeding out of "the throne of God and of the Lamb," Ezekiel viewed it talking its course by the altar, and therefore connected with, and flowing out of the atoning sacrifice of Immanuel.

But this wisdom is not only pure in its origin, it is also pure in its nature. It is as pure as the throne of God out of which it flows; it is as spotless as his eternal holiness, as unsullied as his immaculate Godhead. It cannot be otherwise. A pure Jehovah can communicate nothing but what is as pure as himself. And thus this heavenly wisdom that springs out of a covenant Jehovah flows purely into the soul, because it proceeds out of the pure and holy fountain of Immanuel's fulness.

And as it is pure in its *origin*, and pure in its *nature*, so is it also pure in its *effects*. It comes accompanied by atoning blood, and therefore purifies the conscience; as we read, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the

unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 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?" (Heb. 9:13, 14.) This is "having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:22.) It comes with—in fact, it is—the pouring out of the blessed Spirit upon the soul; therefore it purifies the heart and affections, as the Holy Ghost declares by the mouth of Peter, "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9.) It brings with it *health*, for it is "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones" (Prov. 3:8); it gives *strength*, for "the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9); it communicates *grace*, for it is "an ornament of grace to the head" (Prov. 1:9); and crowns all with *glory*, "for the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psa. 84:11.)

Being thus pure in its *origin*, pure in its *nature*, and pure in its *effects*, it is not sullied by the corruptions of the heart into which it comes, though it discovers and brings them to light. This wisdom is "the light of life" (John 8:12); and therefore discovers all upon which it shines. Thus it makes sin known and felt; as the Apostle speaks, "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Eph. 5:13.) And this is the reason why the Lord's people have such a sight and sense of their inward corruptions, are so plagued with "the sin that dwelleth in them," and pour forth so many sighs and cries on account of their internal wickedness. Divine teaching makes them acquainted with themselves; and the pure wisdom which is from above manifests the filth and impurity of their fallen nature. And what is true of divine wisdom as a whole is true also of all its branches. Thus faith discovers unbelief; light, darkness; life, deadness; liberty, bondage; purity, holiness; and unsullied brightness discovers filth, carnality, and wickedness. And as this heavenly wisdom in the soul is not an inert, inactive, barren principle, but the life of God in active, fruitful operation, it not only discovers, but resists, struggles

against, condemns, and subdues, as the Lord from time to time enables, the corruptions that are by it manifested and groaned under.

II.—The second mark that the blessed Spirit, by the pen of James, has stamped upon this heavenly wisdom is, that it is "*peaceable*." Its first mark is, "*purity*;" its second, *peace*. But in what way is it *peaceable*? It is so in its *origin*. It dates its birth from eternal transactions. Do we not read, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both?" (Zech. 6:13.) From this "counsel" (or covenant) of peace heavenly wisdom, as a gift to the church, took its rise. But what originated in the counsels of eternity was accomplished and ratified in time by the incarnation of the Son of God: for Jesus "made peace by the blood of his cross." (Col. 1:20.) He reconciled the elect unto God: "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 unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight." (Col. 1:21, 22.) He brought them near unto his Father by making an atonement for their sins, and has thus cast all their iniquities into the depth of the sea. And is he not the peace-maker? (Eph. 2:15); the peace-speaker? (Eph. 2:17); the peace-giver? (John 14:27.) "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land." (Micah 5:5.) "He," says the Apostle, "is our peace." (Eph. 2:14.) Therefore, the wisdom which is from above is "peaceable," because it flows out of the "counsel of peace" entered into between the Eternal Three, and because it was brought to light and ratified in the fulness of time by the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, blood and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore sent down from on high as a sweet and sure message of peace to the soul; and wherever it comes, it proclaims peace to the guilty conscience, for it assures the soul into which it divinely flows that peace has been made through the blood of the Mediator.

But this heavenly wisdom is not only "peaceable" in its *origin*, and *nature*, it is "peaceable" also in its *effects*. It produces a sense of peace by enabling the soul to believe that Jesus has made peace.

When the blessed Spirit is pleased to bring a measure of this heavenly wisdom into the heart, peace with God through Jesus Christ is felt and experienced; as the Apostle says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.) As the effect of peace thus made and proclaimed, it also produces *quietness*; as we read, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isa. 32:17.) It is, therefore, accompanied with that spiritual mindedness which is "life and peace." Thus it pours oil upon the troubled waves and heaving billows of a sinner's breast; it assuages the pangs of guilt; it disarms the rebellion of the carnal mind against God; it allays the peevishness and fretfulness of man's stubborn will against the sovereign dispensations of the Most High, and hushes every faculty of the soul into a sacred and solemn calm. What then so sweet, or what so desirable, as to be blessed with a measure of this peace with God; and to enjoy the dewy operations and influences of the Holy Spirit, producing a holy, heavenly calm in the troubled breast!

But this heavenly wisdom is "peaceable" also in its *fruits*. What is most opposite to God? Is it not enmity? "For God is love." And is not "the carnal mind enmity against God?" Then that which is most opposed to the character of God must be enmity, hatred, wrath, malice, strife, envy. The very nature of devils—that which makes hell to be hell—which inflames their tortured spirits as well as those billows of divine wrath that are perpetually rolling over them in waves of fire and brimstone—the internal hell, that devils and damned spirits carry within their own breasts, is hatred and enmity against God and his ways. And have we not felt, to our shame, a measure, some perhaps a large measure, of this hell within, this enmity, this rebellion, this peevishness, this fretfulness, this quarrelling with God, his works, his word, and his ways? And have not our souls sometimes also enjoyed a measure of the Spirit's divine operations, communications, dew, and power? And was not the effect this? to command a holy calm, to produce peace with God and peace with his people? For wherever the holy Dove broods over the soul, wherever he waves his

blessed pinions over a sinner's heart, wherever he speaks through the blood of the cross, he also creates peace with the people of God. When the shepherds were keeping their flocks by night, and an angelic chorus hovered over their heads, this was the burden of their song, "Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*" O how different is this peace on earth thus proclaimed by the angelic host at the time of the Lord's nativity, from a state of war, where wrath, enmity, jealousy, pride, and rebellion are all mustering their hostile bands to desolate and destroy! Peace is heaven; wrath, enmity, and rebellion are hell. Peace is from God; war is from Satan. Peace flows like a river from the blissful abodes of happiness and glory; war is a troubled sea, whose waves cast up mire and dirt.

III.—"*Gentle.*" How is this wisdom "gentle?" By making that heart "gentle" into which it comes. And what is "gentle" opposed to? Self-will, passion, fretfulness, peevishness, and the workings of a rebellious heart. "Gentle" is opposed to everything headstrong, perverse, froward, stubborn, obstinate. If we look at the *origin* and *Author* of this heavenly wisdom, it must needs be "gentle." The heavenly Dove can only breathe his own nature, his own spirit, which is gentleness, quietness, meekness, calmness. O how this gentleness and meekness shone forth in the character of the blessed Lord! "Learn of me," he said, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matt. 11:29.) It was said of him, that "he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." (Isa. 42:2.) "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (53:7.) But how opposed is this "meekness of wisdom," this "meek and quiet spirit," this "gentleness of Christ" to the very nature of man! This is man's nature—to have some point in view, some darling lust, some pitiful self-interest, some object of pride or ambition; and in the hot and eager pursuit of this, to press hurriedly forward, to trample down every obstacle, and to carry all before him. Self is his motive, his starting place, and his goal. Has he then some desired object in view? Are his appetites inflamed towards it? Does his hand long to grasp it? But is there a crowd of obstacles between him and it? Trample them under foot; push them on the

right hand and on the left; have it he must, have it he will. Does any man oppose? Down with him into the dust. Does any man thwart? Woe to him who crosses his path. Is not this man's disposition by nature? And is not this the very wisdom of hell? that wisdom which James declares to be "earthly, sensual, devilish?" Now look in the opposite direction, at the wisdom in the heart made wise unto salvation; its very essence, its very nature is to be "gentle;" not *unfaithful*, that is quite another thing. Men often mistake the matter both ways. Violence, wrath, anger, are called faithfulness; cowardness in divine matters, a truckling, yielding, timid spirit, sacrificing truth, and uprightness at the shrine of expediency and self-interest, a cowering before money and power—this is loudly proclaimed by those who reap the benefits of such courtly adulation to be the very spirit of the gospel and the very gentleness of Christ himself. But no two errors can be greater. The highest gentleness may be consistent with the deepest faithfulness; and the greatest enmity and obstinacy may be consistent with the greatest cowardice.

IV.—"*Ready to be entreated.*" How different is this *fourth* mark of the wisdom which cometh from above from our fallen nature! How hard usually is man to be entreated! Is a favour wanted? What bowings and cringings does he require before he grants it! What flattery before, what supple gratitude after! If he be offended, how hard to be overcome! With what slowness, what difficulty, what unwillingness does he relax his angry brow! how slow to overcome his angry temper! how backward to forgive the unhappy offender against his dignity, his pride, or his interest! But how different is grace in its fruits and effects upon the soul! When divine wisdom drops into the heart, when some measure of this pure fountain of heavenly grace distils into the soul, it makes a man "easy to be entreated." He must give way. There is that brokenness, that contrition, that sense of unworthiness, that tenderness communicated by the operations of God the Spirit upon the soul that he becomes "easy to be entreated." He must give way when his heart is softened, broken, and melted by the blessed Spirit shedding abroad love in his soul.

But why is the heart wrought upon by divine teaching "easy to be entreated?" Is it not because it has ever to carry about with it the deepest sense of its unworthiness? Is it not because it has tasted in some measure that the Lord is gracious? because it has felt the goodness and mercy of God, and been melted down at his feet by his superabounding grace? This makes a man "easy to be entreated." Has the Lord had mercy upon him, and shall he not be merciful to another? Has the Lord pardoned his sins, and shall he not pardon the transgressions of a brother? Has the Lord looked upon him with favour and melted his heart, and shall he stand up in obduracy, wrath, and obstinacy against one who bears Christ's name and wears Christ's image?

V.—"*Full of mercy.*" This is the fifth mark of that wisdom which is from above. Why "full of mercy?" Because this wisdom flows out of the heart of eternal mercy. What a sweet sound is *mercy* to a fallen sinner, to all who know and feel themselves to be guilty criminals, deserving nothing but eternal displeasure! Having tasted of the sweetness of mercy, does not this make a man merciful? Mercy is always accompanied with a sense of our guilt and shame, and a deep sense of our own unworthiness. Mercy brings us low in the dust. Mercy makes us feel ourselves to be "the chief of sinners," and "less than the least of all saints." Mercy breaks the hard heart, softens the obdurate heart, dissolves the stony heart. The man, therefore, who knows anything of his own vileness, has no stone to throw at others. He who feels his own corruption, and knows how sin works in his fallen nature, nay, at times bursts forth like the leprosy in Miriam's forehead, cannot cast off trembling sinners. No; mercy will never lead a man to stand up in pride and self-righteousness. Mercy never leads a man, because perhaps he has lived a consistent life, to cut and hack at God's sin-burdened and temptation-harassed people. Mercy pardoning aggravated crimes—mercy superabounding over the vilest transgressions—mercy flowing undeservedly into a sinner's guilty conscience, makes him pitiful and tenderhearted, gives him to feel for the tempted and tried, constrains him to take the lowest place amongst God's children, and causes him to feel that he of all men has least to say against others. How

different are these fruits and effects of heavenly wisdom and divine teaching from all that is produced by natural religion under whatever shape, whether the highest Calvinism or the lowest Arminianism! What can natural religion do for a man? Does it find his heart hard? It renders it harder. Does it find him self-righteous? It establishes him as a more confirmed Pharisee. Does it find him resting on his own strength? It leads him to lean on it more confidently. Does it find him far from God? It sets him infinitely farther. But what does grace for a man? Grace makes a man feel that of sinners he is chief; grace humbles a man, in soul feeling, into the very dust; grace manifests to him the corruptions of his heart; and grace in mercy pities, pardons, blots them out, forgives, and subdues them. And thus, a man having known something of mercy, and being enriched and ennobled with the wisdom which is from above, is "full of mercy." Nothing delights him more than hearing of God's mercy to poor fallen wretches. Nothing in the character of God suits him better than that he is "rich in mercy, and plenteous to forgive." And if he meet with a poor guilty child of Adam, mourning, sighing, and crying on account of sin working in him, his heart overflows with tender affection; he would, if God enabled him, take him by the hand, and lead him to the cross of Jesus, and tell him, that because he hath found mercy, what hope there is for him. How this shines forth in that blessed man of God, Hart! He had gone to great lengths of transgression; he had backslidden very far from God; yea, he had sinned that grace might abound. But when the Lord revealed himself unto him; when mercy reached his heart; when love and blood met in his conscience, what a sweet impression did they leave upon his soul, and how he has poured forth the very feelings of his heart in those hymns which have been so blessed to God's people! How a sense of his sins and of God's mercy shines through every line; and how he always abhorred himself! As one of his biographers says, "He dwelt always in the outer porch, because he ever bore his shame." Yet how tenderly and suitably he speaks to God's family! Such will ever be the effect of God's mercy in a man's soul. It will make him merciful to others, and will break to pieces that proud, legal, pharisaic spirit which ever says, "Stand by thyself; I am holier than thou!"

VI.—"*Full of good fruits.*" This is the *sixth* mark which the Holy Spirit by the pen of James has stamped upon heavenly wisdom. As a tree is known by its fruits, so is the wisdom which is from above distinguished by its rich and abundant crop. Among these good fruits, there is the fruit of *faith* whereby Christ is embraced in all his glorious fulness; the fruit of *hope*, the anchor cast within the veil, both sure and stedfast: the fruit of *love*, whereby the Lord is loved with pure affection, God's truth enshrined in the heart, and the Lord's people in the bosom; the fruits of *uprightness, integrity, and godly fear*. And after all, this is the grand test that we are to know men by. "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" If a man has grace in his heart, there will be corresponding fruits springing out of that grace. If then we see not these fruits springing out of it, we know that neither the root, the sap, nor the stem can be good.

VII.—"*Without partiality.*" This is James' *seventh* mark of heavenly wisdom, "*without partiality.*" This is opposed to earthly wisdom, which is always partial, which loves the rich, the well-dressed, the wise, the learned, the eminent, the noble, the polished members of society. The very character of earthly wisdom is, to admire and esteem one above the other, to lavish its favours and affections on those who are adorned with all that attracts the flesh; but to despise the Lord's broken-hearted family, and look down with contempt on God's poor children in their holes and corners. But "the wisdom that is from above," being "pure," and "peaceable," and "full of mercy," looks out for the objects of God's love, and cleaves to God's sin-burdened family. It is, therefore, "without partiality." It admires grace in rags. It loves the image of Christ, however tattered and soiled the garments be that clothe the outward man. It points its eyes, erects its ears, fixes the heart upon that which wears the image of Christ. A broken heart, a contrite spirit, however poor, however emaciated, however despised by man, however trampled upon by the great ones of the earth its possessor may outwardly be, to it the heart's affection flows as towards the

image of Christ, wherever that image is seen. As two drops of water flowing down a pane of glass draw nearer and nearer, till at last they meet and coalesce in one; so where two hearts have been touched of God and made partakers of heavenly wisdom, they mutually attract each other till they coalesce and meet in an intimate blending of spirit and union of heart. This wisdom, then, as being "without partiality," flows towards Christ's image wherever it is distinctly seen. It does not admire respectable people in the church with little or no grace in their hearts; it loves and cleaves to those who are most deeply taught; to those who are most highly favoured; to those who bear most of the image of Christ. It does not bow down to the golden calf; it does not idolize fashion; it does not look at goodly apparel. It passes through all these external things; it looks through the creature as to its outward appearance, and it fixes its penetrating eye upon the image of Christ in a broken and contrite spirit. Thus, it is, "without partiality." But the wisdom which is from beneath, and is "earthly, sensual, and devilish," is partial in all its thoughts and in all its affections. It can bow down to gold and silver; it can lick the dust before respectability; whilst it can despise and trample upon the poor and needy in this world's goods, though they have the riches of Christ in their heart.

VIII.—The last mark by which the pen of divine inspiration has described this heavenly wisdom is, that it is "*without hypocrisy.*" This feature results from its divine origin. It is from God. Sincerity and truth must be therefore its marked characteristics. Can we think for a moment, that the blessed God can drop into the heart wisdom, and that wisdom be stained with hypocrisy? No; it is impossible. And if both from its *origin*, and in its *nature* it is and ever must be "without hypocrisy," wherever it comes, into whatever heart it flows, it makes it honest and sincere. He who "in the hidden part makes us to know wisdom," "desires also truth in the inward parts." (Psa. 51:6.) And what God desires he creates. To be sincere, is the very groundwork of religion. If a man is not honest before God, his house is built upon the sand; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, great will be the fall of it. The wisdom then which is from

above being so pure in its *origin*, and so pure in its *nature*, must be necessarily pure in its *effects*. No one therefore, under its divine influence, can indulge in anything like acknowledged, allowed hypocrisy. I say, 'acknowledged, allowed hypocrisy;' for possessed as we are of "a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," who is, who can be, without the inward principle of hypocrisy? And will not this, more or less, manifest itself? O how much inward hypocrisy there is amongst the people of God! and how this hypocrisy is continually manifesting itself! How it peeps out in the looks, shows itself in the tongue, and manifests itself in action! But if this be the case, will you not say, 'What, are the people of God hypocrites?' O, no; there is a wide difference between feeling hypocrisy and acting the hypocrite. It is one thing to have the *inward workings*—it is quite another to carry it out in *acts* of allowed hypocrisy. It is the same thing as with unbelief and other heart sins. I may feel the continual workings of unbelief, yet not be an unbeliever. I may be tempted to adultery, and yet not be an adulterer. Thus we shall ever have in this life hypocrisy dwelling in us, for it is part of our fallen nature. But if we are partakers of that "wisdom which cometh down from above," *that* is "without hypocrisy." There is no hypocrisy in *that*, whatever there is in our fallen nature. Our carnal mind, our corrupt nature, is indeed a mass of hypocrisy. It breathes and savours of it unceasingly. But though the children of God feel so much of the actings and workings of hypocrisy, still they are not hypocrites. They have another principle in their hearts—a principle of simplicity and godly sincerity, that struggles against all hypocrisy and insincerity, and makes them cry to a heart-searching God to try them, and prove them, and see the ground of their heart. And thus when on the one hand, a principle of hateful hypocrisy will be ever manifesting itself, they have on the other, in their heart another principle which, testifies against it, and makes them say, "What I do, I allow not." I have sometimes, I think, felt as much hypocrisy working in my bosom as any man breathing; but I must still say with Paul, "I allow it not." It will work; it will manifest itself; it will put on such shapes and wear such forms; it will continually obtrude its hateful head. But I hate it, and I hate myself for it. I know that the "wisdom

which is from above" is "without hypocrisy." Whatever hypocrisy dwells in my fallen nature, and nothing but hypocrisy dwells there, yet so far as I possess any measure of "the wisdom which is from above," that wisdom is "without hypocrisy," though *I* am not, and in this time state shall never be.

Now see, friends, whether you can trace out anything of this heavenly wisdom in your hearts. The Lord the Spirit, by the pen of James, has stamped upon it certain marks. Depend upon it, if you and I have no more wisdom than we brought into this world with us, or than we have learnt at school or college, it will perish with us, and leave our souls under eternal wrath. But if, on the other hand, we have been made partakers of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation; if some pure drops out of that heavenly fountain have fallen into our hearts, this character will be stamped upon it,—*"pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy."* Can you find these marks in you? Is it, first, *"pure?"* If so, it will purify your heart; and whilst under its gracious influences, there will be holy affections, tender sensations, spirituality of mind, and warm, fervent desires and feelings toward Jesus as the altogether lovely. When it is suspended; when its holy sanctifying influences cease to be felt, the impurity of our fallen nature will manifest itself in opposition to it. But, whilst it lasts, whilst the Spirit is distilling his holy dew, whilst the heavenly Dove is brooding with his sanctifying operations upon the heart, then pure affections, pure desires, and pure breathings reign and rule in the soul.

It is also *"peaceable;"* a sweet peace is felt; peace with God, and peace with men.

It is also *"gentle."* It does not strive, nor cry, nor lift up its voice in the street. Being conformed to the image of its divine Author, it cannot enter into riots and brawls; it retires into some calm, secluded, quiet corner, and longs for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest, to hasten its escape from the windy storm and tempest. It will not, therefore, it cannot display unseemly

turbulence and rude boisterous violence at church meetings or other meetings. It rather retires into the quietness of the sanctuary; it bows its head, and lets the storm pass over it. It cannot wrangle and jangle, rage and riot, storm and bluster with rude brawlers. The peaceable Dove that hovers over broken hearts, is frightened at these broils, expands his wings and takes flight far away from all such scenes of strife and contention.

Nor will the happy possessor of heavenly wisdom lack the fourth mark—*"easy to be entreated."* He cannot stand up in stubborn obduracy against a tearful eye, a broken heart, a contrite spirit; he must needs give way to an appeal to his tender feelings; and will not hold out in sullen obduracy, or domineering haughtiness when under the influence of this wisdom from above.

And he will also from time to time manifest himself full of mercy, and of good fruits; without allowed partiality, and without indulged hypocrisy.

I do not ask if you are always under the influence of these feelings. I should be one of the worst of hypocrites to say that I am always so. But I ask you, if you have any measure, at any time, of this wisdom which is from above. I do not ask you, whether you are always under the sanctifying operations of God the Comforter: I ask you whether you have ever felt them? whether you love to feel those blessed communications of light and life to your soul? and whether you know the difference between them and the opposite workings of the flesh which continually manifest themselves to your soul's grief and shame? And is not this wisdom, and this conduct becoming the gospel? becoming that great name by which you are called? becoming members of gospel churches, who have taken up Jesus' name upon their lips, and profess to follow him in that strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life? Will any broken heart and contrite spirit rebel against these truths? Will not this ever be the language of every tender conscience? of every soul that desires to fear God? I know these are solemn truths; but I mourn and lament that I have so little of that wisdom which is from above; I

have reason to abhor myself that I have so much of this wisdom which is from beneath. But it is my soul's desire to be blessed with heavenly wisdom, and to have all its blessed and precious fruits brought forth in my heart, my lip, and my life. Remember this, it is from above, it is a free gift; it flows from free and sovereign grace. It was never manufactured upon earth, never made on the anvil and wrought in the smithy by the arms of human strength and skill. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." It springs out of Jesus' fulness, and is freely given to the poor, needy, humble, and contrite, that wait at mercy's door-posts, asking the Lord to look down upon them and bless them.

Blessed are we, if we can trace any measure of this heavenly wisdom in our hearts; for if it come down *from* heaven, it will take *to* heaven. If it has visited our souls, it has been the foretaste and earnest of immortal bliss. The heavenly calm, the divine sensations which it produces, are the sure pledges of that "rest which remaineth for the people of God," where

"Not a wave of trouble rolls,  
Across their peaceful breast."

## **THE HIDDEN MANNA, THE WHITE STONE AND THE NEW NAME**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, June 21, 1868

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."  
Revelation 2:17

I do not know a more solemn or weighty part of the Word of God than the messages, which our gracious Lord sent by the hand of John to the seven churches in Asia, which we find contained in chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation. As introductory to these messages, and to give them greater weight and power, as well as to furnish a general introduction to the whole of the book, our adorable Lord appeared to John in a very conspicuous and glorious revelation, of which we have the record in the **Re 1** first chapter. He tells us there that he "was in the isle of Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Being, thus, the Lord's prisoner, he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind him a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

I need not, however, enter at any length into a description or explanation of the glorious vision with which John was thus specially favoured, and shall, therefore, only draw your attention to the following points in it.

1. If you carefully examine the distinctive features of this revelation, you will not see in it His **priestly** character. He did not appear to John as the High Priest over the house of God; as the Mediator at the right hand of the Father; as the Intercessor able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. But He appeared as King in Zion in all the dignity of regal majesty. You

will easily see this from casting your eye upon the description, which John gives of this glorious Person. Thus, he says that "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." This feature symbolises His eternity; for you will recollect that "the Ancient of Days," who from the context is evidently the Father, is represented in **Da 7:9** with "the hair of His head like the pure wool." But why should this symbolise eternal duration? It is because grey hair represents age in man; and thus in type and figure His hairs being white like wool, as white as snow, represent duration, that is, eternal duration in the Son of God. He is called, in Isaiah **Isa 9:6** "the everlasting Father," or as Bishop Lowth renders it, "the Father of the everlasting age;" and His "goings forth" are declared by the prophet Micah to have been "from of old, from everlasting." Now, it is to Him in His regal character that this description applies. The prophet Isaiah, therefore, says in connection with His being "the everlasting Father," that He is "the Prince of Peace;" and that "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end;" and the prophet Micah, in the passage which I have quoted, declares that He is "ruler in Israel."

2. Another feature observable in this description is, that "**His eyes were as a flame of fire,**" not tender, gracious and sympathising, as would have been the eyes of the high priest; but the eyes of a King in His regal majesty, flashing forth rays and beams to illuminate and gladden those who believe, and to smite down, as with so many lightning shafts, those who live and die in their unbelief; searching all hearts and trying all reins, and like flames of fire penetrating into the depths of every human breast.

3. Another striking feature in this description is that "**His feet were like unto fine brass**"—not torn or bearing any marks upon them of the cruel nails whereby He was fastened to the cross, but bright, shining and glorious as become the feet of an enthroned King, able to dispense the riches of His grace, and yet swift to move forward on errands of vengeance.

4. Another noticeable feature was His **voice**, which was "**as the sound of many waters;**" so full was it, melodious, powerful and falling upon the ear like water rushing from a height. You have sat at times, it may be, near a waterfall, and you have heard the rush of the waters as they fell down the steep rock. What strength, and yet what harmonious melody, were blended together in the sound. What a calm stole over your mind, and how, as you breathed the air around you, so cool and fresh, a spirit of meditation came over you as your ears listened to the noise of the ever falling waters in their ceaseless melody! Thus, in it there were combined these three things: power, continuance and melody. And are not these three things characteristic of the voice of Christ as "the voice of the Lord upon many waters" spoken of by the Psalmist?

1. It is **powerful**; for "with the word of a king there is power;" and it is expressly said of it, "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

2. It is **continuous**, for this voice is ever speaking to the hearts of His people.

3. And we need not tell those who have heard it that it is most melodious, for every accent is full of sweetness; as the Bride said in her description of her Beloved, "His mouth is most sweet." **So 5:16**

4. Another characteristic feature of this glorious Person is that He "had in His **right hand seven stars.**" These He himself explains as being the angels, that is, the presiding ministers or pastors of the seven churches. They are called "stars" as shining in the Christian firmament with conspicuous lustre, as giving light to the churches, directing them to Christ, and pointing out the way of salvation, as stars were used for guides in ancient navigation, and also to rule the churches, as stars rule the night. As held also in Christ's hand, it shows how that they are wholly at His disposal, held up only by His mighty power, preserved from error

and apostasy only by His grace, and used as instruments to do His work and shine in His light.

5. Another conspicuous feature, which I may name, is **His sword.** "**And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.**" This signifies the Word which He speaks with a divine power, for it corresponds with the description given of the Word of God by the apostle, "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." **Heb 4:12** By this sword He searches the heart, as He says: "All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts" **Re 2:23** and by this sword he fights also against all evil doers, as He declares, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of My mouth." **Re 2:16** This sword carries with it death when it is lifted up against the impenitent and unbelieving: "And I will kill her children with death." **Re 2:23**

6. The last feature which I shall mention is the glory of His countenance. "**And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.**" This is a representation of His glory as the Sun of righteousness; and as such He appeared to the three favoured disciples when He was transfigured before them, for "His face did shine as the sun." **Mt 17:2**

Now this wonderful description of the glory of the Son of God, as seen by John, was to prepare him for the reception of the Revelation with which he was to be favoured for the benefit of the church in all time, and especially to give weight, authority and power to the messages sent by him to the seven churches.

But I need not dwell further upon these points. We have a part of one of these messages to consider this morning, and I hope that the Lord may enable me so to open it up, that I may bring out of it something that may be for your instruction, or edification, or

encouragement, or admonition and reproof, if need be, as He may enable me, in handling it rightly, to divide the Word of truth.

In these messages to the seven churches, there are certain features, which are common to all, and there are certain features, which are distinctive of each.

Of the features common to all the messages, there are chiefly three.

1. The first is, "**I know thy works.**" How accordant these words are with the description of His eyes as a flame of fire; and how they show us that every word and work, every thought and imagination of our hearts are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive Him. He knows all that we are and have been, and is perfectly acquainted with everything in us both in nature and grace. It is good when a feeling sense of this makes us watch our words and works, and to desire that they might be pleasing in His sight, and that what we do in His name might have His approbation in our hearts and consciences.

2. Another common feature, and one that generally winds up the message (**as, "I know thy works," introduces it**), is, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." These words extend the message beyond the church to which they were spoken, and address themselves to every one to whom the Word comes, and to whom an ear is given to hear and receive it. Thus each message sent to the churches becomes a message sent personally to us. If we have a spiritually circumcised ear, if we are willing to listen to the voice of the Lord, He speaks to us in every message as personally and as distinctly as He spoke to each individual church. It is indeed an unspeakable blessing to have this ear given to us that we may receive in humility, simplicity and godly sincerity what the Lord speaks in the Word of His grace. It is by His Word that He knocks at the door of our hearts; and what a blessing He has pronounced on the man who hears His voice and opens the door when he

hears the knock, like a fond and affectionate wife when she hears the knock of her husband at the door of his house: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." **Re 3:20**

3. The last common feature which I shall name, is the promise given **"to him that overcometh,"** varied in every message with a special promise attached to it.

But, as the consideration of this feature will form a main part of our subject this morning, I shall not now dwell upon it, but come at once to the words of our text; which I shall take up, simply, in the order in which it lies before me.

**I.—First, I shall call your attention to the solemn invitation, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."**

**II.—Secondly, endeavour to show the character pointed out, who is said in it to overcome, and in what way he that overcomes obtains the victory.**

**III.—Thirdly, I shall dwell upon those special promises which are given to him that overcometh, which are:**

1. **He shall eat of the hidden manna;**

2. There shall be given him **a white stone;**

3. And in the stone **a new name** written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

I.—I have already dropped a few remarks upon the invitation, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;" but I shall now endeavour to handle it at greater length, and to dwell more fully upon the mind and meaning of the Lord in it.

And first let me urge this point upon you, that in and by this invitation you are called upon to listen this morning to what the Lord may condescend to speak by me to your hearts and consciences. I know well that I cannot bring before you anything worth listening to except the Lord enable; but as coming up to the house of God to hear His Word, as sitting before me in this assembling of yourselves together for the worship of God, you are engaged by so coming, and by the profession so made are bound as a matter of conscience to listen to what you hear brought forward in the name of God; not to allow your mind to be diverted by any vain speculation or idle fancy that Satan may thrust in, nor waste precious moments upon matters which may be attended to at other seasons, but, with God's help, to avail yourself of that short space which we have in the week to meet together in the Lord's house to listen to that which, through His goodness and mercy, may be for the good of your soul.

You come here to be instructed in the truth of God; to have your sins shown to you in the light of His countenance, that you may repent of and forsake them; to have the way of salvation through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus set before you, and thus have faith raised up in your hearts to believe in His name; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." You are come to hear the work of God upon the soul traced out, and the living experience of God's saints described, that you may have some testimony that the work is begun and is being carried on in your own soul. And you are come also to learn how you may know the will of God and do it, by hearing the precepts of the gospel set before you, that you "may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Now will you throw away, so to speak, all these blessings and advantages for a few silly thoughts, vain speculations, or anxious cares, and will you not rather, if your heart be right with God, earnestly desire and pray that you may get some blessing this morning from the Word which you are come to hear?

## **I may divide hearers of the gospel into three classes.**

1. Those who hear the Word of life sounding in their ears, and that, it may be, continually, who yet feel no concern whatever in what they hear; into whose outward ear the Word may penetrate, and who may perhaps even learn something of its meaning in their natural judgment, and yet their ear is not circumcised, or conscience touched, or heart wrought upon and engaged to listen to the Word as being the Word of life. These will always form a very numerous part in every religious assembly. In many congregations there are no other hearers, for they are what the Word of God calls "the congregation of the dead." But even in our assemblies under the Word of truth, where we hope there are many who truly fear God, there will always be a large proportion of these unconcerned hearers who are brought under the sound of the Word from various causes but at present have no manifested interest in it.

2. But there is another class of hearers who seem at first sight of a much more promising character, and of whom it is very difficult to pronounce how far they possess the life of God or not. They certainly are different from the class, which I have just described, for they have more light, and there is something in them, which often looks like life. Wherever the gospel is preached there will be many, and doubtless I have some such now before me, who will never listen to anything but pure truth, and whose ear is usually very keen to detect any deviation from it—perhaps more so than many of those who know truth in its power. And yet, though their ears have been in some measure opened to distinguish sounds, yet it is at present a doubtful point how far the truth of God has really laid vital hold of their heart, struck deep root into their soul, or been made spirit and life to their consciences. The event sometimes shows that some of these doubtful characters do possess the beginnings of divine life. Where this is the case, it will in due time be clearly manifested.

In every congregation there will be many such; and it is for you who desire to be right before God, and yet see in what a doubtful spot your soul often seems to stand for eternity, not to rest

satisfied with the mere dim and doubtful hope of being found right at last. You have light enough to see the danger of standing on a spot where you have little or no testimony of your interest in Christ, or any clear evidence that there is a saving work of grace on your heart. It will be then your wisdom and mercy to look narrowly into your own bosom, carefully examine your own heart, and see whether you are one who has ears to hear by the application of God's Word to your soul, and what you have felt of the power of truth upon your conscience, or whether you have not advanced at present beyond merely knowing the distinction of sounds, and understanding what you hear in your natural judgment.

I am well convinced in my own mind that no man has an ear **(that is, a spiritual ear)** to listen to and receive God's Word except God has given him faith; and I am also well satisfied that no man has faith who has not felt the power of the Word of God upon his heart. You will perhaps recollect that last Lord's day, in explaining how faith was raised up in the heart, I ascribed it to the power of the Word under the operation and influence of the Spirit. Now those who have felt the power of the Word in the hand of the Spirit, penetrating even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, so as to be a discerners of the thoughts and intentions of the heart—these have ears to hear; they listen as for eternity; they weigh up what is spoken as a matter of personal concern. "Am I right? Am I deceived? What faith I profess to have, is it God's gift and God's work? Does it spring from nature or from grace? Is it of the operation of God, or is it merely the natural faith of my own mind with which God has nothing to do?" These searchings of heart are good: they manifest, as far as they go, a tender conscience, and where they lead to prayer, cries and sighs before the throne, and to a real baring of the breast before Him whose eyes are as flames of fire; where there is this prostration of body and soul and spirit before His heart-searching eye, and that continued—because we cannot tell how far nature may go, how far conscience may work, and what a man may feel just for a few moments under solemn impressions—but where this is continued,

not as a mere land-spring, but flowing on as a river, and goes on day after day, and sometimes hour after hour, until the question is settled between God and conscience, there you have marks and evidences of the life of God; and to such a one the Lord speaks in the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

3. Now this is the third character of whom I spoke as being found among the hearers of the gospel. These have the life of God in their souls; in these the Lord the Spirit has wrought a principle of living faith. They may much differ from each other in their personal experience. Some may be strong and others weak; some highly favoured with the manifestations of the love of God, and others walking in much darkness, or even doubt and fear, through trials and temptations; but they all possess the light of life, the fear of God, a spirit of faith and prayer, and a separation in heart and spirit from the world. Now these are they to whom our Lord speaks as having an ear, and He bids them hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. For the Spirit says very important things to the churches in the messages sent to them. He shows them the evil and the good; and state into which sin had brought some of them, and what the consequences would be if, as churches, they persevered in disobedience. He also sets before those who were believing and obedient very precious promises, and these are especially made to him amongst them who overcometh.

II.—I shall now, therefore, coming to our second point, endeavour to show who this **character** is who is said **to overcome**, for that is the point which peculiarly concerns us. It is, indeed, the most important part of the message, for if you will read carefully the messages which the Spirit sends to the churches, you will find in every one of them a promise given to him that overcometh, and to no other.

I. It is, therefore, a point which demands our earnest and anxious enquiry; for bear this in mind, that the Christian contest is not one in which one man may win the prize and the others be

unsuccessful, yet not be disgraced nor dishonoured. It is not like a competition in a public school, where two or three boys carry off the various prizes, whilst others fail, and yet no disgrace is attached to the failure. It is not like a race where one runs and receives the prize, and those who miss the prize still are as they were before the race was run by them. This contest is for life or death: it is either being overcome and being damned, or overcoming and being saved. It is like two men, mortal foes, who are fighting at the sword's point for their life: "You must die," says the one combatant to the other, "or I must die; no quarter on either side shall be given; my sword must either pierce your breast, or your sword must pierce mine; we shall never leave the ground till one of us be dead." That is the sort of contest spoken of by the Spirit to the churches: a contest of certain victory or certain defeat, and that for all eternity. Or I may compare it to a man who is tried for his life at the bar of justice: it is for him a verdict of guilty or not guilty; it is to send him free into the light of day, or to send him to swing upon the gallows.

Bear this also in mind, that this solemn truth affects every one here. It is not as if you might calmly and indifferently say, "So-and-so is religious and I am not, but what of that? I make no profession; my father or my mother, my husband or my wife is very religious; I highly esteem them for it, and should be glad to be like them; but I hope it will not be so bad with me as you make out. God is very merciful, and there may be after all no such great difference between us in the end. Besides which, I hope I may be religious some time before I die; and you well know that I can't change my own heart or do anything of myself." But this is the way whereby Satan deceives men to their own destruction. We do not find in the Word of God any such hopes as these held out. If we have an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, we shall find there is no promise except to him that overcometh; and, therefore, to be overcome is to perish, as to overcome is to be saved. Hear, then, for yourselves what the Spirit saith to the churches, and see whether you are one who overcometh, or one who is overcome.

I shall endeavour to point out, in various ways, how we overcome, and as I travel along the road, do you endeavour to travel by my side, and see how far you and I can square accounts, and how matters stand between God and conscience, as I shall unfold the dealings of the Lord with it. 1. The first thing, which we have to overcome—for it meets us at the very beginning of our race—is **self**. If that be overcome, all is overcome; if **that be** not overcome, nothing is overcome. Our Lord, therefore, on one occasion, when He saw great multitudes following Him, turned and said unto them, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." **Lu 14:26,27** He also said, on another occasion, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." **Lu 9:23,24** Thus, according to our Lord's testimony, to deny self lay at the very head of the way. The man who could not do that, could not take a single step in the way of eternal life.

Now just consider for a moment, the state and condition in which the grace of God finds us, if indeed it be that it has reached our hearts. **Buried in self**, assuming, indeed, different forms in different individuals, yet the same state and condition in all. It may have found you **profane** self; it may have found another **professing** self; it may have found in **this man** self buried in, yet working strongly by and with the most daring and open iniquities, and in **that man** covering itself over with a robe of self-righteousness. But wherever it found you, or whatever it found you, your first step in the strait and narrow way was to overcome it. Now here we begin to learn for the first time our weakness; for to learn our weakness is a very great lesson in the divine life. It is only as we learn our weakness that we learn in whom our strength is, and how we are to overcome self, not by our own wisdom, will, or power, but by His who teacheth our hands to war and fingers to fight. If once we sit down and

contemplate what lies before us in all the difficulties of the way, which we are called to tread, we shall never take a single step.

Many a person under conviction has said, inwardly or outwardly, "If I were in some different station of life; if I were not so peculiarly circumstanced as I am with my business, with my wife, with my family, with my connections, I could take the step; but I cannot, I am so hampered." And there the man would lie till he dropped into hell, had he no help or strength but what he found in himself. But the Spirit of God comes to his rescue, if one of His, does that for him, and that most effectively, what the man never could do for himself had he a thousand years to do it in. By the application of God's words to his conscience, He pulls him out of self in which he was hopelessly buried, and causes him to take that step which he could not take, and yet knew must be taken or he must die in his sins.

He now comes willingly and easily out of his profanity, or out of his profession, or out of his self-righteousness, because there is a power put forth in his conscience by the Spirit of God, which gives him the victory in the first stage of the spiritual life—a victory over self. And he finds it easy too, most unexpectedly easy, for by the power of the Word in his heart, every crooked thing is made straight, and every rough place plain, and the worm Jacob can thresh the mountains. As long as he was shut up in unbelief—with desires to be right and yet held down by worldly influence—nothing was done; the step was too hard to take. But when the Spirit of God came with power, with light and life into his soul, he was able in a moment to do what otherwise he never could have done, and he found to his surprise that he did it easily. There was no difficulty in coming out of profanity, in leaving ungodly companions, in dropping the oath, or the drink, or the nightly resort. He was drawn out of his profane self, and all that accompanied it, by a secret yet invincible power, and what at one time seemed to be a mountain, he found diminished to a mole hill. The chains, which bound him to sin and the world dropped off his hands, like those of Peter in the prison. He began to hate himself for his sins, and to hate all that which held him

down fast in them, and longed to be free from all his besetments that he might not ever be a vile, beastly wretch, carried away by his lusts and passions. To deny them, he felt, was sweeter than to gratify them.

Or it might be you were deeply wrapped up in professing self, and you often said to yourself, "I can never leave the church or chapel which I now attend. What will my wife say, what will my husband say, what will members of the church say if I leave the church where I was baptized? Besides which, it would crush all my prospects in life; it would turn against me my best friends, and be almost my ruin. O it is a sacrifice which I cannot make, for it would mar all my respectability, destroy all my comfort and worldly happiness, and overthrow all I have been striving to build up for years. It cannot be done."

But keen and sharp convictions are sent to pierce and wound the conscience. The fearful danger of falling, as an unpardoned sinner, into the hands of Him, who is a consuming fire, terrifies the mind; the wrath of God alarms the conscience; death and hell stand continually before the soul, and it feels compelled to flee from the wrath to come, be the sacrifice what it may. In these exercises the Word of truth becomes often opened up to the enlightened understanding, and a power is put forth, in its application to the heart, to believe and act upon it. Now is done in a moment that work whereby without difficulty the step is taken, self is denied and the soul delivered from the snare.

2. But to pass on to our next step. We do not travel very far in this way, before we begin to find the power of **belief**. When the Lord is pleased to work in us by His Spirit and grace, in His first dealings with our conscience, as I have just described, and gives us faith to take the onward step, of which I have just spoken, so as to come out of the world and be separated from it, and from all that profanity or profession in which we were wrapped up, we could do it, for we did it in His strength, not our own. Anything was better than to die in our sins. A prison, a workhouse, the loss

of all our substance was preferable to the loss of our soul. This was faith—the faith of Moses, who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But at this time we did not, for the most part, know the mighty power of unbelief, for it lay deeply hidden out of sight in our heart. We had sufficient faith given unto us to take the first step in denying self, and to come out of its binding strength and power; but we little knew the strength of unbelief for all future trials and cares. It was, indeed, subdued for the time, but soon began to revive and show itself in renewed strength. Nor did we, at first, know much of the mighty power of sin in which unbelief finds its stronghold.

But when the law, in its spirituality and curse, made itself known to the awakened heart, when guilt began to press upon the conscience, light to open, in its penetrating discoveries, the majesty, holiness and purity of God, as seen therein, attended, as it always is, with a sense of our own helplessness to fulfil any of His commandments, and the bondage produced thereby, then it was that the power of unbelief was felt. It became now a heavy load, and the soul often cried aloud—

O could I but believe,  
Then all would easy be.

But we could not overcome this unbelief. The stumbling stone was too heavy for us to take up, and though we would believe, and often tried to believe, and muster up every argument and every reason why we should not doubt, yet we found that we could not overcome this unbelief; for if it seemed to be for a time subdued or removed, it came back again with renewed strength and power. Now, if we were left to ourselves, in this unbelief we should live and die. But the Lord comes to the soul's aid, applies His Word, brings home some promise or some blessed truth out of the Scripture, and by this means raises up and draws forth faith upon His dear Son. Now the unbelief is overcome, and we find it as easy to believe when the Lord gives faith as it was hard, yea, impossible to believe, when shut up in our feelings in

unbelief.

3. But we may have—and this is the third thing which we have to grapple with—much **guilt of conscience**, especially when the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and we have to learn that painful lesson which all learn, sooner or later—the depth of the fall. There is often great guilt of conscience, bondage of spirit and much despondency accompanying the breaking up of this deep fountain. Now how are we to overcome our guilt? How can we, when we are burdened with a sense of dreadful sin and iniquity, lift up our head before God in sweet confidence and holy boldness? We cannot do it, for the guilt of our sins has such an accusing voice that we cannot bear the voice of mercy speaking in the promises and invitations of the gospel. There is nothing harder to bear than a guilty conscience, for it seems to cut the very roots of our hope.

Now none but He who has laid the burden on can take it off. He must remove it from the conscience, for we cannot. But sooner or later He speaks peace to the troubled mind, and when He is pleased to apply the precious blood of Christ to the conscience, or to drop in a comforting word, or to give a view of the glorious Person of the Son of God, and manifest Him with a divine power to the heart as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, then the guilt is removed and the conscience is cleansed and purged, by the application of atoning blood, from filth, guilt and dead works to serve the living God. In this way the guilt of sin is overcome, and with it its filth, love, practice and power, for all these are removed by the same hand, which takes away its guilt.

4. But as we travel on we begin to find the **worm** to have a very strong hold upon our heart—much stronger than we suspected. Now there are many things connected with the world which have to be overcome, such as the spirit of it, the strong affection which we naturally have to it, the cares which spring out of our connection with it, and the continual circumstances which necessarily attend the various employments which each of us has to fill. John tells us the way in which the world is overcome: "For

whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." **1Jo 5:4** And he asks this question as if he would show that there was only one character who succeeded in obtaining this victory: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" **1Jo 5:5**

Now, unless there were some great difficulty in overcoming the world, would John have used this strong and striking language concerning it? But why does faith give this victory? Because it worketh by love, being connected with the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It is only by faith that there is a saving view of the glory and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and where this is seen and felt, the love of the world drops out of the heart, and its carking cares and anxieties no longer press as before. Compared with the beauty and blessedness of the Son of God, the world and all its charms are seen to be less than nothing and vanity; and as the Lord Jesus reigns and rules in the heart, He puts the world and worldly things under His feet.

5. But in order to be an overcomer, we must overcome every obstacle, which stands in our way. Among these obstacles we may find **many fears**, and amongst them especially **fears of death**. Many anxious thoughts and terrifying suggestions may press upon our minds; how it may be with us in those solemn moments when we shall have to encounter the swellings of Jordan. Now these fears we have to overcome, that we may die in sweet peace; and it may be that they will not be fully overcome till just before the Lord cuts the thread of life. But how graciously is it said of the Lord, that one object for which he came was that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage!" Death is the last enemy; but the blessed Lord, who has overcome every other enemy, will also overcome this last in the experience of His dear people, and enable them to say, "Death is swallowed up in

victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

II. If you recollect, I said I would endeavour to show you in **what way** he that overcomes obtains the victory. Let me now redeem my pledge. I have already shown how victory is given us over self, unbelief, the guilt of sin, the world and the fear of death; but I have not yet distinctly explained the difference between those who fight and are overcome, and those who fight and gain the victory.

Very many persons think themselves overcomers, who never gain any real victory but, as Paul says, "beat the air." He tells us, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." **2Ti 2:5** Thus a man may strive for, and seem to get victory, and yet if he do not strive lawfully, that is, to use a common expression, fight or run according to the laws of the game, his success goes for nothing. This at once disposes of the whole tribe of those who fight with carnal weapons and gain the victory by their own skill and strength. Their victory is in fact a defeat; for it is merely substituting one form of the flesh for another. Thus, a man may be considered a very religious man, and yet not possess a grain of true religion; a very holy man, and yet not be sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost; indeed, may be a very consistent, upright and benevolent man, full of devotedness to what are called good works, and yet know nothing of the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit in his own heart. The great point is not only that we overcome, but overcome in such a way as is consistent with the Word of truth and meets with the approbation of God and His testimony in our own conscience.

Now we must not think to take the city by storm, to win the great battle by our own strength, wisdom and righteousness, but to learn that lesson which is contained in the words which were spoken by the Lord to the heart of Paul when he was groaning under the thorn in the flesh, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." **2Co 12:9** The great

secret of overcoming is, to be overcome, and then when overcome, to fall down at the feet of Him who is able to make us more than conquerors and, in and by His strength, to take up the sword against our foes and fears. No man ever overcame by his own strength. It must be with us as it was with Israel of old, "For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them." **Ps 44:3** It is not our own sword that can fight our battle, nor our own arm that can save us; but it must be the right hand and arm of God, and especially the light of His countenance shining into our souls to put our foes and fears to flight, and that because He has a personal favour unto us.

We read in the Book of Revelation of a blessed company who overcame Satan the accuser of the brethren, and we are told how they overcame him. It was by the blood of the lamb, and the Word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death. **Re 12:11** These were their weapons: atoning blood sprinkled upon their conscience, the testimony of God's Word in their heart, and their martyr spirit, so that they would sooner die than yield.

But a point which deeply tries many of God's living family is the being continually overcome and finding so much in them that is their master. They seem so little able to make head against the workings of sin, the movements of pride and covetousness, the secret lusts ever striving for the mastery, their own worldly spirit and the guilt, doubt and fear which a sense of the strength of these evils produces. They find sin continually working in them, and to their shame and sorrow it seems as if the sin, which they hate would prove their master, for they feel they have no strength to overcome it.

But now observe, what is the effect of this experience of their own weakness. It is to bring them down, to lay them low, to empty and strip them of all their strength, wisdom and righteousness. Now when they are brought there, to fall down in

all humility of mind, with much brokenness of spirit and contrition of heart, before Him who sits upon the throne, and to beg of Him to undertake their cause which they cannot manage themselves, and give them the victory over sin and self, He will appear for them.

When, then, in His tender mercy and surpassing grace, the Lord thus listens to their humble cry, and sends His Word with power into their soul, it gives them the victory, and enables them to overcome. Their worst foes, their greatest fears are all dispelled, and they find themselves able to overcome what they were never able to get the better of, when they tried in their own strength. It will be found in the end that all who tried to overcome in their own strength were defeated; but that those who, stripped of their own strength, looked to the Lord for strength, proved the victors. All who fight with earthly weapons have them beaten out of their hands, for all carnal weapons are unfit for this terrible struggle.

The apostle, therefore, says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." **2Co 10:4** What does Satan, the accuser of the brethren, care for arms manufactured by the skill and wisdom of man? What are resolutions, tears, prayers, vows and the whole apparatus of creature contrivances before this terrible accuser of the brethren, an angry God, a condemning law, a guilty conscience and an unbelieving, infidel heart, ever fighting and resisting the Word of God? What is all the strength of the creature or the holiness of the flesh against the allurements of sin, the power of temptation, the spirit of the world and the enmity of our own heart against the God of heaven? Nature can no more be bound by these bonds than Samson by the green withs or the new ropes. Sin would break them off from our arms like a thread. No man ever gained the victory over self, or overcame sin, who depended upon himself or trusted to his own strength. But when, after repeated and aggravated failures, almost in an agony of despair, he falls down before God, overcome, beaten and defeated, and with longing eyes looks to Him who sits upon the throne, and begs of Him to undertake his

cause, then that victory which was impossible to nature now becomes possible to grace, and that which he could never have done for himself, the Lord does for him in the twinkling of an eye.

III.—But now I pass on to consider the special promises which are given in our text to him that overcometh. These are three:

1. It shall be given to him **"to eat of the hidden manna."**

2. To receive **"a white stone."**

3. In the stone **"a new name**, which no man knoweth save him that receiveth it."

But perhaps when you look, with a searching eye, through the greater part of your experience, you find yourself so overcome, baffled and disappointed, that the very mention of the promises to him that overcometh sinks you lower, as feeling you have no interest in them. How often are you obliged to confess before the Lord that on this and that occasion your bad temper, or your worldly-mindedness, or your light and trifling spirit, or the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life overcame you! Have you not been entangled, again and again, with a spirit of covetousness, or fretfulness and rebellion, or a careless indifference and neglect of prayer, reading and meditation? Even looking back through the past week, and taking an account of victories and defeats, how many more have been your defeats than your victories; how much oftener you have cried and sighed than sung and rejoiced; how much more often you have had reason to put your mouth in the dust, if so be there might be hope, than lift up your face with holy confidence and been able to shout victory through the blood of the Lamb!

Yet let me endeavour, if I can, to show you in spite of this, that all with you is not defeat, and that you do sometimes, with all your defeats, know what it is to overcome.

1. Look, then, at the first promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Is that promise altogether

hidden from your eyes? By the hidden manna we may understand two things: first, the Lord Himself; and secondly, the Word of His grace.

It represents the Lord himself, as we find Him speaking in John vi., in answer to the Jews, who said that their fathers did eat manna in the wilderness: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." **Joh 6:32,33** There were various things in the manna that fell in the wilderness, which made it a suitable emblem of the Lord Jesus. Its coming from heaven was highly typical of the Son of God coming from heaven to earth; its fall only with the dew was emblematical of the dew of the Spirit which always attends the manifestations of Christ; its being just sufficient, so that he who had much had nothing over, and he who had little had no lack, was typical of the sufficiency of Christ for the desires and wants of all; and its being gathered day after day, was emblematical of Christ being the daily food of His people. Now have you not tasted sometimes of this manna, and felt a sweetness and blessedness in Christ, which you could never describe? And has not this been when views of Him by faith have enabled you to overcome? Then you fed upon Christ, and this was hidden manna to your soul.

But it also signifies not only Christ in His Person, love, blood and grace, but the Word of truth that testifies of Him; for we can only know and feed upon Christ by the testimony given of Him in the Word. Thus, any portion of the Scripture that is opened to the mind, and applied to the heart, so that the soul is fed thereby, is a part of this hidden manna. Now, this is only given to those that overcome. God's Word is precious only when you can overcome that unbelief which shut your heart against it; that guilt which could not receive the promises, but sealed your heart as with a double seal against them; that bondage of spirit, which kept you from the sweet liberty of truth.

If you look at your experience, you will find when you are in darkness, in bondage, in guilt, in fear, under the hiding and withdrawing of God's presence, the Word of God is mostly out of sight. You may try to catch hold of a promise, plead an invitation, endeavour to look through the dark cloud; but being under the power of unbelief, you cannot lay hold of God's truth so as to bring it into your soul and taste its sweetness and power. But if you get a little victory over your unbelief, the bright side of God's face begins to shine upon you, and you can see the Mediator looking upon you with affection and love. Then comes the sweetness of God's Word, for it is sweet just in proportion to your faith.

So you see that in order to feed upon the manna, you must overcome, because the feast is only to the victor. It was when Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, that Melchisedec brought forth the bread and wine. So it is in grace. How often God's Word is to you a sealed book; how often you hear from the pulpit the most encouraging preaching, yet get no encouragement from it; how often you hear Christ held forth in His Person, blood and righteousness, and go away as you came, without any sensible relief! What is the reason? Because you are overcome. Unbelief, bondage, darkness of mind, insensibility rest upon your spirit, and all these keep you from feeding upon the manna. But sometimes a gracious Word comes over all these hills and mountains of unbelief, bondage, doubt and fear, and as this Word drops into your heart, you begin to shout victory over all your foes and fears. Then the Word of God begins to open itself up in its sweetness and blessedness. The Lord of the house brings out the hidden manna, and the Word of God is made sweet and precious to the soul.

Sometimes you read the Word of God as a dry and barren task to satisfy conscience. When is that? When you are shut up in unbelief and bondage. But at other times the Word of God is read with pleasure, and it is to you the joy and rejoicing of your heart. This is when you can believe it; and thus faith turns the Word of God into manna. But if you are barren, then the Word of God is

barren; if dead, the Word is dead; if cold and lifeless, the Word is so too. But when the scene changes, when the clouds are dispersed, then you see light in God's light. Then it is a blessed Bible, a precious book, full of sweet promises and encouraging invitations. It is in this way the manna is given to the over-comer.

2. "And **will give him a white stone.**" This seems to allude to an ancient practice, whereby criminals were either condemned or acquitted, according as the judges dropped a black or a white stone into a urn. In one of our celebrated Greek tragedies, Orestes, who had slain his mother as a judicious act because, in conjunction with her paramour, she had murdered his father, Agamemnon, on his return from Troy, is represented as pursued by the Furies. In his distress, Apollo advises him to go to Athens, and plead his cause before the court of Areopagus—the same court before which Paul stood. **Ac 17** The cause is tried. The judges drop the stones, some black, some white, into the urn; but the goddess Pallas, who is the arbitress of the trial, drops in a white stone: the pebbles being counted are found equal, and Pallas declares that the criminal is acquitted.

I have merely named this as giving us an apt illustration of the meaning of the promise, "I will give him a white stone;" that is, I will seal his acquittal. He was almost like Orestes pursued by the Furies, or like a criminal tried for his life. Every sin dropped as it were a black stone into the urn against him. But the blessed Lord, from whose decision there is no appeal, drops a white stone into the judicial urn, and this outweighs all the black ones. "O man," he says, "guilty man, I acquit thee; I pronounce thee absolved from all thy sins and offences. Here is the white stone; hold it up before thine accusers, and keep it to the judgment day, that when the books are opened thou mayest produce the white stone, and say, There is my acquittal from the Lord Himself."

Now has the Lord ever given you a white stone? You know how guilt, law and conscience have dropped stone after stone into the urn—condemned thee here, condemned thee there; here was a

black stone and there was a black stone. Is there a white stone that will swallow up all these black stones? There is; for when the Lord is pleased to drop a pardoning word into the heart, He empties out of the urn all the black stones, and then comes, in all its blessedness and beauty, the white stone of His sovereign acquittal.

3. But there was a **new name** written upon the stone. It was not merely acquittal, but something more. I take it to be the name of marriage. Just as the wife takes the husband's name and has a new one; so when the Lord brings forth the hidden manna and gives the white stone, He gives with it the marriage ring and changes the name. We find Him speaking by the prophet, "Thou shalt be called by a new name." And what is that name? "Hephzibah," "My delight is in her." The new name, then, is marriage with the Lord; and with the new name are given new rights, new favours, new blessings, and a claim to all that the Bridegroom possesses; because He gives a new name to the bride and calls her for ever His. This is the reason why no man knows it saving he that receives it. Who knows the love of the bridegroom but the bride? And when marriage puts them into possession of each other, their mutual fondness and affection are known only to themselves.

No, all these promises are given to him that overcometh. "Well," says one, "if none get them but those that overcome, what is to become of me?" Now I will take up your case. If you say that in a careless, discontented, unbelieving mood, it may be that this will be your eternal sentence—to be overcome and cast into, what the Lord calls, outer darkness. But I will take another case. You say, "I am often overcome; but it is my grief. O I wish I had more strength against besetting sins and temptations; but alas! alas! I am continually overcome." Let us see how this works. Does it work to harden or to soften? Some men are hardened by a continual sight and sense of their sins, and some are softened. Some are always complaining, "I am overcome; I have no strength; my temper, my business, my family, all get the better of me." And they are willing it should be so. There is no

resistance, no struggle. But there are others who feel the misery of being overcome; and they are crying to one who is stronger than they, to put forth that strength in their behalf, which will make them victors. These will prove conquerors; and as they prove conquerors, they will come in for every promise to the conqueror. Salvation will be their happy lot; and the very tokens they now have here below, the very victories they have gained every time they have been able to raise a fresh Ebenezer, are all so many pledges that the victory is certain, though it may be delayed; and that the Lord, who has thus far wrought in them, will never leave His work till he has accomplished it for their good, and His own glory.

## The History of an Idol, its Rise, Reign and Progress

J. C. Philpot, excerpted from his "Reviews" 1855

"Dear children, **keep yourselves from idols.**" 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart. We need not go very far to find of this the most convincing proofs. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it—the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly, and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and power of God.

It amazes us sometimes in reading the history of God's ancient people, as recorded in the inspired page, that, after such wondrous and repeated displays of his presence, glory, and majesty, they should again and again bow down before stocks and stones. That those who had witnessed all the plagues of Egypt had passed through the Red Sea by an explicit miracle, were daily living on manna that fell from heaven and water that gushed out of the rock, who had but to look upward by day to behold the pillar of the cloud, and by night the pillar of fire to manifest the presence of Jehovah in their midst—that this people, because Moses delayed coming down from the Mount, should fall down before a golden calf, and say, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt," does indeed strike our minds with astonishment.

And that this sin should break forth in them again and again through their whole history down to the period of the Babylonish captivity, in spite of all the warnings of their prophets, all the terrible judgments of God, all their repeated captivities, and, what would be far more likely to cure it, all their repeated deliverances, does indeed show, if other proof were lacking, that it is a disease deeply rooted in the very constitution of fallen man.

If this be the case, unless human nature has undergone a change, of which neither scripture nor experience affords any evidence, the disease must be in the heart of man *now* as much as ever; and if it exists it must manifest itself, for a constitutional malady can no more be in the soul and not show itself, than there can be a sickness in the body without evident symptoms of illness.

It is true that the disease does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped, at least the calf is not, if the gold be, nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone. But that rank; property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are as much idolized now as Baal and Moloch were once in Judea, and Juggernaut now is in the plains of Hindostan, is true beyond all contradiction.

But what is idolatry? To answer this question, let us ask another. **What is an idol?** Is not this the essence of the idea conveyed by the word, that an idol occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, in our dependence and reliance, in our worship and devotedness, which is due to God only? Whatever is to us what the Lord alone should be, *that* is to us an idol. It is true that these idols differ almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals. But as both in ancient and modern times the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all calculation in number, variety, shape, and size, so is it in these inner idols of which the outer are mere symbols and representations.

Nothing has been too base or too brutal, too great or too little, too noble or too vile, from the sun walking in its brightness to a snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag, which man has not worshiped. And these intended representations of Divinity were but the outward symbols of what man inwardly worshiped—for the inward idol preceded the outward, and the fingers merely carved what the imagination had previously devised. The gross material idol, then, whether an Apollo, "the statue which

enchants the world," or a negro fetish, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man.

In that inner mind there are certain feelings and affections, as well as traditional recollections, which sin has perverted and debased, but not extinguished. Such are, a sense of a divine Creator, a dread of his anger and justice, a dim belief in a state after death of happiness or misery, an accountability to him for our actions, and a duty of religious worship. From this natural religion in the mind of man, a relic of the fall, sprang the first idea of idolatry—for the original knowledge of God being lost, the mind of man sought a substitute, and that substitute is an idol—the word, like the similar term "image," signifying a shape or figure, a representation or likeness of God.

Against this therefore, the second commandment in the Decalogue is directed. Now, this idea of representing God by some visible image being once established by the combined force of depraved intellect and conscience, the debased mind of man soon sought out channels for its lusts and passions to run in, which religion might consecrate; and thus the devilish idea was conceived and carried out, to make a god of SIN. Thus bloodshed, lust, theft, with every other crime, were virtually turned into gods named Mars, Venus, Mercury, and so on; and then came the horrible conclusion, that the more sin there was committed, the more these gods were honored. Need we wonder at the horrible debasement of the heathen world, and the utter prostration of moral principles produced by the worship of idols—or at the just abhorrence and wrath of God against idolatry?

But we need not dwell on this part of the subject. There is another form of idolatry much nearer home; the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan or a modern Hindoo, but that of a Christian.

Idolatry is the very breath of the carnal mind. All that "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," desires, thirsts after, is gratified by, or occupied with, is its idol—and so far as a Christian is under the influence of this carnal mind, this

old man, this evil heart of unbelief, this fallen Adam-nature, this body of sin and death—all which are Scripture terms to express one and the same thing—he bows down to the idol set up in the chambers of imagery.

There is an old Latin proverb, that "love and a cough are two things impossible to be concealed;" and thus, though an idol may be hidden in the heart as carefully as Laban's teraphim in the camel's saddle, or the ephod and molten image in the House of Micah, (Judges 18:14), yet **it will be discovered by the love shown to** it, as surely as the suppressed cough of the consumptive patient cannot escape the ear of the physician.

Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest with ourselves, to find out each **our own idol**—what it is, and how deep it lies, what worship it obtains, what honor it receives, and what affection it engrosses. Let me ask myself, "What do I most love?" If I hardly know how to answer that question, let me put to myself another, "What do I most think upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts flow when unrestrained?" for thoughts flow to the idol as water to the lowest spot in a field.

If, then, the thoughts flow continually to the farm, the shop, the business, the investment, to the husband, wife, or child; to that which feeds lust or pride, worldliness or covetousness, self-conceit or self-admiration—*that* is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts the thoughts of the mind towards it.

Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours; and yet we may both be idolaters. You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool or such a sinner as to hug it to my bosom; and I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours. You may condemn me, and I condemn you; and the word of God's grace and the verdict of a living conscience condemn us both.

O how **various** and how **innumerable** those idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, learning,

literature, languages, general information, shall be his idol. Music, vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second; so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the fine arts generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. Poetry, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid pictures, melodious cadence, and sustained flow of all that is beautiful in language and expression, may be the delight of a fourth. Science, mathematical or mechanical, the eager pursuit of a fifth. These are the highest flights of the human mind; these are not the base idols of the drunken feast, the low jest, the mirthful supper, or even that less debasing but enervating idol—sleep and indolence, as if life's highest enjoyments were those of the swine in the sty.

An idol is not to be admired for its beauty or loathed for its ugliness, but to be hated because it is an idol. You middle-class people, who despise art and science, language and learning, as you despise the ale-house, and ballfield, may still have an idol. Your garden, your beautiful roses, your verbenas, fuchsias, needing all the care and attention of a babe in arms, may be your idol. Or your pretty children, so admired as they walk in the street; or your new house and all the new furniture; or your son who is getting on so well in business; or your daughter so comfortably settled in life; or your dear husband so generally respected, and just now doing so nicely in the farm. Or your own still dearer SELF that needs so much feeding, and dressing and attending to—who shall count the thousands of idols which draw to themselves those thoughts, and engross those affections which are due to the Lord alone?

You may not be found out. Your idol may be so **hidden**, or so **peculiar**, that all our attempts to touch it, have left you and it unscathed. Will you therefore conclude that you have none? Search deeper, look closer; it is not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a tender conscience anointed with

divine eye-salve. Hidden love is the deepest of all love; hidden diseases the most incurable of all diseases. Search every fold of your heart until you find it. It may not be so big nor so ugly as your neighbor's; but an idol is still an idol, and an image still an image, whether so small as to be carried in the coat pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue.

Every man has his idol; but it is not every man who sees it; few groan under it.

"Dear children, **keep yourselves from idols.**" 1 John 5:21

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from my heart,  
And worship only Thee."

## **Holding Fast Our Profession**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 29, 1857

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:14, 15

There are two things which God in his holy word has joined together, and which therefore no man may lawfully put asunder. These are, faith and confession—both of them fruits of the Spirit, both of them effects of sovereign grace; but each occupying its own place, each succeeding in its own order. The seat of faith is the heart; the seat of confession the mouth. The end of the one is "righteousness," or justification; the end of the other is the fruit of righteousness—the "salvation" of the soul. Is not this according to the firm and sure Scripture testimony: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation?" (Romans 10:10.) We see then from this testimony that a confession of Christ is as needful as faith in Christ, and that the work of faith in the heart must ever be accompanied with the word of faith in the mouth. Does not our Lord himself say, "'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven?" (Matthew 10:32, 33.) How encouraging upon this point to all who believe in Christ and confess his name is the apostle's declaration, and how solemn the warning words of his Lord and ours.

In our text we meet with the word "*profession*:" "Let us hold fast our profession." Now the word "confession" in the passage which I have quoted from Romans 10. is almost the same as the word "profession" in the text; the only difference being that in the original in the former place it is a verb and in the latter a

substantive, the meaning in each being substantially the same. Or even if we do admit a little difference in the signification of the words as used in our own language, yet in intent and meaning they really and practically amount to much the same thing; confession being chiefly that which is made by the lips, profession that which is carried out in the life. Whether then we use the word "confession" or "profession" it comes to the same point as a matter of personal and indispensable performance, that there must be, agreeably to the word of God, an open and undisguised profession made of faith in the Son of God by all who through grace are enabled to believe in his name. We see this very clearly exemplified in the New Testament saints. When the Lord, for instance, by declaring to Nathanael that before Philip called him he saw him under the fig tree, convinced him that he was the Christ, faith immediately sprang up in Nathanael's heart, and confession at once burst from his lips: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." (John 1:48, 49.) When the Lord asked his disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter at once answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:15, 16.) But what was the root of Peter's noble confession? "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." What else but this special and personal revelation of the Son of God raised up faith in Peter's heart, and was not the confession of his lips the necessary fruit of this faith? When pardon and peace through the word of Ananias reached the soul of Paul after those three days of intense conflict, when he neither ate nor drank, what was the effect? "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God." (Acts 9:17-20.) In his instance, as in that of Peter, we see how faith in his heart brought confession out of his mouth. He could not be silent. To him it was not life to live except to testify of Christ. And was not this the main object for which he was so specially and signally called? As the Lord said to Ananias, "Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15.) So a little before this we find that when Peter and his fellow apostles began to preach Jesus at Jerusalem, it caused a mighty stir. The Scribes

and Pharisees were all up in arms to stop this dangerous religion, and if possible to put a gag into the mouth of those men who were spreading amongst the people that destructive doctrine—destructive, that is, to all their false pretensions, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had ignominiously crucified, was the very Christ and the Son of God, as manifested by his resurrection from the dead. But what said Peter in the name of himself and his fellow apostles? "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And so little daunted were they by the fear of suffering for Christ's sake, that when let go, and rejoining their own company, "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord," a part of their prayer was, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." (Acts 4:29.)

This, then, is what is meant in Scripture by "confession" or "profession"; and as with the apostles so it is now. It is impossible for any one to keep silence when once the Lord Jesus Christ has been made manifest to his soul. He must join confession to his faith; and sooner or later it must come forth out of his mouth to declare what he has seen, felt, and heard of the Lord's Person, of the Lord's presence, of the Lord's voice, and of the Lord's power.

But this public and open confession of Christ, or, to use the word of our text, this "profession," especially in those times, was attended with great difficulty, and environed with many perils, and these most severe and daunting to the flesh. Believers in those days carried their lives in their hands. It was death, and often instantaneous death, to profess to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, as we see in the case of the martyred Stephen. The Hebrews, that is, the believing Jews in Palestine, as distinguished from the believing Gentiles, to whom the Epistle was addressed, were especially encompassed with these perils. They were surrounded on every side by the unbelieving Jews—deadly enemies not only to all who believed in Christ, but

particularly to those of their own nation who professed faith in him. The apostle therefore says to them, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, while ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions: and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." (Heb. 10:32, 33.) They dwelt also surrounded by the power of the Roman Emperor, who had a large army always stationed in Judea, and whose will was law, from which there was no appeal. Added to these circumstances, it is very evident from various allusions in this epistle and its strong warning against apostacy, that the believing Hebrews to whom it was written were very weak in faith, and that there were those amongst them who were exceedingly wavering in their profession. Now all these circumstances from without and from within combined, as we find from the internal evidence of the epistle, to shake them to the very foundation, and were almost inducing some of the waverers to give up the very profession of that faith in Christ which they had previously made. The apostle, therefore, in this epistle, to meet their peculiar circumstances, seeks on the one hand to strengthen the faith of all who truly believed amongst them, and to encourage them by all means to hold fast their profession, and on the other hand solemnly to warn all who wavered against drawing back, for if they did so it would be unto perdition. (Heb. 10:39.) And let no man think that these warnings and admonitions are not needed now. They may not, and we know they will not, keep back from apostacy those whose hearts are not right before God, for it is with them as with the sons of Eli: "Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." (1 Sam. 2:25.) But they are made useful and profitable to those who truly fear God as hedges to keep them back from departing from the Lord.

Now we may not be exposed to the same perils in all points with which these believing Hebrews were surrounded. Persecution in our day has to a great extent, dropped its terrors; law has beaten the sword out of its hands, and we can meet this day and worship God according to our own conscience without let or hindrance.

For this we cannot be sufficiently thankful. Great are our civil and religious privileges; and we know not how soon they may be suspended or taken away. But still a true profession—and no other is worth the name—will always be attended with difficulties. If these be not outward they will be inward, and perhaps to an extent even greater than when a profession of Christ led to the prison and the faggot; for the summer of prosperity has been always more dangerous to the Church of Christ than the winter of adversity, and there have been more shipwrecks in a calm than in a storm. The words of the apostle are therefore as applicable now as they were then; and as in writing to the Hebrews he would inspirit them to hold fast their profession, by setting before their eyes the Lord Jesus Christ as their great and sympathising high priest, so, as the Scriptures were "written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come," we may sit and listen to the words of our text as believing that the Holy Ghost speaks to us by the apostle as much as he spake to them. With God's blessing, therefore, in opening up these words, I shall,

I.—*First, show the necessity and nature of a Christian profession.*

II.—*Secondly, the difficulties and discouragements which encompass the saints of God in making and maintaining a godly, consistent profession of their most holy faith.*

III.—*Thirdly, the helps and encouragements which the apostle sets before them to strengthen their faith, and to inspirit them still to hold their profession fast.*

I.—There may be those in this congregation who fear the Lord, and yet at times may almost wish they had never made a profession of his name. I am one. For when my mind has at various times been cast down by many trying circumstances without and within into which I cannot now enter, and I have been sunk by them very low, or at others when I have taken a solemn view of what I am in myself, as a poor, vile sinner, and felt how little either as a Christian man or as a Christian minister I have lived to the Lord's honour and praise, I could have wished

that I had never made a public profession of the name of Jesus. You may think perhaps, from my being so widely known among the churches of truth, that I love and am ambitious of popularity; but that is not my real or natural disposition. To live in obscurity and quiet would suit me far better than to be brought so much before the public eye. When, then, my position exposes me, as it has done, to much opposition without and within, I could wish myself anything and anywhere but to be what and where I am. But am I or you singular there? Can we not find in the Scriptures any one who has travelled in the same path? I think we can find one, and him not less than a prophet of the Lord—if there be no other, who has had similar feelings in his soul. "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." But could Jeremiah carry out his feelings? Could he put in practice his resolution? Let us hear his own words: "But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Jer. 20:9.) The Lord had put his word into his heart, that it might come out of his mouth; and therefore he could not keep it in. So in our own case; though we may not be prophets of the Lord as was he, whatever resolutions we may make in the flesh, or whatever discouragements we may experience in the path we are called upon by Scripture and conscience to tread, there is that in our hearts which will not let us rest satisfied with hiding our light under a bushel, or burying our talent in the earth; for we feel we cannot be silent without sin, and that we must publicly profess what we have tasted, felt, and handled of the Word of Life, that it may be to the glory and honour of his great name.

1. The Lord has now, and ever had, a peculiar people upon earth—a people whom he has formed for himself, that they may show forth his praise. The whole world lieth in wickedness, or as it might be rendered, "in the wicked one" (1 John 5:19); and thus the whole human race are by nature and practice enemies to God and godliness. Will then the Lord be satisfied that his name should no longer be known upon earth? Shall men succeed in thrusting God out of his own creation? Shall his mighty wonders in providence and in grace never be revealed, discovered, or

made manifest? Shall the whole human race sink under his wrath, and no mention be ever made upon earth that though just, he is also merciful; that though he hates sin, yet that he can pardon a sinner, and that his name and nature are love? He has determined, therefore, that his name shall be glorified even upon this ruined scene, this abode of sin and woe; that there shall be a people even upon this earthly ball, who shall set forth his worthy praise, and make it manifest that there is a God who reigns and rules below as well as above, who can glorify himself in this mortal, perishing world as well as in the glorious realms of eternal, unclouded bliss. He therefore has chosen a peculiar people to make himself known upon earth; for so sunk and fallen is man, that but for this eternal choice, none would or could be called to a knowledge of it. I need not multiply passages to prove this. Election stands so prominent in the work of God, that none can doubt it who understand and believe the Scripture. If then we are to be delivered from the wrath to come, we must belong to this peculiar people, for they only will be saved; and if we are to enjoy the blessings and mercies which are stored up for them in the realms of bliss above, we must be satisfied to cast in our lot and portion with them here below. If we are ashamed of Christ here, he will be ashamed of us hereafter; if we deny him before men, he will deny us before God. But if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him. If in this time-state we bear his cross, in a future state we shall wear his crown. Such is the sure, the unvarying testimony of the word of truth, not one jot or tittle of which can fall to the ground. Thus, fear as we may what may be the consequence of such a step, if the blessed Spirit do but work upon our heart and give us faith in the Son of God, we are as if compelled—and it is good that we are compelled—to make a profession of his worthy name. When I was in the world I had no serious thoughts about religion; I say "serious thoughts," because from various circumstances, and especially from what I had seen and heard in the life and example of gracious people, I had some thoughts about it, but there was no real weight and power attending them. No idea and inclination had I at that time of making any profession of religion; and indeed to have done so would have been but hypocrisy. Could I have had my own will, it

would have been to have spent my life in ease and quiet, devoted to study and literature, without religion ever troubling my mind, interfering with my pursuits, or in any way injuring my worldly prospects, which I may say without boasting were fair and good. But God, in his infinite mercy to my soul, and I hope for the good of others also, willed it otherwise. He made me religious whether I would or not; for he wrought those feelings in my soul, he laid eternal things with that weight and power upon my mind, he brought his own word so to bear upon my conscience, and gave me, with a sense of my lost, ruined condition, such earnest longings, thirstings, and breathings after himself, that I could not but be sensible that the Lord himself had by his grace wrought a new and striking change upon my heart, which could not be hidden from myself or others. Therefore I was compelled to speak about those things of God and those divine realities which I so powerfully felt; because, with Jeremiah, there was that shut up in my bones which made me speak, whether I would or not. The consequences of all this in persecution and opposition were then hidden from my eyes; nor in truth did I care much about them. So it is with all the saints of God, in each according to his measure of faith. God's work upon their hearts separates them from the world, sometimes at once, sometimes more slowly and gradually, but in every case sooner or later effectually; for "they are not of the world," even as Christ was not of the world (John 17:14); and to all of them God speaks: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." (2 Cor. 6:17.) Now it is this separation which first stamps them as belonging to the peculiar people; for until this is accomplished there is no decisive mark or evidence of God's choice or the Spirit's work. The first step, then, in profession is *separation*.

2. But now comes a further step. They are delivered from their various errors or their false profession by the same power of God's word upon their heart which makes them separate. This deliverance gives them an ear to *hear the truth*, faithfully and experimentally preached; and as it is commended to their conscience and finds a place in their affections, they feel and find themselves compelled by a sweet, invincible constraint, to cast in

their lot with the people that know and love the truth; for they can truly say with Ruth, from the love that they feel to the Lord and his saints: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth 1:16.) As the nature and evil of sin are also more and more opened up in their conscience, they are obliged to separate from that company, whether professing or profane, those ways and pursuits which feed the power of sin, and therefore from all who live in the practice of evil; and as the saints of God are made more and more dear unto them, and brought more into close relationship with them, they are obliged to associate with them more and more, both from the convictions of their conscience and the constraints of love. Thus by the work of God upon their souls, whether they will or not, they are brought into a profession of religion more and more, almost without knowing it and almost without seeing the consequences. It is therefore with them not a matter of choice and will, though they are made willing in the day of God's power, but of the Lord's leading and guiding; for they find and feel what the Lord is pleased to make manifest to their souls, of that they cannot but speak and testify. If they have felt Christ precious, they must, as opportunity offers, exalt his gracious name. And if the Lord has blessed their souls with any manifestation of his goodness and mercy, they cannot keep silence, for it seems, if they did, as if the very stones would cry out. Thus, not against their will, and yet in a measure independent of their will, are they brought to make a profession of that name which is above every name—of that name which at times in their souls' feelings is as ointment poured forth. (Song 1:3.)

A profession then to be a right, a saving, an acceptable profession, must spring from faith. Faith is the root, profession is the stem; and as a root without a stem is an incomplete if not an unsightly object, so a stem without a root is a fading, withering plant. If then we have no right faith, we can make no right profession. But if we have right faith, by which I mean a faith of God's own giving and implanting in our soul, then that faith will of necessity give birth to a profession corresponding to it; for there will be a necessary agreement between root and stem. If my faith

be strong and vigorous, my profession will be strong and vigorous too. If my faith be weak, so will be my profession. We see this daily exemplified in ourselves and others. How strong the faith, how active, how devoted, how godly the profession in some; in others the faith how weak, the profession how languid and unstable, and often inconsistent. It is true I may make a profession of faith, and a loud and bold one too, without possessing the faith of God's elect: it is true I may talk as many do about Christ, without having the root of the matter in me, or ever having spiritually seen his beauty and glory. But will not the fear of God in a conscience made tender by the touch of his hand repress and keep under this noisy, loud, talkative profession, and rather make us "swift to hear and slow to speak," than swift to speak and slow to hear? (James 1:19.) Is not honesty and sincerity before God and man an eminent fruit of divine teaching; and will not this honesty and sincerity of heart keep all who fear God in good measure from that presumptuous confidence and boasting talkativeness which are so stamped upon the profession of the day, and so opposed to every gracious, godly feeling of the heart? We therefore see that to make an honest and good profession, we must have a faith wrought by the power of God in our soul. Bear also in mind that this profession is not to be confined to words only, the mere talk of the lips, but must be made manifest in our daily conduct and conversation; for "actions speak louder than words," and it matters little what profession a man makes with his lips unless it be carried out practically in his life.

II.—But I pass on to show the *difficulties and discouragements* that surround a godly profession; for if there were none, why should the apostle, here and elsewhere, exhort the Hebrews to "*hold fast* their profession?" Was there no danger of letting it go, of its slipping through their fingers? Was there no inward or outward peril accompanying their profession, so that it might be by a sudden stroke beaten out of their hand, or drawn from it by craft and subtlety? Would they have no moments of doubt and almost despair in which they might be tempted almost to abandon all for lost? Surely there were, or what need of the

exhortation, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering?" (Heb. 10:23.)

i. But have these perils and dangers all passed away? Have not we, too, our temptations, our difficulties, and discouragements as well as they? Surely we have, or the text would not speak to us. Let us then look at some of these difficulties and discouragements which encompass a godly profession, some of which are inward and some outward; some arising from the church, others from the world. But most of them take rise from our own wicked, corrupt heart. Examine, then, with me a few of those difficulties which prevent us from holding our profession as fast as we should.

1. As faith is the root of all gracious, godly profession, so *unbelief* is the grand hindrance both in making and maintaining such a profession as brings comfort to our own heart, glory to God, and profit to his people. This is therefore what the apostle calls "the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. 12:1), the idea being taken from a loose, cumbrous garment which entangles the feet and prevents activity in the race. When faith is in exercise, nothing is more easy than to confess the blessed name of Jesus. Then we hold fast our profession without wavering. But when faith is not in exercise, when unbelief comes in and exerts its power over our minds, it makes the hands droop, so that, if I may use the expression, our very profession but for the grace of God would drop out of our fingers. To fight at such times the good fight of faith is somewhat like a man fighting with an adversary in a dream: he cannot grasp his sword. Have you not dreamt sometimes that you were fighting with some deadly enemy, and it was as if your hand could not clasp your sword, or if you struck a blow, it was so weak and ineffective that it seemed as if all your muscle and sinew were gone? There are day-dreams as well as night-dreams; and how often in our day-dreams does unbelief so weaken our hands that we cannot grasp "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." We would fight against every foe and every fear, against every vile lust and base corruption; we would resist even to blood striving against sin. We

would not be cast down and discouraged by the difficulties in the way. But, like one fighting in a dream, the enemy seems to get the better of us in every way, and all our attempts to beat him back are weak and inefficient.

2. Another temptation, and therefore another hindrance to holding fast our profession, is *infidelity*. You would hardly think so, but it is an undoubted fact, that many of the saints of God are very much troubled with infidel suggestions; and that even the servants of God themselves are not exempt from these fiery darts of the devil. I personally knew a gracious man, a servant of God, who during the greater part of one week was so assailed with infidelity, and especially about the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he resolved on the coming Lord's day to go into the pulpit and tell the people that he had been deceived. "I have not deceived you," he resolved to say; "I fully believed what I preached to you, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost; but I now see that I was wrong, and that what I preached is not true." He was a remarkably honest man, both naturally and spiritually, and he therefore felt bound to tell the people the conclusion to which he had come in his own mind. Now I do not say that he acted wisely in coming to this resolution, for he might have seen, or at least feared, it was a temptation. But before the Sunday came, the Lord broke in upon his soul with such sweet, overwhelming power, and gave him such a bright and clear testimony to the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he went into the pulpit and preached it more boldly and strongly than ever. I mention this to show that even those whose hearts, lips, and lives are taken up with preaching the gospel are yet exposed to these assaults of Satan. I have read also of a man, an undoubted saint, and if I remember right, an acknowledged servant of God, who had lived many years in the sweet enjoyment of gospel truth, and yet when a friend came to see him upon his dying bed, was so full of infidelity—not only of unbelief, but actually of such infidelity that he said he could not believe that the Scriptures were the word of God. His friend was overwhelmed with trouble. "What?" he said, "you to be on your dying bed and say this, whom I and so many

others have received as a saint of God for all these years?" "Well," he replied, "I only tell you what I feel; here I am in it, and I cannot help myself out of it." But before he left this life, the Lord appeared in power and glory to his soul, and he went home in the sweet enjoyment of the truth which he had so long professed. I mention these things to encourage you and myself also, who am often assailed with these darts of hell, these infidel suspicions, those suggestions of our relentless foe, who would destroy, if he could, the very foundation of our faith. But O, "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" If he can take away our Lord from us as revealed in the Scriptures, and as we hope he has been revealed to our hearts, what have we before us but the blackness of darkness for ever? For to take away the Deity of Christ must necessarily do away with his atoning blood and justifying righteousness, and leave us to utter despair.

3. But again, we often get *slack and cold* in the things of God. We may at times, perhaps, have been indulged with light and life, liberty and love, and walked comfortably with the Lord in peace and truth. But the world, it may be, has got hold of us; we may have left our first love, and those blessed feelings of warmth and consolation that once animated our hearts may have sunk to a very low ebb. Now when this is so, it is very hard to keep up a godly, consistent, active profession. It is true we may still keep up our profession before the Church and the world, and I hope do keep it up; for it would be a sad thing to let it go, or be remiss outwardly. It would indeed be bad to abandon prayer, reading the Scriptures, the house of God, and the company of the saints. But with all this outward attention there may be much inward coldness, torpidity, and death; much that benumbs the spiritual faculties. Thus, though we may keep up the form without, yet the life and power, holy warmth and living energy of vital godliness may be much wanting within.

4. But again, our profession may expose us to many things that may much *annoy and mortify the flesh*. We may sometimes be almost even ashamed of our profession, as keenly feeling what

contempt it brings upon us and often what persecution. Our friends and relations may all discountenance this new, this strange religion of ours, which none of our family, they tell us, ever professed before; and especially in early days, when we are subject to their authority, they may frown upon us and threaten us with severe pecuniary injury. Or if not so circumstanced, our own timorous, cowardly minds may present to us many difficulties, none of which may come to pass, and all of which God may dispel, as the sun dispels the morning mist; and yet they may appear of sufficient magnitude to deter us from making and maintaining a firm, consistent profession of Christ.

5. *Satan*, again, hates a godly profession. It thins the number of his subjects; it glorifies God; it makes the crucified One to be the object of our esteem and love; it casts contempt upon his power, and thus galls and wounds his jealousy and pride. As then an honest, consistent, godly profession, bringing glory to God, brings disgrace to Satan, this stirs up his infernal enmity, and prompts him to display it in every possible way, to hinder us, by force or fraud, from holding fast our profession, and thus glorify Christ by our faith and obedience.

Thus all those things—and many others might be mentioned—combine to make us drop our hands, as if worn and wearied by toil and exertion, and hold our profession at times with very lax and loose fingers. Mark then how the apostle comes as to the rescue in the words of our text, as if by them he would sound a shrill trumpet in our ears, and animate by them both himself and us: "Let us hold fast our profession." And may I not re-echo his words, and say to you "Whatever come give not up your profession, for if you give up that, you give up Christ? By giving up your profession, you renounce your faith; you manifest yourself a reprobate; you are guilty of apostacy; the indignation of God will surely fall upon you; and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Therefore, come what will, hold fast your profession. Let friends, family, honours, pleasures, riches, all go; they are not worth an instant's thought in comparison with eternal life; they are not worthy to be put in the same scale for a

moment with the weight of your immortal soul. Let all go, but keep Christ whatever you do. Whatever you suffer, never part with Christ; for remember that if you part with your profession, you part with Jesus, so far as your act is concerned, for his grace can recover as well as keep. But to draw back is virtually to draw back unto perdition; for it is by your profession that you are held up before the world, and testify you are one with him."

III.—But having viewed the difficulties and discouragements which stand in the way of a consistent, godly profession, let us now consider the *helps and encouragements* which are brought forward in our text, that we may ever hold it fast.

i. The apostle well knowing that all motives, whether to warn or to encourage, would be of no real efficacy unless there was One who could give them vital power, directs our eyes up to "the Great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," and thus would set before us the most encouraging motive he could possibly urge to hold fast our profession.

Now in thus setting Jesus before us, he would seek to impress upon our minds three things concerning him. 1. First, though not in exact order, yet still first, that he is a *sympathising and compassionate* high priest. "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." But how came Jesus to be a sympathising high priest? What makes his holy heart, even now, enthroned as he is in heaven's highest glory, to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, struggling as we are with them day by day, in this vale of tears below? Does he know these our infirmities, if I may use such an expression, by theory only? Does he merely view them with his heart-searching eyes as possessed of perfect omniscience? O no! Though as the omniscient God he knows them so, still he knows them otherwise. He knows them feelingly and experimentally by having himself passed through them: "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." 2. The next point he sets before us is, that *Jesus is passed into the heavens* as the Son of God, and therefore has gone up on high to be our Mediator and Advocate at the right

hand of the Father. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." This was God's decisive testimony that he had finished the work which he gave him to do. Thus he has won the battle; he has gained the victory; and leading captivity captive he passed into the heavens as our great Head and representative. 3. The third motive which the apostle, to encourage us to hold fast our profession, would lay before us is, that Jesus is "*a great high priest;*" and because a great high priest, greater than all our discouragements and hindrances.

Let us consider these three encouraging motives separately.

1. First, then, he is a *sympathising high priest*. Sympathy, you know, when we are afflicted, is very touching, very agreeable to our feelings; and when it is deep and real, penetrates with a peculiar power into our hearts. But a real sympathiser must have been a real fellow sufferer. Who, for instance, can sympathise with a widow but a widow? Who can feel for a parent bereaved of offspring but the mother or father who has lost a child? Who can sympathise with the sick and afflicted but those who know by real experience the weight and burden of bodily pain and suffering? There is something in sympathy when truly felt and expressed that draws to it the tenderest feelings of our heart; something which, while it softens and melts, gives us strength to bear up under our afflictions, as not being alone in them. So in the things of God. We find great difficulties attending our profession—difficulties without, difficulties within; so that at times it seems as if we must almost give it up. Sometimes we may fear that we have been deceived altogether; that we never had a real work wrought upon our conscience, shall be proved at the last to have been vile hypocrites, and die under the wrath of God. As such fears and feelings work in the mind, it seems at times that it would be almost better at once to give up our profession, so as not to add hypocrisy to our other crimes. Now as we sink under these thoughts and apprehensions, the apostle would encourage us not to give way to them, but still in spite of them all to hold fast our profession. "Look not," he would say, "to yourself; what

will you ever find in yourself but misery and wretchedness, sin and wickedness, hypocrisy, filth, and folly? Turn your eyes to another quarter. Look up: there is at the right hand of the Father One who can sympathise with you in all your temptations and difficulties, in all your wants and woes, in all your apprehensions and grievous discouragements." Yes: he can sympathise with you, in and under them all. And why? Because he "has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Thus, have you been tempted with unbelief? His holy soul was so tempted. It was true that his holy soul never gave way to it, nor was under the power of it, because, though tempted, he was "without sin;" and had he given way to unbelief—had unbelief entwined its fibres around his holy nature—it would have made him a sinner. But he had the temptation presented to him, and so can sympathise with those who are under it. Did not Satan come to him and say, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread?" Was not that tempting him to unbelief? But you say you are tempted even to *infidelity*; and to that surely the Lord could not be. But if he were tempted in *all* points like as we are, this must have been one, or the text would not be true. Have you then doubted at times whether the Scriptures are inspired of God? Is the Deity of Christ sometimes such a mystery to you that it seems as if you must give it up as a doctrine you cannot believe? Be assured that Jesus can sympathise with you in your temptation. Or are you tempted at times to believe God is not your Father or Friend—that he is rather your enemy, your angry and inflexible Judge, not your God and Father in Christ? Was not Jesus tempted so? When the Father hid his face from him and he had to endure the wrath of God due to our transgressions; when such dark clouds hung before the face of his Father in that awful eclipse, in which the very sun itself and earth sympathised, were no such temptations presented to his soul when his enemies cried aloud, "God hath forsaken him;" and he himself burst forth into that dolorous lament, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Or again, if we are sometimes almost ashamed of Christ, unwilling to bear the contempt and reproach which the profession of his name brings upon us, was not Jesus so tempted? Had he not to walk about this lower world

despised and rejected of men, and at last to be buffeted and spit upon by the vilest of wretches, though at one word to his Father twelve legions of angels would have been given him to hurl them to hell? If we then through a feeling of shame would sometimes conceal, if not abandon, our profession, let us remember that Jesus was tempted like as we are in this as one of the "all points" insisted upon in our text. Are the difficulties and discouragements which lie in our path—some from without and some from within, but the main from within—so peculiar and almost so overwhelming that it seems at times, as Hart says, "there is no way at all?" Had not Jesus, when travailing here below, everything to discourage his holy soul? Look at the greatness of the work he had to do, the sufferings he had to bear, the weight of God's wrath he had to sustain, the holy law he had to fulfil before he could say, "It is finished." It was this personal experience of suffering which has made our Lord so "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," as having felt everything which we feel, having suffered everything which we suffer, and actually drunk up every bitter which we do but taste in the cup of temptation and sorrow. Thus, though he is now in heaven encompassed with glory, surrounded with everything that is happy and blessed, yet he looks down from the throne of his mercy and his majesty upon his suffering saints in this vale of tears with the tenderest pity and compassion. Here is one poor child of his so inwardly distressed with sin, that he fears he shall die in despair: Jesus is touched with the feeling of *his* infirmities. Here is another so bowed together with unbelief, that, like the poor woman in the gospel, he can in no wise lift himself up: Jesus is touched with a feeling of *his* infirmities. Here is a third who is assailed with such infidel suggestions that he cannot pray, or draw near the throne, or even open his lips before God, on account of the dreadful thoughts that rush into his mind upon his knees: Jesus is touched with a feeling of *his* infirmities. Here is a fourth, who, when he would read the word or hear it preached, has blasphemous imaginations suggested, to drop poison, as it were, into the very wells of life. I have mentioned but a few as a specimen of the infirmities that we all have to groan under. Now we have a high priest at the right hand of God who "is touched

with the feeling" of these infirmities. And remember who he is; that he is God-Man, with all the sympathy of man and all the power of God; whose heart is human, and whose hand divine; who looks from his holy throne upon those who fear his name, scanning the thoughts of every heart and reading the infirmities of every tempted saint, with his ear open to every cry, and his eye watching every spiritual movement of their soul.

And yet, though he was "tempted in all points like as we are"—so that whatever our temptations be, he has personally experienced them all—yet "*without sin,*" for he was "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Heb. 7:26.) This humanity, as being a "holy thing" in its very conception by the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35), was absolutely impeccable, that is, absolutely incapable of evil, and therefore all his temptations never produced one spot of sin in his pure, holy, human nature. They all fell from him, as the viper from the hand of Paul, without fastening on his pure humanity; or as when the waves of the sea dash upon a rock and the spray falls away, the rock is as and where it was before, neither sullied or moved. So the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ the Rock of ages, bore the pelting of the storm, and all the waves of hell that beat against it, unsullied and unmoved by them all.

It is by such motives that the apostle would direct our minds to look up to Jesus at the right hand of the Father. It is as if he would say, "There is everything in self to discourage and dismay; the more, therefore, that you look to yourself the lower you will sink, the more you will be tossed up and down by doubt and fear. But why do we look so much and so continually to self? Why should you ever be looking at your discouragements, as if there was nothing else to think of, nothing else to look at? Is your case wholly desperate? Must you sink in despair under a sight and sense of your sins, without hope or help? Look up." He would thus seek to raise up our fainting spirits, and fix our eyes upon the only Object worth looking at—Jesus in glory, and yet Jesus full of grace. Thus would he direct our minds to the same gracious man of sorrows, who when upon earth was tempted in

all points like as we are, but is now at the right hand of the Father, as the sympathising high priest of the Church of God.

ii. But he speaks of him also as having "*passed into the heavens.*" Now, if I may use the expression, Jesus would never have gone back to heaven if he had not finished his work upon earth. If you were to send a servant to do a certain work, and said to him at his departure, "Never see my face again until that work be done, and you can come without fear or shame into my presence and say, 'I have done that which thou hast commanded me,'" your servant, assuming he was a faithful servant, would never attempt to come back until he had done the work so solemnly and particularly entrusted to him. So in a spiritual sense. Jesus was the Father's servant ("Behold my servant whom I uphold," Isai. 42:1), and as such had a work to perform, which was to redeem the Church of God from the depths of the fall. Now Jesus would never have gone back to see his Father's face, any more than Judah could have ventured to go back to Jacob without Benjamin in his hand, unless he had finished the work which the Father gave him to do. This work was, as I said before, to redeem the Church of God from the lowest hell, and present all the redeemed to his Father without spot or blemish or any such thing, by washing away their sins in his own blood and covering them all around with his own robe of righteousness. The apostle therefore encourages us to look unto him who is "passed into the heavens," as a proof that he had finished the work. Once he was upon earth doing his Father's will and working out our salvation. But he has left earth, is gone up on high, is passed into the heavens, and there sits at the right hand of God, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He would by this blessed truth raise up our drooping hearts. He would say, "Look up, poor drooping soul, look up, and see Jesus who has passed into the heavens: there anchor within the veil; there let your faith and hope firmly rest. And you shall pass into the heavens too, because you are a member of his body, flesh, and bones. Where the Head is, there must be the members. He has gone to prepare a mansion for you, and where he is, there must his people be also. He cannot leave you on earth to grapple with your sins, for

he has put them all away by his own blood-shedding. He will not then leave you in the hands of sin and Satan. Therefore, look to him and cast your weary soul into his hands, who is able to keep that which you commit unto him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.) This Jesus, who has passed into the heavens, is even now there with all his grace and all his glory; and he can send down supplies to all who feel their need of them. A word from him can give renewed strength. He has but to speak, and your foes and fears, sins and miseries, will all vanish like the mist before the sun. How was it in times of old? Look at the children of Israel with Pharaoh behind and the Red Sea before: death seemed certain which ever way they turned. But Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the waters were divided. So with us. We are surrounded with difficulties, perils, and woes. The great high priest has but to speak: the waves open, the way is made plain, and the soul passes through the waters as on dry land.

iii. But Jesus is said to be also "*a great high priest;*" he must indeed be a great high priest, because he is the Son of God; and if he be so by nature and essence, as we believe him to be, he has all the power of God, for he is God as well as man. With God all things are possible; that is our mercy. With man, many things are impossible. Salvation, for instance, is impossible to man as a poor, fallen sinner. Let man do what he will, he never could save his own soul; but God can save it because Jesus died. This great high priest, then, as being God-Man, is greater than all our enemies. Put them all together, he is greater than all; yes, and greater than all our fears, greater than all our doubts, greater than all our dangers, greater than all our discouragements, greater than all our unbelief, greater than all our infidelity. Put together in one man everything that tempts, that tries, that casts down, and discourages all the saints of God taken together, why, they would be like chaff before the wind if the Lord did but appear. They would all fall flat upon their faces, like the walls of Jericho, or as so many dead men, like Sennacherib's army when the destroying angel went forth and their carcasses were stretched upon the plain. View, then, and review the number of your enemies, magnify them to the utmost of your fears or of your

imagination: what are they all compared with the power of this great high priest? But you say, "I believe all this, and yet it does not remove them." But do you go the right way to have them removed? Are you putting your soul, with all its perils and cares and anxieties into the hands of this great high priest; or are you partly trusting to him and partly trusting to yourself—one eye upon Jesus and another upon your own strength? If it be so, be not surprised that he does not come forth. But be what the saints of God ever are in their right mind, and what they ever should be, poor and needy, weak and helpless, this deep necessity at once enlists him upon your side. This great high priest is drawn by a sense of our need of him to appear on our behalf; and when he appears, then all our doubts and misgivings will be like the chaff before the wind. Have you never proved it to be so? You know what afflictions, trials, and temptations are by personal experience; you must know what consolations are by the same medium and in the same way. You can go with me a certain length, for you can say, "I certainly am acquainted with the exercises of mind which you have described." Can you not go a step further? See if you cannot. Stay not at the threshold; come into the inner court. Has there been no word of promise, no smile of mercy, no faith and hope and love raised up at some time or other in your soul? You cannot deny, if you know anything of divine teaching, that there have been times when help and support have been given you from the sanctuary. These are marks for good—certain proofs that the same Jesus who gave you these has others to give; that the same great high priest who has helped you on thus far will help you on to the end of the journey; that he will go on to appear more and more in your soul, and endear himself more and more unto you; and that if he enable you to trust in him, all will in the end be well. You may have more doubts and fears than ever you have had; the power of unbelief may rage stronger and stronger; but all these things will draw more sympathy, more compassion, more love and mercy out of the heart of our covenant Head. As you sink more and more into self-helplessness and despondency, and see more of the suitability of the Lord Jesus Christ, it will enable you to draw more out of his fulness; and then you will see that though your

discouragements are very great, your temptations very strong, and your fears very powerful, yet there is that in him which can in a moment dispel all. By seeking his face, and casting your soul upon him, you are engaging him on your behalf, and putting yourself, as it were, in his way. Like blind Bartimeus, you are crying, "Son of God, have mercy upon me." You are lying at his feet, taking hold of his garment, seeking to come near to him. All these are movements of the divine Spirit in your heart. By these means he is drawn, so to speak, out of his sanctuary into the fuller and clearer opening up of his grace, beauty and glory. And every fresh view of him will endear him more to your heart, till faith is lost in sight and hope in enjoyment.

## **THE HOLY ANOINTING, ITS ABIDING, AND ITS EFFECTS**

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, July 20th, 1856, at Gower Street Chapel, London

"But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." 1 John 2:27

In the latter chapters of the book of Exodus God gave Moses very special and minute directions as to the anointing and consecration of Aaron and his sons to the office of the priesthood. Aaron, beyond all doubt, was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest over the house of God, and his consecration and anointing to the priestly office was a figure of the consecration and anointing of the Lord Jesus Christ to His holy priesthood; but the conjunction of the sons of Aaron with him points further, and seems emblematical of the consecration of the saints of God, who are "a holy priesthood," and as such "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Now, among the directions which God gave to Moses in the consecration of Aaron and his sons, there were several things noteworthy.

1. He was to wash them, which is emblematical of the saints of God being washed in the blood of the Lamb. 2. He was to clothe them with garments of glory and beauty, which, as applied to Aaron's sons, is emblematical of the robe of righteousness which is cast round them, and in which they stand without spot before God. 3. He was to anoint them with "a holy anointing oil," of which the ingredients are specially mentioned in the directions given, and the manufacture, composition, and use of which are well worthy of our notice; for I need hardly observe that this holy

anointing oil was emblematical of the grace, gifts, operations, influences, teaching, and sanctification of the Holy Ghost.

But there are several things said about this holy anointing oil which are very noteworthy. I. First, it was to be exactly compounded according to certain special directions, which you will find Exod. 30:23-25. It would appear from the quantity manufactured—if I may use that expression without lowering the dignity and sacred nature of the subject—that it was to serve as long as the old covenant lasted. This points to the unity of the Spirit, that as successive priests were in all generations anointed by exactly the same holy anointing oil, so all the saints of God are anointed by one and the same Spirit, who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son.

2. The next thing noteworthy is, that it was "not to be poured upon man's flesh," which may imply either that it was not to be used for common purposes, or that the carnal mind is not sanctified by the grace of God.

3. An especial prohibition is given that "whosoever compounded any like it was to be cut off from his people." God set His face against any imitation of this holy anointing oil. O what a sentence against any imitation of the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost! for if a man presumed to counterfeit this holy anointing oil, he was to be cut off, by a judicial sentence of death, from the congregation of Israel.

4. And the fourth and last thing we shall notice of it is, that "whosoever put any of it upon a stranger was to be cut off from the people," implying that it was reserved for the priests of God, and was not to be put upon anyone who was a stranger to the covenant of promise, not redeemed by the blood of Christ, nor justified by His righteousness.

Having dropped these few observations upon the holy anointing oil, I now pass on to consider, with God's blessing, the words of the text, in which we find mention of the anointing, or unction, of

the Holy Ghost: "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him."

With God's blessing, in attempting to open up the meaning of the Holy Ghost in these words, I shall direct your attention to five particulars.

I. First, the necessity and the nature of this holy anointing.

II. Secondly, that this anointing teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie.

III. Thirdly, how this anointing, where once bestowed, abideth in the soul an incorruptible seed.

IV. Fourthly, that this divine anointing supersedes, to a certain extent—I shall show by and by why I limit the words—all other teaching, for he who is favoured with it needs not that any man should teach him.

V. Fifthly and lastly, the blessed effect of this anointing abiding in the soul, that as it hath taught us, so we shall abide in Christ.

I. A right knowledge and living experience of the Person, graces, and operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul, is a very essential thing. Man is so deeply sunk, so utterly fallen, so unable to bring himself back, that he needs this holy Teacher to lead him into a saving, experimental knowledge of the truth of God; for we know nothing but by His teaching, have nothing but by His giving, and are nothing but by His making. The more clearly, then, that we are led to see, and the more deeply we are taught to feel what we are as fallen sons and daughters of Adam, the more shall we feel our need of, and the more shall we value when realized, His blessed operations upon the heart and conscience. Now, in the case of Aaron (viewed not only as a type of Christ, but as personally ministering at the altar of the tabernacle, and

thus consecrated to the office of high priesthood), it was not sufficient that he was washed, nor that he was clothed; he must be also anointed by the holy anointing oil before he could stand in the sanctuary of God. So it is with a son of the Most High, one of the "kings and priests" that form "the royal priesthood;" it is not sufficient for him to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in His justifying righteousness; he must be consecrated to God's service by the holy anointing; in other words, be sanctified, regenerated, and renewed in the spirit of his mind, that, by being made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) he may enter into a spiritual experience of the truth of God here, and enjoy the eternal pleasures which are at God's right hand hereafter.

From the very nature of the fall, it is impossible for a dead soul to believe in God, know God, or love God; it must be quickened into spiritual life, before it can savingly know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. And thus there lies at the very threshold, in the very heart and core of the case, the absolute necessity of the regenerating operations of God the Holy Ghost upon the soul. The very completeness and depth of the fall render the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost as necessary, as indispensable, as the redeeming work of the Son of God. The Apostle therefore puts them together. "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." If, therefore, the soul is to enter into eternal glory, it must be prepared for glory by being made a partaker of grace. It must, in this present life, this time state, be made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, be capacitated whilst here below for the eternal fruition of the Triune God, by receiving a new and heavenly nature begotten of the Holy Ghost, which as a pure spirit (for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit) is capable of seeing, enjoying, and eternally delighting in the open vision of the Deity as manifested in the glorious Person of the God-Man.

Having, thus far, seen a little of the necessity, that lies at the very root of the case, of the regenerating, sanctifying operations of the blessed Spirit, let us now look at the nature of this holy

anointing of which the beloved disciple speaks.

The ancients delighted much in having the head, hands, feet, and sometimes the whole body anointed with fragrant ointments. The drying nature of that hot climate made the hair and skin hard and rough, the joints and muscles rigid, and the fine sand and dust chafed and chapped the flesh, producing sores and cutaneous diseases unless the body were frequently anointed—oiled we might almost call it. And as the heat also made the bath and constant ablutions indispensable, and as this dried up the natural moisture of the skin, anointing became necessary to preserve it soft and flexible. These thoughts may help us to understand the reasons why the blessed Spirit has chosen the emblem of oil and anointing therewith as a type of His gracious operations. The Holy Spirit, then, in selecting this emblem, seems to have had special reference to the effects of divine grace upon the heart and conscience.

Let us examine the figure thus.

1. How *penetrating* is oil! Water is soon evaporated. The rain we had this day soon dried off the pavement; but let fall one drop of oil upon a sheet of paper, or upon a new board, how it penetrates into the inmost pores and very substance of the material. So it is with this divine unction, this holy anointing; there is something penetrating in it. It does not float upon the surface as mere natural religion does; but it sinks into the inmost heart, and penetrates into every hidden corner, nook, and cranny of the sinner's conscience. The work of grace in the soul, in its very beginnings, penetrates deeply into its inmost substance. It wounds and lays open the conscience to the eye of infinite Purity and Holiness. "The entrance of Thy words (that is, the very first entrance) giveth light." "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." All conviction, to be true conviction, must be thorough. The field must be ploughed, broken up, and furrowed, before the seed can

find a tith, a seed-bed for the seed to fall in so as to germinate and grow. There is much to be done in a sinner's heart before Christ can dwell in him by faith, or be formed in him the hope of glory. The heart is naturally very hard; thorns, thistles, and briars overspread its surface; the rank weeds of pride and lust have taken deep root; much grubbing up of these bosom sins, as well as of our inbred self-righteousness and fleshly holiness, creature strength and sufficiency, is needed to prepare us to receive a free-grace salvation, separate us from the world and false professors, embitter to us the loved things of time and sense, and lay us suing for mercy at the foot of the cross. The first work, therefore, of conviction must be deep, or at least thorough, in order to make room for Christ and His salvation. And so it is with any manifestation or discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ, any application of His blood, any visitation of His presence, or shedding abroad of His love; these divine realities do not float upon the surface, but sink deep, and penetrate into his heart of hearts, into a man's inmost and deepest soul. How soon is all lost and forgotten, but what the blessed Spirit writes Himself in the heart! People say, "How well we have heard!" but all is lost and dropped before they get home from the house of prayer. They read a chapter, close the Bible, and with it all they have read is closed too. Many have passing pangs of conviction, and passing desires, who give little proof of living under the Spirit's anointings. That divine Spirit does not let the saints of God off so easily. He holds them fast and firm to the work of conviction till He has slain them outright; and when He blesses He heals as deep as He wounds, and reveals the gospel as powerfully as He applies the law.

2. But oil *softens*, *supples*, and *mellows* that to which it is applied. A hard tumour, a stiff joint, a contracted muscle, a sprained ankle—how ointment rubbed into them softens and supples them. So it is with the holy anointing of the blessed Spirit; it softens the hardest, supples the most stubborn, mellows the most obstinate heart. This softness and tenderness of heart were eminent in king Josiah: "Because thine heart was tender" (2 Chron. 34:27). How the mountain melts at His presence! how the

stony heart flows down at a touch of His finger or smile of His face! The whole heart is softened, melted, dissolved into humility and praise. This tenderness of conscience, this melting of heart, is a sweet evidence of the unction of the Holy Ghost resting in and upon the soul. All true contrition of heart, brokenness of spirit, humility of mind, godly sorrow, penitence and compunction, weeping over a sinful heart and a suffering Jesus; all looking to Him whom we have pierced, and mourning for Him; all self-loathing and self-abhorrence; all bitterness of soul and deep grief for continual backslidings in heart and affection; all holy indignation against self, and groaning desires to be kept from evil and to walk before God in daily, hourly, filial fear—all these precious marks of the grace of God proceed from the anointing of the blessed Spirit.

3. Again. Oil *spreads itself*; it is diffusive in its very nature. Water gets less and less; sun and wind soon dry up the heaviest shower. So natural convictions are soon exhaled by the burning sun of temptation, or dried up by the sirocco wind of pride and lust. They have not time, so to speak, to spread, but die as soon as born. But the unction of the Holy Ghost abides, diffuses itself, enters into every feeling of the heart, spreads through every affection of the soul. It draws forth faith, inspires hope, communicates love, gives patience, confers humility, spreads through the whole new man of grace, reaching every member, and diffuses itself in proportion to the depth to which it penetrates.

4. But the anointing oil was *fragrant*. The choicest spices, the most odoriferous flowers and fruits of the sweetest shrubs were used in its composition; myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia, all of them the most fragrant spices of the East, lent to the anointing oil their separate odours. It was not common oil, but "an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compounded after the art of the perfumer" (margin). So the anointing of the Holy Spirit gives forth a divine fragrance up into the very courts of heaven. As the house was filled with the odour of the ointment when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, so when the great High Priest entered

the courts of heaven, He filled them with the fragrance of that holy human nature which was begotten of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and which the same blessed Spirit had also anointed with every divine gift and grace. And as the oil was poured upon the head of Aaron, and ran down upon his beard, and went down to the skirts of his garments (Ps. 133:2), so the members of the mystical body of Christ are anointed with the same Spirit as their glorious Head, and thus give forth a fragrance acceptable to God. It is the same fragrance that makes them acceptable to the saints, for it was Asher's dipping his foot in oil, the holy anointing oil, that made him acceptable to his brethren (Deut. 33:24). O to be favoured with this holy anointing! with a few drops of this sacred oil! There is more vital godliness, more real religion, and more felt blessedness in one drop of God's holy anointing, dropped into the soul from the fulness of Jesus, than there is in seas of creature religion, in oceans of what is called piety and goodness, in the widest lakes or broadest rivers of human wisdom, strength, and holiness; for "better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right." This every child of God who has felt, though but in small measure, the blessed effects of this holy anointing, can certainly and safely testify.

II. But I pass on to show, with God's help, *what this holy anointing teaches*. The Holy Ghost, speaking of it by the pen of John, has laid out a very wide field of what this teaching embraces; for he says, "The same anointing *teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie.*" Of course, by the words "all things," he means all divine things, the heavenly realities, the blessed truths of God, which are made known to the soul, for it is to them that the Holy Spirit confines Himself. He does not make us mathematicians, philosophers, or linguists. His operations, like Himself, are spiritual, holy, and divine, and "all things" that He teaches are connected with the glory of God and the good of the soul.

i. Now, if He is to teach us "all things," we may safely lay down these two points. 1. That really and truly we know nothing but by

His teaching. 2. That just in proportion as we are favoured with His teachings, are we made wise unto salvation. Let us look at a few things that He teaches us.

1. He teaches us *the nature and evil of sin* as committed against the holy, just, and righteous law of God. He thus gives us spiritual and abiding views of the majesty, greatness, power, purity, and justice of the great God with whom we have to do. We cannot feel the spirituality of God's holy law, nor sensibly know the length, breadth, and awful depth of sin in the carnal mind, without this holy anointing. Men may have natural convictions of sin, but they cannot know and feel it as a violation of the purity and holiness of God; they cannot sensibly enter into the dreadful evil of sin as beyond all description hateful to His terrible majesty, and deserving His eternal wrath and fiery displeasure. They rather palliate it, because the anointing has not touched the conscience. By this anointing oil also the depths of iniquity in the heart are broken up. The very nature of oil, as I showed before, is to penetrate. So where this anointing penetrates it acts with power; it sinks into the conscience; it breaks it up; diffuses upon it the light of God's majesty; and thus sinking into the depths of the regenerated soul, discovers the filth and folly, the hideous wickedness and foul criminality of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. And not only so, but it brings sorrow and grief, with mental trouble upon the heart, for the sin which it discovers; lays guilt upon the conscience; causes distress, anxiety, remorse, and works a living repentance of, and hatred to all the transgression and iniquity that it lays open and brings to light. Bear this in mind, that such is the darkness and hardness of the heart by nature, that we have no real sight or sense of sin, no groaning under it, no feeling of its dreadful power, no hating ourselves on account of it, except as this holy anointing drops into the soul and makes it sensible of the existence and working of sin, and fights against it; for "the spirit lusts against the flesh as well as the flesh against the spirit."

2. The same "anointing" teaches us also *how to pray and what to pray for*, intercedes for us and within us with groanings which

cannot be uttered. Thus this holy anointing does not come merely to convince of sin, to bring the soul down, to lay it low, and then leave it there; but it comes as a Spirit of grace and supplication, with a whole flood of earnest breathings and longing desires to the God of all mercy, for mercy to be shewn. As the publican prayed in the temple, so does the convinced sinner cry, groan, and pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

3. But, as the same anointing "teacheth of all things, and is truth and no lie," it teaches us in God's own time and way to *know and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*; for the special work of this holy Comforter is to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to the soul. The special office—the office He sustains in the eternal covenant—is to glorify Christ; not to speak of Himself, but to testify of Jesus; to reveal Him; to bring His blood and obedience near; to shed abroad His love; to raise up faith in His Person and work; and to knit the believer into a vital union with the Son of God. We know nothing savingly of Christ; we have no vital, active, influential faith in Him, nor well grounded hope in His blood, until the anointing raises it up and draws it forth.

ii. But this anointing not only teacheth of all things, it "*is truth, and is no lie.*" As then the Holy Ghost leads *into all truth*, so He leads away *from all error*. Those who are destitute of this holy anointing fall easily and greedily into error. Not so with the child of God. John says in the verse preceding our text, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." There were those even in those days, who went about—we might almost call them incarnate fiends—to seduce the simple into error. And how were any preserved from this erroneous spirit, and these doctrines of devils? By the holy anointing, that gave love to truth, and hatred to error. So now we are preserved from error only by that anointing, which leads the child of God into all truth; opens their eyes to see error; makes their hearts abhor it; guides their feet away from it; a makes them shun and flee not only erroneous doctrines but erroneous men, because they dread being left to fall into error, and hold a lie in their right hand. I believe, for my part, there is more error and heresy in the

churches professing truth, such as the Strict Baptist churches, than we are well aware of. Crafty, deceitful men, whom Satan has secretly drawn into error, and drugged with his poisonous doctrines, often cover up their delusions and heresies under a show of experience; and thus deceiving the simple, creep into churches and pulpits of truth, where they soon begin to work, and try to drag the children of God into the same pit into which they have fallen themselves. But take this as a most certain truth, that though there may be sound doctrine where there is not sound experience, there is no sound experience where there is not sound doctrine—in the heart at least, if not in the head. When, then, these erroneous men are pointed out by the servants of God, and their errors shown by the Word of truth, then, like serpents coiled up in their holes, they begin to spit and hiss, and thus manifest themselves in their true colours, showing that they are serpents, and not sheep. The Holy Ghost, then, by His divine teaching, leads the soul away from all error, because He leads into all truth; and as truth must ever be the exact contrary to error, in proportion as we are led into every truth we are led away from every error. No man whatsoever, however sound his creed, is safe a single moment from falling into the most delusive errors, except as he is favoured with the "anointing." But if he be a partaker of this holy unction, it leads him so sweetly, draws him so blessedly into the truth of God, that he never can embrace any doctrine on which the power, grace, dew, and unction of God do not more or less sensibly rest. If, then, you are afraid of falling into any error that seems to wear an air of truth, that your reasoning mind appears to favour, that some friend or minister may bring forward, and back up with texts and arguments, beseech the Lord that he would favour you with the anointing "which teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie:" and receive no doctrine without it. But specially beware of error or heresy directed against any one of the Three Persons of the Godhead; any error directed against the Father, or against His Eternal Son, or against the Holy Ghost. Any approach to any erroneous view upon any one Person of the Trinity, or any work or office maintained by them, is to be shunned and abhorred by every one who desires to fear God and live to His glory. Satan

introduces no trifling errors into the Church; they may appear trifling at first, but they always involve perilous consequences. It may seem of little consequence whether the human soul of Christ pre-existed in eternity, or was created in time; but the former doctrine is the high road to Arianism. It may seem of little moment whether Christ be the Son of God by nature or by office but the latter doctrine is a blow at each Person of the Trinity. The longer I live the more I love truth, and the more I abhor error and heresy, in whatever shape they may present themselves to my eyes. Therefore for yourselves, your ministers, and the saints of God, beseech the Lord more and more to favour you and them with the holy anointing of which John speaks; it will be your and their safeguard against error; and will sweetly lead you and them into the truth as it is in Jesus. The promise is still valid, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And if we realise the sweetness of this promise then are we "disciples indeed."

III. But I pass on to our third point, which is, the *abiding of this anointing in the soul*. Now, all the powers of earth and hell are combined against this holy anointing, wherewith the children of God are so highly favoured. Sin, in all its movements, desires, and actions, aims its deadly shafts against this holy anointing; the world, with its charms, amusements, lusts, pleasures, and even occupations, is all against this holy anointing; Satan is infuriated with a most bitter hostility against not only the anointing, but against all who are partakers of it; our carnal mind, with all the dreadful evils that lurk therein, with everything that is sinful, devilish, and vile; all, all are combined against this holy anointing. But if God has locked up in the bosom of a saint one drop of this divine unction, that one drop is proof against all the assaults of sin, all the attacks of Satan, all the enmity of self, and all the charms, pleasures, and amusements of the world. Waves and billows of affliction may roll over the soul; but they cannot wash away this holy drop of anointing oil. Satan may shoot a thousand fiery darts to inflame all the combustible material of our carnal mind; but all his fiery darts cannot burn up that one drop of oil which God has laid up in the depths of a

broken spirit. The world, with all its charms and pleasures, and its deadly opposition to the truth of God, may stir up waves of ungodliness against this holy anointing; but all the powers of earth combined can never extinguish that one drop which God has Himself lodged in the depths of a believer's heart. Jonah had it locked up in the depths of his soul when he was in the whale's belly; but all the waves and billows that went over his head, no, nor the very depths of hell itself, in whose belly he felt he was, did not wash away that drop of anointing oil which God had lodged in his soul. David sank deep into sin and remorse; but all his sin and misery never drank up that drop of anointing oil that God the Spirit had dropped into his heart. The prodigal son goes into a far country; but he never loses that drop of anointing oil, though he wastes his substance in riotous living. Heman complains out of the depths of his affliction; but all his troubles never drank up that holy anointing oil that God had put into his soul. Hezekiah on his apparent death-bed, when he turned his face to the wall, was sorely tried, and almost in despair; yet all his affliction and despondency never drained the holy drop of anointing oil. And so it has been with thousands, and tens of thousands, of the dear saints of God. Not all their sorrows—I may say more—not all their sins, backslidings, slips, falls, miseries, and wretchedness, have ever, all combined, drunk up the anointing that God has bestowed upon them. If sin could have done it, we should have sinned ourselves into hell long ago; and if the world or Satan could have destroyed it or us, they would long ago have destroyed both. If our carnal mind could have done it, it would have swept us away into floods of destruction. But the anointing abideth sure, and cannot be destroyed; where once lodged in the soul, it is secure against all assaults of earth, sin, and hell. The saints of God feel that it abides; for it springs up at times in prayer and desires after the living God; and it breaks forth into faith, hope and love. Thus it not only abides as a divine reality, but as a living principle, springing up into eternal life. Were it not so, there would be no revivals, no fresh communications, no renewed testimonies, no breakings forth, no tender meltings, no breathings out of desire for the Lord's presence, no mourning over His absence. The minister would be

dead in the pulpit, and the people dead in the pew. Barrenness and death would overspread the Church of God as a deep and dark cloud; mildew and canker would eat up all the wheat in the field, and weevils and dust all the corn in the granary. But the anointing abideth, and this preserves the soul from death, and keeps it alive in famine.

IV. I pass on to our fourth point, which is, that the anointing, to a certain extent, *supersedes all other teaching*. I say to a certain extent, for there are ordinances and institutions in the Church of God which it certainly does not supersede. For instance, it does not supersede the *ministry of the gospel*, because, in fact, the anointing is often communicated through the ministry of the Word. Nor does it supersede the *ordinances* of God's house, because they are themselves appointed of God. Nor does it supersede *mutual intercourse* with each other; for if it did, we might bid farewell to all converse with the saints; we might shut ourselves up, and never speak to a dear child of God again. But it supersedes everything which does not in some measure savour of it, and is not connected with it. The ministry of the gospel, for instance, is connected with it, for through the preached gospel the anointing often comes. The ordinances of God's house are connected with it, for the Lord often blesses the ordinances of His house. So with prayer, social, private, and public; so with the converse of saints; the Lord often blesses these means, and through them the anointing is communicated. Therefore it does not supersede the ordinances, nor the preaching of God's Word, nor the mutual help the children may be to each other; but it supersedes everything foreign to it. We want no carnal wisdom in the Church of God; no bright intellects, no learned philosophers, no great men of science, no poet, orator, or metaphysician, to teach us the truth of God, or make us recipients of this anointing oil. The poor and the uneducated receive this anointing, as well as those who, speaking after the manner of men, may have been more favoured with talents and education. All the family of God are, in this respect, put upon the same level. It reduces all to this single point—what we know we know only by divine teaching. One may be educated, another not, it matters not; as the one or

the other is anointed, he is made wise unto salvation, is made a believer, knows and feels the power of God's truth, and is led into the sweetness and blessedness of the gospel. In this way this holy anointing supersedes everything which is foreign to it, and not of the same nature.

V. But we now come to our last point, that this anointing, when received into the conscience of a child of God, maintains him in *an abiding union with the Son of God*. Without union with Christ there can be neither life nor love. To abide in Him is the source of all fruitfulness, of all happiness, and all holiness. His own words are, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (John 15:4). But without this anointing we can neither believe on Him nor abide in Him; but this anointing produces both faith and communion. Whenever this holy anointing comes, it produces a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and it maintains that union which it has once given; for the Holy Ghost keeps taking of the things of Christ, and revealing them to the saints, to whom He first communicated them. The promise was that the Comforter whom Christ was to send should "abide with the disciples for ever." He was to dwell with them and to be in them; and therefore, as He ever abides, His anointing ever abides likewise; and as the anointing abides, it keeps up an abiding also in Christ. Others may leave and forsake Him; be weary of His way, truth, and people; but the anointing keeps the true saint of God in living union with the Son of His love. Profession may fail, false faith decay and perish, vain hope expire, feigned love turn to coldness or enmity, knowledge cease, zeal wax cold, the truth be abandoned, the company of the saints forsaken, the servants of God despised; thousand may fall on the right hand and the left; but the anointing abideth still in the hearts of the family of God. This makes them abide in Christ. The Holy Ghost will never abandon His own work. He will maintain the faith He has bestowed, the hope which He has given, and the love which He has shed abroad. This abiding union with Christ is the blessed fruit and result of having received this holy anointing oil. Those who are not favoured with it, seem to believe for a time;

but not being favoured partakers of this holy anointing, they soon fall into the way of sin or error; and being thus manifested as unfruitful branches, are taken away and cast into the fire. How highly-favoured, then, is that soul which has received but even one drop of this holy anointing, and by virtue of it obtains as well as maintains an union with Christ! He lives in Christ, for Christ is his life; and dies happy in the sweet confidence of being made a partaker of His glory. Thus it comes to this narrow point, to speak individually—is my soul, is your soul favoured with this holy anointing or not? If they be not, how do we stand before God? Dead in sin without any living faith; without any testimony that we are interested in the blood and obedience of God's dear Son. But, on the other hand, if we have ever been favoured with this holy anointing to soften our hearts, humble our souls, give us faith in Christ, and break us down into godly sorrow for sin—if thus favoured with this holy anointing, it will keep us from all error, maintain that union with Christ which it first gave, and eventually land us safely in the realms of eternal bliss.

## The Hope and Saviour of Israel a Stranger in the Land

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening, July 23, 1850

"O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not." Jeremiah 14:8, 9

True religion is a mysterious thing. It is, therefore, called in the word of God a "secret." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." (Psalm 25:14.) "The secret of the Lord is with the righteous." (Prov. 3:32.) "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen." (Job 28:7.) "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," said the Lord Jesus Christ, "that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Luke 10:21.) Now, this secret, mysterious religion is the sole work of God upon the soul. We have no more, and we have no less than he is pleased to impart.

But when we come to look at the nature of this mysterious, yet only true religion, we find it to consist chiefly of two branches; a knowledge of sin, and a knowledge of salvation; an experience of self, and an experience of Christ; an acquaintance with hell, and an acquaintance with heaven. However varied, deep, or diversified our experience may be, yet, as far as it is of God, we shall find it very much to be summed up in the knowledge of these two distinct things.

Now of these two distinct things, God has said that they are both alike unsearchable. Describing the human heart, God gives this testimony concerning it; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; *who can know it?*" The Lord here gives a challenge, declaring that the wickedness and deceitfulness of the

human heart are so deep, that no man can, that no man does, know it to the bottom; for *that* he challenges as his own prerogative; "I, the Lord, search the heart;" implying that we cannot, that we have no line sufficiently long to fathom its boundless depths. And again, speaking of the love of Christ, which is the ultimatum, the sum and substance of the other branch of vital godliness, the Lord pronounces *that* also to be unsearchable. For Paul prayed that the Ephesian church might be led into a knowledge of "the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ *which passeth knowledge*, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Thus, if religion consists, as I believe it does, in a personal, spiritual acquaintance with these two distinct branches—a knowledge of sin, and a knowledge of salvation: in other words, a knowledge of the heart, and a knowledge of Christ; and if these two are equally unsearchable; it follows, that we can only have at best but a bare superficial acquaintance with either. For as we have no line sufficiently deep to sink to the bottom of human depravity, so we have no line sufficiently high to reach to the summit of the love of Christ. Thus, all our knowledge of self, us well as all our knowledge of Christ, must be, from the very nature of things, defective; and he that knows most of self, and he that knows most of Christ, will be the first to confess it.

But any knowledge of these two things will always bring with it a spiritual exercise. We do not learn religion as we learn a trade, a science, a language—by dint of human study. Religion is not to be learnt so; it is wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit of God; and, for the most part, it is "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." We grow in grace as we grow in nature; first, a babe, then a child, then a youth, then a man, then a father. But in proportion as we are divinely taught, shall we be exercised in the things of God; and it is mostly by long and continued exercises that we come to any real, satisfactory, spiritual knowledge of either Christ or ourselves.

But you will say, 'What connection has this with your text?' Why,

it has this connection, that in proportion as our souls are exercised with these two things shall we enter into the experience of the saints as revealed in God's word. We know nothing of the prayers of the saints, except so far as the same prayers are written in our souls; we taste nothing of the sorrows of the saints, except so far as those sorrows are felt by us; and we share nothing of the joys of the saints, except so far as those joys are brought by the power of God into our heart.

Now, looking at the general experience of the people of God, we must say that the church is now in a low state; that the bulk of God's people are exercised as to their eternal state and standing, and know for the most part much more of sorrow, of sin, of temptation, and of trial, than of the sweet manifestations of the love of God. And therefore, the dark parts of experience, those parts of scripture wherein we find the sorrows and exercises of the heart laid bare, are for the most part those which seem to fit most closely into the feeling of God's people now.

In our text, which is one of this character, we may observe *three* things.

I.—*First*, the *titles* that the church bestows upon God. She calls him, "The Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble."

II.—*Secondly*, we may observe her *affectionate expostulation*, "Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?"

III.—*Thirdly*, we may remark her *tender plea*, "Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not."

I.—We shall, *first*, then, with God's blessing, notice *the titles* of God that the church here takes and lays as it were at the Lord's feet.

1. Now there is something very significant and suitable in the titles that the church here makes use of. It is not a taking of the Lord's name into her lips, and giving him titles as mere titles of honour, in which she has no heart concern; but they are titles that she gives to the Lord as really descriptive of what he is to her, and of what she is to him. "*O, the Hope of Israel!*" she cries, clearly implying that she had no other hope. Her soul, when she used the words, was sinking into deep despondency. The Lord had withdrawn himself from her; she could not get any comfortable and blessed access to him; she could not call him "Abba Father;" she was not enjoying the manifestations of his love; he was not visiting her with the sweet assurances of her interest in his blood and righteousness. And yet, she could not give up her hope. She could find no solid ground in self to rest on; that had all fled away; she therefore looked out of herself, as souls in sinking circumstances are compelled to do, that she might find and found her hope in the Lord. She here resembles a drowning man. As long as he has full command of his limbs, (supposing he is a swimmer), he will strike for land; but let him be sinking, he no longer trusts to the power of his limbs, but lays hold of some friendly help. So with the soul: as long as she has something to trust in, in that something she will trust. But when all her strength is gone, and she has nothing whatever in self to rest on; when all her hopes, as regards her own strength, wisdom, or efficiency, are cut off, she must needs look out of self, that she may find somewhat on which to rest her hope. Now this she finds in the Lord; therefore, he is "the Hope of Israel." This is casting anchor within the veil, looking unto and hanging upon the Lord, and the Lord only, and experiencing him as "the Hope of Israel;" implying thereby that Israel is compelled to hope in him, because there is no other ground for Israel to hope in: hoping in his blood, hoping in his righteousness, hoping in his love.

But you will say, has the soul no hope in self? We must here draw a distinction. In one sense of the word, a soul taught of God has no hope in self, in another sense of the word, it has hope in self. As far as regards any hope in our ruined nature, in our vile heart, in our desperately wicked and helpless self—in *that* there can be

no foundation for a sinner's hope. God never meant a sinner to hope in self. He always sooner or later, cuts that hope in pieces; He will never let a sensible sinner rest there. If he hope in self, he hopes in a lie. But, in another sense, there is an inward hope. When the Lord is pleased to let down into the soul a manifestation of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, a revelation of his mercy, a discovery of his love, a visit from his presence, a word from his mouth, a smile of his countenance, a glimpse of his favour, the inward testimony of the Spirit raises up a hope in the heart. But this "good hope through grace" is different from a hope in self. The one is natural, the other spiritual; the one is of self, the other of God; the one a lie, the other a truth; the one a delusion, the other the solid teaching of the Spirit. Yet, this very internal hope enables the soul to look out of self, and hope in Israel's God; and therefore she calls him by that endearing appellation, "the Hope of Israel."

1. To prove this, take away what the Lord Jesus is and has; what he has done and suffered; and where is your hope? If there be no blood shed to put away sin, where is any foundation for hope? If there be no righteousness brought in, where is there any ground for hope? If no glorious Mediator, no risen Saviour, where any standing for hope? So that the soul is graciously compelled to look out of self with all its miseries unto Jesus with all his mercies, and thus cast herself on him who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. In this sense he is "the Hope of Israel."

2. But the church uses also another tender and beautiful appellation; she calls the Lord (we must evidently understand the Lord Jesus Christ here) "*the Saviour thereof in time of trouble.*" He is not only "the Hope of Israel," but "the Saviour of Israel," and a complete Saviour too. Not a Saviour in part, but a Saviour wholly; a Saviour to save to the uttermost. None but such a Saviour will suit Israel. For Israel is utterly lost. She has not a thread of righteousness. She has not anything which can stand; her condemnation must be complete without Jesus; nor can she lift up a finger to save herself from the bottomless pit. He must

be, therefore, and is a complete Saviour, a sufficient Saviour, a suitable Saviour, a Saviour worthy of the name. He is called such because he saves; and if he do not save perfectly, fully, finally, if he do not save thoroughly the vilest and the worst, we cannot call him a Saviour.

But how hard to believe this! how impossible to believe it, except as brought into the soul by the power of God! We use the words; they are in everybody's mouth; but are they in everybody's heart? And when are they in any heart? When we despair of mercy from every other source; when hopes of salvation are cut off from every other quarter; when we look within and without, and see and feel ourselves perishing, but have in self neither refuge nor help. Then, when the blessed Spirit is pleased (and at times he is pleased) to bring some sense of this blessed Saviour into the soul; anoint our eyes with divine eye-salve to see his person, obedience, suitability, love, and all-sufficiency; when he raises up a special faith whereby he is laid hold of, embraced, felt to be precious, enjoyed in the soul, and sweetly and blessedly received into the heart, then and there he becomes "a Saviour;" more than a name, a word, a title, a Bible appellation, more than an ornament of a discourse, or a tag-end to wind up a prayer. He becomes, as one of my people said lately on a deathbed, 'a blessed reality;' a Jesus that saves his people from their sins; yea, "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory."

But observe: "*in time of trouble.*" We do not want a Saviour for the most part, except "in time of trouble." As I say sometimes, we can do very well without God when we are at ease, in health, and prosperity, and the carnal mind is uppermost. It is a sad thought, a dreadful thought, that we can often do so well without God; live without him, think without him, act without him, speak without him, walk without him, work without him—just as if there were no God. All this we can do when self, and sin, and the world are uppermost. It is an awful thing that it should be so; it shews to me almost more than anything the desperate alienation of the heart—that a man, and a living man too, a man with grace in his heart, a man with the fear of God in his soul, a man loving and

beloved of God, a man who hopes one day to be with him in glory, a man who without him is really and truly a wretch, a man who owes everything unto him, and cannot exist in being a moment without him—that a living man, who has all these mercies and blessings, can for hours perhaps in a day live without God! How desperate must the heart be! how deep the alienation! how awful the wickedness! how wretched the case, that a living man can live for hours without any sensible realization of the power and presence of God!

But *when* can he not live without God? When his soul gets into "trouble." And therefore, the Lord, so to speak, is obliged to send "trouble" to flog us home. We are like truant children. Here is a truant child playing about in the street, taking up with every dirty companion, forgetting all about home, unmindful of his mother who is all anxiety about him, and his father who is all solicitude. The father and mother have then to go and flog him home. So the Lord sees us, his truant children, wandering away from home, taking up with every foolish vanity, forgetting all we profess to know. He has to come with his rod and flog us in; and this by trouble. "The Saviour thereof in time of trouble." Thus, when we get into "trouble," we remember there is a God; we think once more of the Lord; we want him to help us; he must come immediately, or we sink. We say, 'Lord come; come now: I cannot do without thee; my soul is troubled; my mind distressed; Lord, thou must come; do come, Lord, and speak a word to my soul!'

Now what brings all these cries and desires, breathings and utterings unto the Lord? Why, the Lord taking the rod down, laying it about us, and flogging us with some "trouble," as affliction in the family, sickness in the body, trials in circumstances, chastisement in soul, lashes of conscience. And thus, the Lord by various "troubles" brings us to cry and sigh and feel our need of him as a Saviour. And he is so kind and compassionate; he is not offended, because we only make use of him when we want him. Anybody else would be offended. I should not like to have *you* for a friend who only came to me

when you wanted me. I should not care much for your friendship, if you merely valued it for what you could get. Yet we are such base, rebellious wretches, as at times to treat the Lord in this way—a way in which we should be ashamed to treat our earthly friends: only coming to him when we can get something from him; only fleeing to him when we cannot do without him; only visiting him when we are in some distress. When the world smiles, and things are prosperous, and all is pleasant and comfortable within, it seems (such wretches are we) that we can do without the Lord. But when "trouble" comes, then the Lord is pleased often to make us feel that none but he can do our souls good. Him we must now have; him we cannot now do without; he must save now, and bless now, for there is none can help but he.

Now you see the church of old was very much in this experience. We are not the only rebels and wretches that have ever lived; we are not the only deep-dyed monsters that ever crawled; others have been as bad as we in their feelings, as base, as black, as hell-deserving, as ungrateful, as careless and forgetful of all good. And this is the reason why we find the confessions of the saints in the word of God so suitable; they come so into our heart, and they so describe our state and case when similarly exercised.

"O, the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble." Can you take these titles into your lips from a feeling experience of them? Can you tell the Lord he is the only hope of your soul? Can you tell him that you have no other; that you have long ceased to hope in self, and all your hope is in him? And do you feel from soul experience that the Lord has been, and is the Saviour of your soul "in time of trouble?" If you cannot come with me thus far, I must drop you here; I cannot take you a step further; but if you can walk with me thus far, now we will go on a little further, and get, if the Lord enable, into the very bowels of our text.

II.—Which is the *affectionate expostulation* of the church with "the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble." And a

very tender and feeling expostulation it is. It does my heart good to read its various branches. She first asks,

1. "*Why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?*" I love those "*Whys.*" Oh, how many whys does my soul put up! '*Why* am I thus? *Why* is it so? *Why* does the devil tempt? *Why* am I so weak? *Why* so foolish? *Why* so vile? *Why* so base? And *why* art thou so far off? *Why* dost thou not appear? *Why* dost thou not speak? *Why* dost thou not come?' You know something of these *whys*, do you not?

The church, you see, has a "why" as well as you and I; and says, "WHY shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?" She does not tell the Lord he was "a stranger," but asks "why" he should be "as a stranger?" Now what is "a stranger?" Why, a foreigner. We can scarcely walk the London streets now without hearing and seeing foreigners, with their black beards. Now these foreigners are not at home as we are in this country; they do not speak the sweet accents of our native tongue. When we pass them in the street we hear a foreign language; they are not citizens of this metropolis; they are only here for awhile.

Now the church seems to feel as if the Lord were all this. "Why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?" 'O Lord, why shouldst thou be thus a foreigner?' The church wanted the Lord to make his home in her heart; not to be a foreigner to her, one who had no home to dwell in, who did not take up his abode in her soul as a citizen, a native of the land. She could not bear this distance; she wanted the Lord to come and take up his home in her heart; and because the Lord did not come and take up his home there, and manifest himself to her soul, he was to her as "a stranger in the land."

But the "stranger" or foreigner, speaks a distinct tongue from ours: he does not converse in our language. This the church complains of—that the Lord did not converse with her as in times past; he spake a strange language which she could not comprehend. She had got separated from him through sin,

temptation, backsliding; and the Lord leaving her to herself, she had learnt too much the language of the world, and the "pure language" of Zion which the Lord spoke had become a foreign tongue in her ear. This she could not bear when her soul was brought to see and feel where she was. She tenderly expostulates, she feelingly complains, "Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land?" She wanted the Lord to speak to her, and converse with her in accents and a language that she could understand and feel at home with, to express that which she could enter into, could enjoy, could receive, and could really believe to be the native language of affection and love.

But there is another mark of a foreigner (for the words 'stranger' and 'foreigner' are doubtless the same); he does not know our customs; he has ways of his own, and does not practice ours. Now the church had got into such a state that the Lord's ways and manners differed as widely from hers as the ways of a foreigner from the ways of a country wherein he for a time dwells. The fault was not in the Lord; the fault was in her. She had got too much entangled in the customs of the world; she had fallen too much into ways that the Lord did not approve of; therefore his ways were out of her sight; foreign to her; and his manners and mode of dealing such as she did not enter into and understand; and this through her own perverseness. Being, therefore, now brought to feel that the Lord was a stranger to her, had no communion with her as in times past, and did not treat her with tenderness, affection, and kindness as he had been used to do, she could only expostulate in a tender and pathetic manner, and ask, why it should be so?

2. But we pass on to consider another branch of her expostulation, where she says, "*Why shouldest thou be as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night?*" "A wayfaring man" is a traveller, one passing hastily through a country. He turns aside from his journey to tarry for a night, because he does not choose to travel in the dark. The idea is of a person receiving this wayfaring man into his house, and the wayfaring man tarrying there during the night. This wayfaring

man we may suppose to be a stranger, received on the principle of common hospitality, as is the case in Eastern countries where there are no inns. Strangers are received into houses there merely on the footing of general hospitality. Under such circumstances the wayfaring man would be shy. He was a stranger; he would not communicate his business to the inmates of the house where he was lodging; he was only tarrying for a night; he was forming no friendship; he was taking no interest in the affairs of the family, nor they in his; he was but to remain for a few hours, and then all intercourse to terminate. The church uses this figure, and tenderly expostulating with the Lord, asks, why he should be so to her as this "wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?"

Let us look at the figure more closely. The wayfaring man would be very reserved; he would not speak much; he would take his meal and go to bed. Now this reserve is what the church could not bear on the side of the Lord. There was a time when, so to speak, he was one of the family; when he would sit at the head of the table; when he would speak to her as her Husband, Friend, and Beloved. But now a strange alteration has come over him; he is reserved; silence marks all his demeanour; he does not drop honied words as before. She was chilled and repelled by this distance. He wraps himself up in a cold reserve towards her; and this cold reserve chills her feelings, so that she dare not, cannot break through it.

Now does not this very much express the feelings of the heart when the Lord hides his face, when he will not speak, when he will not smile, when he will not give some testimony that he is listening to us, when he will not appear to our soul's comfort? There is a reserve in him; he does not open his lips; he chills us by his coldness. We pray, perhaps cry, desire, knock, seek, supplicate. He wraps himself up (I use the word with all reverence; but it is necessary to enter into these things to open up the beauty of the figure) in an atmosphere of coldness that we cannot break through. If (to carry out the figure) you were to receive some distinguished person into your house for the night,

you would see by his manner that he was a person of consequence. His very air carries dignity and authority with it; he is not familiar. He speaks rarely, and only a few words. You cannot break through that. Wrapped up in this atmosphere of reserve, you are repelled. So it is spiritually. When the Lord speaks, we can talk; when the Lord draws, we can run; when the Lord hears, we can pray; when the Lord blesses, we can praise. But if the Lord hide himself, withdraw, wrap himself up in a chilling atmosphere of coldness and reserve, we are dumb; we have nothing to say; we are shut up, and cannot come forth; our very hearts drop and droop, our mouths are closed, and our feelings thoroughly chilled. You know naturally nothing chills us like a reserved manner. We cannot take liberties with a person who is very reserved in his manners and conversation. My own natural manner has, I know, much of this cold reservedness, and is often mistaken for pride. But I cannot help it; it was born with me; it was my father's before me; and I cannot shake it off. But "the wayfaring man that tarries for a night," would, like myself, be reserved; he would not talk much. Now this is what the church complains of, 'Lord, why shouldest thou be as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? No sweet conversation, no gracious words. What, not one smile on thy countenance? Wilt thou not give me one kind glance, one look of love, one tender intimation? Do speak, Lord; whisper into my heart some word that may comfort and bless. O, "why shouldest thou be as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?"'

But we may take the words in another point of view—to express the transitory nature of the Lord's visits. "The wayfaring man tarries for a night;" he is gone in the morning; perhaps before dawn the wayfaring man has left the house. And so with the Lord; his visits are very transient; his words very few; his smiles very rare; they are soon gone; and there is a long interval before they come again. He is like a wayfaring man too often that tarries for a night; and before morning is come, the blessed guest is gone, has withdrawn himself, and only left an aching void which none but himself can fill. Do you know anything of this? If you do not, you do not know much about vital religion. If you have

known something of the Lord's blessedness, you will know something of wretchedness and misery when the Lord does not appear to visit your soul. You cannot have too much of him. If you have had him at all, you will want him again; and you will sigh and mourn that your sins have driven him away, and that now he comes so rarely to visit and bless your soul.

3. But her heart being full, she adds a *third* tender expostulation, "*Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished?*" Strange words! But not more strange than true. "Astonished!" At what? Why, at the people he has to do with, the heart he has to dwell in, the sins he has to behold, the iniquities he has to search. Astonished that his people should be such a people, that their hearts should be such hearts, and that they should be such wretches. Well may the church say, "Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished?"

Now mark, the church does not say that the Lord *is* all this; that the Lord *is* "a stranger in the land," *is* a wayfaring man, *is* a man astonished. No: the church puts an "*as*;" and that *as* is a very safe word; it takes away all irreverence from it, and all that might be construed wrongly in it. The church does not say, "Thou *art* a stranger; thou *art* a wayfaring man; thou *art* astonished." No; thou art *as* one; thou seemest to deal with us *as* though thou *art*. We are very apt to measure the Lord by ourselves; and when we are astonished (as well we may be) at what passes within, we may well think that the Lord is so too, and say unto him, "Why art thou as a man astonished?"

But there is another meaning of the word; and that is, a man astonished not only with the scenes that his eye looks upon, but also at the amazing difficulty of the case. Let a physician go into the wards of a hospital, and see some very mysterious disease; he would stand astounded; he would say, 'This is not a common disease; I am completely baffled; I am perfectly astonished.' He would as it were, at first, be stunned with the strange disease that came before him, and would seem as though he hardly knew what to say, or what to do. This is what the church represents the Lord to be. "Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished," that does nothing, because so thoroughly baffled? And have you not

thought sometimes that your case was one which would baffle the Lord himself? that there were sins in you, lusts, evils, iniquities, hypocrisies, and devilisms, which seemed as though they would baffle the skill and wisdom of the Almighty Physician? that there was something in your case desperate, something worse than in anybody of whom you ever heard, read, or spoke with; and that the Lord seemed as if he looked on and did nothing? He knew what was in you; saw the evils of your heart; all was open before him; and yet like a man astonished, he stood still, and did nothing, for the case was hopeless.

4. *"As a mighty man that cannot save."* Now this seems stranger still; that when the church had been telling the Lord he was "the Saviour of Israel," she then tells him that as far as her case was concerned he was as "a mighty man that could not save." She knew he was "a mighty man," for she knew he was the mighty God. He must needs be a mighty man, because he is Immanuel, God-Man; but though he was this mighty man, this God-Man, this Immanuel, this complete Saviour, yet, as regards her, it seemed as though he could not save her; that her case was beyond his reach. That she had sinned beyond all hope of mercy; that her sins were too bad and black for his blood to wash out; that she had so transgressed against light, conscience, conviction, and knowledge, that her case was altogether desperate; and that, though he saw all that she was, and all that was in her; yet he was as "a mighty man that could not save," her case being beyond his reach. She does not say that it was so; but these were the feelings of her soul; this was the tender expostulation which she addresses to him. It is very clear that she had not cast away her hope, for she says, "The hope of Israel;" and, therefore, in the tender expostulation of a feeling heart, she says, 'Why, Lord, should it be so? O, why is that distance betwixt thee and me? Why am I thus? and why art thou so far from us? "Why, O Lord, shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for the night, as a man astonished, and as a mighty man that cannot save?"'

III.—Well, is she going to give all up for lost? Is she running to

the pond to throw herself in? Is she looking at the beam to tie a halter round her neck? Is she stealing to the dressing table to take a razor out of its case? No; she cannot give it up; she will not give it up either. Though the Lord is not to her what she wants him to be, and is not blessing her soul with the enjoyment of his love, yet she still goes on with her last affectionate plea: "*yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.*"

i. The first plea she makes use of is, that the Lord was "in the midst of her." How was he "*in the midst*" of her?

1. By his *preached gospel*. The gospel was preached in her ears; the gospel still held forth a Saviour; still proclaimed salvation to the lost. The gospel still sounded the sweet tones of mercy, still invited backsliders to return, still called upon sinners to look to the Lord. The Lord is "in the midst of her" in the preaching of the gospel. Has not the Lord sometimes been thus in the midst of you? When you have heard the gospel preached, you have felt a sweet witness in your soul that you knew what the gospel was when you have heard the experience of God's saints described, you have had a corresponding experience in your soul, and there have been melting, comforting, and blessed seasons when your soul had a sweet testimony of your interest in the precious blood of the Lamb. The Lord was "in the midst" of you thus.

2. The Lord was "in the midst of her" in *the ordinances* of his house. When you have sat at "the Lord's Supper," or witnessed its celebration without partaking of it, or seen the solemn ordinance of "Baptism," have you not sometimes felt the Lord was there?

3. The Lord is "in the midst of her" in *spiritual conversation*, when heart responds to heart, and sweet love and union are felt. Has not "your heart burned within you," like the disciples journeying to Emmaus, in conversation with a Christian friend?

4. And not only so. Have there not been times when the Lord has

been in your heart, in the feeling enjoyment of your soul, *when all alone*; and thus "in the midst" of you, not merely in a preached gospel, and that gospel reaching your heart with sweetness; not merely in the Lord's ordinances; not merely in Christian intercourse; but you have felt the Saviour "in the midst" of you, inasmuch as you have been enjoying a sweet sense of his presence in the heart with none but God to witness it.

ii. Her *second* plea was: "*We are called by thy Name.*" Thy Name has been sweet to us, it has been "like ointment poured forth;" we have been enabled to say, 'Precious Jesus! my soul loves thee; I have no hope but in thee. "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" Precious Jesus! thou art my all.' Then you called yourselves by the Name of the Lord, and had the name of the Lord called upon you. For this is the meaning of the Name of the Lord being called upon you, as it is in the margin, and stands in the original—receiving into your heart the Name of Christ as ointment poured forth: and thus being enabled to call yourselves by the Name of the Lord, by believing yourselves to be Christ's.

iii. "*Leave us not.*" This was her final request. 'If thou leave us, we shall have no more feeling, no more desire, no more longing after thee. Our hearts will get harder and harder, our consciences become seared; our strength will be gone, and no hope left. O, "leave us not;" do not abandon us; give us not up; let not sin obtain dominion; let not the world fill our heart. Whatever thou doest with us, "leave us not," give us not up; carry on thy work; bring us to thyself. Abandon us not to sin, Satan, the world, and our own evil hearts.'

And what brings about all these troubles? Is it not our own sins, our backslidings, our departings from the Lord? These things go deep; they lie at the root. You will find that your backslidings, departings from the Lord, inward adulteries and idolatries—lie at the root of the Lord's hiding himself, withdrawing his presence, shutting up the throne of his mercy, not smiling upon your souls. And this, too, lies at the root of all real complaints, real

expostulation, real desire that the Lord would return—a feeling sense of what our iniquities, sins, and backslidings have procured unto us, and yet looking unto the Lord that he will heal our backslidings, accept us freely, pardon our sins, bless our souls, and manifest to us again and again that where sin hath abounded, there his grace doth and will much more abound.

## The Hope of the Cast-down Soul

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 17, 1845

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God." Psa. 42:5

There is something singularly tender and pathetic in the enquiry that David here makes of his own soul. He addresses it as the faithful and tender companion of all his joys and all his sorrows—his treasure and his all. For if our soul be happy, we must needs be happy; if our soul be troubled, we must needs be troubled; if our soul be safe, we must needs be safe; if our soul be cast down, we must needs be cast down too. Not that there is any thought or feeling in man distinct from his soul—I mean not that. But David here addresses his soul, as being that which is the most precious part of man, redeemed at an infinite price by the blood of the Lamb; and the prosperity or adversity of which must ever deeply interest him.

In this pathetic and affectionate address to his soul, we may notice two things.

I.—*The question itself—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?"*

II.—*The encouragement that he addresses to his cast down and disquieted soul—"Hope thou in God."*

I.—It is evident from the very form of *the question* that David here puts, that his soul was "cast down." If it were not "cast down, and disquieted in him," the enquiry that he makes as to the cause of its disquietude would be utterly useless.

But we may take these words as applicable not to David only at the time he put the question, but as suitable also to the family of God who tread in the experience of David.

Let us look, then, at some of the things which cause the souls of God's people to be often "cast down" within them.

1. But, first, what is it to be "*cast down*?" It is to be depressed; to feel our soul bowed down within us; to be sunk low, in a low spot; to be brought off from presumption, false confidence, levity, profanity, pharisaism, and worldliness; and by the work of the Spirit upon us, to be brought into that low place, out of which nothing but the hand of the Lord evidently stretched out and his arm made bare can deliver us.

Now there are many things that cause the souls of God's family to be "cast down" from time to time within them.

1. *The guilt of sin.* If there be anything that casts the soul down more than another, that sinks it into a low spot before the throne of the Most High, it is the guilt of sin lying with weight and power upon the conscience. And when I speak of *guilt*, I do not confine it to the first convictions of sin produced by the law in the application of the spirituality of the commandment to the conscience: but I mean the felt sense of sin, as it pursues us all our journey through, as it perpetually rises up in our heart, polluting the conscience, and striving ever to regain the mastery. This it is that makes the guilt of sin lie with weight upon the soul. I do believe, from soul experience, that one of the greatest, if not the greatest burden and trial to the child of God, is the daily, hourly, minutely, momentarily workings of sin. The adulterous eye, the roving heart, the defiled imagination, the constant stream of iniquity polluting every word and thought, every feeling and desire, is and must be a burden to the soul, just in proportion as the fear of God lives and works in a man's conscience. And whenever sin gets the mastery over us, though it be but for a short time, (I am not speaking here necessarily of gross sins, or of outward falls; for sin in some shape or other is perpetually striving to rule within where it does not rule without), guilt will as surely follow it as the shadow does the sun. But even where sin does not get the mastery, those whose consciences are tender in God's fear continually feel the workings of pride, hypocrisy,

presumption, and self-righteousness; of carnal desires, of filthy lusts, of worldly-mindedness, and of every thing that is hateful and vile in the eyes of a holy God. Nay, do we not continually find how, in spite of all our desires, and all the resolutions we make (which are not wise in making) to the contrary, how instantaneously temptation sets fire to the combustible materials we carry within? and what an awful flame there is at times bursting forth in our carnal mind? These things, I am sure, will bring guilt, shame, and sorrow upon every conscience that is quickened to fear God; and just in proportion to the depth and working of godly fear in a man's soul will be the burden of sin from time to time upon his conscience.

2. Another thing that casts down the souls of God's family is *the unceasing conflict* which they have to maintain between that in them which desires to live under God's leading, and that in them which desires to live after the course of this world. In other words, the conflict betwixt nature and grace, betwixt the spirit and the flesh, will always cast down the soul in proportion to the intensity of the struggle. To be baffled, as we are hourly baffled, in all our attempts to do good; to find the carnality of our hearts perpetually obstructing every desire that rises in our bosom to be heavenly minded, spiritual, enjoy God's word, feel his presence, and live to his honour and glory; thus to have the tide of carnality and pollution perpetually bearing down every spiritual desire in the heart—must not that cast down the soul that covets nothing so much as to live under a sense of God's presence and favour? And that this conflict should be a perpetual and unceasing one; that we should have so little respite from it; that it should not be merely now and then, but more or less, in proportion to the depth of godly fear, always be going on in our soul—must not this cast down the poor soul that is the subject of it? I am sure it cast me down day after day, and sometimes hour after hour, to feel such an unceasing and perpetual conflict betwixt that in us which is spiritual, heavenly, and holy, and that in us which is earthly, carnal, sensual, and devilish.

3. Another thing which casts down the soul is *the hiding of God's*

*countenance*; the inability to realize his most gracious presence, or feel the manifestations of his most precious favour. How continually the souls of God's people are cast down by reason of their inward darkness! When the Lord is the light of their countenance—when he supports them by his gracious word and Spirit, they are not cast down. But when they cry, and he does not hear; when they pour out their hearts before him, and get no answer; when in spite of all the tears that wet their cheeks, and the convulsive sobs that heave from their bosom, there is no word, no testimony, no sweet inshining, no precious flowing out of his gracious presence and love—must not that make the souls of God's people to be cast down within them?

4. *The temptations* that the Lord's people are so painfully exercised with, is another thing that makes their souls to be often cast down within them. There is in the bosom of the child of God a holy principle—as holy as God is holy, as pure as God is pure—for it is God's own nature, that is, his communicable nature, as we read, 2 Pet. 1:4, "partakers of the divine nature." This pure nature must ever hate sin, must ever loathe that which is opposed to Christ's image, must always painfully feel the presence and power of everything that is opposed to its spirituality, holiness, and purity.

Now, when a man is assailed with temptations to blasphemy, to curse and swear, to doubt the truth of the Scriptures, to question the very being of God, to disbelieve the Godhead of Jesus, to commit the worst of iniquities, and these temptations are perpetually struggling and striving for the mastery in his heart—must not this cast his soul down? What life, what power, what tenderness, what reality can there be in a man's religion, if he can feel the waves of temptation roll over his soul, and he as hard under them as a rock in the ocean? Is it not just in proportion to the depth of the work of grace upon a man's heart—in proportion to the spirituality and liveliness of the new man of grace, that temptations are painfully and sensibly felt? Filth is no burden to the filthy; it is the clean that feel the disgusting nature of filth. And so spiritually. Sin to the dead sinner is no burden;

temptation to those who have but a name to live is no sorrow. But to the "pure in heart" who shall see God, to the spiritually minded, to the partakers of the divine nature, to those in whose bosoms the Lord of life and glory is enthroned to them, just in proportion to the depth of the Spirit's work upon their heart, must temptation ever prove a burden.

Must not then the people of God be perpetually alive more or less, to the power of temptation? Where is temptation? It is in my bosom. Every lust and obscenity, every unclean bird of night, every base and black reptile—do I not carry about in my bosom a cage of these hideous and ravenous creatures? And will these beasts of prey lie torpid and inert in my bosom? Will not my old corrupt nature work, and that powerfully—desire, and that actively? Will it not rage, and that often abominably within? If I carry, as I do carry in my bosom, a constant fountain of temptation; and if I have also in me a new principle that is born of God, and is conformed, in its measure, to the mind and image of Christ—must I not groan and grieve, being burdened by the temptations that are constantly springing out of my carnal mind? If I have any spiritual feeling, any tenderness of conscience, any divine life in my heart, any longing to bless and praise God, or any desire to fear him—will not my soul groan under temptation just in proportion to the depth of the Spirit's work in my conscience?

5. *The many afflictions that the Lord's people have to pass through*, is another cause of their souls being cast down. And the Lord means these things to cast them down. Afflictions and trials that never cast them down! Call them afflictions! it is but the name. The Lord in sending afflictions means them to do a certain work. We are high; they are sent to bring us low. We are often standing upon the pinnacle of presumption and confidence; and the Lord sends these troubles to put us in our right spot. We are proud; they are meant to humble. We are worldly; they are meant to purge out of us this worldly spirit. We are carnal; they are sent to subdue this carnality. We are often straying from the Lord into bye-paths! they are meant to bring us by wholesome

corrections into the strait and narrow path that leads to glory. Afflictions thereof which are not felt; that never exercise a man, and try his spirit—do not call them afflictions: they are not worth the name; to call them so is but hypocrisy and deceit. But if we "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ"—if we are really among the afflicted people of God, we must expect at times to be cast down and burdened by troubles. Now the Lord sends afflictions for a special purpose; and this special purpose is, to cast down the soul, that he himself may have the honour of raising it up.

Many of the Lord's people are deeply afflicted by *bodily* afflictions; and those who pass through bodily afflictions (I am a living witness to it) know how they depress the spirit and cast down the soul; and how they open the door for Satan to come in, with many doubts and fears, and many distressing trials and exercises. But how good it is to be thus laid low, and kept low! What a check it is to the spirit of levity, frivolity, worldliness, and folly that there is in our carnal mind! What heavy weights and burdens are needed to have this horrible and abominable levity and frivolity kept effectually down! Now a man cannot be very light and trifling who has a suffering body, and is continually depressed in his spirit by the bodily afflictions he passes through; nor can there be much room for lightness and frivolity in a man's soul, when his poor body is racked with disease and pain. The Lord therefore sends these bodily afflictions upon his people, in order to mortify and subdue that wretched spirit of frivolity which is usually so active in them.

Others of the Lord's family are cast down by heavy *temporal* afflictions. The Lord does not see fit that his people should have this world's honours, riches, and prosperity; they could not stand it. Riches, honours, prosperity, an easy path, do not suit the family of God. They puff up with pride, feed the spirit of worldliness, lead a man into bye-paths, and take him away from the company of God's poor exercised family. The Lord, therefore, for the most part exercises his family with temporal afflictions, with poverty, with distressing circumstances, and thus casts them down, and keeps them down that they may not be lifted up and

so drawn away by temporal prosperity.

Others of the Lord's family have to pass through heavy *family* afflictions and trials. A dear wife is taken off; a beloved husband is torn from a wife's bosom! a child is smitten down with the hand of disease; or else, the children, instead of being comforts, grow up to be burdens and sorrows to their parents. By these afflictions the Lord often casts down the souls of his people.

Others of the Lord's people are cast down by *their evidences being beclouded*; by many anxious doubts and fears as to the reality of the work of grace upon their souls; by seeing and feeling so little of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts; by having the depths of their unbelief and infidelity open up to their view, and being thus made to fear lest "concerning faith they some day may make shipwreck."

Many are the causes (each "heart knoweth its own bitterness") why the souls of the Lord's people are cast down within them; and this is the case, not only now and then, but more or less unceasingly. For they need continually to be put into a low place; they cannot bear much prosperity; they need to be well plagued and exercised, that they may prize divine consolation, and feel that nothing can support and bless them but the hand of God alone.

2. But David puts another question to his soul—not differing much from the first, but still having a slight distinction—"Why art thou disquieted in me?" The expression, "cast down," refers more especially to present feeling; but the word, "disquieted," refers more to the anxiety of the soul in looking to the future.

The causes of trouble in the heart of a child of God are often of this two-fold nature. Not merely does *present* sorrow and affliction cast down the soul at the time; but it is disquieted at the prospect of *the future*. This ever will be the tendency of affliction and sorrow. Could we see the bow in the cloud, and feel assured the sun would soon shine forth, half the trouble would be taken

away. But to see the whole atmosphere enwrapped in misty darkness; to view clouds rising upon all sides of the horizon; not to behold one ray of light piercing through the dark gloom—it is this which makes the soul not merely "cast down" for the present, but "*disquieted*" for the future.

Thus when under guilt, there will be disquietude until pardon is sweetly experienced. When under afflictions, there will be disquietude and doubts how the afflictions will terminate. When engaged in conflict with the enemies of our soul's peace, there will be disquietude lest we should be worsted in the battle. When the body is afflicted with pain and disease, disquietude may be felt whether it will end in death. When family afflictions press down the mind, there will be disquietude what the result may be. In a word, whatever be the source of sorrow that casts down the soul, from the present trouble and present affliction there will be almost necessarily many an anxious glance towards the future, many a watching whether the cloud give any symptom of dispersion, many fears lest the thunder-storm, whose roar we hear in the horizon, and the flashes of which we perceive afar off, will not approach nearer and nearer, and burst wholly upon us. So that when the soul is cast down, distressed, and burdened, it is not merely so with what is taking place at the present; but suspicions and disquietudes arise as to what will be the issue, as to what we may expect, and as to what we may fear for the future.

How gracious and merciful was it of the Lord to cause the soul of David thus to be exercised! How kind and tender it was of him to cause him, by the pen of inspiration, to record in the sacred Scriptures his painful experience! We have reason to bless God for it. Many of the Lord's dear family have had to take this enquiry into their lips, and with a burdened heart, cry aloud, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?"

II.—But we will pass on to *the encouragement* that David proposes to his own soul. It was, as I hinted, the tender and

affectionate partner of all his sorrows; and he desired it to be also the tender and affectionate partner of all his joys. "*Hope thou in God.*" He here addresses himself to his own soul, as though he would cheer it onward, as though he would hold forth to it some prospect of relief, as though he would lay the strong arm of consolation beneath it that it might not utterly sink, as though he would encourage it to look for better times, as though he would say, 'My soul, cast not away all thy confidence'—"Hope thou in God."

This will enable us to look a little at the foundation of the encouragement, strength and relief that David proposed to his soul—"Hope thou in God." What is the source—what is the fountain of hope—of all true and spiritual hope—such as David here encourages his soul to look to?

"Hope in God" springs from various causes. We will endeavour to enumerate a few. But observe. There can only be hope in God, just in proportion as we are brought into a state to need it. The Lord throws nothing away in providence; and the Lord will throw nothing away in grace. Those who have deeply scrutinized the works of God as Creator have admired the simplicity and perfection of his creative hand; nothing is given that was not needed, nothing is withheld that could not be spared; no scantiness on the one hand, no waste or profusion on the other. So it is in the kingdom of grace, as in the kingdom of nature—no good withheld from them that walk uprightly, no superfluous good wildly lavished upon those who do not need it. Thus we must be brought by the Spirit into a state and case to need these encouragements in order that we may have them. Consolations without afflictions, liftings up without castings down, communications out of Christ's fulness without previous emptyings, are but delusions. The one must be suitable and proportionate to the other. Preparation for God's bounty is indispensable. If that preparation do not take place, blessings suitable cannot come.

1. Thus, one source of hope in God springs out of the *invitations*

that the Lord has given in his word to the poor and needy, to the exercised and distressed, to the burdened and sorrowful. For instance, the Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28.) "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:22.) "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.) These invitations, addressed in God's word to certain characters, are applied from time to time by the blessed Spirit with dew and power to the soul, so as to encourage it to hope in God.

You will observe, that the Psalmist here encourages his soul to hope *in God*. Not in God's mercy, not in God's faithfulness, though both these are needed. But, if I may use the expression, he takes his desponding soul beyond the attributes of God to hope in the Person of God himself. So that, in order that there may be this hope in God, springing out of the suitability and preciousness of the invitation addressed to certain characters, there must be in the heart and conscience a personal knowledge of God—and this springing out of his own manifestations to the soul, and the communication to the heart of that precious faith by which the invitations are received into the affections as set forth in the Scriptures of truth. Now the effect of the suitability and preciousness of the invitations flowing into the heart and conscience is to raise up a hope in God. It may not be a hope that affords strong consolation; it may not be a hope that entirely overcomes despondency. But yet it shall be a hope that shall raise the soul up from the waves. It is something like a buoy at sea, or the life-boat in a storm; it may often be dashed by the waves that beat upon it, yea, so dashed as to be hidden by the foam. But let there be a subsidence of the troubled waters, let the waves and billows cease, then we see the buoy again; that sure mark of the anchor beneath is not sunk, though it may be hidden for a short space from the view. Thus, hope in God springing out of the suitability, sweetness, truth, and preciousness of the invitations, as they flow with power into the conscience, supports the soul under the waves of doubt and despondency, although it may feel the foam often dash over its

poor desponding head, and even fear that it may prove a castaway.

2. But there is a "hope in God" springing out of *the past testimonies* that he has given to the soul. And this is what David seems here especially to allude to. He says, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." In the land of Jordan, and the Hermonites, God had appeared conspicuously for David; and the little hill Mizar had been raised up in his heart and conscience by some testimony from God. He looked to that spot, and stood upon it as a foundation for his hope.

Now every intimation of God's favour that we may have received, every token for good that we may have experienced, every glimpse and glance, every believing view of a precious Christ, every feeling of the power of atoning blood in the conscience, and every manifest shedding abroad of divine love, is a testimony to which the soul may at times look; and if it could always look there, it would not be cast down and disquieted; nor would David need to raise up his soul and encourage it to hope in the Lord from past testimonies: I believe myself that when our testimonies are beclouded, we would look back for comfort to things we have gone through, but darkness rests upon them. It is with us as with Job; when he went forward, he could not behold; and when he went backward, there was darkness still. When the soul is cast down, testimonies are but dimly seen: If I may use so familiar an illustration, it is like passing through a deep cutting in a railway; we cannot see the country on either side, though there it is in all its blooming beauty. So, as we pass through the deep cuttings in the soul, we cannot see our Mizars, our Ebenezers. They are there; the testimonies remain the same: but just in proportion as we sink, do we sink out of their sight. But David would encourage his soul to hope still in God; he would softly remind it of what it had sweetly experienced. This encouraged his poor troubled heart still to hope in God, looking for better times, and trusting that the Lord would shortly appear.

3. But again; "hope in God" will sometimes spring *from a sight of scriptural evidence raised up by the Spirit of God in the heart.* Observe, I draw a distinction between testimonies and evidences. All testimonies are evidences; but all evidences are not testimonies. The fear of God in a tender conscience; the sacrifices which a man has been enabled to make for God and truth; the hungerings and thirstings after Jesus; godly sorrow and contrition of soul; pantings, longings, and cryings after the Lord—these are evidences. But still, though evidences, we cannot rely upon them as we can rely upon testimonies. They are not strong enough to bear the soul up. We can see and admire them in others, and believe them to be *in their case* gracious marks of the Lord's teaching; but when we look into our own bosoms, we cannot see these evidences as distinctly in ourselves as we see them in others. In others, we see the fear of God unmixed; in our own hearts, we seem often mingled with servile fear. In others, we see tenderness of conscience; but in our own case, we often feel hardness of conscience. We see others looking out of self; we feel our own hearts full of self. We see in others simplicity and sincerity; we feel in ourselves a corrupt and hypocritical nature. We see in others that which clearly bears the mark and stamp of God; we see in ourselves so very much that bears the mark and stamp of Satan, that we cannot read the mark and stamp of the Lord equally clear. So that the very evidences we admire in others, we cannot rest upon in ourselves, especially when these evidences are beclouded, especially when guilt, shame, and fear rise up in our heart, and cast a lowering cloud over these marks of the life of God in the soul.

But there are times when the Lord's people are kept from utter despondency by the possession of these evidences. The pouring out of soul in prayer, though it does not bring deliverance, yet often gives relief. The workings of a tender conscience cannot deliver a man from the feelings of guilt; but the workings of a tender conscience are an evidence of the Lord's having begun and carrying on a work of grace in the heart. The pantings, longings, and thirstings after Christ in his beauty and glory—these are not

satisfactory evidences oftentimes to the soul; yet they do at times relieve it from that despondency and despair into which it otherwise would sink. So that there are times and seasons when these evidences are so beclouded as not to appear as evidences; and again there are times and seasons when these evidences are shone upon by the Holy Spirit, and then they stand forth as evidences. I will illustrate my meaning by a simple figure. You travel in a dark and cloudy day in the country; you see but little of the steeples and towers of the towns and villages; they are all dark and gloomy. You travel through the same country on a bright and sunny day; the whole scene is changed, and adorned with beauty; the tall spires and towers of the towns and villages are lighted up with the golden rays of the sun, and the whole aspect of the landscape is changed. Yet its features are exactly the same on the lowering and gloomy day, as when they are rendered conspicuous by rays of the sun. So spiritually. Hungering and thirsting after God, godly fear, love to Jesus, simplicity, spirituality, heavenly-mindedness—these are all evidences. But there are times and seasons when dark clouds hover over us, when these landmarks in the soul of what God has done for us are enveloped in darkness. They are there, though they are not seen. But when the light and life of the Spirit, and the shinings in of God's countenance illuminate the dark and gloomy heart, then these evidences stand forth, and shine in the blessed light of God's favour and presence, as evidences of the work of grace in the heart, and then the soul is enabled by them to "hope in God."

Now just in proportion to the "hope in God" will be the soul's relief from being cast down and disquieted within. The reason that we are downcast often in our soul is because we cannot exercise this "hope in God." The anchor is still within the veil; the ship rides securely; it is not carried down the tide of sin; it is not borne down the stream of an ungodly world; the vessel is at anchor; and though the waves and billows that dash against its sides may hide the cable that holds the anchor, yet there is a secret power which keeps the ship in her place. The child of God never entirely loses his hope; he never utterly loses his trust in

God; his faith never totally deserts him. What else is it that supports his soul from sinking into despair? What keeps him from plunging into the filth and abominations of his lustful heart? What preserves him from altogether giving up the very profession of religion? What keeps him from open blasphemy and infidelity? Is there not a secret power in his soul, invisible to himself, acting in a mysterious way, and holding him up, so that concerning faith he does not make shipwreck? Perhaps some of you have made a profession many years, and many have been the waves and billows that have passed over your head; and the longer you live, the more will these billows roll. Never expect to be long at ease; and if you are spiritually-minded, you cannot bear the thought of being at ease. I can speak for myself; I would sooner have trials, temptations, troubles, exercises, crosses, and sorrows—feel my soul kept alive by them, and enjoy the presence and favour of God in them, than be at ease in Zion, and settled upon my lees, or have all prosperity, and know no changes nor reverses. But who has raised up your soul amidst these waves and billows? Have you not sometimes been tempted to cast away all your confidence? Have you not sometimes been so cut up by guilt as to think you never could lift up your head before God and his people again? Have you not been so carried away, at times, by some master sin as to fear lest it break out and bring you to open shame? Have you never got weary of religion altogether; and feared a time would shortly come when you would be made manifest as an hypocrite? And have you not waded through many other inward and outward trials which I cannot enumerate? trials which none but a man's own soul can know; for each heart knows its own bitterness—each one is best acquainted with his own sorrows, burdens, and perplexities. We cannot breathe them all into the ears of our best friend. We admit our friend sometimes into the ante-chamber, into the outer court; but who has ever taken his friend into the inner chamber of his heart's secrets? I never have, and never can. There are depths *there* that the eye of man never has looked into; none but the eye of God is privileged to look into the very ground of the heart. Child of God! is it not so? What then has kept you during all this storm? What has held you up secretly, when you have resolved upon some

sin?—when you have contrived it, plotted it, planned it, and in a fit of wild despair at its vile workings in your heart, have felt that you would plunge into the sin to-day, if you jumped into hell to-morrow. What kept you? Was there not a secret power that held you up in this storm?

When doubts and fears and despondency almost made head in your heart, was there not a secret, "Who can tell?" a longing looking to the Lord, though you might be, with poor Jonah, in the very belly of hell, with the weeds wrapped round your head? and though you may have almost despaired of ever coming forth into the light and liberty of God's countenance, what held, what kept you from utter despair? Was there not a secret breathing of your soul Godward? a mysterious laying underneath of the everlasting arms? a sensible going out of your whole soul and spirit into the bosom of Immanuel? Or when you have backslidden—(and who dare say that he has never backslidden in heart, lip, or life? What! No adulterous eye, no roving heart, no filthy idol that has carried you away captive, and cut you up with guilt and shame?)—but when in this backsliding state, what kept you from utterly abandoning the place where God's word is preached, and turning your back upon the Lord's people, and the cause of God and truth? What brought you upon your knees, made you confess your sins, and caused tears of sorrow to roll down your cheeks, and the sobs of contrition to heave from your bosom? What held you up in these storms? Was it not the mysterious, the secret workings and operations of God the Spirit in your conscience, enabling your soul to hope in God; still to look to, lean upon, and pour out your heart before the Lord—to rely upon his word of promise, and to believe that whatever he might do would be right?

Now, by some of these encouragements would David support the affectionate partner of all his cares and sorrows, as well as of all his joys. He would cheer her up as she travelled the strait and narrow road, breathe into her ear a little encouragement, and not allow her to cast away all her confidence. He would still endeavour to lay his friendly arm underneath her, and support her in the rough and rugged path—"Why art thou cast down, O

my soul?" Is the case altogether hopeless? Art thou utterly disconsolate? Is there not a faithful God to go to? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Are the fountains of his grace and love dried up? Is the love of his bosom exhausted and withered?—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" Is there not an ever-living, ever-loving Jesus to go to? Is there no blessed Spirit to support thee? Is there no kind bosom to lean upon? What! art thou like the world, that when they are cast down, the only relief (if relief it can be called) is to sink altogether out of their own feelings? No, my soul: (he would thus seek to encourage the affectionate partner of his sorrows and joys;) No; the case is not desperate with thee; it is not altogether lost and forlorn; while God the Father rests in his love; while the Saviour is in the presence of God for thee; while his blood can plead; while his love can comfort; while his presence can support; while his favour can bless, there is still encouragement for thee. "Why then, art thou cast down?" All these things are working for thy good; peace and joy can only spring out of trials and exercises. The people of God are predestinated to walk in the paths of tribulation: no "strange thing" has happened unto thee; nothing but what is the lot of saints. Have not the family of God trodden these paths before thee? Did not the Son of God travel this dreary road? Was he not made perfect through sufferings? Did he not pour out his heart to God in strong cries and tears? Then "why art thou cast down, O my soul?" If these things were to destroy thee—if these griefs were to cut thee off without hope or help—if these trials were to crush thee in the dust without remedy—if these temptations were for thy entire destruction—then, my soul, thou mightest be cast down. But when thou hast such sweet encouragements, such gracious support, such abundant promises—such a God, whose truth cannot be impeached, whose mercies cannot fail—such a High Priest of covenant faithfulness and superabounding grace—such a Three-One God to lean upon—"why art thou cast down?" The present is painful; but will not the present pain be made up by future pleasure? The future is dark; but is not the Lord, who has helped hitherto, a present help; and will he not provide for the future? Has he not promised, "As thy day is, thy strength shall be!" Has it

not passed from his faithful lips—"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass?" Dost thou not know that the mercies of God fail not—that they are for evermore? Then, "why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" This is thy remedy. I know that thou art disquieted; and I know what thy poor dark, anxious bosom is heaving with. But still "hope in God," for there is no care or restless disquietude for which the Lord is not thy remedy.

How tenderly David—or rather, the Spirit of God in David—encourages his poor soul—"Hope thou in God." The soul's expectation shall not be cut off; Jesus still lives and reigns within the veil. "Hope thou in God." The time will come when "I shall praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God," adds the sweet Psalmist of Israel. "And believing I shall yet praise him; believing he is the health of my countenance; believing he is my covenant God and Father—I will hope in him, and not give it up; but still look unto him, and lean upon his everlasting arms which cannot fail, and his love that endureth for evermore."

Now is not this precisely suitable to the state and case of every child of God here who is cast down and disquieted? Does not the same God live and reign, who lived and reigned when David wrote? Are not his consolations the same? Is not his love the same? Is not his faithfulness the same? O, it will be our mercy if our numerous causes for being cast down, if our numerous sorrows, anxieties, and disquietudes, lead us away from the creature to "hope in God;" and to believe that we shall yet praise him, "who is the health of our countenance and our God."

## **The Hope of the Hypocrite**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, August 3, 1843

"For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his prayer when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job 27:8-10

What was the main subject of controversy between Job and his three friends? It was whether Job was a hypocrite or not. His friends, seeing him afflicted with such heavy calamities, and hearing the passionate and rebellious expressions that came out of his lips, unanimously came to the conclusion in their minds, that a child of God could neither, on the one hand, receive such heavy visitations from the Lord's hand, nor, on the other, make use of such peevish and rebellious language; they set him down therefore to be a hypocrite. Job, on the contrary, knew he was not that. Why the hand of the Lord had so gone out against him he knew not; and why his soul was permitted to be so harassed and distressed he could not understand. But one thing he was certain of, from God's past dealings with his soul, and from the experience which the Lord had wrought in his heart, that he was not the character his friends believed him to be. He would not yield, nor submit to such a charge; and God himself knew that Job was in the right; and that however harassed he was in his mind, and whatever self-righteousness might lurk in him, yet he was free from that imputation.

By way then of answer to his friends' accusation, Job in the text brings forward certain marks and tests which he knew hypocrites had not, and which he knew he had. He says, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job knew well that no hypocrite could ever come up to these two marks; and that with all his craft and subtlety, he never was in possession of these two tests.

But before we come to this part of the subject, it will be desirable to go through the preceding portion of the text. And I do not know a simpler or better way than to take it as it stands, and see what light the blessed Spirit may throw upon it.

I.—We will commence then, *first*, with the *character* pointed out in the expressive word "*hypocrite*." What is the meaning of the term? It signifies, at least in our acceptation, "a stage-player; one who assumes a part, and wears a character that is foreign to him; one who is not the man he professes to be." This is as simple and as concise a definition as I can give of the character of a hypocrite.

But it appears to me that there are two classes of these characters; one, who knows what he is, and the other, who knows it not. There is one who may deceive others, but does not deceive himself; and there is another who may deceive himself, but does not deceive others. Thus, there are those, I believe, who know they are wrong, and yet never put up a cry to a heart-searching God to make them right; who know that they have taken up religion for wrong ends and base motives, and that they were never led into any portion of truth by the Spirit of God; but in order to gratify some carnal design, have embarked upon a profession without any moving power felt in the heart. The other, who form the more numerous class, and most abound in the professing church, are persons so deceived by Satan, so ignorant of themselves and of the God they have to deal with, and having such a veil of delusion over their hearts, that they are self-deceived, according to that word, and a solemn word it is, "deceiving, and *being deceived*." (2 Tim. 3:13.) Not merely deceiving others, but being deceived themselves; not base designing hypocrites, but believing they are right, and only learning they are wrong when "trouble comes upon them, and God takes away their soul." And be it remarked, that neither of these two classes are ever troubled or distressed about their hypocrisy; the first, because their conscience is seared, and the second, because they are fully persuaded they are right. So that I believe we may lay it down pretty well as a general truth, that

those who are exercised with distressing doubts and fears about hypocrisy, are not hypocrites; and, on the other hand, that those who, with brows of brass, and necks of iron, would resent with the greatest warmth the imputation of hypocrisy, would, could you look into their hearts, be found really guilty of the charge.

II.—But having considered the hypocrite's character, I pass on to consider his *hope*. "For what is *the hope* of the hypocrite?" He has then a hope. Scripture speaks of two kinds of hope. "There is a hope that maketh not ashamed," (Rom. 5:5); "a good hope through grace," (2 Thess. 2:16); "a hope, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil," (Heb. 6:19); the *hope* that stands as a sister with *faith* and *love*, (1 Cor. 13:13); and the hope whereby the soul is saved. (Rom. 8:24.) And there is another kind of hope, which the Scripture also speaks of, and which it has stamped with peculiar and indelible marks. It is compared for instance to "a spider's web," (Job 8:14); and this comparison throws a little light on its character. What is the spider's web? It is a filthy thing—spun out of the creature's own bowels—only intended to catch flies—and broken to pieces by the first puff of wind. Now carry these ideas into the spiritual figure. The "hope of the hypocrite" comes from himself; it does not spring out of any testimony of God in his conscience, any dealings of the Spirit upon his soul, any drawings up of his affection towards the Lord Jesus, or any discovery of God's presence or favour: but it is spun, laboriously spun, out of his own filthy heart. As the spider also spreads out its web in order to catch flies for its food and sustenance, so the hypocrite spreads out his hope before the eyes of men, that he may catch the buzzing flies that flit about the religious world, and feed upon their flattery and applause. But, like the spider's web, it will be blown away by the first puff of God's anger; by the first blast of his nostrils it will be swept away, and no trace of it left.

But the Scripture (Job 8:11, 12, the same chapter that compares it to the "spider's web") gives us another description of this hope, and illustrates it by another figure. "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in

its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." The "hope of the hypocrite" is here compared to "the rush" and "the flag." What is their site? Not the flowing stream, but the miry, sluggish ditch. Out of the mud they grow, and by the mud they are supported; let the muddy water be dried up, and "they perish before any other herb." Thus the "hope of the hypocrite" is not a tree that rests on a rock; it has no solid foundation on the work, blood, love, grace, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but grows up as a perishing flag out of the mud and mire of his own corrupt nature. It is not "a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots by the river, whose leaf is ever green," (Jer. 17:8); but a wretched rush that stands in a sluggish pool, and fades and dies whilst yet in its greenness, as soon as the ditch dries up.

III.—But we pass on to consider his *gain*. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained?" He has then a certain object in view, which he is often allowed to gain. Now this gain is not necessarily, nor perhaps in the majority of cases, money, or filthy lucre. It may indeed happen that a man may put on a profession of religion for the sake of filthy lucre; but we cannot confine the gain here spoken of to that one thing. If he has obtained his purpose in any way, it is gain; and Job seems to intimate this, by not mentioning any specific object, but leaving the nature of the gain ambiguous. But "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained?"

God then allows him to gain his ends. And if this be *money*, perhaps while he is thwarting every plan that his people set their hand to, and blighting every prospect that rises up before their eyes; whilst he is bringing them continually to poverty, and never suffering them to prosper in any thing; every project that the hypocrite puts his hand to flourishes; and, like the fabled Midas, every thing becomes gold under his touch. Let him, for instance, commence business under the most unpromising circumstances, let him set up a shop in the most unlikely neighbourhood, everything succeeds, customers come in, and all things are

prosperous.

But I have hinted that we should err, if we limited this gain to filthy lucre. Each man has a peculiar object, and in the attainment of that object his gain consists. Thus, the approbation of others may be an object of gain with many; to have the good opinion of his fellow-creatures, and to be highly thought of may be his darling aim. Perhaps such an one may have a strong memory, and being well versed in the Scriptures, and very fluent in quoting them, may draw a certain degree of approbation from those before whom the gift is exercised; and this is his gain. Or he may be well informed in his judgment upon Scriptural truth, may compare passages together with great neatness, and so cast light upon the word; and may derive much pleasure from being "confident that he is a guide to the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes;" when all the time he has but "the form of knowledge and of the truth" in the letter. (Rom. 2:19, 20.) Or he may have a gift in prayer, and this gift may so shine in the eyes of professors as to draw their approbation; and thus this wretched creature may gain his ends, in having the applause of others bestowed upon his gift.

Or it may be, and this perhaps is the most common case of all, that his gain is his *own good opinion*. The good of opinion of others is only now and then given, and that perhaps rather grudgingly: but our own good opinion, what a constant companion is that! It gets up with us, and it lies down with us; there is no one to contradict it, and it is always present to whisper its sweet flattery into our ears. If a man only gets his own good opinion and his own approbation, he has a constant source of pleasure opened up in his own mind. There are a great many people, therefore, who become hypocrites merely to gain a good opinion of themselves, and will adopt any mode of compassing this end. Is it then to be gained by a profession? By a profession it shall be gained. Is it to be obtained by receiving the doctrines? By the doctrines it shall be obtained. By talking about experience? By talking of experience it shall be attained. By humble looks? By humble looks it shall be had. By acts of

liberality? By such actions it shall be gained. Whenever a hypocrite is fully bent upon gaining a certain object, he will put in practice every artifice in order to get it. And God lets him gain it. He does not deal with him as with his own children; he will not let *them* do anything that is not for their welfare; but he deals with him spiritually, as you do with yours naturally. If you have children, and see them playing in the streets, and quarreling or acting wrong, you rush out, or call them in doors, and chastise them if you know it is necessary. But if you look through a window, and see others fighting and quarrelling who are not your children, you leave them alone and take no notice of them. The reason is, because they are not yours; if they were, you would punish them severely, rather than they should be doing those things which you know to be wrong. Thus it is with those who are God's children, and those who are not. The Lord lets the hypocrite fill up the measure of his iniquities; he suffers "his eyes to stand out with fatness, and lets him have more than heart could wish" (Psalm 82:7); but he sets his feet in slippery places, and he is brought into desolation in a moment. Be not surprised then that ungodly men and hypocrites flourish in the world, and are at ease in Zion, while you, on the contrary, are poor in circumstances, and are tried and exercised in your mind. Be not surprised, if you see every dishonest plan and scheme of theirs flourish, while every honest plan of yours is marred and blighted. God has reserved some better things for you; therefore he chastises you with affliction as a child; but he has reserved eternal wrath for them, and therefore they have their portion in this life.

IV.—But we pass on to consider the hypocrite's *trouble*. "Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" It seems then there is a period when troubles comes upon him. And what is that period? The blessed Spirit has marked it out in the text. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, *when God taketh away his soul?*" That is *his time of trouble*, "when God taketh away his soul;" when he stands before the eyes of an angry God on his deathbed, and his soul is about to pass into eternity. Now it is very sweet to my mind, that the time of the hypocrite's trouble is thus distinctly marked out, because it

shows that he has no soul-trouble till he comes to die. If you and I, then, have known something of soul trouble before now, we have not this mark against us. He embarked smoothly on a profession; his religion never began nor went on with trouble; his was an easy, comfortable, flesh-pleasing path from first to last. He never knew sighs, groans, tears, and cries; he never rolled upon his bed, full of anguish, and bitterness of soul; his conscience never bled under wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores. In all his profession of religion, all his life long, he had been cheerful, easy, and comfortable. But now, when God is going to "take away his soul;" when the wrath of the Almighty, the foretaste and prelude of wrath to come, flashes into his conscience, then for the first time he begins to be in trouble.

V.—But with this trouble we read of *a cry*. "Will God hear his *cry*?" No; he will not. But why should not God hear his cry? Has he not promised to hear cries and groans? He has. But not the cries of hypocrites; he has never promised to hear them. When a man has mocked God all his life-time, insulted him to his face, done everything to provoke him, and to deceive and distress his people; when it comes to the last, and he stands upon the brink of eternity, should natural convictions at last press a cry from his carnal mind—will God hear *that*? No: I say, God will not hear that cry; because it is not the cry of a child, not the cry which the blessed Spirit raises up in the soul, not the breathings forth of a broken and contrite heart into the ears of a listening God. It is nothing but the cry of a natural conviction; and God has never promised to hear and answer that. Nor after all, is it so much a cry to God for mercy, as a howl of fear and anguish as the Lord says (Hos. 7:14), "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." But whether so or not, he never cried to God before: it was with him all assurance and confidence. I dare say, had he been here he would have sung at the top of his voice every hymn given out that spoke of assurance. I cannot doubt but his voice would have been heard swelling amongst the throng; and the higher the assurance, the louder would the note have swelled. But there was no cry when alone in his room; when he sat by his fire-side, and hung his

head upon his hand, there was no groaning prayer going out of his soul unto God; when he was engaged in his daily business, there was no secret sigh that the Lord would look upon him and bless him. His religion never consisted in sighs and cries unto the Lord; but was a tissue of deceit and hypocrisy from beginning to end.

VI.—But having seen what he *is*, we will now proceed to see what he *is not*. The Holy Spirit by Job speaks in the text of certain marks and tests which this wretched character, with all his *gains*, never attained to, and which Job knew his soul was in possession of. He says, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" As though he had said, "You have charged me with hypocrisy; and though you have known me many years, and have seen how God has dealt with me in time past; yet now, because this trouble has come upon me, you accuse me of the blackest of crimes, you charge me with being a hypocrite. Now I ask you," said the Patriarch "this question: answer me as honest men. Call to mind all the hypocrites you ever knew; look at them in their various classes: gauge and measure them in their different bearings; and then tell me, if you can find these two marks in any one of them, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?'" Depend upon it they were dumb. Not one of them could say, that of all the hypocrites they had known in the course of a long life, they had ever found one with these two marks on him.

1. What is the first? "*Will he delight himself in the Almighty?*" No: he will not. And why not? Because with all his self-assumed religion, he was never made a partaker of a new nature, was never regenerated by the Holy Ghost, never had a new heart given to him, and a new spirit put within him; in a word, he never had bestowed upon him an inward, spiritual, and supernatural faculty, whereby alone God can be seen and known. And that was one and the main reason why he could not "delight himself in the Almighty." Nature, however highly polished and varnished, can never rise up to a spiritual knowledge of eternal realities, still less rise up to any spiritual acquaintance and communion with the

blessed God. But, besides this, the Lord had never, in any degree, let down a measure of his mercy and grace into his soul; and for want of this also, he could not "delight himself in the Almighty."

But what does *delighting himself in the Almighty* imply? It implies *reconciliation*. God and man by nature are at variance; there is a bar between them; sin has interposed, and cut asunder the original knot that linked the Creator and the creature together. Man has become "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." He is born in sin; his "carnal mind is enmity against God;" therefore he needs reconciliation. And in order that this reconciliation may be effected, there must be an external and an internal reconciliation. Sin must be put away, righteousness brought in, and God well-pleased with the sinner, before external reconciliation takes place. And this was effected by the sacrifice of Christ once on the cross, when "by that one offering he perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.) The apostle therefore says, "And that he might reconcile both unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity." (Eph. 2:16.)

But besides *the external* there is an *internal* reconciliation, according to Rom. 5:11, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the *atonement*," or, as it is in the margin (which is the more literal rendering of the word), "by whom we have received *the reconciliation*." To receive this reconciliation is to receive into our heart and conscience the reconciliation Christ has effected by the substitution of his sacred person; and to receive into our affections the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator between God and man.

But the wretched character in the text never knew the enmity of his carnal mind; sin was never opened up to him in its hideous colours; he had never felt the alienation of his heart from God; he never knew the curse of God's law; and therefore he knew nothing experimentally of reconciliation, because he had never

experimentally known variance. Nor had his eyes been enlightened, his heart touched, or power been given to him to embrace the Lord Jesus as the Reconciler of the church to God. Nor again, had the Lord God Almighty ever let down any measure of his love into his soul, or ever indulged him with a taste of his presence. He had never found the word, and eaten it. (Jer. 15:16.) He had never fed upon it, and found it "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb." He never had his affections fixed where Jesus sits at the right hand of God; he never enjoyed, feelingly enjoyed the truths of the gospel, nor did his soul ever banquet on them, and find them to be "fat things, full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined." He had never, in all his religion, any sensible enjoyment in his soul of the truths which he professed to believe; for they had no place in him, as the Lord said to the Jews, "My word hath no place in you." The truths of the gospel were never grafted in his heart; never formed his spiritual meat and drink; never were the element in which his soul lived. The tokens of God's favour never were his happiness and his heaven, and he could be perfectly contented without them; indeed he was more happy without religion, even such as he had, than he was with it; for his heart was in the world, buried in the things of time and sense. He had never, in all his professing life, one feeling desire after God, one spiritual panting after him, "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks." He and the Almighty never enjoyed blessed converse; he never walked and talked with him "as a man talketh with his friend." He never sat alone that he might converse with God, away from all intrusion; he never hid himself in his chamber, or buried his head beneath the bed-clothes, that he might commune secretly with the Almighty. He never enjoyed the presence of God, nor mourned his absence; never sought his favour, nor feared his frown. His heart was never lifted up towards the Lord that he would come down and bless his soul. So that all his profession, his gain, and his hope were idle and vain, because he lacked this one grand thing, "delighting himself in the Almighty." Spiritual joy and consolation were never known in his soul, but were always foreign to his experience, and always a stranger to his feelings.

Now, do you think, with all your doubts, fears, troubles, and exercises, that you did ever "delight yourself in the Almighty?" Was your soul ever drawn out in unutterable partings and longings after the blessed enjoyment of his presence? Was this ever your heart-felt language, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee?" And have you ever said to Christ, "Thou art all my salvation, and all my desire?" Was there never an object on earth that yielded such delight to your soul as the Lord Jesus Christ? never an object so embraced in the arms of your affection as his glorious Person; never anything that so melted, moved, and softened your heart as a sense of his dying love? Then you are not a hypocrite, nor can all the men or devils in the world make you out to be one; for you are one that "delights yourself in the Almighty." God himself has stamped that as an indelible mark on his children, as a proof of their sincerity; and recorded it in these burning letters of ever-living light, as a testimony for them, as well as a mark against all, however high in their pretensions, or consistent in their profession, who live and die ignorant of it.

2. But the Lord in the text has given us another test, "Will he *always* call upon God?" No. How beautiful it is to see the evidences that the Lord has given us in his Scripture. If we look at these two evidences, we shall see how wisely they are put together. For there are doubtless living souls that might say, "The test just brought forward is too high for me; I fear I do not delight myself in the Almighty; I cannot come up to that; it is beyond my reach: My heart is so hard, my faith so weak, my love so little, my affections are so roving after the things of time and sense, and my soul walks in such darkness, that I cannot reach up to this solemn test, delighting myself in the Almighty; it seems to cut me off!" Well, but the Lord has not cut you off, because you cannot come up to this test; he has given you another. So that if the first test cuts your head off, the other test will put it on again. "Will he always call upon God?" See the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in the position of the words. Men sometimes think they can improve the Scriptures; they are going to introduce *this* alteration, and make *that* wonderful correction; but they would

only mar the word of God, if they were to touch it with their critical fingers. Suppose then the word, "always," were transposed; what would the effect be? "Will he always delight himself in the Almighty? Will he call upon God?" The mere transposition of the word *always* would spoil both tests. For where is the man who *always* "delights himself in the Almighty?" And the hypocrite himself may and does call upon God *once* in his life, when trouble cometh upon him, and God "taketh away his soul." So that could we transpose the word "always," by that little transposition we should spoil both tests. But when we look upon the word "always" as applicable to "calling upon God," we see how it suits and exactly fits in with the experience of a living soul, and gives the prayerless hypocrite no quarter. Does not he then, "always call upon God?" No: you never hear of his calling upon God, till "God taketh away his soul;" and then just before he breathes out his miserable soul into a never-ending eternity, he howls upon his bed, and cries unto God for mercy. But he never *always* "called upon God:" it was never his habitual practice: prayer had never been wrought in him by the hand of the Spirit; and it was only just when hell was opened before him that he prayed, sooner than be plunged into it. But the living family are marked by this test, that they *always* call upon God; that is, they are a praying, groaning, crying, sighing people, ever calling upon God: not calling upon him once, twice, or a few times in their lives, but it is more or less, their daily and habitual practice.

But what is it "to call upon God?" You will observe that the *cry* and the *call* are here distinguished from each other. It does not say, "Will God hear his *call*?" but "Will God hear his *cry*?" Nor again does it say, "Will he always *cry* unto God?" but, "Will he always *call* upon God?" There is, then, a difference which the Holy Ghost here makes; that a man may *cry* who never *calls*. We read in Genesis (4:26), "Then began men *to call upon* the name of the Lord;" and in the first verse of the sixth chapter, which is connected with it read, "When men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, *the sons of God* saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose." Thus we see the connection

(for the two chapters are closely connected), the fifth being, as it were, in a parenthesis, between *calling on God* and *being sons of God*.

To *call on God* is to call on him with "a spirit of grace and supplications" interceding in a man's heart. It therefore implies a knowledge of God. When the Lord first quickens the soul into spiritual life, he implants in it "a spirit of grace and supplications." I have always insisted on this mark, for I felt it so my self. I must always, then, insist upon it, that whenever God quickens a soul into spiritual life, with his quickening work on the conscience, he communicates to the soul "a spirit of grace and supplications," and that spirit is never lost out of the heart, till the "spirit of supplication" is lost in the universal song of praise before the Lamb.

Now no man ever did call upon the Lord, unless he had "a spirit of grace and supplications" implanted in him. He might have squeezed out a few formal prayers; he might have gone through a daily round of self-imposed forms; yet he never worshipped God "in spirit and in truth." Or, he might, as very many do, pray what is called extempore: he might have kneeled down night and morning, or perhaps even seven times a day, and might have prayed without a form as the thoughts rose in his mind; and yet all the time never have had a breath of true prayer in his soul, nor once offered up a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. But the soul that "calls on God," calls on him through the Spirit interceding within him, "with groanings that cannot be uttered." He has God set before his eyes, as the Psalmist says, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (16:8.) He has at times the presence of God in his heart, and the fear of God ever in his soul. He worships him "in spirit and in truth," and he serves him "acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." He does not worship an unknown Jehovah, but he knows whom he worships, because he has had a spiritual discovery of the being and character of God to his soul. And no man will or can call upon God, till he in some measure discovers himself to him, and draws

out the pantings, longings, hungerings, and thirstings of the soul to himself.

But, as I have before hinted, much of the force of the expression lies in the word *always*. The word *always* is not to be taken in the strictest sense of the term; that is to say, it does not imply that a child of God is praying all day long, but that once having been favoured with "a spirit of grace and supplications" he never loses it out of his heart; but, from time to time, as the Lord the Spirit draws it forth, he pours it out into the bosom and ears of Jehovah. For instance, there are times of soul adversity, trouble, and affliction; and when these come, the living soul will still be calling upon God; he will not be waiting for the sun to rise and shine before he seeks the Lord's face; he will not be waiting till a promise comes with power to his heart, before he visits the throne of mercy with sighs and tears. But when the soul is troubled and distressed, then prayers and supplications begin to flow out of the heart into the ears of God. And I believe, if I know anything about it, the more a man is pressed down with trouble, the more he will call upon God. When every thing is smooth with us, our visits to a throne of grace are short and rare; but when the soul is burdened, pressed down, afflicted, and troubled, these things press and squeeze prayer out of our bosoms; so that a man is never so prayerful, so continually seeking the Lord's face, and pouring out his heart before him, as when he is in soul trouble. Was it not so with Hannah? What made her pour out her soul before the Lord? Because she was "in bitterness of soul, and wept sore." (1Samuel 1:10.) She spoke "out of the abundance of her complaint and grief." (5:16.) When did Hezekiah pray? Was it when he was displaying the treasures of the temple to the Babylonish ambassadors? There was no prayer, I will venture to say, going out of the heart, when, in his pride, he was showing them "the house of his precious things." But when the prophet came with a message, that he was to "set his house in order," then "he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." When did Jonah call unto God? Not when he was asleep in the sides of the ship; but when he was in the whale's belly, then "he cried unto the Lord out of the belly of hell."

Thus it is that times of soul trouble, force, so to speak, cries and sighs out of the heart of God's people. And then God will bow down his ear, and hear them; for he says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," (Psa. 50:15); especially pointing out *that* as the season for the soul to *call*, and, *that* as the season when God will hear and deliver the soul that calls upon him. So the children of Israel, who were typical of God's people, when in Egypt their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, cried unto the Lord. So in their various captivities, when they were oppressed by the Midianites, or by the Philistines, or by their other numerous enemies, they *always* "cried unto the Lord in their trouble," and he heard and delivered them "out of their distresses." (Psa. 107:13.)

But again. Worldly things are often much against God's people. Dark clouds in providence encompass their path, so that they cannot see their way; and this makes them call upon the Lord. But hypocrites do not go to the Lord in worldly trouble; they cannot go about mumping for charity, and "living," as they call it, "on Providence," when they have no object but to get all they can out of the bowels of God's compassionate children; while a true child of God, in his lonely garret, will be calling upon the Lord, and beseeching him to appear. The hypocrite will go down to Egypt and Assyria for help, and never think of asking it from the Lord; but his real children, who are suffering from poverty, will often conceal their wants even from the Lord's people, and go to the Lord himself, and tell him how they are suffering under temporal distresses.

The word "*always*" implies further, that under all circumstances and all states, at all times and seasons, and in all places, a God-taught soul will call upon the Lord. God's people will not be waiting for the morning or evening to come that they may pray. As they walk the streets, sometimes even as they are in worldly company, if thrown into it by business or accident, or as they are occupied in the various employments of life, from time to time there will be a lifting up and a breathing forth of their hearts unto

God. They must call upon the Lord, because they cannot be truly happy without him. Guilt sometimes oppresses, condemnation burdens, and heavy temptations harass them; God hides his face; and they cannot obtain what their soul longs to enjoy. These things cause groans and supplications to flow out of their souls unto God that he would appear for them, come down, bless, and deliver them.

There may be, perhaps, some here who are exercised (as, I believe, many of God's people are at times exercised) as to their hypocrisy; and sometimes they may think themselves the most consummate hypocrites that ever stood in a profession. They may even think themselves so crafty and subtle that they are deceiving those who have the keenest discernment. But if you are exercised with these painful surmises, these doubts and fears, just see (and the Lord enable you to bring it to the light of his countenance) these two features of a spiritual character. Do not talk about your hope; it may be "a spider's web." Do not boast of your gifts; they may be altogether in the flesh. Do not bring forward the good opinion of men; they may be deceived in you. But just see if, with the Lord's blessing, you can feel these two tests in your soul, as written there by his own hand. If so, you are not an hypocrite; God himself, by his servant Job, has acquitted you of the charge. Did you, then, ever "delight yourself in the Almighty?" It is a solemn question. Did your heart and soul ever go out after the living God? Did affection, love, and gratitude ever flow out of your bosom into the bosom of the Lord? Did you ever feel as if you could clasp him in the arms of faith, and live and die in his embrace? Now if your soul has ever felt this, you are no hypocrite; and nothing can rise up out of your wretched heart, as an accusing devil, that can prove you to be one. Or if you cannot fully realize this, if you are one that *always* calls upon God, you are no hypocrite. I do not mean your family prayer, social prayer, wife or husband prayer, or your private night and morning prayers. I do not speak of your regular prayers, or any other of your regularities; for I believe that there is often more of God's Spirit, and more craving after God and delighting in him, in your irregularities, than in all the daily regularities which

hypocrites delight in. But I mean, is there a sigh or cry by night, as well as by day; a pouring out of the heart into the bosom of God from time to time, as the Lord works it in you, in trouble, in perplexity, in sorrow, and in distress? This is a test and a mark which no hypocrite ever had or ever can have.

But if neither of these marks are to be found in you, what then must I say? Why, it is greatly to be feared that if you are a professor, you are a hypocrite. If you have never known, in all your profession, what it was to "delight yourself in the Almighty;" if you have never turned away from creatures to converse with God; never felt his word precious, and enjoyed the sweetness of it in your heart. Or if you do not know what it is *always* thus to call upon God, as I have endeavoured to explain it, I say, it is a black mark against you, and it is to be feared, that your religion began in hypocrisy, is going on in hypocrisy, and is likely to end in hypocrisy; or I would rather say, end in ineffectual trouble, and in an ineffectual cry, which God will not hear, when "he taketh away your soul."

## THE HOUSELESS WANDERER

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street. London, on Thursday Evening, July 10, 1845

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way: they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul tainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalm 107:4-7

These words, at first sight, appear to refer to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness: but a closer inspection will shew that this view cannot be borne out by the context. If we look at the preceding verse, we read, "And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south." This is not applicable to the children of Israel; they were gathered only out of Egypt, not from the four quarters of the world. The text has no reference then to the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness; but describes, spiritually and experimentally, the dealings of God with the souls of his people.

This Psalm appears to me to be an epitome of the Lord's dealings with the souls of his children. In order therefore to set forth those dealings more clearly, and to trace out their diversified nature, the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the Psalmist, has given us in it a description of four distinct characters. When I say distinct, I mean, distinct so far as refers to the teachings of the Spirit in the soul. In all the Lord's spiritual dealings with his chosen, there is unity, though not uniformity; similarity, though not sameness. And thus with respect to the dealings of God with his people, as traced out in this Psalm, there is a variety; and yet such a variety as is not inconsistent with the unity of the Spirit's teachings.

There are four characters, then, whose experience is traced out in **Ps 107**; and in order to distinguish them more clearly, I may

give each a name—a name borrowed from the circumstances of their case.

1. **The wanderer Ps 107:2-9;**
2. the **prisoner Ps 107:10-16;**
3. the **foolish backslider Ps 107:17-22:** and,
4. the **spiritual sailor, or navigator Ps 107:23-31.**

Though all these cases differ, yet there are three points in which they all agree:

1. they all are in trouble:
2. they all cry unto the Lord in their distress: and,
3. he delivers them all out of it in answer to their cry.

I shall, this evening, if God enable me, endeavour to trace out the character of the **spiritual wanderer**, as drawn by the pen of inspiration in the text. And in so doing, I shall not make any formal divisions of the subject; but take it up sentence by sentence, and clause by clause, as it lies before me—more in a way of exposition, than in a set, arranged sermon.

I.—The first thing said of the spiritual wanderer, and that from which I give him the name, is, "They, **wandered** in the wilderness in a solitary way." A wanderer is the mark stamped upon this spiritual pilgrim. But how became he so? And what is the character of a wanderer, such as is described in the text? He may be known by two marks

1. that he is **houseless;** and,
2. that he has **lost his way.**

1. But what made him **houseless**? Had he not a comfortable home in which he lived? Had he not once a place where he could find food and shelter? He had; and this was the world. That was his home; and the things of time and sense were his food. But when the Spirit of God entered with divine power into his conscience, he drove him out of his house, he banished him from this shelter; and, like Noah's dove, he cannot find rest for the sole of his foot upon the carcasses that are floating amid the waters of the deluge. He is no longer able to shelter in his own wisdom, righteousness, and strength. The pleasures of the world and the pursuits of business, that alternately amuse and engross the great bulk of mankind, have lost for him their interest. He can no longer find his element in these things. The inward teachings of God the Spirit have driven him out from them all by laying the things of eternity with weight upon his soul; and thus he has become a wanderer.

2. But there is another idea connected with a wanderer—that he has **lost his way**. When he was in the world, he had no difficulties: the path was so broad that he could not mistake it. But when the work of divine grace begins in a sinner's heart, he loses his way. He cannot find his way into the world: God has driven him out of it, as he drove Lot out of Sodom. He cannot find his way to heaven: because he at present lacks those clear testimonies, those bright manifestations whereby alone he can see his path.

This is his experience, then, that he has lost his way: having turned his back upon the world: and yet unable to realize those enjoyments in his soul that would make heaven his home. He has so lost his way, as to be often unable to go backward or forward; so lost his way, that whether he turns to the right hand or the left, he has no plain land-marks to shew him the path in which his soul longs to go.

But we need not stray from the text to find where the wanderer is. "They wandered **in the wilderness**." The wilderness is a type and figure of what this life is to the Lord's people. There is

nothing that grows in it fit for their food or nourishment. In it the fiery flying serpents—sin and Satan—are perpetually biting and stinging them; and there is nothing in it that can give them any sweet and solid rest. The barren sands of carnality below, and the burning sun of temptation above, alike deny them food and shelter.

But there is a word added which throws a further light upon the character of the wilderness. "They wandered in the wilderness **in a solitary way;**"—a way not tracked; a path in which each has to walk alone; a road where no company cheers him, and without landmarks to direct his course. This is a mark peculiar to the child of God—that the path by which he travels is, in his own feelings, a solitary way. This much increases his exercises, that they appear peculiar to himself. His perplexities are such as he cannot believe any living soul is exercised with; the fiery darts which are cast into his mind by the wicked One are such as he thinks no child of God has ever experienced: the darkness of his soul, the unbelief and infidelity of his heart, and the workings of his powerful corruptions, are such as he supposes none ever knew but himself.

It is this walking "in a solitary way" that makes the path of trial and temptation so painful to God's family. To be without any comfort except what God gives, without any guidance but what the Lord affords, without any support but what springs from the everlasting arms laid underneath: in a word, to be in that state where the Lord alone must appear, and where he alone can deliver, is very painful. But it is the very painful nature of the path that makes it so profitable. We need to be cut off from resting upon an arm of flesh: to be completely divorced from all props to support our souls, except that Almighty Prop which cannot fail.

The Lord's people are very apt to lean upon one another: they will rest upon anything **so prone is our nature to look to and rest upon something visible** before they will lean upon the invisible God. But the mark of the believer is, that he has to do

with invisible realities: that he is supplied with invisible strength, and upheld by an invisible hand. Were it not, then, that the people of God had to walk in this solitary path where none but the Lord can support or comfort their souls, they would cease to deal with these invisible realities, and lean more upon those things which sense and reason could comprehend.

But the Lord will take care that his people shall deal only with himself; that they shall have no real comfort but that which springs from his presence, and no solid testimonies but those which are breathed into their conscience from his own lips. And thus he puts his people into, and keeps them "in a solitary way," that they may receive communications out of Christ's fulness into their souls, just as much as though there were no other believers on the face of the earth. How many a gracious person is utterly unable to communicate the feelings of his heart to any one! And sometimes this burdens us. We want sympathy, pity, and compassion from men. But the Lord will not often suffer us to find this pity or compassion; or if we find it, he will not allow us to rest upon it. His object is to draw us away from the creature; to take us off from leaning on human pity and compassion; and to bring us to trust implicitly to himself, "whose compassions fail not"—to lean wholly and solely upon him, who is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Thus the very circumstance of having to walk in a path of peculiar temptation and sorrow, which makes it to be "a solitary way," is the very reason why that solitary way is so profitable.

II.—But there is another expression added, which helps to fill up the description of the solitary wanderer—"They found no city to dwell in." Man is, by nature, a restless creature, and he wants some place of rest. The world rests in the shop, the farm, the pleasures and vanities of the passing day: men in a profession of religion without the power rest in a name to live: but the Lord has determined that his people shall find no rest but in himself. He is a jealous God. He will not suffer us to find any solid resting-place for our souls but in the Son of his love.

This, then, is the mark that belongs to the solitary wanderer—that "he finds no city to dwell in." A city implies something, which is stable, with mansions, streets, shops, houses: something that has fixtures. But the Lord's people, as they journey through the wilderness, find no such fixtures: there is nothing in this world that is sufficiently strong for them to lean upon; there is no city that spreads its charms before their eyes sufficient to satisfy them. This world can afford no resting-place for their weary spirit; they are not at home in it. Their minds may be occupied with business: their affections may be drawn aside after the things of time and sense; they may set up idols in the chambers of imagery; they may even endeavour for a time wholly to occupy themselves, as other men do, with the things of this world; but yet with all, "they find no city to dwell in." There is nothing stable, nothing satisfactory; no rest, no peace. "All that cometh is vanity and vexation of spirit." Should they sometimes attempt to rear up a city, sorrow, trouble, temptation, and grief sweep it away as soon as it rises up before their eyes: like a house of cards, one touch dashes it all to pieces. For the pilgrims of Zion there is in this world no city to dwell in; no suitable foundation to rest upon, except the Lord, who will not own nor bless the earthly city with which the citizens of this world are so much occupied and so madly in love.

Do you not find this in your experience, that there is an aching void in your souls, which nothing but the presence and love of God can fill? Are you not often restless at home, restless abroad: restless alone, restless in company? Is there not a desolate vacancy in your soul that the world cannot satisfy? Is not all confusion without the Lord's presence: all darkness without the Lord's light; and a feeling of dissatisfaction generally prevalent, except the Lord lift upon you the light of his countenance? This is a sure and infallible mark of the life of God in the soul.

III.—But there are other marks given in the text of the spiritual wanderer, which further serve to fill up his character. "**Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.**" Hungry after what? The things of time and sense? The delicacies and luxuries that the

world sets before them? No: they are spoiled for such things. Their hunger is after heavenly food, after eternal and spiritual realities, after the presence of Jesus, the love of God shed abroad in their heart, the blood of atonement sprinkled on the conscience, and the consolations of the Spirit experimentally enjoyed.

But hunger is a painful sensation. It is not merely an appetite for food; but hunger is an appetite for food attended with pain. So spiritually. It is not merely a desire after Christ that constitutes spiritual hunger. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing" **Pr 13:4**. But it is a desire attended with pain; nor merely a wish for spiritual food, but also with such painful sensations, that unless this appetite is satisfied, the soul must perish and die. Nothing short of this constitutes spiritual hunger. There are many who say, 'I have a desire.' If it be a spiritual desire, it will be granted. But spiritual desire is always attended with painful sensations, which many are completely ignorant of who profess to have desire. "The desire of the slothful killeth him" **Pr 21:25**. Why? Because he rests satisfied with a desire, and never takes the kingdom of heaven by violence.

The expression "**thirsty,**" in the text, conveys a still larger meaning. Hunger is more supportable than thirst. Persons die sooner when left without water than without food. Intense thirst is perhaps the most painful of all bodily sensations that a human being can know. The Spirit has therefore made use of this figure in order to convey the intense desire of a living soul;—that he must have Christ, or perish—must feel his blood sprinkled upon the conscience, or die in his sins—must "know him, and the power of his resurrection," or pass into the gloomy chambers of eternal woe—must have the presence of Jesus sensibly realized, and the love of God shed abroad, or else of all men be the most miserable.

IV.—But there is a word added, which throws a still greater light upon the subject—the sure effect and consequence of hunger and thirst—"**their souls fainted in them.**" Observe, it is not said

their 'bodies,' but "their souls:" which shews that the whole description is to be understood spiritually: and that the Holy Ghost is not here describing natural hunger and thirst, but that which is wholly and solely supernatural. It was their hunger, and not having that hunger gratified—it was their thirst, and not having that thirst appeased, which made their souls faint within them.

Some of God's people think that they have only to desire, and as soon as they desire, that the blessing must come; that they have only to thirst, and no sooner do they thirst, than God is sure to send them a supply. But it is not so. Hunger and thirst are first to do a certain work. What is this work? To make their souls faint within them; to starve them out of all spiritual strength, and reduce them to the famishing point. And be sure that you have never hungered and thirsted aright, if your soul has never fainted: fainted through the weakness produced by the denial of spiritual food—fainted by reason of the difficulties which you have had to pass through—fainted through the burdens laid on your shoulders—fainted through the rough and narrow path which you have had to traverse. How many of the Lord's people have been brought to this spot, that they must give up all for lost! How many have sunk into despondency, because the Lord will not attend to them when they call upon his name—that he will not speak to their souls, though they have so often begged him to hear and answer—that he will not take the burdens off their shoulders under which they are sinking—that he will not give them those evidences, testimonies, and smiles which their hearts are panting after!

But the Lord has a special purpose in all this. It is his object that their souls should faint within them. It was so with Jonah. "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple" **Jon 2:7**. We must be brought to the fainting point. It is almost, to use a natural figure, as with persons ill of a fever or inflammation; they must be bled till the body swoons away. And so with spiritual hungerings and thirstings; they must go on until the soul faints; this is the

intention of them. Until the soul faints, it does not want support: the everlasting arms are slighted—the bosom of Jesus is not leaned upon. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples," cries the Bride. Why? Because she was swooning away: not indeed, in her case, of hunger, but of love. When we faint, we want cordials: but cordials are mere drams, intoxicating drinks, unless to fainting persons. "He giveth power to the faint: and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" **Isa 40:29**.

V.—But we pass on to consider that which is the fruit of their wanderings, hungerings, and faintings—"Then." Observe how this is the point to which all tends. All their previous exercises are to bring them to this solemn then. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." It was these things made them cry. Until they wandered in the wilderness—until they felt it to be a solitary way, until they found no city to dwell in until hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them—there was no cry. There might have been prayer, a desire a feeble wish, and now and then a sigh or a groan. But this was not enough. Something more was wanted to move the bowels of divine clemency. The case was not sufficiently urgent; the disease had not struck deep enough into the vitals to demand the hand of the heavenly Physician. The feeble prayer; the mere expression of desire, the falling down upon the knees, and uttering a few words, which so many are satisfied with—this was not sufficient.

Something more was wanted to draw forth loving-kindness out of the bosom of the compassionate Head of the church. A cry was wanted,—a cry of distress, a cry of soul trouble, a cry forced out of their hearts by heavy burdens. A reality, an urgency, a taking no denial, a fervent importunity, a holy wrestling was needed. There is no real cry in the soul until it is brought into these circumstances. Perhaps some of you are wondering why the Lord has not had compassion upon you. You read this and that person's experience; and you wonder why the Lord has not appeared for you as he has appeared for others. Have you ever looked deeply into the chambers of your heart to trace out the cause? Is not God faithful and willing to fulfil his promises to the

very letter? Perhaps you have not been brought to that spot where real blessings and testimonies are needed. You have been hovering around the blessing, instead of earnestly crying after it. You have been sometimes going to it, sometimes going from it: sometimes casting half-hearted looks, sometimes venting half-hearted desires: and then wondering and wondering why the blessing has not come. But you must go into a deeper spot, into heavy trials, into more painful and distressing feelings, into more stripping and cutting sensations before the cry that brings deliverance can come forth.

**A cry** implies necessity, urgent want, a perishing without an answer to the cry. It is the breath of a soul bent upon having eternal realities brought into the conscience, or perishing without them. "Then they **cry** unto the Lord in their **trouble**." It is trouble that makes a man cry. I am a living witness to that. Nay, nothing but trouble will make a man cry. And therefore the Lord is obliged to send trouble into our hearts to produce it. Past troubles will not make us cry, and past blessings will not make us cry; past experiences, however deep, however high, will not make us cry. They affect us no more than the showers that fell last year. We must have present things to call forth present cries: we must feel present trials to bring forth present prayers. That is the reason why the Lord is perpetually sending troubles upon his people; perpetually wounding and distressing them. Not that he loves to see them distressed; not that he delights to see them in misery and sorrowing; but he knows that it is for our good; as we read, "But he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" **Heb 12:10**. And thus it is he sends troubles into our souls, and afflicts us in body and mind, for the purpose of producing an effect upon us, which cannot be produced in any other way.

Now, do look at your experience in this matter, you that fear God. What are your prayers, when you have no trouble, no burdens, no exercises, no perplexities? Are not your prayers half-hearted? Is there then any wrestling with the Lord? Is there any breathing of your soul into his bosom? I know from experience

that we need troubles and trials, exercises and temptations, stripe upon stripe, and blow upon blow, to bring a cry out of our soul. What a mercy it is when there is a cry! Some of our troubles and trials stun us; and then we cannot cry. Some shut us up well-nigh in despondency and despair; and then we cannot cry. We cannot cry. Some drive us to rebellion, and to think that the Lord is dealing hardly with us; and then we cannot cry. Some make us sullen and reckless: and then we cannot cry. We cannot raise up a cry ourselves. We may be in the deepest trouble: and yet be shut up in sullen obstinacy. But when the Lord sends a cry in the trouble, he is sure, in his own time and way, to send deliverance out of it. Observe the words, "Then they cried unto the Lord **in** their trouble." Not **before**, not **after**, but **in** it. When they were in the midst of it: when trouble was wrapped round their head, as the weeds were wrapped round the head of Jonah: when they were surrounded by it, and could see no way out of it; when, like a person in a mist, they saw no way of escape before or behind: when nothing but a dark cloud of trouble surrounded their souls, and they did not know that ever that cloud would be dispersed:— then it was that they cried.

But what makes them cry? It is this solemn feeling in their hearts, that they have no other refuge but God. The Lord brings all his people here—to have no other refuge but himself. Friends, counsellors, acquaintance—these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is no refuge, nor shelter, nor harbour, nor home into which they can fly, except the Lord. Thus troubles bring us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much; and they drive out that notional experience and dry profession that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists; and they bring a man to this solemn spot, that he must have communications from God to support him under, and bring him out of his trouble. If a man is not brought to this point by his troubles, they have done him no good. They have been like the clouds that have passed over the desert, and communicated to it neither fertility nor fruitfulness; they have been like the rain that drops upon the pavement, and

is evaporated by the sun, producing neither fruit nor flower. But the troubles that God sends into the hearts of his people are like the rain that falls upon the fertile soil, causing them to bring forth fruit, and every grace of the Spirit to deepen and fructify in their soul.

**VI.—"And he delivered them out of their distresses."** What deliverance can there be except there is some distress to be delivered from? If there were a general gaol-delivery proclaimed through this kingdom, would that interest you and me? It would interest the poor debtor, the chained felon, and the groaning captive in his dark cell: but it would not interest you or me, who can walk abroad in the light of day. So what deliverance can we receive except we be in some trouble, some perplexity, some exercise, something that bows down the heart, or distresses and burdens the mind? Manifestations, testimonies, revelations, and gracious discoveries—these are all nothing to a man except he be in circumstances to need them. What is Christ, with all his glorious offices, what is his blood, what his righteousness, what his love, what his sympathy, to a man settled upon his lees, and at ease in Zion? There is in him no felt necessity for these heavenly realities. There is no groan and cry after them. There is therefore no precious communication of them. It is but a delusion, a deceit of Satan, to think that we can have deliverance except we are in troubles and trials out of which God alone can set us free.

Now, when the soul cries to God in his troubles, he is sure to deliver it out of its distress. But we must not always expect very bright and conspicuous deliverances. I know that such alone can fully satisfy a troubled soul; but we must not think there is no deliverance when it falls short of a powerful manifestation. The Lord does not confine himself to one way; and perhaps the very way to which we are looking for deliverance, is the very way by which it will not come. It is a deliverance when the Lord supports the soul under trouble. It may not come with great peace and joy; but when there is a solid support that the soul can rest upon, and it feels a measure of dependence and leaning on the

everlasting arms— **that** is a deliverance. What is deliverance? It is a bringing out of captivity. If, then, we are in distress, and any measure of relief is given in that distress, that is a deliverance. If we are in a state of felt weakness, and must sink without support, if there be a measure of support given, that is a deliverance. If we are in a state of rebellion, and a measure of meekness and submission is given, that is a deliverance, because it is a deliverance out of our carnal, worldly state. If in trouble the Lord secretly assures the soul that these trials are working together for its good; gives it faith to believe the word of promise, though sense, nature, and reason fight against it: and enables it to rest upon divine faithfulness, in the very teeth and in the very face of nature, sense, and reason—**that** is a deliverance, because it is a deliverance from leaning on our own strength, and trusting to our own wisdom.

When the Lord gives us a testimony that we are his, by raising up love in our heart, brightening our evidences, calling to our mind his past dealings with us, secretly assuring us that we are his children, and enabling us to lean upon him as upon a kind Parent—**that** is a deliverance, though it may not be accompanied with overflowing joy or superabounding consolation. To be delivered from our own spirit, our own temper, our own righteousness, our own violence, our own justification, from leaning upon self in any shape or form, is a deliverance. If there be a going out of self to the Lord, a putting away of fleshly weapons and a taking up of the spiritual weapons of faith and prayer, a leaning wholly and solely upon the bosom of a kind Jesus—**that** is a deliverance.

I do not say that these minor deliverances are to be compared with precious revelations, sweet manifestations, sheddings abroad of heavenly love, and the comforting testimonies of the Spirit of adoption. But do not consider that there is no deliverance, no reception of strength, support, or consolation, till the soul feels these overflowing manifestations. I mention this, because some of the Lord's people are so looking after great things, that they put away little; and often forget what the Lord is

putting the trial upon them for. His object in bringing them into trial may be not to raise, but to lower; not to give them sweet testimonies of his love, but to discover to them more and more of the depth of their corruptions; not to clothe them with salvation, but to clothe them with humility; not to reveal in them the blessed manifestations of love and blood, but to stamp upon them more of the mind and image of Jesus. The object of trouble, in the eyes of the Lord, is, to meek the soul, to purge the vessel from pride and presumption, and prepare it for the reception of a broken-hearted Immanuel. The Lord's testimonies and manifestations are not to exalt us; but they would exalt us if they were poured into a heart that had not been purged and emptied. The Lord's manifestations are to humble, melt, and soften down; to bring about union and communion with a broken-hearted Jesus. We need, then, perpetual trials, troubles, and exercises to purge the vessel of its baneful ingredients, and prepare it to receive the consolations that the Lord gives to those that call upon his name.

**VII.—"And he led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation."** Did not we read that "they wandered:" and that their wanderings were in a "wilderness," where there were no tracked paths? And did we not read that it was "a solitary way"? How, then, could it be "a fight way," where there was no way at all; where there was but a succession of ups and downs; and where the path of each traveller was so peculiar, that he scarce ever saw the footstep of a pilgrim before him? Yet the Spirit of God says, that it was "right way." Reason, sense, and nature, hold your peace. Nature never can understand how a way of trouble, of temptation, of exercise, of sorrow, of perplexity can be the right way. But God never meant nature, sense, and reason to understand it.

The Lord gives faith to his dear people, that his dealings may be believed in, not reasoned upon; and he raises up this precious gift of the Spirit in their soul, not that they may confer with nature, sense, and reason, but that they may believe His own testimony in their heart and conscience. For this reason God

leads his people by such paths as are directly contrary to nature, sense, and reason, in order to baffle them; for these loquacious talkers in a man's bosom are ever ready to thrust forward their arguments; and our foolish hearts are continually lending their ears to their subtle discourses. The wise God, therefore, leads his children in such paths that nature, sense, and reason are baffled, and obliged to hold their peace. If I may use the expression, they are outrun by God's dealings. They may come in, panting and out of breath, to understand them; but God will not explain his ways to such flippant rebels. There is one of his own blessed graces in the soul, one of his own heavenly gifts,—faith, that prudent handmaid, who has eyes to see, ears to hear, and feet to walk step by step with the Spirit's teaching.

By faith, then, only can we understand how it is "a right way." And when faith is in exercise, then it is known to be "a right way." Your losses, your crosses, your trials in providence, your afflictions of body, your perplexities of mind, your sorrows of heart,—all are then to you "a right way." 'Once,' say you, 'they were a labyrinth: I could not find my way through them: they were an enigma, which I could not unravel. But now I see that those things, which so puzzled, perplexed, and tried me, led to my greatest blessings. I could not,' say you, 'see the hand of the Lord at that time: but how plainly do I see it **now**? In that sickness, that painful dispensation, that agony of soul, that trouble of mind, that distressing path, how plainly do I see **now** that the Lord's hand was leading me!' Well, will it not be so for the future? Does God intend you should see it **now**? What saith the scripture? "We walk by faith, not by sight." But if you or I could see the issue of our troubles and trials: if we could believe that every temptation we were passing through was intended by God for our special good, it would take off half the burden. But that would take off half its object. When God sends troubles and trials, he means them to be burdens. But if we could see the Lord's hand laying them on, half the burden would be taken off; and we should need fresh burdens to be added in order to complete the tale, and create that effect which the Lord means to produce.

When the Lord sends a rod, he intends that rod to cut deep into our flesh; when he lays on a burden, he means it to weigh us down; and when he lays on a trial, he means it to pain us to the quick. Trials not severe, temptations not harassing, exercises not perplexing—why, they are feathers, not troubles. It is like a person tying two straws together, and calling it a cross; or laying a pillow upon his shoulders, and saying, 'What a burden I am carrying!' It is because they are heavy, cutting, and perplexing that they are profitable. The weight is the stamp that gives them value; take away that stamp, and they are useless.

Yet, after all, it is "a right way." Does not scripture most emphatically declare, that "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom"? If we walk then through much tribulation, it is "a right way." If you did not know your way to a place, and a person were to direct you, and say, It is a very rough path, my friend; there are high mountains and deep valleys, huge crags and deep precipices: the road is almost impassable; but it is the only road to the place which you have started for.' Then, if you were to see a broad road, almost as easy as a turnpike-road, would you not start back, and say, Surely I must have made a mistake: this is not the road pointed out? So spiritually. If our path is one of ease: if we are never burdened or distressed, must we not have gone out of the way?

It was a strait and narrow path, a road of tribulation, that the Son of God trod to the land of glory: but if ours be a smooth and easy path, must not this be the conclusion of every heart honest in God's fear, 'Surely we must be out of the road altogether?'

Strange creatures! that when out of the path we want to be in it: and when in the path we want to be out of it!

Uneasy when I feel my load,  
Uneasy when I feel it not!

Shrinking from burdens, yet condemned for not having them;

trembling at trials, yet fearing because they do not come; wanting to walk in a smooth path, and yet when it comes, exercised because it is so smooth! And yet all "the right way."

**"He led them forth."** Forth out of the world—forth out of sin—forth out of a profession—forth out a name to live—forth out of everything hateful in his holy and pure eyes.

**"To go to a city of habitation."** They had no city to dwell in here below; but they were journeying to a city of habitation above, whose walls and bulwarks are salvation, and whose gates are praise; where there are eternal realities to be enjoyed by the soul; where there is something stable and eternal; something to satisfy all the wants of a capacious and immortal spirit, and give it that rest which it never could find while wandering here below. If we have a city here, we want no city above; and if we have a city above, we want no city here.

This then must be our state and case; either to be pilgrims, journeying onwards, through troubles, to things above, or taking up our abode below; seeking heaven here, or heaven hereafter; resting upon the world, or resting upon the Lord; panting after the things of time, or panting after the things of eternity: satisfied in self, or satisfied only in Christ. One of the two must be our state and case. The Lord decide it clearly in the hearts of his people that they are on his side: and give us to know and feel that our very restlessness and inability to find food and shelter in the things of time and sense, are leading us more earnestly and believingly to seek after the things that have reality in them: that finding no city to dwell in here below, we may press forward to be manifestly enjoying testimonies of being citizens of that city which is above. "which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God!"

## **AND ALSO I HAVE WITHHELD THE RAIN FROM YOU**

"And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest—and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city—one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered."  
Amos 4:7

How powerless we are as regards the rain that falls from the sky! Who can go forth when the sun is shining in its brightness and bid the rain to fall? Or when rain is falling, who can go forth and restrain the bottles of heaven? He who gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, also turns a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of those who dwell therein.

Equally sovereign is the blessing that God gives to the preached gospel. He holds the blessing in his own hand; it is his to give, and his to withhold. If he blesses, it is because he has promised it; but when, where, and to whom it shall come, is at his own sovereign disposal.

Yet what do we naturally desire when the earth is parched up for lack of rain? Knowing that there is rain stored up in the clouds above, and that when it does come it will produce beneficial effects, desires, if not prayers, go up that it may fall.

In fact, the earth itself, parched and dried up by heat, the very ground itself, by the fissures and clefts which are made in the soil by a burning sun, silently, mutely, but still imploringly calls upon the rain to fall. Every crack you see in July is a silent mouth asking the rain to come down. The withered herbage, the cattle lowing in the field, the dried-up ponds and brooks, are all imploring, though not a word is uttered, that rain may fall.

So in grace. The parched, withered, dried-up feelings of the soul are all so many mute mouths imploring God's blessing to come

down. No, the very hardness, barrenness, and sterility felt in our heart when the blessing of God does not rest upon the word, are so many mute appeals to the God of all grace that his blessing would attend the word to our conscience.

I say this because you may think sometimes that you are not praying for the blessing of God to rest upon the word, because you may not be using vocal prayer, or are not favored with a spirit of grace and supplications. God sees your needs, and to those needs he has a kind regard. The babe need not, and indeed cannot ask in so many words for food. The cry of hunger is enough. Or even if too weak to cry, the mother knows the child is hungry by its restless movements; and she is as pleased to give the nutritious food as the babe is to receive it.

So you must not always measure the strength of your prayers by the mere vocal utterance you may give to them. The heart-searching God reads your needs, knows your desolate case, and sees your barren condition. As in the kingdom of his providence he views from his holy throne the parched ground, and sends down showers because he sees its need; so in the kingdom of his grace he looks upon the parched condition of his people, and gives the spiritual rain because he knows they need it.

## **IDOLATRY**

Preached at Bedworth on a Tuesday Evening in April 1852

"For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God: and to wit for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead. even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. 1:9, 10

The churches in the New Testament differed much in gifts and grace. This may be gathered from the way in which the Holy Ghost was pleased to inspire the apostle Paul to write to them. The Romans, for instance, appear to be much blessed with faith: for the apostle says, "their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world:" eminent believers, many of them, highly favoured with the faith of God's elect. The Corinthians, the apostle says, came behind in no gift. The Lord bestowed on them much utterance and much knowledge, with which they were too much puffed up. It appears the Ephesians were led deeply into the mysteries of the gospel; for the apostle writes to them as those deeply instructed in the mysteries of Christ. The Colossians were not only led into the mysteries of the gospel, like the Ephesians, but the apostle speaks of their discipline: "Joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." The Philippians passed through much persecution: "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." The Hebrews were wavering and much tempted to depart from and give up the faith.

If we look at the churches in the New Testament, we shall see none were so highly favoured in the enjoyment of the things of God as the church of Thessalonica. The apostle writes to them as being much favoured with the sweet enjoyment of the gospel: "Remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father: knowing, brethren beloved, your election of

God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance: as ye know what manner of men we were among you for our sake."

Thus we find the churches in the New Testament were not all enjoying the same things. The Galatians were sadly tainted with a legal spirit, drawn after false teachers, turned their back on Mount Zion, had gone back to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto they desired again to be in bondage. The Hebrews were wavering continually, scarcely knowing whether they should hold out to the end. Similar things are to be found in the church in our day; similar differences, not only in the church, but also in individuals: some weak, others strong; some highly favoured, others all their lifetime subject to bondage. With some it is spring time, with others summer, autumn, or winter. The Lord deals with different individuals as seemeth good in his sight; yet causing all things to work together for their spiritual good.

The words of the apostle before us point to two things, which are spoken of as being special marks of grace. He says, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God." One mark of a person being a partaker of grace is being turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.

The second mark which he gives as being a partaker of the grace of the gospel is, "And to wait for his Son from heaven."

I believe we shall find these two marks in every child of God. If we set up a very high standard, many of the Lord's children cannot raise up their heads so high; but here we shall see is a standard of God's own raising. The apostle brings forward and points to two marks of grace in the souls of these Thessalonian converts; and if the Lord has touched our hearts with the same gracious finger, we shall find, if he be pleased to shine in our souls, these two marks. Bear in mind, these Thessalonians were a Gentile church, and therefore had worshipped idols, in the literal sense of the word. They had bowed down before idols of wood

and stone. What is the reason we have in the world so much outward idolatry? Wherever we look or turn to in the heathen nations, we shall see something more or less of idolatry, worshipping gods of wood or stone. There must, therefore, be some principle in the human heart which brings it to worship wooden and stone gods: yet, as all men's hearts are the same there must be that in our nature which is idolatry. There are the nature and spirit of it, though not, as in the case of these heathens, outwardly seen.

Now, what is idolatry? What is an idol? The bringing or meeting together in the human heart of two opposite principles. These are in every human heart, and are seen in various shapes and lusts, and mixed with natural religion. Idolatry embodies two things that are quite distinct and opposite. Idolatry embodies a false notion of God; at the same time it deifies some lust or corruption. These heathen idolaters had their god of war, of love, of murder, of wine, and the god of death. Their idols were deified vices, lusts, passions, corruptions, and the wickedness of the human heart. Such was the working of Satan on the human mind, that he brought forth an idol representing two things apparently distinct, yet united: religion and lust, worship and devilism; the prostration of the body before a god that truly was nothing less than some deified lust and corruption. This is devilism, a false religion, worshipping some lust or corruption under the mask of religion; our natural corruptions under a profession; worshipping our pride, our respectability, our covetousness, or love of the world. All these are worshipped under the garb of religion, which is idolatry; and this is what every man does, except so far as he is delivered from it by the power and grace of God. Men must worship something. All have a natural religion. When the mind is dark through sin, the heart ignorant, the old veil remaining on the heart, no teaching of the Spirit of God in the soul, we must worship something, as the Athenians of old had an altar to the Unknown God. We must worship something; and if what we worship is not the true God, then we worship idols.

Some persons bow down before the great golden idol that Nebuchadnezzar set up. Many, very many hearts are set on this golden idol; they give a little money towards religion, and if they appear to be liberal in the cause, they then think that in other things they may be as covetous as they please; so that their religion is just as the heathen's; they worshipped golden gods, these worship their gold. They imagine by giving a little away that it is sanctified, therefore they may worship it. A man worships his own righteousness under the mask of religion: worships his self righteousness, falsely called holiness. He prides himself upon his gloomy and solemn countenance: so he indulges his pride, and makes his religion a mask to cover his sin.

This is what the people of God do, more or less, until they are delivered from it by the Spirit of God. Some are constant in attendance on the means, and go to the "sacrament," as a means to wash away their sins. Just as a man once said, he could not commit sin so greedily till he had said his prayers. Some, to pacify their consciences, will not go to rest or rise in the morning without saying their prayers: then they can rush into sin with greater pleasure. This is idolatry, deifying their sins, worshipping their lusts under the garb of religion. We have no occasion to go to the heathen in order to find out what is idolatry. It is not merely worshipping a wooden or stone god, but it is the lust and depravity of the human heart. If we dig down into the heart, deep down, we shall see the principle embedded there, like the coal in the pits at Bedworth; as the deeper you dig to discover the seams of coal, so it is with the heart of man; the deeper you go the more you find: "Son of man thou shalt see greater abominations."

Our Saxon ancestors were idolaters. They worshipped the Sun, the Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury. Thus **Dies Soils**, or the Sun's day (**Sunday**); **Dies Mond(?)** Moon's day (**Monday**); Mars's day, **Tiwe's daeg (Tuesday)**; Mercury's day, **Wodnes daeg (Wednesday)**; Jupiter's day, **Thunres daeg** or Thor's day (**Thursday**); Venus's day, **Friga's daeg (Friday)**;

Saturn's day, **Dies Saturni (Saturday)** . (The above does not appear to be perfectly reported.)

I merely name this to show what idolatry there is in the human heart. Now, here is a mark of grace, a mark of the Spirit—that you have been turned to God from idols. There is no real religion until God is pleased to touch the heart with his gracious finger; there is no spiritual light until the Lord is pleased to shine into the soul; no spiritual life until life is breathed into the conscience.

When the Lord is pleased to work in the soul, one thing he shows to us—that we have been wrapped up in a false religion, in self-righteousness; that we have been deceiving ourselves and have tried to deceive him; that we have mocked him with prayers and pretences; in which there was nothing but hypocrisy; hypocrites, such as make a profession of religion, and yet are destitute of a real work of God on the soul. Nothing cuts more deeply, when the Lord is pleased to lay his finger on the conscience, than the pretences we made, having no reality. Having been turned to God is a clear proof that we have had a manifestation of God to our souls, whereby his fear is put into our hearts, so that we know him to be the only true God, by his shining into our souls and manifesting himself to us.

Look at the contrast. The god they served before, was a dead god, like Baal or his priests, who, for the time, were more sincere in their way than many are now. They cut themselves with lancets: but we should not find many either so earnest or zealous as to dig into their flesh with knives until the blood streamed out. Though they cut and wounded themselves, yet Baal never heard. So with us; if our god is a dead god, there will be no answer; God has never spoken to that soul. There is no answer to prayer, no pardon of sin, no manifestation of mercy, no shining in of light, life, liberty, and love. No application of God's truth, no sweet breathing of God's promise, no worshipping of God in spirit and truth, no power, no feeling in the soul, no work of faith, no labour of love, no patience of hope. It is a dead religion, addressed to a dead god.

When the Lord is pleased to begin his gracious work, the soul is turned from idols to serve the living and true God; the living God who fills all time and all space, a God who knows all motives, a God who sees into the depth of our being. I do believe that no man living knows the everlasting God, until he is pleased, in some measure, to manifest himself and to shine in his soul. Then, then he knows the living God; as the psalmist says: "Thou compassed my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Ps 139:3, 4).

This is true religion, to know the living God, a holy God, a sin-hating God, a sin-punishing God, a God who will not be mocked, a God before whose awful bar we must stand at the great day, a God who reads all hearts and knows all motives, a God who knows what sins are indulged in, a God who beholds all the evil workings in the heart, and who drives us out of all the holes and corners in which we may take refuge, a God who lifts up the veil of unbelief from the heart, and whose awful prescience sees all our impurity at a glance, a living God who must have a living worship. A dead god may have a dead worship: but a living God must have a living worship. There is no living worship of a living God until he himself is pleased, by his Spirit, to give it. He is a Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. If you look back at the first dealings of God with your soul, you will see there was living worship, that you could not rest satisfied with a dead religion. Dead prayers would not do; you wanted living prayers, living sighs, living groans, and a living movement towards God; a living feeling, a living religion, because it is addressed to him that liveth and abideth for ever.

When the Lord would manifest himself to the children of Israel, he sends to them, by Moses, his great Name: "I AM hath sent me unto you." He was not known to them before as the great I AM, the self-existent JEHOVAH, whose awful majesty, terrible justice, universal presence, a solemn, tremendous Being, couched in the words, "I AM THAT I AM." He was not known to them by that

Name before, nor is he known to the soul now, until he is pleased to reveal himself as the great I AM—the self-existent JEHOVAH, a God of all power, who lives for ever and ever; and he is not known as such, until he is pleased to make it known to the soul; in the first teachings, in the manifestations of his awakening, gracious presence; he is then known to be the living God; a God who is worshipped as the living God, a God before whom we tremble, a God who hears and answers prayer, a God whose law becomes to us a living law, whose threatenings are living threatenings, whose wrath is living wrath, whose displeasure is living displeasure, whose declarations are living declarations; who saith: "Because I live ye shall live also."

Thus a soul worshipping a living God is alive, whereby he knows God; and just in proportion as we know him to be a living God shall we have a living religion. In our approaches to him we shall know that a living God produces living feelings; we shall realize, from time to time, a living God, living desires, living prayers, living cries, living groans, going out of the heart with a living faith, living repentance, living sorrow for sin, living contrition, a living turning to God from idols, a turning from a dead god to a living One, from a dead religion to a living one, from a dead faith to a living faith, as the Lord is pleased to raise up a spirit of hope. Thus we have instead of a dead hope, a living hope. A man's religion becomes a living religion, coming from a living God and leading to a living God. The more he knows and feels the presence, power, majesty, and glory of a living God, the more his soul will be living near to God, and the more a living religion will be felt in his heart.

The child of God is a wonderful paradox; a mystery not only to others but also to himself. As every branch and member of the old man still continue within him, so among the members and branches of the old man is that one, idolatry. Remember this, that though a child of God has a living God for his God, and that this living God will have living service and worship, that those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth; yet idolatry is still in the heart. Lusts, pride, self-righteousness,

unbelief, and every member of the old man. Among these members is that of idolatry.

Now, what is an **idol**? Something my carnal mind loves. How may I know whether my carnal mind loves it? When it thinks of it, is very much pleased with it, we pet it, love and fondle it, dallying and playing with it, like a mother with her babe; see how she takes the little thing and gazes at it. Her eyes are fixed on it; she dotes upon it because she loves it, and it too often becomes an idol. Thus we may know an idol if we examine our own hearts, by what our imagination, desires and secret thoughts are going out after. I do believe nothing is too small or too insignificant which, at times, may not be an idol; even a tulip or a gooseberry! What a wonderful large gooseberry! What a beautiful tulip! Some will walk up and down their garden on the Lord's day admiring their gooseberry trees, and praising the fruit, how fine and large it is; others their tulips or anemonies. They look at them and admire them, fearful the frost may have done them some injury. This is idolatry, because it is something, which, for the time, the mind is looking at before God.

Another makes an idol of his shop. He comes to chapel to hear the minister and the preaching; but, instead of this, he is thinking what customers he has missed, what he has lost by coming to chapel. His heart is, therefore, in his shop: that is his idol. The farmer makes the farm his idol. He thinks of his wheat: he is fearful of his barley: how much rain it wants. He looks at his beasts, his stock: how they are getting on. He goes into his fold-yard, looks at the sheep and dotes on them: therefore is an idolater, in so far preferring these things to God. Instead of being spiritually-minded, having his heart and affections in heaven, he has something in his mind which it is going out after; something or other laying hold of the affections, that were we to drive deeper, to go down into this coal-pit, and bring up these lusts, obscenities, this filth, this devilism, that works in the carnal mind, would prudence allow us to mention this baseness, this vileness—O so black, so filthy, that we should be more begrimed than the dirtiest collier?

The child of God has, more or less, all these propensities working within. There was a time I should not have believed it, if this had been told me. But I now know it, and it is from knowing what I have in my own heart that I can read others. I know your hearts by mine. From painful experience I know there is idolatry in every man's heart. But what a mercy it is to be turned to God from all these, from all these idols, to serve the living and true God. When is this? No man can turn till the Lord makes him. Then his prayer is, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." This was the prayer of the prophet Jeremiah. When the Lord is pleased to turn us then we shall be turned. Something like our blessed Lord, when he turned and looked upon Peter; what was the effect? It broke Peter's heart; he went out and wept bitterly. As the Lord is pleased to turn the king's heart as rivers of water, which way he will, so he turns the heart of his children.

What a blessed thing it is now and then to be turned to God from these idols, to feel the misery, wretchedness, and dissatisfaction which these idols cause! There is something in idolatry so debasing, so unsatisfying, which makes a man thoroughly miserable, when he has been indulging in it, worshipping his idols, and his heart departing from the living God.

When the Lord, in mercy, by his gracious Spirit and presence, turns to us, then we are turned from idols, and serve the living God. What is it to serve the living and true God? The apostle says. "Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son" (Rom. 1:9).

First to serve God in spirit, not with our bodies, because we may be serving God with our bodies and serving the devil with our souls. There is a great deal of wickedness committed on a man's knees. A man may be on his knees, and his heart in all manner of wickedness: a man may sit in a chapel, hearing a sermon and his heart practising all manner of abomination. That is serving God with the lips, but not with the spirit. In other words, being made partakers of that blessed Spirit, serving him in spirit, from a

feeling, believing, affectionate heart; serving in the newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter; serving him with some manifestations of mercy and love to the soul. This is to "serve in the spirit in the gospel of his Son." See how much is contained in these words, what marks of grace the apostle here sets up. To turn to God from these idols, to serve the living and true God, because the living and true God is served with the spirit in the gospel of his Son. If God is not served with the spirit in the gospel, it is merely bodily exercise, not evangelical obedience, not gospel obedience, but obedience in the letter, an obedience according to the beggarly elements of the law. What a mercy, then, to be able to serve God in spirit, to have the proud heart brought down, willing to serve God!

Another sweet and blessed mark of grace is, to "Wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Now, this waiting for his Son from heaven is not to be considered here in its primary signification. No doubt it means waiting for the second appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who shall come the second time without sin unto salvation." Thus the saints in the Word of God are represented as waiting until then. Their happiness will not be completed until they see him as he is, until he comes the second time, when body and soul will be reunited. Their happiness will then be complete, and never will they be perfectly happy until they get to glory.

Here, then, are the two marks, the state of a child of God, and the marks of grace in the soul. One is, as I have endeavoured to show, being turned from idols, to serve the living and true God: the other, waiting for his Son from heaven. Why should a soul wait for the Son from heaven, unless he knew God had a Son in heaven, unless he had some life, feeling, and desires towards the Son of God in heaven? How do you know that God has a Son in heaven? "Well," say you, "the Word says so." That is good: but have you no other evidence? If God's Word says so, how do you know the Word of God speaks the truth? "That is shocking," say you, "to doubt of that." So it is: but this, I believe, we cannot

know in our own souls that God has a Son in heaven, until he is seen by the eye of faith. There is no seeing the Son until he is revealed by the Spirit. If we do not have a manifestation by the Spirit to our souls, we do not know the Son of God. We must see him, in some measure, as Stephen saw him.

If we do not know for ourselves in the court of conscience whether God has a Son in heaven or not, how can we be said to wait for him from heaven? When the blessed Spirit is pleased to set Jesus before our eyes as the Son of God in heaven, we see him by the eye of faith, as the Lord is pleased to manifest him to our heart as the God-man, the glorious Immanuel, God with us. Then we know for ourselves that God has a Son in heaven. When we know, by the Spirit's teaching, God has a Son in heaven, then the thoughts, desires, and affections of the soul go out after the Son of God in heaven. The soul is filled with desires, longings, and breathings after a revelation, clearer views of a Saviour; deeper, clearer, and more powerful manifestations of the Son of God in heaven.

Let me illustrate this. A woman is married, has an affectionate husband; he leaves his home for a time upon business, saying he shall return home on a certain day. When the time arrives, she is waiting for his appearance. She knows his step, knows the very way he turns the handle of the door. So it is with a soul that is married to the Lord. There is a spiritual union between Christ and the soul. He is absent, does not come: but he **will** come; the soul is waiting for his appearing. The soul knows his touch upon the handle of the lock, how he puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and makes the very bowels melt. The soul knows his voice: "My sheep hear my voice, and they know it." Every shining in of his presence, every drawing near of his most gracious Person. every manifestation of his love, makes the soul long for his appearance: and when he hides his face the language of the heart is, "Why does he delay coming? Why delay the wheels of his chariot? O that the Lord would visit my soul, bless me with his presence, shine into my heart, and speak the promise home to

my soul!" So we talk with him, so we have sweet communion with him, "Waiting for his Son from heaven."

See what sweet and blessed marks they are, marks of grace in the soul! Do not be contented or satisfied with yourself unless you find more or less these two sweet and blessed marks. You know what you have been, what a wretch you have been, how in time past you have acted vilely and basely; but the Lord worked on your conscience and turned you from these cursed idols to serve the living and true God, to bow down before him, worship him in spirit and in truth, fear his great Name, tremble at his law, at his almighty displeasure. This is turning from idols to serve the living God, to feel a living God taking possession of you, by the shinings in of his Spirit and grace in your souls, worshipping him in spirit, desiring his favour, having all this living religion wrought in the soul by the living God. This is the way the Lord is pleased to work; so that you daily repent, grieve, and groan, because of these idols, because of this teraphim (Hos. 3:4) in the camel's furniture. (Gen. 31:34.) So waiting with the heart for his Son from heaven, waiting for the word of peace, pardon, and mercy, waiting for a smile, some testimony of an interest in his precious atonement.

"Waiting for his Son from heaven." Waiting with earnest prayer; waiting for his Son from heaven, in hearing the word, upon your bed at night, to have a secret persuasion that he will appear. "Waiting for his Son from heaven," that you may be able to cast all your care upon him. This is a proof of the reality of the work upon your soul. If you are brought to a knowledge of the living God, to know this living and true God, as the Son in heaven to wait for him here, is the mark of a believer, to wait for him, not like a presumptuous professor, as the poet tells us:

**"Who rushes in where angels fear to tread."**

But waiting, longing, hoping, expecting. Sometimes drawing back, sometimes moving on, waiting for his Son from heaven, looking upward and inward, in hope Jesus will hear, will reply,

speaking the word, will dispel the cloud, will remove the burden, deliver from the power and guilt of sin, and appear for the soul's good and the Lord's glory. This is to wait for the Son from heaven. The man that has these two marks in his soul will have a deal of work between God and conscience, because he finds continually sad idolatry in his heart drawing him aside. What a deal he suffers from this: how it plagues and tries him! Like the man in the fable that found the dead viper, at least dead to all appearance through the cold. What a pretty looking thing! He puts it into his bosom and warms it, when it revives and bites him. So it is with a man who plays with his lusts, indulging them; his carnal heart goes out after them, until at last, like the torpid viper, it turns to a living adder and stings him. What a deal of work for conscience this brings a man into, a man whose thoughts, desires, and affections wander from God. In this way, my friends, things in themselves, to use a common expression, innocent things, in themselves quite allowable, when indulged in, often bring guilt on the conscience and great grief to the soul.

A man may have a hearty appetite, but if indulged in to excess may be a snare to him. So in many other things, as children, wife, family, and conversation. How soon may they degenerate into idolatry, occupy the thoughts and affections, and turn the soul away from God. Like David, who idolized Absalom, Eli with his sons, or Samuel, that great and good man, who made his corrupt sons judges in Israel. How deep this idolatry is rooted in a man's heart, how it steals upon his soul! Whatever is indulged in, how it creeps over him, until it gets such power that it becomes master. What work for conscience to get out of this snare; how the conscience is defiled when these idols become an object of worship! There is something so detestable and abominable in an idol that it should be our earnest prayer for God to deliver us.

If a man knows anything of the idolatry of his fallen nature he knows also the desire to serve the living and true God. He will also know that he never can blend these two things. He may try to do it—while serving idols to serve God, but he cannot; "for what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?"

There can be no communion between a dead soul and a living God. How these things make a man wince, to give up his idol, to be obliged to part with it. How he pleads so hard: just this time. What work it makes. especially if the conscience is tender, struggling with the idolatry of the heart, the lust, concupiscence, and devilism of our fallen nature. I have compared it to a spider watching a fly. The poor little fly has just been caught in the extremity of the web; the spider lies in a hole: as soon as he sees the web shake, down he runs, and draws the threads around his victim, kills him, sucks his carcase, and leaves it.

Thus the devil may be compared to the spider working in his web, waiting, lurking, in reality to suck the very bones and blood of a child of God and cast him into hell; and so he would, were it not for preserving grace. What conscience work there is between the idols struggling for mastery and for the grace of the Spirit of God, groaning, crying, and sighing continually to cast these idols out. Then we turn to God with weeping and lamentation, rending our hearts and not our garments; turn to the Lord with weeping and supplications. A man does not know himself if he does not know what power this idolatry has over him. None but God can make the man know it; and when the Lord delivers him, he then turns to God and says, "What a vile wretch I have been! What a monster to go after these idols, loving this thing, and that. A wretch, a monster of iniquity, the vilest wretch that ever crawled on the face of God's earth, for my wicked heart to go out after these idols!"

When the soul is brought down to a sense of its vileness and baseness and God's longsuffering and forbearance, it turns to God from idols to serve the only living and true God, waiting for his Son from heaven, who pardons the idolater, heals the backslider, and communicates special mercy to his soul. The Lord raises the poor soul up, raises him from the dead. What a blessed doctrine is the Resurrection of Christ! What a glory there is in it! The resurrection of Jesus is my triumph over death, sin, hell, and the grave; lifting the poor, his poor people, up from the grave of their misery and wretchedness, raising them from the dead.

"Delivered them from the wrath to come." Wrath which we find drawn down upon our guilty heads through these idols. Delivered us from the wrath to come by interposing his body and blood. Waiting for his Son from heaven, triumphing over death, hell, sin, and the grave. He delivered his people from wrath, the tremendous displeasure of God's hand that will be poured out upon a guilty world: upon all idolaters who live and die in their idolatry, upon all false professors, false religionists, upon all that are not turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Jesus died to deliver us from the wrath to come: God raised him from the dead, and he is at his right hand.

What a mercy to be able to find these two marks standing up in your soul, though they are sometimes buried, like some old Roman relics. Suppose some antiquarians had information that at Bedworth there was a Roman milestone, they would soon come to the town, and when they had discovered the stone, though only just discernible, what a digging down to get at the inscription. So often the marks of grace, like the old Roman milestone, are buried in the earth. If God has put this blessed stone, this Ebenezer, in your heart, and the inscription is covered up with mud, mire, filth, and earth; if you want to have the inscription read, may the Lord, under the operation of his Spirit, enable you to dig down, so that every obstacle may be removed out of the way. I hope the Lord has enabled me this evening to clear away a little of the rubbish round this stone; so that you may be enabled to read the inscription and tell how many miles you are on the road to heaven, and to tell me that you have some reason to hope that the blessed God has caused the corruption, sin, and devilism of your heart to flee away, that you have a mark that you are a child of God.

To a poor soul sunk into carnality and sin, with everything that is base and horrible, what a mercy it is to have some little evidence of a work of grace in the soul! Here is the milestone found, first being turned to God from idols; the man can read the inscription—besides, he can read another: that is, "to wait for his

Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come." Whoever can find these two marks written with the finger of God in the soul, let the devil and unbelief say what they may, if they have these two Scripture marks in the soul, they will bless and praise God for his mercy and thank him for his unmerited favour.

## **AN IMMUTABLE GOD AND A STRONG CONSOLATION**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 8, 1866

"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Heb 6:18,19

We live in a mutable world. The revolutions of the seasons; the vicissitudes of day and night; the alternations of weather from heat to cold and from dry to wet; the growth of our own bodies from childhood up to youth and manhood, and in some cases on to advancing old age; the alterations which take place in our own minds, in our thoughts, in our views, in our feelings, and in our varied exercises, both natural and spiritual, all stamp change and mutability upon everything here below. The departure of friends one after the other—how many well-known faces of attached hearers do I miss from the congregation now before me!—tells us also how change is stamped upon the life of men. Family bereavements, vicissitudes in business, change of friends into enemies, separation by distance or local habitation from those with whom we have walked in sweet fellowship, with the forming of new acquaintances and the rising up of fresh friends, these all manifest mutability as a part of the life we live in the flesh, as regards our connection with others.

As regards ourselves, and more especially our inward feelings, the movements of our spirit God-ward, and all that we hope and believe is a part of, or closely connected with, the life of God in our soul; how subject that is to change also. If blessed one day with the light of God's countenance, we have to walk in another in thick sensible darkness; if brought out for a time into sweet liberty, then are we again shut up, it may be for a long space, in cruel bondage; if relieved for a little while from the weight of

afflictions and trials, then again we have to put our neck under the yoke and be exercised as much by them as before; if favoured sometimes with sweet access to a throne of grace, and blessed with holy liberty to pour out our heart before God, then again are we shut up in miserable dryness, deadness, coldness, sloth and indifference, so as scarcely to feel a movement of real prayer within.

Thus, whether we look at the world without or the world within, whether we fix our eyes upon men and circumstances as they pass before us, or regard the movements of divine life in our own breast, change and mutability we see stamped upon all. But there is a greater change to come than any which we have yet experienced, when the eyelids will droop in death, when the pallor of our last sleep will overspread the face, when life itself will have fled and the warm body be reduced to a heap of cold clay, to be consigned to the silent tomb, there to await the last and greatest change of all in the resurrection morn, when the Lord will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. (Php. 3:21)

But what an unspeakable mercy it is amidst all these changes to have to do with One who is unchanging and unchangeable; One who says, "I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed;" One "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" One who is "the same yesterday, today and for ever;" One who rests in His love and whose purposes, like Himself, stand fast for evermore. This is that foundation both of faith and hope, which the apostle brings before our eyes and heart in the words of our text, encouraging us to hold fast our profession upon the ground of God's immutability. "That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

In opening up these words, I shall, as the Lord may enable, direct your attention,

**I.—First, to the characters spoken of: They are those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them."**

**II.—Secondly, the strong consolation, which God has provided for them.**

**III.—Thirdly, the pillars, the two pillars on which this strong consolation rests; the two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie.**

**IV.—And, lastly, the nature of the hope which they have laid hold of: That it is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and entereth into that within the veil."**

I.—The main object of the apostle in this chapter, as very much generally all through the epistle, is to strengthen and confirm the faith and hope of those whom he calls the "heirs of promise." And I may observe here, by the way, that one special feature of the epistles of the New Testament is to comfort and encourage the living family of God. They are not addressed to the world, nor was it the primary intention of the inspired apostle in writing them to call sinners out of darkness into God's marvellous light. It should be fully and clearly understood that they were written to those already called: members of the church of Christ by spiritual regeneration, and members of visible churches by profession. But being in many points imperfectly instructed, they needed to be built up on their most holy faith. They had also to endure what the apostle calls in this epistle "a great fight of afflictions." They had to be made a gazing stock or public spectacle in the reproaches and indignities cast upon them, and even to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, as knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. They therefore needed in every way to be strengthened and encouraged, that they might not cast away their confidence, which had great recompense of reward.

Now there was no ground of strength and encouragement more suitable for those thus situated than the faithfulness of God. It is for this reason, therefore, that the apostle is continually bringing before the church the promises made to Abraham, and God's faithfulness in fulfilling them. Thus he speaks of "Abraham being the father of all them that believe, whether Jew or Gentile," and of our "walking in the steps of his faith, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." (Rom. 4:16) Now what was the peculiar character of Abraham's faith? It was this, that "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform." (Rom. 4:20, 21) He would therefore encourage the heirs of promise to rest upon the security and stability of God's everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and thus manifest that they were blessed with all the blessings which were given to Abraham.

But in order to guard the subject well, to preserve the professing church of Christ from the shoal of presumption, as well as the quicksand of despair; while he would on the one hand strengthen faith and hope, and yet not encourage arrogance, boasting and vain-confidence, he takes care to point out very clearly who the characters are to whom the blessings of the gospel belong. It is this peculiar feature of describing characters, and not restricting promises to persons, which establishes a connection with us and them, and I may add, between us and the Scriptures of truth; for if we find and feel in our own bosom the characters, as I may term them, of spiritual and eternal life stamped there by the hand of God, we may take courage to believe that all the blessings of the gospel are ours, that we are true children of Abraham, and, as such, heirs of promise, and as being heirs of promise, are blessed with all the blessings of our father Abraham.

The character, then, here specially pointed out in our text, as if by the finger of God is of one who has **fled for refuge** to lay hold upon the hope set before him. Let us seek, as the Lord may

enable, to open and elucidate this character, for it is very descriptive as well as very comprehensive. It commences with the very beginning of the work of grace upon the soul, and follows it up almost to its completion. And admire with me the wisdom of the apostle in not setting up a high standard of experience and divine teaching, but with great condescension coming down so low as to embrace all in whom the good work is begun, and who are taught and led by the blessed Spirit out of sin and self to embrace the Lord of life and glory as set forth and revealed in the gospel.

But there are two points in the characters, which will demand our special notice:

**1. their fleeing;**

**2. their laying hold.**

I. The first point is that they **have fled for refuge**. What is it thus to have fled? and how is it a description of those in whom the Lord the Spirit has begun a gracious work? The expression is evidently metaphorical and figurative. We cannot then do better than to adopt the same mode of explaining it, and by using simple figures and illustrations, which often cast a clear and broad light upon Scriptural subjects, to explain and elucidate what we may understand by the expression, that you who have fled for refuge may find light from the sanctuary streaming upon your path, raising up a sweet confidence in your own bosom that you are amongst these blessed heirs of promise.

1. The first illustration which I shall adopt is taken from **the walled or fortified cities** of which we read so much in the Old Testament. You will recollect how the spies sent by Moses to explore the land brought back word that "the cities in it were great and walled up to heaven." To understand the reason for these fortified cities, we should know a little of the peculiarities of the holy land at all periods of its history.

Now Palestine had this peculiar character, that it was not all mountain nor all plain, nor were the mountains very high, or the plains, with one or two exceptions, very wide. This mixture of hill and plain made it available for a vast population, the plains and valleys affording pasture for large flocks of sheep and cattle as well as arable soil for crops of corn, and the hills, which were cultivated to the very top, yielding terraces which in that warm climate produced abundance of oil and wine from the olive trees and vines which occupied every inch of ground.

But the feature to which I wish to call your attention, as illustrating our text is this. The whole land, except a narrow strip on the sea-coast, was surrounded on almost every side by wandering tribes of predatory habits, known to us under the Scripture names of Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, etc., with whom we find the children of Israel continually at war, besides the more settled and inveterate Philistines. Now it was the habit of these predatory tribes, as is the case at the present time with the Bedouin Arabs, to make sudden raids or incursions into this cultivated territory, sweep away flocks and herds and trample down or carry off the corn, besides slaughtering all the defenceless people, with the women and children, on whom they could lay their violent hands. To guard their persons, then, where they could not secure their property against these wandering tribes, who might burst in at any moment, the people built upon the hills and mountains fortified cities, so that when an alarm was sounded that the land was threatened to be swept over by any of these predatory incursions, they might flee for refuge to these fortified towns, where they with their wives and children were safe for a time until their enemies had dispersed and gone back to the desert. A knowledge of this circumstance will explain many allusions in the Word of truth to hills and fortified places, strong towers and the like. Thus we find David frequently saying, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress;" and again, "Thou hast been a strong tower to me from the enemy." So Isaiah speaks, "There shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of water in the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall." (Isai. 30:25.) Solomon declares that "the

name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." This custom, therefore, of fleeing to these hills, forts and strong towers which were built upon the mountainous parts of Palestine may serve as an elucidation of the meaning of the expression in our text—fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us.

We spiritually are much like the children of Israel naturally. On every side are hosts of enemies ever invading our souls, trampling down every good thing in our hearts, accompanied by a flying troop of temptations, doubts, fears, guilt and bondage sweeping over the plain of our soul like those wandering tribes over the plains of Palestine, carrying off, burning and destroying everything on which they can lay their hands; and we, as regards our own strength, as helpless against them as the children of Israel were at many points of their history against the Philistines, the Ammonites and Moabites, and other such surrounding enemies. But there is a refuge set before us in the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as King in Zion, is there held up before our eyes as the Rock of our Refuge, our strong Tower, our impregnable Fortress; and we are encouraged by every precious promise and every gospel invitation when we are overrun and distressed by these wandering, ravaging, plundering tribes to flee unto and find a safe refuge in Him.

2. Take another idea; for I wish to explain things and make them as clear as I can for your instruction and comfort. It is not so scriptural as the last but as vividly true, and may well serve as an illustration of the same truth. We read sometimes of **harbours of refuge**, and attempts have been often made in Parliament to obtain a large grant of public money to construct them; for indeed much needed they are.

For instance, all along our eastern coast there stretches a long line where there is no harbour of refuge for the innumerable ships, which sail along it, or no haven but what is difficult of access. Now when, as is often the case in spring, strong easterly winds blow across the German Ocean, for want of harbours of

refuge on this lee shore great loss of ships and lives occurs. Here is, for instance, a large fleet of coasters, London bound, colliers, fishing boats, and other craft on a calm day setting their sails in every direction, studding the whole horizon for many leagues. On a sudden there gathers in the east a dark cloud; the heavens become black with storm; the gust blows with increasing violence. Now what is the consequence? They cannot stand out to sea through the violence of the wind dead against them. But were there harbours of refuge at various points along the coast they could make for them, and by running into them obtain safety.. But for want of these harbours of refuge many every year are driven upon the lee shore where they are wrecked with great loss of life and property.

Now take this as a figure and apply it spiritually. Here is a soul sailing calmly upon the sea of life, bound upon some voyage of business or pleasure; and whilst the wind is fair and the weather calm little danger is apprehended as to the issue. A dark cloud begins to gather in the sky, at first no bigger than a man's hand; but it gradually increases till it seems to cover the heavens, and out of it bursts an unexpected storm. This storm is some manifestation of the anger of the Almighty in a broken law, which beats upon the soul with irresistible violence, and threatens to drive it upon the lee shore amidst the breakers and the rocks, there to make awful shipwreck. O to find in that awful moment a harbour of refuge to which we may run and obtain shelter from every storm! Kent has a beautiful hymn upon the subject, for he had seen with his own eyes, if I remember right, near seventy ships strewn upon the rocks at Plymouth for want of a breakwater at the entrance of the Sound. The hymn, you will recollect, begins:

How welcome to the tempest-tossed  
Amidst the storm's career,  
While horror spreads from coast to coast;  
Is some kind haven near!

But now see how the Christian poet applies the figure:

But far more welcome to the soul  
Is that secure abode,  
(When terrors o'er the conscience roll,)  
The Rock prepared of God.

3. But take now a Scriptural figure: **the city of refuge** provided for the manslayer. There was no city of refuge provided under the law of Moses for the wilful murderer. For him even the altar was no protection: "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die." (Exod. 21:14.) But if a man were accidentally guilty of what our law calls manslaughter; if for instance, he went into a wood to cut down a tree, and his axe-head came off and struck a man at work with him; or if he shot an arrow at a mark and the wind carried it in a different direction and pierced a bystander, he could not legally be put to death as a wilful murderer.

But there had grown up a custom amongst the people from ancient times which made such casual homicide to carry with it the penalty of death from the nearest relative of the slain man as a species of legitimate revenge, and he was warranted in killing him wherever he could find him. This blood revenge subsists in the east to the present day. This was not, you will observe the law of God but the law of man. It was a cruel and unjust custom, but had become so inveterate that God chose rather to deal with it as it stood than wholly abrogate it. To mitigate, then, the severity of that rigid law and to make it comparatively harmless, God commanded Moses to set apart six cities of refuge—three on one side Jordan and three on the other—to which the manslayer might flee. But in order to guard against these cities becoming an asylum for wilful murderers, the congregation were to judge the cause between the slayer and the avenger of blood, and if they found that it was a case of manslaughter and not of murder, he was to be rescued out of the hand of the avenger and live in peace in the city of refuge.

Several things are mentioned in connection with these cities by Jewish writers into which I need not enter, such as that they were to be of easy access; that once every year the magistrates were to inspect the roads to see that they were kept in good condition and that there were no impediments in the way; that at every division of the road there was to be a direction post on which was written, "Refuge, Refuge;" that the cities were to be well supplied with water and provisions; and that no warlike weapons were allowed to be made there. All these features might be pressed into the service of the figure, but not being exactly scriptural I shall not enter further into them. One remarkable point I must however mention, that the manslayer was to continue in the city until the death of the high priest. Now our High Priest never dies; and therefore if we have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel, we are safe as long as our great High Priest lives.

But let us now seek to apply this figure. The true, the only refuge of the soul is the Lord Jesus Christ, who receives into His bosom sinners with a load of guilt upon their **conscience**, as the city of refuge received with open arms the manslayer flying from his avenging foe. And O how suitably does this feature describe the soul that flees for refuge to Jesus. Look at the unhappy manslayer. What danger dogged every step. What fear, alarm and terror would haunt him like his shadow when the axe-head struck with death his fellow workman, or his ill-shot arrow had killed a bystander. Two things would be present in his mind; fear and hope—fear of the avenger, hope of escape to the city of refuge.

But these things must meet in the same person to constitute him one who has fled for refuge. And is not the same remark applicable also to my other figures? Do not two ideas meet in them all? There might be a storm and no harbour of refuge; or there might be a harbour of refuge and you not need it. Without the first there would be no felt danger; without the second no fleeing for safety. The weather is fair, the wind calm, you go boldly along your voyage; were there twenty harbours of refuge

along the coast you would not need one of them, but would go sailing on. Or take my first figure. Your crops are not spoiled by wandering tribes; you lose neither ox nor sheep; you are in no peril of your own life or of those near and dear to you; you therefore want no hill-fort to shelter you from the incursions of these predatory bands, who, after robbing and spoiling you of all you had, would next turn their sword against your bosom. So with my third figure, if you have no guilt upon your conscience; if no avenger of blood is pursuing your steps, you need no city of refuge. Thus, to make a complete whole you must put two features together: first, alarm, fear, terror, urging and prompting speedy flight for security; then a refuge already provided, seen by the eye far or near, but in either case fully suitable to the case, resorted unto with all the strength given, reached before perishing, entered into as a last hope, and then full safety found and enjoyed.

But to make these two points a little more clear as well as a little more personal, cast a retrospective glance upon the dealings of God with your soul, and without dwelling upon needless minutiae, see if you can find these two features in any way impressed upon them. If ever there was in your experience a season never to be forgotten of alarm, of fear, of terror, of guilt, of apprehension; and then when you scarcely knew what to do, think, or say, there was a view opened up to you of a refuge in the Person and work, blood and righteousness of the Lord the Lamb; if as driven or drawn you fled to it, were kindly received, and found safe harbourage from guilt and doubt and fear, then you surely know what it is to have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you. It is these, and these only, who are heirs of promise; and therefore how important it is to have had some personal experience of these things.

How are we to know whether we possess the life of God in our soul, the grace of God in our heart, unless there has been some such fleeing and some such laying hold? Do see, then, if you can trace these two things in your breast: first, if there ever was a season with you when you feared and trembled at the wrath to

come, and were compelled to flee for refuge from it. But, secondly, finding no refuge in self, and that all your own righteousness was a bed too short and a covering too narrow, you fled to Jesus as your only hope; and as there was a sweet opening up to the eye of your faith of a refuge provided in the Lord the Lamb, you were enabled to take hold of Him in His covenant characters and blessed relationships, and found in Him rest and peace. If, then, you can find these two features of divine life in your soul, you are one of the characters of whom our text speaks: you have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you; which leads me to show you what **laying hold** is.

II. I much admire the wisdom and condescension of the apostle, or, to speak more correctly, the wisdom and condescension of the Holy Ghost by him, in not taking very high ground in describing the features of the heirs of promise. There were indeed special reasons for His thus dealing with them. It is very evident from the internal evidence of this epistle that the Hebrew converts, to whom it was written, were not very far advanced in the faith of God's elect. Their old Jewish views and inveterate prejudices, imbibed from their former Rabbinical teachers, stuck very closely to them; and these were sad hindrances both to their spiritual knowledge of, and their experimental profession in the truth of the gospel. They were also exposed to great and grievous persecutions, arising chiefly from their brethren after the flesh, who then, as now, loathed with the deepest abhorrence all who renounced Judaism for Christianity; and, viewing them as the worst and vilest of apostates, did not spare any degree of violence or insult.

Being, then, very weak in faith, they were much borne down by the violence of the storm, and were almost ready to turn their backs upon the gospel. The apostle, therefore, though he deals with them very earnestly and faithfully, yet mixes with his powerful warnings and urgent exhortations much tenderness and affection, however much their wavering, vacillating ways might try and grieve his spirit. They were also very weak and childish as regards an inward knowledge and experience of the blessed

truths of the gospel. He therefore gently chides them that, "when for the time they ought to be teachers, they had need that one should teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God, and were become such as had need of milk and not of strong meat."

I have named these things to explain why the apostle so deals with them as with children in understanding and experience, and why he takes, speaking comparatively, such low ground—ground so different from the way in which he addresses the Ephesians, Colossians, Thessalonians and other members of the New Testament churches. Thus, in the words before us to suit their case, he comes down to a hope; but keeping strictly upon Scriptural ground, such a hope only as is set before us in the everlasting gospel. Well he knew that all other hope was delusive and vain, and would prove in the day of trial a broken reed and a spider's web.

But as what he said to them may also suit us, I will now endeavour to show you what this hope is, that each may see for himself how far he has **laid hold** of it.

Now a little difficulty meets us here at the very outset; for it is not at first sight very clear whether he means the **object** of hope, or the grace of hope. It would seem, however, that his words comprehend both these significations, but that the primary meaning is the **object** of hope, and the secondary meaning the **grace** of hope, the two being so closely connected that what he says first of the one he transfers to the other—the former being true in doctrine, the latter true in experience. Let me explain this, and, first, as to the **object** of hope.

1. Every grace of the Spirit must have an **object**, that is, something to which it may look and with which it may deal. Christ Himself in His Person and work is the object of every grace, but more especially of faith, hope and love. He is therefore called "the hope of Israel" (Jer. 17:13); and "our hope." (1 Tim. 1:1.) But as faith and love deal more specially with the Person of Christ, hope deals more particularly with the word of Christ. "My soul fainteth

for thy salvation; but I hope in Thy word." "Remember Thy word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." The hope, then, here spoken of is the **word of promise**; for this is that unto which the soul flees, and on which it hangs.

But this hope, in order to be firm, must have a foundation; and this is nothing less than the faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of His promises. "Sarah judged Him faithful that had promised." (Heb. 11:11.) This sustained her hope; and when she held in her arms the new-born Isaac, her hope made her not ashamed. When then the apostle would encourage us to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, he adds, "For He is faithful that promised." (Heb. 10:23.)

Now where are these promises but in the gospel of Jesus Christ? All of them are made sure in Him; for "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1:20.) The word of promise then in Christ is "the hope set before us;" for when we flee for refuge from the wrath to come, we flee to the promises as opening their arms to receive us. They are thus like the elders of the city of refuge, who take us within its walls all trembling at the avenger of blood, loaded with guilt, and soiled with dust, and give us safe harbourage, so that he cannot slay us.

2. But having shown you that the hope is as **an object**, I shall now show you what hope lays hold of as **a grace**.

The main thing embraced by hope is **eternal life**, according to those words of the apostle: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Tit. 1:2.) But as Christ is "the life," and as He alone gives eternal life, He, as held forth in the word of promise, is the chief object of hope, and, therefore, when experimentally made known to the soul, is said to be formed in us "the hope of glory." As long, therefore, as guilt, doubt and fear press upon the conscience, our hope must be very faint, if it exist at all. But when we flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel, which is the promise

of eternal life in Christ, there is a springing up of spiritual and therefore eternal life in the heart. The Lord says, "I give unto them" (that is, "My sheep") "eternal life" (John 10:28); not "I will give them in the life to come;" but I will give it unto them now. We therefore read, "He that believeth on the Son **hath** everlasting life"—has it now, as a present, felt and enjoyed possession. This life is given manifestly when Christ reveals Himself to the soul; for eternal life is then received out of His fulness as an enjoyed possession.

All, then, who have truly fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before them, embrace in so doing eternal life. They live, as being manifestly in Christ, for He is "our life;" and as they embrace it in Him they feel its sweet movements in their breast, in the joy it communicates, in the peace it imparts, in the prospects it opens, in the doubts it removes, in the fears it disperses.

Thus, in real religion, there is something, if I may so speak, tangible—something to be laid hold of; and this distinguishes a good hope through grace from every other hope which is delusive, enthusiastic, or visionary. Depend upon it, there is a reality in vital godliness—a possession for eternity, which, therefore, kills and deadens the living child of God to a perishing world, and the fading things of time and sense. Whenever we get a view of Christ, there is a view of eternal life in Him; for He is the eternal Son of God, and when He makes Himself known to the soul as such, He shows us that all our life is in Him. The work that He accomplished is for eternity; He lives Himself for ever and ever; and those whom He has redeemed by His blood, justified by His righteousness and sanctified by His grace, will live for ever and ever in His glorious presence. It is the eternity of His love which stamps it with its main value and blessedness; for this life being eternal, secures not only perpetuity, but immutability—prevents it from any change in time as well as from any change in eternity, and secures it firm and stable to all the heirs of promise. As then they lay hold of eternal life in laying hold of Him

who is the life, and as the sweet movements of hope spring up in their breast, it opens before their eyes a vista of immortal joy.

II.—But to pass on to our next point, "**strong consolation**" which God has provided for these heirs of promise, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.

As God does nothing in vain, so He provides nothing in vain. These heirs of promise fully need all the consolation, which God can give, and strong consolation too. The fleeing for refuge is but the first act of their spiritual life. They are not yet safe at home or landed in their eternal rest. Under the violence of their first storm, they have fled to the harbour of refuge. This is however but the beginning, not the end of the voyage. The harbour was provided to give them a temporary shelter; but they have again to put out to sea, to encounter fresh storms, and be exposed to fresh perils. He that fled to the hill fort from the Moabites and Ammonites had to come down again to the plain there to plant and sow, and there to expect fresh attacks from the same robber bands. The manslayer who fled to the city of refuge was again exposed to the fatal stroke of the avenger of blood, if he ever left the city to which he had fled.

Thus, to have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us does not insure to us security against future foes or fears; indeed only prepares us the better to meet them. This is why the heirs of promise need strong consolation. Their afflictions are great, their trials heavy, their temptations numerous, their foes strong, and their fears often stronger than their foes. They have also, for the most part many painful vicissitudes and changes: reverses in providence, bereavements in family, afflictions in circumstances, trials of body, trials in the church and trials in the world. God often hides His face from them; Satan harasses them with his fiery darts; fears of death often bring them into bondage, besides all the guilt, which they bring upon their own consciences through their backslidings, and all the chastening strokes, which they procure for their own backs through their folly.

Thus they need consolation, and strong consolation too, that there may be balm for their wounds, cordials to cheer their fainting spirits, wine to strengthen their heart and oil to make them of a cheerful countenance. God not only knows best what we are, but knows best also what we want, for His wisdom and His goodness are alike infinite. He has, therefore, beforehand provided strong consolation for all who need it, for weak consolation would not do for strong trials, feeble deliverances for powerful temptations, and little drops and sips for sharp exercises. It may do for those who have not to wade through perplexing circumstances, or who in grace have no powerful discoveries of the holiness of God, no clear apprehension of His dread Majesty, no strong sense of the evil of sin, and no deep acquaintance with the strength of human corruption and the weakness of our nature to withstand temptation. But where a man is let into the mysterious secrets of a body of sin and death, the strength of internal corruptions, the overwhelming power of lust, pride and covetousness, when he is not upheld by the special grace of God; the snares of Satan spread for the unwary feet; and his assaults as the prince of darkness, as well as his temptations as an angel of light; when, I say, a man is led into these internal mysteries whereby he learns the depth of the fall, he will find his need not only of consolation, from the mouth of God, but strong consolation too.

When, too, he comes, as we all must come, to the closing scene, and has to look back, it may be, upon many things in his past life which may sadly grieve his spirit, if not painfully wound his conscience in the bitter recollection, and if in that trying hour the Lord should suspend the light of His countenance and withdraw His gracious presence—though we hope it may not be so with us, and that He who has borne us up through every trial will bear us up through our last, and He who has never forsaken us will not forsake us then—yet should these things come upon him or come upon us, we shall surely need strong consolation to face the gaunt king of terrors and grapple with our last enemy. Die we must; but who can say when, and who can say how? Every year snatches from us one or another of our dearest friends. As death

has come to them, so surely will it come to us; and though we know not how any of us shall die, yet I am sure of this, that if our senses are preserved unto us and we look with open eyes into eternity, we shall then need all the support and consolation which God can give.

Now God has provided, already provided strong consolation for these heirs of promise, for all who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. I shall now, therefore, endeavour to show you what is the foundation of this strong consolation.

III.—It rests, then, upon two **immutable** pillars, as the apostle beautifully speaks. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:17, 18.)

You will observe that it is the immutability, that is, the unchanging character of His counsel, viz., His eternal purpose, which God was willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise. The counsel or purpose of God is immutable in itself; but God wished to show its immutability to the heirs of promise, that out of it might flow strong consolation to their troubled hearts. He, therefore, gave them two immutable things in which it was impossible for Him to lie. What, then, are these two immutable things, these unremovable pillars on which it rests? God's word in the promise, and God's oath in its confirmation. These are the two immutable things, which I shall now, therefore, more fully open.

1. The **word of God's promise** is essentially immutable. Whatever God promises stands as firm as the very being of God himself. His own eternal throne is not firmer than the word of His mouth, as expressed in the promise. But what the apostle chiefly refers to is the word of promise made to Abraham. Now if you will observe, when God first made a promise to Abraham, there was

no oath given with it. God simply said to him, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:2, 3.) I need not enter into all the promises made to Abraham, but this is the chief one as regards us: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," for this promise takes us poor Gentiles in. As the apostle argues, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." (Gal. 3:8, 9) The promise thus given flowed out of and ratified the everlasting covenant, for when God gave it He said to Abraham, "As for Me, behold My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations:" that is, their spiritual father, for they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. I need not tell you, that this seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, is Christ. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. 3:16.)

This, then, is the word of promise made to Abraham; and if we by faith in Christ Jesus are children of Abraham, then are we blessed with faithful Abraham, and the word of promise secures us in the possession and enjoyment of every blessing of the new covenant. This made the apostle cry out, "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. 1:3.) And observe how he adds as the richest and primest blessing: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. 1:7.) Now is not this calculated to give strong consolation to the heirs of promise who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them, that they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus?

2. The other immutable thing, is God's **oath** which He gave to Abraham after He had tried his faith by bidding him offer up his

only son Isaac. Then it was that the Angel of the Lord (**Jehovah-Jesus**), "called out of heaven the second time and said, By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord." (Gen. 22:15, 16.) God, so to speak, was not satisfied with merely speaking to Abraham in the word of promise. That, indeed, would have been enough for Abraham's faith; he did not require the oath: he gave obedience to God's word, without asking anything more when He bade him offer up his son. But to confirm his faith and give ground for the strong consolation which was to be afforded throughout all time to the heirs of promise, He confirmed it by an oath, or, as it is in the margin, "interposed Himself," that is, put Himself between the promise and faith. Now God could swear by no greater, and therefore swore by Himself; and these were the words of the oath: "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." The blessing was that in his seed, that is, Christ, all the families of the earth should be blessed, and that his seed, spiritual and natural, should be multiplied as the stars of heaven.

Thus the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, made fast with our Lord in eternity, and in due time with Abraham, from whose loins the promised seed should come, rests upon these two immutable pillars, the promise of God and the oath of God. These two immutable things, then, in which it was impossible for God to lie, form the foundation of the strong consolation which God pours into the breast of the heirs of promise. Whatever change they may endure, whatever mutability in self or in others, God changeth not; His promise and His oath stand fast for evermore.

But how does this give them strong consolation? In this way. Am I an heir of promise? Do I believe in the Son of God? Do I walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham? Have I the same faith, the same hope? Then I have the same ground for confidence. On what did his faith rest? Was it not upon God's promise and God's oath? But how shall I know that my faith rests upon these two immutable pillars? I have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before me in the gospel of Jesus Christ; I have embraced the promise of eternal life made in Christ; I have rolled

my guilty soul upon the blood of the atonement in the promised Seed; I have found and felt refuge in Him; I have come out of all false hopes, vain confidences and creature expectations, and built all my hope and all my confidence on the finished work of the Son of God. He has more or less made Himself known to my soul by some manifestation of His glorious Person, atoning blood and dying love. This stamps me as one of the characters to whom the promise is made, for have I not "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before me?" Have I any other refuge, help, or hope? Do I want any other Saviour or any other salvation? It is an experience of these things, which marks me as an heir of promise. Then I am blessed with the faith of Abraham; then the covenant made with Abraham was made with me as a son of Abraham; I, having Abraham's faith, have Abraham's blessing, and Abraham's God is my God, because I believe in the same God that Abraham believed in.

This is the way in which faith is enabled sometimes to argue, yea, to fill its mouth with arguments against the accusations of law, conscience, sin and Satan. And may I not apply these arguments to your case? Have you as a poor, self-condemned, guilty sinner fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you in the gospel? Have you embraced in the arms of a living faith the Son of God, and felt and found Him precious to your soul? Then you are one of the heirs of promise, and God has secured your inheritance by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for Him to lie. Men may lie, for all are liars from the womb. We carry in our bosom a lying heart and live in a lying world; but it is impossible for God to lie; and whatever men may say, think, or do, He remains the same, immutable in His glorious perfections; unchanging, unchangeable; for with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Here we rest our hope.

IV.—And now let me endeavour to show what this hope is as a **grace of the Spirit**, its nature, and its character, how it works and operates, and the blessings which attend it: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

I intimated that by hope in our text we were to understand two things:

1. the object of hope;
2. the grace of hope.

The first is, as I have explained, the word of promise; the second is that peculiar grace of the Spirit, which acts upon it. And the reason why both are thus comprehended is because they are so closely connected.

When those who flee for refuge embrace the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus, this raises up a good hope through grace. They may not have very strong consolation or be blessed with a very great deliverance; but they find peace, acceptance and a sweet sense of tranquillity stealing over their breast so far as they are favoured with a living faith in the Son of God, and He makes Himself in any measure precious to their soul.

Now this hope is their anchor, which holds them fast amid every storm. Many are the storms, which beat upon these vessels of mercy. Storms without and storms within; storms in providence and storms in grace; storms in the world, storms in the church, storms from friends and storms from foes. But they have that which enables them to outride every storm, and that is the good hope through grace which God Himself has dropped into their breast from His own heavenly throne, that it may keep them fast and firm to covenant settlements and hold them up in every trying hour.

But of what use is an anchor except against the dangers of a lee shore? Were there no lee shore, no breakers, no rolling surf, no strong wind and no apprehension of shipwreck, the anchor would hang at the bow merely an ornament, if not a dead weight to the ship. But when a lee shore is in sight and the white surf shows the breakers ahead, and as the sounding line is dropped, and

fathom after fathom is called out as decreasing in depth, and danger is at hand, the command is given, "Let the anchor go." The word is obeyed. The anchor sinks into the sea; it takes firm hold of the sand; it brings up the ship; and as long as it holds there is no danger of the vessel being driven upon a lee shore, however the surf may roll over the rocks. It is both "sure and steadfast." First it is "sure," that is, it will never break; and, secondly, it is "steadfast," that is, no violence of wind or wave can make it lose its hold. Now these are the very two things required in an anchor. It might break from badness of material, or it might not hold fast the ship through badness of the ground. But this anchor of the soul is so strong that it **cannot** break, and the ground is so good that it must ever hold fast.

For where is this anchor fixed? "Within the veil." Who is there? Jesus at the right hand of God. The anchor of a ship will sometimes what is called "come home;" the sand or gravel does not hold the fluke firm, and the anchor drags along the ground and thus becomes practically useless. Or the wind might be so strong as to break the cable. The hawser might part, or, if a chain cable, one of the links might break, and all the precautions taken by the most skilful seamen prove ineffectual. But not so with our anchor: that is "sure." The stock can never break, the chain never part. And it is "steadfast," so that it can never move. Why? Because it is within the veil, takes fast hold of heavenly ground, and, I hardly like to use the expression lest I should drop anything derogatory to His divine Person, it takes hold of the Lord Himself, so that He Himself must be dragged from His eternal throne before the anchor can fail to hold the ship.

But this anchor may still be there and yet not always be seen. The anchor of a ship when down in the sea is never seen; even the cable itself is hidden by the waves. But ever and anon the sun breaks forth and shines upon it; and though it be dripping with the brine, yet how the bright ray manifests when it shines upon the links that there the anchor still is and holds the ship firm. So our anchor is in heaven and cannot be seen, and the cable that holds on to the anchor is sometimes so deep in the brine of a

storm-tossed heart as to be scarcely visible. But let the Sun of righteousness shine upon it; then how one ray out of His glorious fulness lights up the chain that holds the anchor firm; and then we not only feel the goodness of the ground and the goodness of the anchor, but we see also that which connects the anchor and the ship, even the grace that God shines upon as being His own gift and work. Now this anchor will never fail you in any difficulties. Whatever storms may beat upon your heart or threaten your destruction, if you have this good hope through grace, this anchor of your soul both sure and steadfast, it will certainly hold out to the end.

How careful therefore we should be to see whether we have this anchor; whether it is in the right place; whether it was made by heavenly hands; whether it was let down by the hand of God into our soul, and whether the whole of it, every part of the anchor and every part of the cable were all manufactured in the court of heaven. No earthly anchor will ever stand the storm that will one day blow. Earthly manufacture will not endure divine storms. Cables wrought by human hands will part when the winds blow and the waves rise, and the anchor itself will be sure to come home when we want it most. Ships never go to sea with unproved anchors. They are all proved in the strongest way before the safety of the ship and crew is entrusted to them. How foolish then for any one to embark upon a profession if he has not proved his anchor. What can he expect but shipwreck? But if he has an anchor that God Himself has, so to speak, welded by His divine hand, let down into his soul by His own heavenly power, and fastened at both ends, the ship and the anchorage, he will stand every storm and live at last. Well I am persuaded that no other anchor will ever hold up the vessel as it rides over the sea of life and preserve it safe from every storm, till at last it enters with swelling sail into the haven of endless rest, where storms blow no more.

God grant me this evening to have spoken a word to the heirs of promise, to those here present who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them, and in whose breast there is

any divine testimony that God has wrought a work upon their souls. Look to that, dear friends. Cast away, as God enables, all creature hopes; they will never profit you in the day of need. Vain expectations and ill-grounded hopes will be as spiders' webs in the day of trial. Prove your anchor; look at it with both your eyes, and see the true seal of God upon it, marked in heaven's armoury, and given out of God's word into your soul; and if you can trace anything real, spiritual, gracious, experimental in your heart, bless God for it. It is not the size of the anchor. A boat has not the same anchor as a three-decker. Your anchor may be a small anchor, and yours a little boat, yet still chartered by the great Owner of souls; and your anchor may be as good, if not as large; as efficient, if not as strong, as the anchor of the most experienced believer in this assembly. It is the reality of a thing we want; and if there be reality, though the work be feeble, the hope faint, and the faith small—if the reality be there, there is eternal life.

## **The Incorruptible Inheritance, with its Heirs and Legatees**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, May 28, 1865

"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." 1 Peter 1:3, 4, 5

When a rich man dies, almost as soon as the breath is out of his body, two questions are often asked: "What did he die worth?" "Whom has he left his money to?" Few care about his body; fewer care about his soul; but a good many care about his money. Even the weeping widow and the mourning sons and daughters, before the corpse of the husband and father is lodged in the ground, will indulge their minds, if not relieve their grief, by some anxious thoughts or inward speculations as to the amount of property left, and what will be the share of each. Nor should we altogether condemn them as showing thereby want of affection for the deceased, or of right and proper feeling under such a painful bereavement. It may colour the whole of their future life, whether the departed died in poverty or affluence, and if possessed of any large amount of property, what the share of each individual may be. But the mystery is soon unravelled. The day of interment comes. The cemetery provides for the body; a charitable hope provides for the soul; and the last will and testament provides for the property. When the interment is over, the family and friends assemble. Were we there and could read hearts, what emotions we should see agitating well nigh every bosom, as the will was slowly read by the family lawyer. How some would be elated and others depressed, for money, like the fabled magician's wand, can both raise spirits and lay them. And yet disappointment

might weigh upon every heart, and a cloud rest upon every face. The eldest son who takes the estates might murmur at finding them so heavily burdened to make a provision for his sisters; the widow at having so small a jointure; and the younger branches that the property was not equally divided amongst all the children. Thus those who got much might think they might have got more; those who got little might complain how hardly they were dealt with; and those, such as distant relatives and second cousins, who got nothing, would with difficulty suppress their vexation and disappointment that their names were not even mentioned in the will, or the small bequest left them of a mourning ring. Let a few years roll on; let us watch the issue; and then it might be found that what had been carefully accumulated was carelessly squandered; that the estates had become heavily mortgaged, the daughters' money lost by profligate or speculating husbands, and the younger sons, having spent all their property, had emigrated with the last few pounds to Australia. Thus that Scripture might be verified with this rich man's money and possessions, "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed." (Prov. 20:21.) It might therefore be found that honest industry, integrity, and ability given by God might be a better property, and possess more abiding substance than land and houses, stocks and shares, aye, than thousands of pounds given by man.

But why do I speak thus? Why do I drop any remarks of this kind upon such a subject as lands and houses, or any such worldly topic as an earthly inheritance? That I may direct your thoughts and draw your attention to an inheritance of a far different character—to an inheritance which cannot be accumulated by man, whether by bad means or good; which can not be left by will, nor mortgaged for half its worth, nor spent and squandered by an elder son, nor presenting to the world after the lapse of a few years the miserable spectacle of a whole family broken to pieces by extravagant habits or ruinous speculations. It is the inheritance spoken of in our text, which is declared to be "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved

in heaven," and therefore out of the reach of earthly hearts and human fingers, for a people who are described as "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

Without further introduction, then, I shall this morning endeavour to direct your thoughts and to draw your attention to three points connected with my text.

I.—*First*, the *inheritance* itself, comprising both its *character* and its *security*: its *character* as "*incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;*" its *security*, as "*reserved in heaven.*"

II.—*Secondly*, the *heirs* and *legatees* to this incorruptible inheritance: those "*who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, the *earnests* and *foretastes* of this incorruptible inheritance, as set forth in the words, "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."

I.—It is observable how the apostle immediately after the usual salutation to the saints, here designated as "strangers, elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," begins with blessing and praising God, and how he blesses him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would have you notice two things here. 1. First, what touched the secret string of praise in the apostle's heart? That very truth which has called forth so many discordant cries, so many almost shouts of horror from all quarters—that God has a people "elect, according to his own foreknowledge," whom he sanctifies by the Spirit "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Instead of denouncing the doctrine of election as "horrid" and the people who believed it and knew their interest in it as "narrow-minded bigots, wild fanatics, or mad enthusiasts," he prays for them that "grace and peace might be multiplied," or granted them in larger and richer abundance; and instead of being angry with God for

electing a people, or declaring, as so many teachers and preachers have done, that such a God was worse than Moloch, he falls to blessing and praising his holy name for the manifestation of such mercy and grace to a chosen people. 2. But observe, secondly, under what title he blessed him: "Blessed be the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" In fact he cannot be blessed by us under any other relationship. It is because, and only because, he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that he is to be blessed and praised by us with every faculty of our soul. And why? Because as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ he has blessed us, already blessed us, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Is not this Paul's testimony? "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. 1:3.) And is not this in connection also with election? "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." (Eph. 1:4.) How well do Peter and Paul agree in this matter. How consistent their views: how harmonious their words. Having, therefore, blessed us with all spiritual blessings, he is worthy of all the blessing and praise that we can bestow upon his holy name.

But let us seek for a few moments to open and enter into the meaning of that peculiar title which God claims and bears under the New Testament. As under the old covenant he was "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," so under the new he is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Both of them are covenant titles, for as in the old dispensation he made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so in the new he has made a covenant with his dear Son. But how is he "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ?" He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ primarily and essentially as his own proper and eternal Father. Jesus Christ is God's own Son, his true and proper and peculiar Son, "the Son of the Father in truth and love." His Sonship is the grand foundation of the covenant, as it is of all redemption and salvation. When then God "sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin," that is, as a sacrifice for sin, he was not

less his Son in his humiliation than he was before his incarnation; and though by taking the flesh and blood of the children he became the Son of man he did not remain the less the Son of God. As the Son of God he came, as the Son of God he suffered, as the Son of God he died; for though Deity did not and could not suffer or die, *he* suffered and died who as the Son of God was God. As our Lord, though he has two natures has but one Person, so though he was the Son of man he is not two Sons but one Son—the lower title coalescing in the higher. Therefore in his complex Person as God-Man he is still the Son of God, and God is still his Father, for he could as soon cease to be God as to be the Son of God. But why is he called "our Lord?" In the covenant of grace he is "our Lord," first, as having bought us with a price, thus establishing a right and claim to us as being purchased by his blood: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20); and, secondly, he is "our Lord," as being our Head and Husband: "And gave him to be the head over all thing to the church." (Eph. 1:22.) "Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name." (Isai. 54:5.) This counsel, therefore, was given to the church: "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." (Psa. 45:10, 11.) "My lord" was the title given by godly women of old to their husbands. Sarah, therefore, said of Abraham: "My lord being old also," to which Peter refers: "Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." (Gen. 18:12; 1 Pet. 3:6.) The title therefore which Jesus bears in the mouths of his people in the New Testament is ever "the Lord," or "our Lord." Thomas, when faith sprang up in his heart, called him "My Lord, and my God." (John 20:28.) When, then, God is called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," it implies two things; first, that he is his "Father" in eternal relationship, and, secondly, his "God," as having chosen, sent, and sustained him, and raised him again from the dead, and set him at his own right hand to be a Mediator between himself and us. Thus God the Father is "the Father of Christ," and "the God of Christ"—his Father prior to, irrespective of, and yet now connected with his Mediation; and "his God," as being our

Mediator. By this he becomes our Father and God also, our Father by adoption, our God by covenant. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." (John 20:17.)

But I would have you observe also how fixed and firm these men of God, these prophets and apostles of old, were in the solemn realities and heavenly truths which they proclaim unto us. There was no uncertainty in their mind as to the inheritance or its nature. No dubious, hesitating language ever fell from their lips. They spoke what they knew; they declare to us what had been revealed to them. And they knew also not only what the inheritance was in itself, but their own abiding interest in it. Peter therefore speaks of himself as "an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." (1 Pet. 5:1.) Only, therefore, so far as we are possessed of a measure of the same faith which was in them, can we stand upon the same spot, bless the same God, and feel a gracious, experimental persuasion of our interest in the same spiritual blessings.

i. But now let me come to the two points which I proposed to bring before you; first, the *inheritance*, with those characteristic marks which so distinguish it from every earthly portion. These mark its peculiar nature. Let me, however, before I enter upon any description of its nature by opening what the apostle has here laid down as peculiar marks of this inheritance, tell you what the inheritance is in itself. If a man leave an estate by will, it is usually a well marked, clearly defined property, having its title deeds, its boundaries, its distinguishing features to determine what it is, and where situated. So when God has given and appropriated an inheritance for the possession and eternal enjoyment of his people, he has not left us in any measure of uncertainty as to what that inheritance is. What then is it? Let us look at and examine it, that we may see each for ourselves whether it is ours. This inheritance, then, is *himself*. This was beautifully typified in the case of the Levites. God gave them no inheritance among their brethren. We find him, therefore, thus speaking to 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." (Num. 18:20.) Now Aaron and his descendants, as ministering in the sanctuary and alone possessing the priesthood and the service of the tabernacle, typified the people of God, and this under two relationships. First, the Levites were taken in the place of the first-born. When God in Egypt passed over the first-born males of the house of Israel, he claimed the first-born whether of man or beast as his, as we find him speaking: "And I behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the first-born that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; because all the first-born are mine; for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the Lord." (Num. 3:12, 13.) Now, as thus passed over, all the first-born had to be redeemed whether of man or beast: "All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem" (Exodus 34:20); and the redemption price was fixed for man at five shekels: "And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thy estimation, for the money of five shekels." (Num. 18:16.) When, therefore, the people were numbered, the first-born were numbered also, and amounted to twenty and two thousand two hundred and three score and thirteen. Now it happened that when the Levites were numbered also, all the males from a month old and upward were just twenty-two thousand. As, then, there was a number of the first-born beyond the number of the Levites, amounting to "two hundred and three score and thirteen," redemption money to that amount was required to be paid for them, in order that the Levites might exactly occupy man by man the place of the first-born. I mention this singular circumstance to show you what I may call God's accuracy in redemption, and that it is not a general and universal but a special and particular act, and the place in consequence which the Levites took as representing both the first-born and the redeemed. They thus stood before God and man as representing "the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23.) But, secondly, as the people of

God are "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," the tribe of Levi, to which was confined the office of priesthood, typically represented the people of God under their character as priests. The four living creatures, therefore, in the Revelation sang, as a part of their new song, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests." (Rev. 5:10.)

God, therefore, spiritually, as in the case of the Levites typically, is the inheritance of his people—God in his Trinity of Persons and Unity of Essence: God in all his eternal, gracious, and glorious attributes. Whatever the great I AM is in himself, the perfection of blessedness, he is that as the inheritance of his saints. We therefore read of them that they are heirs of God. (Rom. 8:17.) And what an inheritance!—not so much heaven as he who dwelleth in the highest heavens!

But there are two particular attributes of God which form what I may perhaps call the chief and enduring substance of this inheritance. These are his *love* and his *holiness*. There are attributes of God specially adapted to a time-state, which, so to speak, will not be needed in the state to come. His long-suffering, his forbearance, his mercy, his tender pity, his guiding eye, his delivering hand, his providential care—these attributes of Jehovah are needed for a time-state, but will not be needed when all the saints will see Jesus as he is. But love and holiness, or rather God in his love and in his holiness, will ever be the inheritance of his saints. His name, his nature is love, for "God is love" (1 John 4:8); and holiness is so peculiarly his that he is emphatically called the "Holy one of Israel." The song at the Red Sea was, "Who is like thee, glorious in holiness?" (Exod. 15:11.) And what was the seraphim's cry in the temple one to another but "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts?" (Isai. 6:3.) These two essential attributes of God are the blessedness of heaven, and will be the bliss of the saints in glory. His love will ever flow forth as rivers of pleasure into their happy, glorified spirits through the humanity of Jesus, and his holiness will ever be reflected upon them and delighted in by them, for they will be made perfect in holiness, both in body and soul. Thus will they ever bask in his love, and

swim in the sea of his holiness; holiness and love being the eternal happiness of heaven, as sin and enmity will be the eternal misery of hell. I shall show you by and by what bearing this has upon the experience of God's saints upon earth; but just take at present this from my lips, that God is the inheritance of his saints, and especially in his two attributes of holiness and love.

ii. But we now come to the *distinctive marks* of this inheritance. It is spoken of in our text as "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." We will look at these three distinctive marks separately.

1. *First*, it is *incorruptible*. Earthly inheritances are essentially corruptible; and they are corruptible in three points of view. Many large inheritances have had their foundations laid in corruption. Immense fortunes in this metropolis have been gained by grinding the faces of the poor. Many a poor stitch girl has been sacrificed to the demon of fashion. Some of these victims of overwork, underfood, and crowded rooms have died in their sleeping dens; others have gone home to die of consumption in their widowed mothers' arms; and all to swell the purses of men milliners and women milliners, who so profusely and so expensively supply "the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles, the wimples, and the cringing pins" of the fashionable ladies of the day. Nor have the victims of cheapness been less numerous than the victims of fashion; for money can be coined out of blood and bone as much at the East end where ragged stitch-women make slop-shirts for the poor, as at the West where well dressed stitch-ladies make court dresses for the rich. But this is only one instance of misery and corruption. Oppression, exaction, and covetousness, fraud, gambling, and speculation have heaped up many a splendid fortune. And that surely must needs be a corruptible inheritance which is gained by corruption. How often do we see money thus badly gained as badly spent, and the curse of the Lord in the house of the wicked? Earthly inheritances are therefore, secondly, corruptible, inasmuch as they may soon disappear by fraud or force, by profligacy or robbery, or vanish away as a dream in the night. Lock up your gold and silver in

your strong box, deposit your notes, your securities, your bonds in your iron safe. A telegram may come before you rise in the morning to inform you that whilst you were locked up in sleep some burglars have broken your iron safe, or that a fire has taken place on your premises, which melted your gold and silver into a shapeless mass, and burnt your notes and securities to tinder. Is not that essentially corruptible which rust and moth may corrupt, and where thieves can break through and steal? Take it in a third sense: do not riches often minister to corruption? They are not evil in themselves. We often hear ignorant men wrongly quote a Scripture text. According to their version, "money is the root of all evil." Not so: Scripture never spoke so foolishly. Money means house and clothing, food and fuel, the home and education of our children, and necessary provision for the wants of life. Scripture never spoke so foolishly as to say that money which supplies our daily necessities is the root of all evil. What the Scripture says is, "The *love* of money is the root of all evil;" not the money itself, but the love of it. And how true is this. We see from daily experience that where men are not restrained by parsimony or by the fear of God, money ministers to their corruption. They will have their lusts gratified; and as money affords the means of this gratification, the more money they have the more corrupt does it make them. You may have inherited property legitimately, and yet lose it as Job lost his by the providence of God. In that sense, therefore, your inheritance is corruptible. Your right hand neighbour may have gained his by corruption, and that is corruptible in origin; and your left hand neighbour be squandering his in sin, and that is corruptible in its end. You may have gained yours honestly by industry or bequest, and yet it may be corruptible in result as taken from you by the providence of God.

But not so with the inheritance above: *that* is essentially incorruptible: for it is God himself, as seen, known, and enjoyed in his dear Son. He gives even here below some taste of its incorruptible nature, as admitting of no loss or diminution in itself from outward violence or natural decay; and as received into a believing heart allowing of no abuse to ungodly purposes; for the

more we know of what that inheritance is in anticipation by the sweet foretastes of it, the more it will lead to godliness and holiness. No burglars can break into that blissful abode; no fire can consume that heavenly treasure. It cannot decay with age, like a house; or become barren, like a worn out field; be mortgaged like an estate, or lost from spending it too freely; for these earthly contingencies can never touch the inheritance of the sanctified. Nay, more, we must die fully to enter into possession of it; for our corrupt bodies could not bear the exceeding and eternal weight of glory to be enjoyed when put into full possession of the incorruptible inheritance.

2. But it is also "*undefiled*." Earthly inheritances are often defiled. Even if clean in themselves we may defile them. Dirty fingers may defile the cleanest object. I should not like for a chimney sweep to have handed to me my cravat this morning, or to have laid his black hands upon the bosom of my shirt, if I had met him in the street. So it is not the thing itself which is naturally or necessarily defiled; it is touching it with dirty fingers that defiles it. You might go to the bank tomorrow, and receive your April dividend in sovereigns fresh from the Mint, or in bank notes all crisp and new. But suppose before you got home you were to spend one of your bright sovereigns in gluttony and drunkenness; or bought some expensive jewellery for your wife with your bank notes when you were in debt to your butcher and baker: would not that drunkenness or extravagance stain the brightest sovereign, and defile the cleanest, crispest notes ever issued by the Bank of England? It is then our dirty fingers that defile what in itself may be clean. There is no sin in inheriting land, houses, money, left to you by your father's will. To the pure all things are pure. The Lord said, "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you." (Luke 11:41.) Nay, the Apostle speaks to the rich, charging them to be "ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim. 6:18, 19.) People often speak against money, especially other people's money, as if it were something inherently bad. Money must be in itself the same

whether it be little or much, yours or theirs. I dare say if you have none of your own you are very glad to have some of other people's—eagerly accepting *from* them what you condemn *in* them. It is not the use, then, it is the abuse which is to be condemned. The money is not defiled in itself; for it often comes to us in such a way of providence that we are compelled to see the hand of God expressly giving it. It is therefore only when we abuse God's good gift that we defile it. But we cannot defile the inheritance of which Peter speaks. That is out of the reach of dirty fingers, whether our own or others. Nay, it is in itself so pure and holy that the very foretastes of it in the soul cannot be really defiled by any base imaginations of our vile heart, or by the corruptions of our depraved nature, though they are surrounded by them. Our blessed Lord, who is gone up to the right hand of the Father, and there sits enthroned in glory, ever was and ever is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Even now to see him by the eye of faith conforms the soul to his image, as the apostle beautifully expresses it: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) The purity and holiness of Christ, as made known to the soul, make him "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." And O what a wonder that he should even say to his church when he knocks at the door of her heart, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." (Song. 5:2.) Undefiled, therefore, not only is the inheritance, but as washed in his blood, undefiled are the heirs.

3. "And which *fadeth not away*." All earthly things fade, either in themselves or in their enjoyment. You may think what a happy man you would be if somebody would leave you a handsome legacy, or if you came into sudden possession of a large sum of money. I saw the other day the suicide of a well-known London banker, who was worth at least a quarter of a million of money, according to the probate of his will. It is not for me to make any comment upon the sad circumstance, but I will just tell you what occurred to my mind when I saw the account. The thought struck me in a moment, what a poor thing money must be when the

possession of a quarter of a million could not keep its owner from suicide. How little happiness must he have had from all his property thus to throw it, and body and soul with it, away. Now you might think a very small part of that large amount would make you happy; and yet you might have so much bodily or mental misery accompanying the very gift, that your present tried circumstances would be almost a paradise in comparison. A cancer in your mouth, a paralytic stroke, a dying wife or husband, or what would be more intolerable, the sense of God's wrath in your soul, would be a heavy counterpoise to all the money. Or even without this ballast, your anticipated happiness would prove a shadow and not a substance. The enjoyment of it would fade away like a gathered flower, or like a butterfly caught by a child in the fields: all its bloom would fade away, and its painted wings be crushed as soon as it was caught. And should it not fade away in reality, it would fade away in the very act of enjoyment. Your cherished prospects, your fostered schemes, and all the airy dreams in which you have revelled, by which you have created sometimes, in imagination, an earthly paradise should you succeed in gaining them all, you would find that you had embraced a cloud or grasped a shadow. Perhaps you have obtained what was once the utmost height of your ambition. Were you satisfied? Was there not disappointment attending it which you had never expected, which marred all your expected happiness in it? If the cup was sweet as it touched your lips, was there not a bitter, bitter drop at the bottom which marred all the sweetness, and turned the whole draught into gall and wormwood? But the inheritance reserved in heaven for the saints is incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away. Even on earth it does not fade, for it is ever fresh, ever blooming, ever new. There is in it a sweetness which never cloy, a satisfaction which leaves behind no bitter reflections. The sweetest and best of earthly blessings perish in the using, if they do not leave behind a sting of guilt and shame. And if this inheritance fade not on earth how will it be in heaven? There will be there no fading flowers, no withered prospects, no disappointed dreams; but ever new and renewed pleasures; for "he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5.) Nay, "the Lamb

himself which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters"—ever fresh, ever flowing, and therefore ever new.

iii. And now a word on the *security* of this inheritance. It is "*reserved* in heaven." The word "reserved" here means preserved, or kept secure. Thus the inheritance is made sure to the heirs—secured to them by an everlasting covenant, and kept safely for them until they are put into possession of it. As they are waiting for the inheritance, so the inheritance is waiting for them. But it is reserved for them "in heaven," and they must go there to possess and enjoy it. The sealing of the Spirit gives the earnest here; but the full possession will come hereafter.

II.—And this leads us to our next point, which was to consider the *heirs and legatees* of this heavenly inheritance. This is a very important matter. If you were present at the reading of the will of which I spoke in the beginning of my discourse, the most anxious moment with you would be to hear whether your name was in it, and if so, what was the amount of money left you. I have described the inheritance. I have spoken a little of its nature, and security. I am now going to read the will, and recite aloud the names of the heirs and legatees. Listen whether I read out your name as put down in this last will and testament of the divine Testator. But mark this; if you can find your character in it, it will be the same thing as if I read aloud your name. There are, I may say, two copies of the will, one in heaven, called the Book of Life: that contains the *names*. The other copy is on earth, called the Word of Truth: that contains the *characters*. The one, so to speak, is God's private will; the other God's public will; and the names in the one correspond with the characters in the other. Listen, then, to the character of the heirs and legatees as given in our text: "*Reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*"

i. There is a people, then, who are "kept by the power of God:" and kept by him for a particular purpose and end. These are the heirs and legatees of the great Testator, for the inheritance, as I

have shown, is reserved for them; in other words, as they are kept for the inheritance, so the inheritance is kept for them. The expression in the original is very striking. The word rendered "kept" signifies kept as in a garrison. It might, therefore, be rendered "garrisoned" by the power of God. The word is well worth examination, for there is much divine truth couched in it. How then are they thus garrisoned?

1. They were garrisoned, in the first place, in the mind of God from all eternity; for they were chosen *in* Christ before the foundation of the world, and given to the Son of God that they might be preserved in him. Does not Jude thus speak? "Sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (Jude 1), evidently referring their preservation in Jesus Christ to a period prior to their calling. Thus they were, if I may use the expression, stored up and safely laid in the bosom of Christ, united to his Person as the bride to the Bridegroom, made his spouse, inheritance, property, and possession by divine decree. Thus as the inheritance was appointed for them, so were they appointed for the inheritance; both the inheritance and the heirs being absolutely fixed, the one as much so as the other in the purpose and by the decree of God. They are as sure therefore eventually of enjoying the inheritance as the inheritance is reserved for them by the will and power of God. And thus being preserved in Jesus Christ before they are called by grace and manifested as heirs, they are kept by the power of God from perishing in their unregeneracy. Have not you been almost miraculously preserved in the midst of dangers, and escaped when others perished by your side, or been raised up as it were from the very brink of destruction and the very borders of the grave? Besides some striking escapes from what are called accidents, three times in my life, once in infancy, once in boyhood, and once in manhood, I have been raised up from the borders of the grave, when almost every one who surrounded my bed thought I should not survive the violence of the attack. Were not these instances of being kept by the power of God? I could not die until God had manifested his purposes of electing grace and mercy to my soul. And so now, I am immortal till my work is

done. Some, if not many, who saw me last year might have thought I should not live to see this. But though I look and am weak and feeble from having had at various times much bodily affliction, I shall live as long as God purposes; and if he has a work for me to do in his church, I shall live until I have done it, as kept by the power of God so long as he may have need of me.

2. But they are kept also by the mighty power of God after they are called by grace; for they are in the hollow of his hand, and are kept as the apple of his eye. I will not say are kept from all sin, for were I so to speak, the cases of David and Peter would stare me in the face; yet I will say this, they are kept from damning sins. They are kept I may add especially from three things; from the dominion of sin, from daring presumption, and damnable error. I do not say that they are not tempted to these things; but temptation is one thing and transgression is another; neither is all presumption damning, nor all error damnable. It is from daring and final presumption, from lasting and damnable error that God keeps as in a garrison all the heirs and legatees of his inheritance. They are never suffered to embark on the wide sea of error, and there wander and get lost, or concerning faith to make awful shipwreck; they are never drowned in the sins and evils of the present life so as to be swallowed up in them, for they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and if so, it is impossible that they can ever be lost.

ii. But observe *how* they are kept. They are not kept mechanically; they are not preserved as persons are preserved from falling over a bridge by a rail, or as children are kept from tumbling into the fire by a tall iron fender. They are not kept mechanically, though often providentially, but spiritually—kept *through faith*. God gives them faith; that faith he draws out; through that faith Christ reveals himself, makes himself precious, dwells in their heart, conveys his promises, his presence, his precepts, and everything connected with his Person and work. Thus, as through faith they embrace Christ, lean upon Christ, and receive out of Christ's fulness, which faith is not a dead, motionless, inert notion, but a vital active principle, as being a

grace of the Spirit, they are kept by the mysterious, invisible power of God through faith in his dear Son. So that though they are kept absolutely by the power of God, they are so kept by his power through faith that they are kept spiritually and experimentally; not visibly but invisibly, not forcibly and against the strugglings of love and liberty, but in harmony with both; not against their will and inclination, but with their will and inclination; not against their solemn, deliberate approval of what is right, but with the full consent of an enlightened mind and a believing heart.

And do observe how the power of God by which they are kept acts in harmony with faith. Thus sometimes it is the power of the *word* upon their heart. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Psa. 17:4.) Sometimes it is the power of *godly fear* in their conscience. "So did not I, because of the fear of God." (Nehem. 5:15.) "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.) "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." (Prov. 16:6.) Sometimes it is by the power of his *love*. "The love of Christ constraineth us." (2 Cor. 5:14.) Sometimes it is by the power of his *promises*. "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1.) And sometimes it is by the power of his *precepts*. "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." (Psa. 119:104.) In all these cases the power of God acts through faith, and therefore does no violence to our will; for he says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Psa. 32:8.) "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Psa. 110:3.)

iii. And they are kept unto *salvation ready to be revealed*. They are therefore preserved in hours of temptation, in seasons of great danger and extremity; for they are guarded by all the power of Omnipotence, shielded by the unceasing care and watchfulness of him who can neither slumber nor sleep. He therefore says, "In that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red

wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isa. 27:2, 3.) It is said of Israel of old, "For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." (Deut. 32:9, 10.) The heirs of God are kept *unto salvation*. Nothing short of this would do. They are never left till they are landed. If you were carrying your wife or child through a stream deep enough to drown them, or rapid enough to sweep them away, would you leave them half in the river, or carry them right through? They might be lost in the few last yards. If God did not carry us right through Jordan's swelling stream, we should sink when close to the bank.

And this salvation is "*ready to be revealed*"—now in grace to your heart, soon in glory to your soul. It is even now at the door, for Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20); and the time draws on when it shall be revealed from heaven at the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Look back and see whether you can find anything of being thus kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Can you not sometimes see how the hand of God has been with you for many years, how it has held you up and brought you through many a storm, preserved you under powerful temptations to commit sin or suicide, fall into presumption or despair; how kindly yet firmly it restrained you from falling a prey to the destroyer; how gently sometimes it drew you on, sometimes kept you back; how from time to time faith was given you to embrace the Son of God, to receive him as revealed in the word and as made known to your heart; how he inclined your mind to listen to his word, to obey his precepts, to seek to know his will and do it? Do you not see how the fear of God was planted deep in your soul, your conscience made alive and tender, and you kept from evil that it might not grieve you? And now looking back through a long vista of years, you can see the kind hand of God stretched

out again and again on your behalf, and can set to your seal that you have been kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Then you are an heir and a legatee of this incorruptible, undefiled inheritance. You are in the will, and all its provisions and all its possessions are yours. Does not the apostle say, "All things are yours?" And why? Because "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:22, 23.) In this will all share alike, and yet each has all. In this last will and testament there is no widow cut down to a miserable jointure; no heir cut off with a shilling; no collapse of a once splendid property; no late discovery of mortgaged estates and ruinous liabilities, swallowing up not only the reputed wealth but the good name and fame of the testator. Your inheritance is no such delusion and deception, but a solid reality and an affluence beyond calculation, for it is God himself in all his divine and glorious perfections.

But I have not yet done with the heirs and legatees. I have something more to speak to and of them. I have to draw their character over again; to point out their names more clearly still as inscribed in the last will and testament of the heavenly Testator. And this I now unfold, according to my third division, which is,

III.—*The earnest and foretastes* of this heavenly inheritance. "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."

This lively hope to which we are begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the main earnest and foretaste of this glorious inheritance. We find the apostle thus speaking in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "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." This inheritance is the same as that which Peter speaks of in our text as "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." And observe that it is "in Christ" that we have obtained it; for only as in him and one with him have we any share or portion in it. But

now see what Paul says about the earnest and foretaste of this inheritance: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." There is the earnest: the seal of the Spirit, according to Paul; "the lively hope," according to Peter. There is no want of harmony between the two apostles. It is the same thing unfolded under a different view. A lively hope, or, as the word might be rendered, a living hope, is the gift and work of the Spirit and is the seal of salvation, for "we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24); and this living or lively hope being unto eternal life, an inward earnest of immortality unto which we are begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, it stands in union with faith and love and the sealing witness of the Holy Ghost unto present grace and future glory. There are several points which need to be unfolded here, to cast a clearer light upon the subject.

i. First, the connection of a lively hope with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the grand foundation on which our holy faith rests. I would not use any unbecoming, irreverent expression in speaking of our adorable Saviour, and yet I would say if our most blessed Lord had not risen from the dead he would have been plainly manifested as not being the Son of God, but an impostor. But his resurrection from the dead was the crowning attestation to the truth of his mission. It was God's own seal, not only unto his divine and eternal Sonship, but that he was the Christ of God, the promised Messiah, the child that was to be born, the Son who was to be given. (Isa. 9:6.) He was, therefore, "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4.) Our Lord, so to speak, staked the whole truth of his mission upon this fact, whether he should rise from the dead or not. His resurrection from the dead was the grand attesting miracle whereby God himself set to his visible seal that he who lay in the sepulchre was his only begotten Son; that the crucified and buried Jesus was the Son of God whom he had sent to save those that believe. This, therefore, was the grand doctrine which the apostles preached, as we read:—"And with great power gave

the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33.) No one, therefore, could be an apostle who was not a personal witness of his resurrection in having seen him alive after his passion by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3, 22), or by special revelation, as in the case of Paul: "Am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1.)

ii. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not only the grand attestation which God set to the truth of his mission, but it involved in itself other consequences, and was the productive parent of other fruits. When he rose from the dead, the Church of God virtually rose with him; for as he is the Head, and the Church the members, when the Head rose from the dead, triumphant over death and hell, the Church mystically and virtually rose together with him, for Head and members could not be separated. The apostle, therefore, speaks of our "being quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:5, 6.) So close and intimate is the union between the Head and members that the resurrection of Christ was virtually the resurrection of the Church, her resurrection from the curse of the law, from her state of condemnation, and from the miserable consequences of the Adam fall. When then our blessed Lord rose from the dead, the Church rose with him out of all the depths of the fall, and he thus secured for her two inestimable blessings. 1. A certain pledge of her *resurrection* at the great day, that is, the resurrection of all the glorified bodies of the saints, he being the first fruits, as the apostle argues in that glorious chapter 1 Cor. 15. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death by man came also the resurrection of the dead." As surely then as Christ rose will the Church rise; for "as we have borne the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. 15:21, 22, 49.) But, 2, secondly, it was also a pledge of *regeneration*, for the Church can only enter into Christ's kingdoms by regeneration. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." If there is an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and

that fadeth not away, and we are to enter into the possession and enjoyment of that glorious inheritance, to be for ever partakers of its bliss and blessedness, we must have a capacity for that enjoyment. I showed you that the two attributes of God which would form the bliss of this inheritance were love and holiness. We then must have love, and we must have holiness, or we can have no knowledge of, no communion with, no delight in, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When, then, the blessed Lord rose from the dead, we not only virtually rose with him, as regards resurrection future, but rose also with him as regards resurrection present: the resurrection of the soul in grace, as well as the resurrection of the body in glory. I have said that it was the pledge of both, but it was something more than a pledge; it was the efficient cause. The apostle speaks of God as "quickenning the dead, and calling those things which be not as though they were;" that is, the future is so certain when God has promised it, that it is as if already accomplished. "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations." "I *have made* thee"—already made thee, not "I *will* make thee;" and this many years before the birth of Isaac. So God speaks of the church as already risen in Christ; his resurrection being the efficient cause of her regeneration. Now this shows the connection between Christ's resurrection and a lively hope: "Hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." There is then, a begetting again: this is regeneration. This begetting again is "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and this begetting again by the resurrection as the cause, and regeneration as the effect, is unto a lively or living hope. Why is there a living hope in your bosom, and what is the foundation of that lively hope but the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? Could there be any hope in your soul of mercy, pardon, peace, and eventually of a heavenly inheritance, if Jesus had not risen from the dead? Where would have been the blood of atonement; where would have been the robe of righteousness; where would have been the blotting out of all sin, and the acceptance of the persons of the saints before God? All would have been sunk in the tomb of Jesus, and never risen from that tomb unless he had risen out of it. But when he rose from the

dead, it was made manifest that atonement had been offered and accepted for transgression, sin blotted out, righteousness brought in, and the Church of God saved with an everlasting salvation. So we see what momentous consequences hang upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that it is not only a proof but a pledge; and not only a pledge but an efficient cause; and not only an efficient cause but a triumphant end and issue.

iii. But carry on your view a little further. I love to make my points clear. Let us have no confusion of thought, and, if we can help it, of expression in these important matters. What does our lively hope spring from? Its foundation is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But the apostle speaks of being "begotten unto this lively hope;" in other words, he testifies of this lively or living hope as a fruit of quickening, regenerating grace. Having already quickened us together with Christ by and in his resurrection, he begets us with the word of truth, regenerates our souls by a divine influence, breathes into our hearts the breath of life, communicates the life of God, and by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost makes us new creatures in Christ. Now the fruit and effect of this regenerating grace is to create a living or lively hope in our souls. If then you cannot read regeneration in your breast; if you cannot find that the Holy Ghost has ever breathed into you the breath of life, you have no hope, no lively hope. You may have a hope—that kind of charitable hope that I spoke of in the case of the rich man which the relations indulge in, as a kind of soothing cordial, when the poor creature never manifested one mark of vital godliness either in life or death. That is a dead hope; but our text speaks of a living hope. Now if there be a living hope, and that hope is in our breast, it will manifest its life. Does not a mother know the distinction between a still-born babe and a living child? No creeping to the bosom in the still-born child, no laying hold of nature's bland nutriment; all cold and dead, and thrust away as soon as possible into its little coffin. So in grace: where there is a living hope, it will be like the living child in the mother's warm bosom—it will nestle and breathe, and exert all those tender movements that the mother knows and loves so well when she

presses her new-born babe to her fond breast. Have you that living babe in your bosom, nestling, clinging, breathing, and manifesting that there is life in it by its inward movements in your soul? This is a living hope and a lively one too. It is the lively child as well as the living; for there may be a living child which is, so to speak, only just living; only just breathing. But a lively child is a step beyond a living child, as having more active movements, more energetic drawings, nestling more strongly in, and cleaving more closely to the mother's warm embrace. Have you then a lively hope as well as a living, a strong, active, vigorous child pulling at your breast, and not a puny, sickly, half-dying, diminutive cripple, a wizened-face doll, as if born before its time in a London alley? When a servant of God has unfolded the truth spiritually and experimentally, described the work of grace upon the heart, brought forward the various signs and marks that are in a living soul, have you not felt that there was a springing up of a lively hope in your bosom, a waking of the child out of the cradle, a crying for food, the pure milk of the word, and a feeding upon the food given? As the food came warm, bland, and fresh, every member of the new man was strengthened, and the hope was not merely living, but lively too, leaping for joy, like the babe in the womb of Elizabeth. To know and experience this is a fruit of being begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

iv. And this "*according to his abundant mercy.*" O the riches of his abundant mercy! It was mercy that gave us to Christ; it was mercy that preserved us in Christ; it was mercy that called us to Christ; it was mercy that gave us to believe in Christ; it was mercy that enabled us to love Christ. And O how "abundant!" What sinners we have been; what base rebels; what wretched wanderers from the living God! And yet again and again he has begotten a lively hope or renewed it; and all according to the abundance of his mercy. A little mercy would not suit you or me: like a few drops of rain, it would soon be lost in the dust in a dry season like this. What we want is a copious shower that shall go down to the very roots of our soul, and water our faith and hope and love. When this abundant shower falls down from the

windows of heaven, how it nurtures every grace; how it waters the soul as with the river of God, and brings forth the lively hope into blessed exercise upon his goodness and mercy.

v. And when so blessed, is not this a becoming word from our lips? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Blessed be his holy name! "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." What a tender relationship! In what a blessed character does he manifest himself unto us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! How it seems to drop into our heart with such tenderness, and kindles in the bosom such an affectionate response; for because he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, if indeed we believe in his dear Son, he is our God and our Father too. Then we can say, amidst all the din and confusion of hostile tongues, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I have opened the will; I have read some part of its contents, for who can read the whole? and I have pointed out the heirs and legatees. Have I mentioned your name? Have I described your character? Have I pointed out that you are one of the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? In this heavenly inheritance there is no partiality or favouritism; no vexation and no disappointment; no jealousy and no rivalry. The whole belongs to each, and each has not only a portion but the fulness of the whole; for each has God, who is the whole of the inheritance. Thus each of the heirs and legatees has the inheritance whole and undivided, without jealousy, without favouritism, and without rivalry.

But if you cannot read your name and title in this heavenly inheritance, have you any reasonable ground of hope of eternal life? Is it not fearful to go on for many years making perhaps a profession of religion, and not to have any well-grounded hope in the mercy of God—not to be able in any measure to read your name in the Book of Life? Would that do for an earthly inheritance? How careful men are to make their title good; how careful the testator that every name is rightly spelled in the will!

How anxious the legatee to know that his name is there!  
Uncertainties will not do in an earthly inheritance; and will they  
do in an heavenly one?

O to be able to make our calling and election sure; and then we  
shall be able to lie down each night in peace, as believing we  
have an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth  
not away, reserved in heaven for us even should death arrest our  
breath before morning.

## THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE FOOLISH SHEPHERD

A Sermon Preached on Thursday Evening, April 29, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

"And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces." Zech. 11:15, 16

We find the prophets of the Old Testament continually directed by the Holy Ghost to sustain typical characters and to perform typical acts. Thus, the prophet Hosea was commanded "to take unto him a wife of whoredoms," **Ho 1:2**, by which we are not, I think, to understand that he was to marry a woman living in that state, but a reformed character who had been living an abandoned life. So Jeremiah was directed to make bonds and yokes, and put them upon his neck **Jer 27:2**. This was a typical representation that the nations to whom the yokes were sent were to submit themselves to the king of Babylon. In a similar manner the prophet Zechariah in the text is commanded to sustain a typical character, and that of a kind the very contrary to what he really was. He was "to take unto him the instruments of a foolish shepherd," as a typical representation of such a character as should be raised up in the land, that by these visible and significant emblems a more lively and effectual representation might be given than could be expressed in words. He was not to **become** a foolish shepherd, but to **represent** one, and stand forth publicly before the people as a visible emblem of such.

But we may remark that he seems already in this chapter to have before sustained two typical characters, one that of a good shepherd, and the other that of Christ. That he was typical of the latter is most evident from what we read, verses 12, 13, "And I

said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." This prophecy was fulfilled when Judas Iscariot betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver, and on his agony of remorse and casting them down in the temple, the potter's field was bought therewith. And that we may understand the literal meaning of the prophet's being valued at that price, we may remark that it was the customary value of a slave, and thus shadows forth, not only that Jesus was sold at the price of a slave, but that the prophet, in his character of a good shepherd, which he seems to have sustained as a representative of Christ, was estimated by the people at "the goodly price" of a slave—apt representation of the value usually put upon the services of one who labours in word and doctrine.

But we find that the prophet, before he was commanded to take unto him the instruments of a foolish shepherd, had taken two staves, each of which he had broken. It would seem that this was also a typical representation of a certain work which must be done, in order to a wise shepherd's being known as such by the poor of the flock. His first staff was "**Beauty**," which seems to me to represent figuratively the beauty of creature holiness. This staff, on which hundreds of false shepherds lean, and by which they seek to rule their flocks, he was to break asunder, typical of the breaking up of all creature beauty and fleshly holiness. And this staff was to be **visibly** broken, to show that a minister must stand up, not in creature holiness, with sanctified visage and demure tongue, as if he in the pulpit were a saint, and the people before him were sinners, but to stand before them a ruined wretch, without help or strength, wisdom or righteousness, save in the blood and love of the Lamb. His staff "**Beauty**" must be broken before their eyes, that they may see in his heart a copy of their own, equally vile, equally base, equally deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and so shivered and shattered in his hands, that he can neither lean on it himself for support, nor rule them with it as a rod. Then the poor of the flock that waited

upon him for profit and instruction, knew that it was the word of the Lord in his mouth. Man's total ruin and the Mediator's complete salvation, the thorough wreck of creature holiness, and the perfection of the Saviour's righteousness, filth, corruption, and pollution stamped upon every thought, word, and action of the sinner; and atonement, pardon, and reconciliation, stamped upon every thought, word, and work of the incarnate Son of God, was a ministry that well suited the flock of slaughter, whom the prophet was commissioned to feed. Having been slaughtered in their own consciences, the poor of the flock knew that it was the word of the Lord.

The other staff which he took, and which also he cut asunder, was named "**Bands**," or "Binders" margin, and signified, spiritually, **the breaking up of false union**. For we read, "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." Judah stood fast with the Lord, when Israel, under King Jeroboam, departed, and worshipped the golden calves that were set up in Bethel and in Dan, **1Ki 12:28,29**. Therefore we read, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints," **Ho 11:12**. And again, "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet not let Judah offend," **Ho 4:15**. The staff, then, "Bands" or "Binders," typically represents false union, unholy brotherhood, unscriptural confederacy, a mingling together of sheep and goats in one pen; a heaping up of wheat and chaff on the same floor; a joining together of faithful Judah with idolatrous Israel, on the footing of similarity of sentiments, doctrines, and ordinances, without union of spirit from Divine teaching. Here, then, is a staff which false shepherds rule their flocks by, on the sole ground of Calvinism, or baptism, or church membership, or "our faith and order," or any other human cement to unite, if possible, living stones and dead stones into one building. But this cement must be broken, "for the" living "stone shall cry out of the wall," pressed down by the dead blocking-course above, and "the" living "beam out of the timber shall answer it," **Hab 2:11**, from its place amid the rotten rafters, and the cry of the one and the echo of the other shall be,

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate." When, then, this staff of unholy brotherhood is broken, and no union is allowed or recognised, but that which is based upon the Spirit's work in the soul, then the poor of the flock feed together as the flock of slaughter, and know that it is the word of the Lord.

But I feel I have wandered somewhat from the text, and therefore I return to it without farther preface. The command addressed to the prophet was, "to take unto him **yet** the instruments of a foolish shepherd." There is, I think, much meaning contained in the word "**yet**," that is, "again," "once more," and I gather from it, that the staves, "Beauty" and "Bands," were also instruments of a foolish shepherd; but he was "yet," once more, still further, to take other such instruments so as to manifest more visibly and strikingly what a foolish shepherd is. By "foolish," I understand "ungodly," "unregenerate," as the word is used in other scriptures, that is, destitute of heavenly imparted wisdom, and therefore in God's account a fool. "The **fool** hath said in his heart, there is no God." "**Fools** die for want of wisdom." "For we ourselves also were sometimes" **that is, in times past** "**foolish**, disobedient, deceived," &c., **Tit 3:3**. We are, therefore, forbidden to call a brother "**fool**," that is, to pronounce him unregenerate, and cut him off as destitute of spiritual life. The "foolish shepherd" is, therefore, a natural man lifted up by education, pride, covetousness, or presumption, into a pulpit, and devoid of spiritual illumination and heavenly wisdom. He has certain instruments which the prophet was to take as emblems of his character. What they were the Holy Ghost has not here informed us, but as we may gather them from other parts of Scripture, I shall take the liberty to put them into his hand.

The first instrument and badge of this foolish shepherd, then, shall be a mask. The instrument itself, perhaps, might not be known to the Jews, though well known to the Greeks and Romans; but the thing which it represents, viz., deceit and imposture, was as old as the times of Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians, who withstood Moses, **2Ti 3:8**, flourished

mightily at the court of Ahab, in the days of honest Micaiah, **2Ch 18:5**, and sadly plagued poor Jeremiah, **Jeremiah 28:10,11 Jer 29:26,27**. Paul speaks of this when he said, "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, **transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ**," **2Co 11:13**. So we read, that the prophets shall no more "wear a rough garment to deceive," **Zec 13:4**. To wear a mask is to play a false part, to assume a fictitious character, to be a stage-player, for in ancient times the actors never appeared but in masks, the features of which imitated the persons whom they represented. Thus this foolish shepherd makes the pulpit his stage, his holy countenance being his mask, and his false zeal, loud speech, and impassioned rant his wardrobe; and thus, by craft and cunning, he entangles the simple in his net.

The next instrument which I shall put into his hand shall be a **sceptre**—the badge of authority and power, to show that he is "a lord over God's heritage," **1Pe 5:3**, and "rules the flock with force and cruelty," **Eze 34:4**. The third instrument shall be a **pair of sharp shears**, for we read that "they clothe themselves with the wool," **Eze 34:3**, and of course he must have something to get the wool off with. Not that the minister is not to have an honourable and sufficient maintenance, for "who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof, or, who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?." **1Co 9:7**. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." But to receive what is voluntarily given is a different thing from clipping off as much wool as possible, or cutting so close as to fetch blood, and take off a bit of the skin. His fourth instrument shall be a long whip, that shall reach to every corner of the pen, to flog all that stir up the enmity of his carnal mind, by what he calls a discontented spirit, and by having imbibed what he terms Antinomian and dangerous principles. Woe to all that will not bow down to his authority, or submit themselves to his instruction. Thus to offend his dignity will bring the long whip upon the transgressor's shoulders. As the apostle says, "Ye suffer if a man **that is, a minister** bring you into bondage, if **a man smite you on the face**," **2Co 11:20**. So

"Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, smote Micaiah on the cheek," **1Ki 22:24**; and thus, though protected by law and moral decency from being now smitten "with the fist of wickedness," the exercised children of God still have to suffer from "the scourge of the tongue." His fifth and last instrument shall be **a bow and a quiver full of arrows**, to reach those at a distance who are beyond the lash of the whip. The arrow is for those at a distance, the whip for those that are near; the latter is plied within the chapel walls, the former is aimed at those who are without them. These arrows are bitter words, as the Scriptures speak, "who wet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect; suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not," **Ps 64:3,4**. And again, "they bend their tongues like their bow for lies;" "their tongue is an arrow shot out," **Jer 9:3,8**. And against whom are these arrows chiefly aimed? At the tried, tempted, and exercised; at those who are sighing and mourning over guilt and corruption; at those who are harassed with many doubts and fears; at those who tremble at God's word, and at times are almost consumed with terrors. All who contend for the power of vital godliness, who "have changes," **Ps 55:19**, who cannot do without a feeling religion, who cannot rest upon doctrines and the letter of truth without the experience of them, and who boldly show their colours as standing in the ranks of vital, spiritual, experimental truth, especially if they be standard-bearers, must expect to be marks for those envenomed arrows.

Thus far for "**the instruments** of the foolish shepherd," the badges and insignia of his office, the emblems and visible signs by which he is at once to be recognised. But we will now come to his character which the Holy Ghost has here drawn; and as we learn much by contraries, it will afford us an opportunity of seeing from the contrast what the wise shepherd is. The blessed Spirit has given four **negative** and two **positive** marks, that is, he has described four things which the foolish shepherd does not, and two things which he does. The wise shepherd, therefore, will be his exact contrary; and there will be four things which he does, and two things which he does not. These four things are, that the

foolish shepherd "does not visit those that be cut off, does not seek the young one, does not heal that that is broken, does not feed that that standeth still." The two things that he does are, "he eats the flesh of the fat"—"and tears their claws in pieces."

The Lord says, "I will raise up a shepherd," that is, He will in his providence, and as an act of his judicial displeasure, raise up such a one as shall be a model and pattern of what a foolish shepherd is. Thus we read, "I will choose their delusions," **Isa 66:4**; and "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie," **2Th 2:11**. As an act of judicial displeasure, in order to punish the people who turned their ears away from the true prophets, the Lord would send them one of a different stamp.

1. Now, the first thing said of this foolish shepherd is, that "he shall not visit those that be cut off." Who are these characters here said to be "cut off?" They are the same whose mournful complaint we hear, **Eze 37:11**, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts." That is, they are such as by a work of the law in their consciences are cut off from all creature righteousness, all false refuges, all deceitful hopes and rotten props, from finding any good in self, or resting on the testimony of man. We read, **Ro 11:24**, of the branch being cut out of the wild olive tree, and being grafted into the good olive tree, which is a striking figure of the way in which a vessel of mercy is cut off from the original stock, and grafted into Christ by way of manifested union. The law working wrath, guilt, condemnation, and fear, is the knife in the hands of the heavenly husbandman that cuts the scion clean out and clean off from the original stock; and before this bleeding branch can be inserted into the good olive tree, it must lie upon the ground with all its native sap oozing and draining away. So must a soul lie helpless and often well nigh hopeless, until the heavenly husbandman takes up this bleeding branch, and inserts it into Christ, by way of manifested union. Then it "partakes of the root and fatness of the olive-tree," spiritual grafting differing from natural grafting in this, that in natural grafting the fruitful scion is inserted into the wild stock, but in spiritual grafting the wild scion is inserted into

the fruitful stock. But in both this grand truth holds that there are two distinct and successive processes, the entire disunion from the old stock, and the entire union with the new.

But the margin gives another rendering, "those that be hidden." The people of God are a hidden people. They are, therefore, called, **Ps 83:3**, God's "hidden ones;" that is, not merely hidden in his hand from eternity, and hidden in the secret of his presence from the pride of man, **Ps 31:20**, but hidden from general view and observation. They are not those who blaze forth in a false glare of sparkling profession, nor rush presumptuously forward to take the topmost room, but through a deep sense of spiritual poverty, need, guilt, and pollution, are fain to hide themselves from all but a heart-searching God. Thus they "hide the word of God in their heart," **Ps 119:11**; and the word of God is in them like the leaven in the three measures of meal, **Mt 13:33**, hid from the general eye, but working powerfully in secret. These cut off, or hidden ones, then, the foolish shepherd "does not visit." I do not understand by this word "visit," a going about from house to house. The old Geneva translation reads, "shall not look for." In these visits, so called, there is often much more gossip and slander than unction and power, more unprofitable conversation than speech seasoned with salt, and we often separate more burdened than benefited. The figure is clearly taken from a shepherd taking his rounds through the fold, and examining each sheep as they are there collected together. The sheep are not scattered one in one field and one in another, but gathered into one fold, so as to be all in one place under his eye. He visits them, then, when he goes through the fold, and stops to examine with particular attention every one that needs his care. So, spiritually, the pastor best visits his flock when they are all assembled before him, and he takes a view of them from the pulpit, as looking up to him for food and instruction. He visits the cut off when he comes down to their exercises, trials, and temptations, when he does not pass them by, but drops such words of encouragement and consolation as are suitable to their case. But this the foolish shepherd does not. He may, indeed, be most diligent in what is called visiting from house to house, and

may fly about on wings of false zeal, or run through a weekly round of religious tea-drinkings, and after all, be only one of those who "creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins." But he never visits from the pulpit those that are cut off in their feelings from eternal life. Nay, he only shoots at and wounds such. "Away with your doubts and fears. Don't stand poring over your corruptions. Look to Jesus, take food at his word, lay hold of the promises. Religion is not gloom and melancholy, but joy and peace." Thus the foolish shepherd wounds and lacerates tender consciences, instead of binding them up. But the wise shepherd finds out, and visits such by describing the feelings of a cut off soul, be, himself, having experimentally passed through it; and by tracing out his experience and removing his stumbling-stones, is often blessed to his deliverance, or at least to his consolation. My congregation lies so widely scattered, some at twelve and fourteen miles distance, that what with that, and what with my weak health, I could not possibly visit all my spiritual hearers personally, but the desire of my heart is to visit them from the pulpit, by going round to the cases of all and each.

**"Neither shall seek the young one."** This is the second black mark with which the Holy Ghost has stamped a foolish shepherd. This "young one" is, doubtless, one of the "newborn babes" spoken of, **1Pe 2:2**, who are said to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." The distinctive mark of these is, that they "have tasted that the Lord is gracious." They are not such as are fully delivered into gospel liberty. They have **tasted**, not fully drunk; have had a crumb and a drop, but not been brought to the banquet and the fountain. The foolish shepherd, then, does not seek "the young one." With him it is all presumptuous confidence and unwavering assurance, and he that does not stand upon this high mountain, he believes to have no standing at all. The early bloom of faith, hope, and love, when the green buds push into leaf and flower, the spring-time of the soul, like the present smiling season, when all is bright and flourishing, the days of our spiritual youth, when the secret of God was upon our tabernacle, when there was a spirit of prayer,

and an appetite for the word, and a zeal for God's glory, and a pure affection to his family,—of this sweet, though usually short season, the foolish shepherd knows nothing. He leaped into full assurance at once, and became a man without passing through the stages of infancy and youth. Thus this "young one" he never seeks. He knows nothing of his feelings, and, therefore, cannot describe his case. He has no milk for such babes, nor can he condescend to those of such low estate. But the wise shepherd seeks out such. He knows just where they are; both their hopes and their fears, their standing and their dangers. Thus, as he goes his rounds through his flock, he seeks to trace out the work of grace in such, neither damping their hopes, nor pushing them beyond their real standing, strengthening all their spiritual encouragements, and yet not thrusting them presumptuously forward; keeping them among the lambs, and not sorting them out among the sturdy rams and travailing ewes. He will seek to warn such against trifling with convictions, being lifted up with pride, giving heed to every plausible professor, being entangled in the snares of Satan, and the lusts of the flesh, running here and there with their comforts, till they have all dribbled away; and, as a tender nursing father, he will counsel and instruct them to the utmost of his ability of all the dangers and difficulties that beset their path.

The third **positive** dark mark against this foolish shepherd is, that he does not **heal that that is broken**. I think that we have in these different characters mentioned in the verse successive steps of experience. We have, first, **the cut off**, that is, those who are under a sentence of guilt and condemnation; then "**the young one**;" those that, by some sweet discovery of his love, have tasted that the Lord is gracious: and now we come to "**the broken**;" these seem to represent those that have lost their first love, that have inwardly backslidden from their God, that have become entangled in some snare spread for their feet, that have been drawn aside into worldliness, carnality, and pride, and so have swerved from the simplicity of the gospel, from the fervour of their warm affections, from the sincerity of filial obedience, and from their submissive yielding themselves up to be moulded as

clay by the hands of the heavenly potter. Thus, their affections, hopes, and desires, their simplicity and godly sincerity, their spiritual comeliness and uprightness, seem marred and defaced. Their vigorous health is broken; and they, instead of being sprightly lambs cropping the tenderest foliage, and bounding up and down the fold, have become sickly and diseased. They are now where Job describes himself to be—"My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart" **Job 17:11**. Thus, their **purposes** of living to God's glory, of loving him with pure affection, of walking with him in communion, of serving him with pure obedience, are all broken and defaced. Their "**judgment, too, is broken,**" as is said of Ephraim, **Ho 5:11**. Not that they doubt the truth and reality of the doctrines of grace, but their judgments respecting themselves, where they are in the divine life, their own state before God, the reality of their own experience, the certainty of their own salvation—in these deep soul-matters they are broken in any judgment which they can form concerning themselves. In a word, all their religion seems broken up, and they themselves broken down. Now, this broken sheep the foolish shepherd never instrumentally heals. He knows neither the disease nor the suitable remedy. **His** judgment has never been broken, for, knowing the truth clearly in the letter, no confusion takes place in his head, the seat of all his religion. His arms are not broken, for he can always take God at his word; his legs are not broken, for he can run when and where he will, though God has never sent him; his back is not broken, for he still stands upright, and has never put his mouth in the dust; and his heart is not broken, for the hammer of God's word has never yet fallen upon that rock, **Jer 23:29**. Thus, he can never instrumentally heal that that is broken. But the wise shepherd has been more or less taught these lessons by painful experience. He has been broken as a vessel in which God seemed to have no pleasure, and been in some measure bound up. Therefore he can bring suitable remedies for the broken of the flock. The atoning blood of the Saviour, the tender compassions of his bosom, his glorious justifying righteousness, the freeness of grace superabounding over the aboundings of sin, the unchangeableness of God's mercy and love—these, and similar remedies, the wise

shepherd brings before the broken of the flock, and when divinely applied they heal his wounds.

But we come to the fourth thing which the foolish shepherd does not. "He feedeth not that **that standeth still.**" Some of the Lord's quickened family are reduced to such straits in soul experience, as to be able to move neither forward nor backward. They dare not go forward, lest they rush into presumption; they dare not fall backward, lest they tumble headlong into despair. Nor dare they turn to the right hand nor to the left, lest they swerve from the king's highway. Thus they are forced to stand still, not from cowardice, not from sloth, not from unwillingness, but from sheer inability to move. They are **cast**, and cannot get upon their legs. Now to this sheep food is to be brought. He is not to be kicked up as lazy, nor struck with the crook as stubborn, nor thrown over the hurdles as dead, but he is to be "fed." Nor are docks, nettles, and thistles to be brought to him, but as Agur prayed, "food, **convenient** for him," that is, food suitable to his state and condition. The tenderest herbage, and the softest and clearest water is to be brought to him, not that trodden down and fouled with the feet of the fat and the strong, **Eze 34:18**, but "the latter growth" **that is, the spring crop, the Hebrews beginning the year in the autumn**, "after the king's mowings," **Am 7:1**. But the foolish shepherd has no food for him that standeth still. If the sheep cannot get its own living, he will not bring food to what he calls "a lazy Antinomian," though he has no eyes to distinguish sickness from sloth, spiritual inability from carnal unwillingness, and the standing still through godly fear from death in sin.

Such are the four **negative** marks of a foolish shepherd—that is, the things which he does **not** do. But there are added by the Holy Ghost two **positive** marks, that is, there are two things which he **does** do. "He shall eat the flesh of the fat," that is, he shall not take that which comes, that which is offered him, but he must go through the flock, and select the fattest for his own eating. The priest's joints were the breast and the shoulder. **Ex 29:27,28**, not the leg and the loin. He was to have good food, and enough

food, but not the fattest and best joint of the whole. The word of God sanctions an honourable and competent maintenance for a minister, but it is to be freely and voluntarily given. But the foolish shepherd manifests a grasping, covetous, insatiable spirit. He seeks not the flock but the fleece, and he will sacrifice truth, mangle the gospel, and preach to please professors, with the sole end of filling his own pocket. To take thankfully what is given freely is one thing; to be dissatisfied with what is given, and be clamorous for more, is another. To eat the flesh is allowable, to grasp after the flesh of the fat is discreditable; to feed the flock as a shepherd, and eat of the milk thereof, **1Co 9:7**, is honourable; to feed the flock as a grazier is disgraceful. "And shall tear their claws in pieces." This is the second positive mark of a foolish shepherd. Sheep, then, have claws! Aye, surely, and some of us have been sorely scratched by them. And these claws, too, they will sometimes exercise upon the shepherd. When, then, the foolish shepherd feels the scratch of these claws, he puts forth all his strength, and tears them in pieces. He does not rule with kindness and gentleness; he does not guide them with the sweet constraints of love and affection, but first starves the living family, and then if they do but scratch him with their claws, he rends them in pieces. Their **claws** are the objects of his attack—that is, he lays hold of any expressions of theirs which have been directed against him, any severe remarks made upon him, any complaints of his ministry, any doubts of his Christianity, any objections to his Arminianism, any censures of his conduct. These claws have scratched him, and wounded his pride and consequence. He must, therefore, retaliate; and these claws he will lay hold of, seizing every word that has been said against him or his ministry, and rend them in pieces, as manifesting, he says, a bitter and unchristian spirit. A wise shepherd will not act thus. He will not return blow for blow, nor stripe for stripe. If scratched by the claws of some of his sheep, he will rather bear it in silence than make divisions and contentions, and rend the flock asunder. He will not take up every harsh thing said against himself or his ministry, nor be jealous of his own honour and dignity, bringing forward into the pulpit his own cause and glory instead of the cause of God and the glory of

Christ; but will be more or less actuated by the spirit of Him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.

We see, then, drawn by the pen of the Holy Ghost, the marks of the foolish and wise shepherd. Keep them in your eye. You are commanded to try the spirits whether they be of God. You are to be the judges of every minister who comes as an ambassador from the Lord. Examine him well, scan his features carefully, weigh him accurately. God has given you his portrait—compare the man and his likeness. Has he, then, the marks for or against? Does he visit the cut off, does he seek the young one, does he heal the broken, does he feed that that standeth still? If he does not agree with these four essentials, he is a foolish shepherd, be he what he may.

Again, does "he eat the flesh of the fat, and rend their claws in pieces?" Is he covetous and contentious; grasping and quarrelsome; a flatterer of the rich, and an oppressor of the poor; a Demas and a Diotrephes? Then is he a foolish shepherd, be he in the church or in the chapel, in robes of priestly dignity, or ungowned plainness. Never mind his holy countenance and solemn demeanour, his grey hairs and silvery tongue; these are but the rough garment to deceive. Watch his ministry and his actions. Look at him in the pulpit and out of it. Turn him about and look at both sides, the negative marks and the positive, what he is not, and what he is.

My friends, I have spoken these things this evening as a disinterested person, not with a view to exalt myself, for I assure you, I am often tried as to my call to the ministry, though not without, at times, both inward and outward testimonies, nor to aim at any particular minister or ministers. You are placed in peculiar circumstances from the want of a stated minister, and being so much in the habit of hearing different supplies at this and other chapels.

I have sought, then, to lay before you the features of a wise and foolish shepherd, as drawn by the blessed Spirit. Try by them all

whom you hear. Let not pretensions suffice. Examine their credentials; put them into the scales; watch their words; and, above all, look narrowly at their spirit. And if they come not up to, or vary from the marks of a wise shepherd; still more, if they tally precisely with the character here given of a foolish shepherd, unceremoniously reject them. God has not sent them; and in rejecting them you act by his authority, and walk in obedience to his word. May he give us eyes to see, hands to act, and feet to walk, in strict accordance with his own unerring testimony.

## The Inward Conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Sept. 2, 1860

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 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. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Gal. 5:16, 17, 18

There are many vital and essential points of difference between him that fears God and him that fears him not—between the believer and the unbeliever. But there is one more marked than any other, chiefly for this reason, that it comes more closely home to the heart, and accords more clearly with the experience of every child of God. This distinguishing mark is, *the conflict between the flesh and the spirit*, spoken of in our text. Those who are dead in sin cannot feel any such conflict, for in them there is no opposing principle to the flesh. The glorified spirits in heaven can have no such conflict, because in them the flesh has ceased to be. It is only then upon earth—only in the bosom of a saint, in this present arena of time in which is fought the good fight of faith, that there can be a conflict of the nature described by the apostle: the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two so contrary the one to the other, that he cannot do the things which he would.

But let us seek, as far as we can, to be clear upon this point, for if the inward conflict be a certain mark of grace, we should be very careful not to mistake anything else for it. And this distinction is all the more necessary, since there is a conflict in the bosom of many who are not under the influence of divine grace. For instance, there may be a conflict in a man's breast who knows nothing of the life and power of God in his soul, between a principle of integrity and a principle of dishonesty. A man in business, say a merchant, a banker, a tradesman, or a person

holding a confidential situation, may have an opportunity of realising a large sum of money by deviating from the path of rectitude, and he may have an inward conflict whether he shall abide by upright, honourable principles, or depart from them to secure the anticipated advantage. This might be a very severe conflict, but it would not be one between "the flesh and the spirit," between nature and grace. Or a person might have an inward contest between acting liberally or niggardly upon some occasion when his compassion or benevolence might be appealed to, and he might find a hard struggle within between a willingness to give and a spirit of covetousness to withhold. But this is not a conflict of nature and grace: it is merely a conflict of a better kind of nature against a worse kind of nature—of a higher species of flesh against a lower species of flesh. Or a man may have a conflict between bad temper and good temper; between giving vent to angry feelings and keeping them down; between carrying out his own inclinations in various ways, or subduing them on a principle of duty and conscience. All these struggles which natural men feel every day involve an internal conflict, but still not the same kind of conflict which exists in the bosom of one who fears God; for all these opposing principles are at best but flesh fighting against flesh. Their spring and end are merely natural and sensual, and when the conflict ceases, whether it terminates in the victory or the defeat of the better principle, it leaves the man just where it found him, under the power of sin and Satan, without God and without hope in the world. The very heathen, as we know from their writings, experienced the same conflict, and it is to be found discussed at large in books of morality, which are utterly destitute of spiritual life and light. But how different is the conflict spoken of in our text, and which is known experimentally by all who are made alive unto God! Theirs is a spiritual conflict; a contest for life or death; an unceasing battle between nature and grace; between the flesh and the Spirit. Nor is the issue of this conflict, though prolonged, dubious or uncertain, for its end is certain victory, and not merely victory achieved for time, but a glorious victory obtained for eternity; for it is "the good fight of faith;" and we know that the end of that faith is the salvation of the soul, and the prize of that contest is the crown of eternal life.

If you look at the words which form our text, you will find that the apostle is speaking to the Galatians of "walking in the Spirit," and tells them that if they were enabled so to walk, they "would not fulfil the lust of the flesh." This leads him to speak of the way in which the flesh does lust, and also of the way in which the spirit acts against it as an opposing principle; the consequence of which is, that neither in one sense nor in another can a child of God do the things that he would. But he would comfort them by this reflection, that if they were led of the Spirit, and were walking in the Spirit, they were not under the curse of a condemning law but under grace, and therefore that the conflict, however sharp or long, would in their case end in certain victory.

In opening up these words, therefore, this morning, I shall, as God may enable,

I.—*First*, endeavour to describe how the *flesh lusts against the Spirit*, and the *Spirit against the flesh*; and how those are *contrary the one to the other*.

II.—*Secondly*, how from this results that *we cannot do the things that we would*.

III.—*Thirdly*, how, though we cannot do the things that we would, yet *by walking in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*.

IV.—*Fourthly*, if we are walking in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, then we are not *under the law* in its condemnation and curse, but under the Gospel in its salvation and blessing.

I.—But let me, before I enter into this conflict, define my terms; let me clear my ground. I like to leave nothing obscure and uncertain in the word of truth, or in my exposition of it, if I can, with God's help, cast any light upon it. By the "flesh," then, here we are to understand that corrupt nature, that sinful principle which we derive from our fallen parent Adam. However high or low, broad or narrow, however sensual or refined this principle may be; in whatever various ways it may work, it is still one and

the same: it never rises beyond its level; it is and ever will be, amid all its varying shapes and lines, as the Scripture designates it, flesh. It is called "flesh" for various reasons. First, as derived by natural generation from Adam, who was our parent after the flesh. Secondly, from its being so naturally dead Godward, there being no heavenly strength or life in it, but like a lump of dead flesh, incapable of gracious actings, or of being transmuted into anything holy and spiritual. Thirdly, because its very tendency and end is corruption; for as flesh naturally dies, petrifies, and rots, so the end of the flesh, viewed in a spiritual light, is death and corruption: as we read that before the flood, "all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth;" and as the apostle speaks, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of his flesh reap corruption." (Gal. 6:8.)

I must now explain what the apostle means by the word "spirit." I understand, then, by the term "spirit" here not the Holy Spirit, but that which is produced by the Holy Spirit. As the Lord himself explains it, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And again, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16.) So also, "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless." (1 Thess. 5:23.) In all these passages we find the word "spirit" signifying not the Holy Ghost, but that which is produced by the Holy Ghost; in a word, that new and divine nature which is produced by the new birth, the new man of grace, which is called "spirit" as being wholly spiritual, for the Spirit can produce nothing but what is spirit; for as the flesh produces flesh, so the Spirit produces spirit. And as he produces by his power upon the heart a new, spiritual, and holy principle, it is called "spirit," because it is the very life and power of God in the heart, bears the image of Christ stamped upon it, and in it dwell all the fruits and graces, teaching and testimony, work and witness of the Holy Ghost himself.

I must explain also the meaning of the word "lust" here. At the time of our present most excellent translation, the word had not that gross and sensual meaning usually attached to it now. It

meant merely desire, whether of a higher or lower nature; whether it was grovelling in the sensual meaning of the term, or aspiring after higher things. In fact it was used much in the same way as the cognate and almost similar word, "list." "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" that is, where it willeth, or desireth. This must be sufficiently evident even to common sense, for the Spirit is said to lust, and we could not attach any gross idea to the lusting of the Spirit, for his desire must, like himself, be ever holy and pure. I take the word, therefore, in what I may call a neutral signification, as meaning simply desire, breathing, aspiration, and the bent of the mind strongly and eagerly towards any object; otherwise we shall confound the whole passage, for if we attach any sensual and gross meaning to the term, what shall we do with it when we come to describe the Spirit lusting after the flesh? We must give it a pure meaning there; so we will view the word as merely signifying a strong, ardent desire, therefore differing from "listing" not so much in signification as in intensity.

I. Having thus cleared our ground, we now come more immediately into the field of battle; and the first warning note of the gospel trumpet which I shall sound in your ears and in my own, is, to call us to look and examine whether we can find anything in our hearts' experience corresponding to the vivid description here drawn by the pen of the Holy Ghost; for this will if not fully decide the matter on whose side we are, yet give us some good grounds for drawing a conclusion as to our state and standing before God; for if indeed we are partakers of a new and heavenly birth, we cannot be strangers to this spiritual conflict, and shall be so far manifested as fighting on the Lord's side against sin, Satan, and self. We know that we possess one of the two conflicting principles, "flesh," because all have that by their descent from our fallen ancestor; but we can only assuredly know that we have "spirit," by the internal testimony of the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of the Most High. But in the absence of this clear and indubitable testimony, we may have an encouraging evidence of being partakers of the grace of God, by feeling a spiritual conflict perpetually going on in the breast; for how can there be a conflict

in your bosom between "flesh" and "spirit" if you have no spirit there? How can there be a struggle in your heart between two opposing principles if one of those opposing principles be altogether absent? So that if you can find a conflict in your bosom between two contrary principles, and one of these is clearly on the side of grace against nature, of faith against unbelief, of God against self, of repentance against sin, of hope against despair, of submission against rebellion, and of godliness against ungodliness, you have so far an evidence that you are a partaker not only of the flesh, which you painfully know, but that you are a partaker also of the Spirit, which you pleurably feel. But these two principles are described as being "*contrary the one to the other.*" It does not say they are different; for things may be different, yet not contrary. Blue differs from black, and purple from scarlet; but they are not contrary, as black and white. But flesh and spirit are so contrary that they are opposed to each other upon every point. As white is opposed to black, as heaven is opposed to hell, as Christ is opposed to Belial, as truth is opposed to falsehood, as grace is opposed to sin, so "the spirit" and "the flesh" are contrary to each other—by an opposition so close, and position so embracing every particular, that you cannot name a single part in which you will not find this contrariety thoroughly existing. But we shall see this better, perhaps, if we look at the various instances in which they are contrary the one to the other.

1. "The flesh" is *hard, impenitent*, obdurate, unrepenting; there is nothing in it soft, tender, and yielding to divine impressions; nothing in it that is melted into love or obedience. Whatever softness it may display on other points, even to tears, its very nature is to be obstinate and obdurate against God and godliness. But "the spirit," at least as divinely wrought upon, is tender, yielding, penitent, contrite, broken, submissive, bowed down before the throne of God so as to take the impression of his will and word. But these two feelings are utterly contrary. You never can reconcile penitence and impenitence, obduracy and contrition, hardness of heart and softness of heart, a seared conscience and a tender conscience. These things are as

irreconcilable as light and darkness, as truth and error; but the flesh is naturally one and the spirit graciously the other; therefore, they are contrary the one to the other.

2. Again, the flesh is *unbelieving*. It is impossible that the flesh can believe—I mean, of course, in a spiritual and saving manner; for there is a natural faith that the flesh may, and indeed frequently does possess. In this sense, many believed in Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh, who were not made partakers of saving faith, for to the very persons of whom we read that "many believed in him," we afterwards find the Lord declaring, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:30, 44.) So Simon Magus believed (Acts 8:13), and the apostle tells us that it is possible to have "all faith so as to remove mountains, and yet be nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2.) This natural faith the flesh may possess; but as to what the scriptures call the "spirit of faith," believing in the Son of God so as to receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of the soul; believing in the blood, and love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that the conscience is purged from filth, guilt, and dead works to serve the living God; as to any faith that works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, subdues sin, casts out Satan, and gains the victory, so as for ever to reign with Christ,—such a spiritual, divine, experimental, and saving faith as this never did dwell in the flesh. Faith, that is, saving faith, is expressly called in the Scripture, "a fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22); and is declared to be "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8); for indeed it is among those good gifts and perfect gifts, every one of which "is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) Indeed how is it possible that a living and spiritual faith can be a fruit of, or dwell in the flesh, which is but a mass of unbelief, atheism, infidelity, and as such, is utterly unable to rise above unbelieving ground into the higher regions of a living faith? In this point then, the flesh and the spirit are contrary the one to the other; for what is so contrary as faith to unbelief? Jacob was not more contrary to Esau, David to Saul, or John to Judas.

3. Nor, again, can the flesh *love*. Its nature is not to love, but to hate; that is God's own description of it. "The carnal mind" (by which is meant the disposition, inclination, and whole breathing of the flesh,) "is enmity against God." And observe the word "enmity." It does not say "an enemy," but "enmity," that is enmity itself. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity never. Thus the whole flesh from head to foot, beginning, middle and end, root and branch, in life and death, is enmity, unmitigated, irreconcilable enmity against the pure Majesty of heaven. How then can spiritual love dwell in it? I expressly say spiritual love: for the flesh has natural love, as there are, as all must admit, natural affections. These may rise to a considerable height, and are what we may almost term, the fairest relics of the fall. There is, for instance, the mutual love of the sexes, which, as issuing in marriage, is the foundation of our nearest and dearest social ties. There is parental love; there is conjugal love; there is brotherly and sisterly love; there is the love of friends to each other, who are not connected by any bond of relationship. How, indeed, could the world hang together but for these social ties? Society itself would fall into ruin, and an utter blank would succeed to all those tender relationships which sweeten life to thousands, and softens many a harsh track in this ragged world, but for natural love. What would society be if all were monks and nuns? Worldly people are not destitute of natural affection, for that is the last stage of a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:31); nay, on the contrary, a large amount of natural affection and kindness and good feeling is often displayed by persons who are enemies to the free, distinguishing, and sovereign grace of the gospel. God forbid that we should think they are destitute of kind and affectionate feelings towards each other because they are not partakers of the grace of God. To say so would be to speak in direct contravention of what we daily witness in acts of the greatest benevolence displayed by our fellow creatures in thousands of instances. Whence come our hospitals; the contributions to the amount of hundreds of thousands of pounds to suffering objects in all directions? Or whence come so many affectionate husbands and wives, fathers and children; so many tears dropped over the grave of the departed; so many sacrifices of time, labour, money,

and even life itself to alleviate the wants of others, if there be no natural affection in the human heart? But when we come to spiritual love there the scene alters; there the flesh still manifests its innate character of being enmity against God. When, then, we test love by this divine touchstone, we find those who display the greatest natural affection to man often are fearfully wanting in affection to God. These, then, are opposed to each other; for the one is earthly and the other heavenly, the one natural and the other spiritual. When leaving earthly love we come to love to God, to his dear Son, to the word, to the people of God, to heavenly things, then we find the flesh so fearfully lacking. Then its true character becomes manifest. But in this very point the spirit specially shines, for here, as shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, the love of God dwells; here Jesus is felt to be near, dear, and precious; here are heavenly affections and pure desires; here is union and communion with the Lord and his people.

4. So with *prayer*. The flesh is an utter stranger to spiritual prayer. It can make long prayers, as the Pharisees did, can go through a formal round of duties and self-imposed observances, and satisfy natural conscience by drawing near unto God with the lips when the heart is far from him. But the Spirit of grace and of supplications, prevalency with God in prayer, so that its sighs and cries enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and draw down answers into the bosom, wrestling with Jehovah as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and gaining access into the very presence of him who sits upon the throne of grace, so as to be made and manifested an acceptable worshipper of God in spirit and in truth,—such prayer as this never dwelt in the flesh. This is a height that the hand of the flesh never reached; which the eye of the flesh never gazed upon; which the ear of the flesh never heard of; nor the heart of the flesh ever conceived; for true, spiritual, and prevalent prayer is among the things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," but are among the things "which God hath prepared for those who love him."

5. Nor is there, again, any *spirituality* in the flesh. Men may have

a formal, natural, superstitious, and self-righteous religion; may make great sacrifices for their church or creed, and even yield up ease and name, property and life itself for it. How plainly may we see this in innumerable instances both in modern and ancient times. What built up our churches and cathedrals but this natural religion? What carries hundreds and thousands every Lord's clay to churches and chapels? What sets up family prayer in thousands of houses? And what raises thousands of pounds on every side but this spirit of natural religion? In ancient days particularly, how we see this religion in lively action! How ancient warriors, men guilty of every crime, abandoned the world, shut themselves up in monasteries, macerated their body, lashed their back with scourges, fed on coarse food, dressed in sackcloth, and died in what was termed the very odour of piety and holiness; and yet, viewed by the spiritual eye, must we not say that they began in the flesh and ended in the flesh? Where in all this was Jesus and his blood? Where the work of grace upon the heart? Where a total renunciation of all hope or help in self, and living a life of faith in the Son of God? All this natural religion, to whatever height it may be carried, whatever form it may wear, or however fair to the eye it may seem, is quite distinct from the work of faith with power, from the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit in the heart, and from that vital, spiritual, and saving religion which is the very life and breath of God himself in the soul of his saints. Where, in all this natural and fleshly religion, is there the new birth, without which none can enter the kingdom of heaven? Where is there any manifestation of Christ to the soul, or any shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart? The flesh may rise to a great height, but it never can rise up into anything spiritual, heavenly, saving, and divine. Like water, it can never rise above its own level. It is of the earth, earthy, like the first Adam, from whom it comes by natural descent. It may do for time, but will not do for eternity. It may gain the favour of man, but can never win the approbation of God; it may be crowned with human applause, but will never wear the crown of glory.

ii. But now we will see, with God's help and blessing, what the spirit is as opposed to the flesh, for the word of truth declares

that these are "*contrary the one to the other.*" So in taking a view of one, we at the same time take a view of the other.

1. Thus, whereas the flesh is hard, obdurate, and impenitent, the spirit is *tender, contrite, repenting*, broken; God producing this godly sorrow for sin in the spirit by the operations of his grace; for the blessed Spirit acts upon the spirit. He is expressly said "to bear witness" to it (Rom. 8:16), which he could not do unless he acted immediately upon it. We must ever bear in mind that the operations and influences of the Holy Spirit are upon the new man of grace. He does not act upon the flesh, making it thereby holy and spiritual, or indeed any better than it was before. He does not transmute flesh into spirit, or sanctify nature into grace; but he acts upon the new man of grace, and brings forth, by his breathings upon it, every holy fruit and heavenly grace, to the honour, praise, and glory of God. For though born of the Spirit and itself pure and holy, and the very life of God himself in the soul, yet the new man of grace cannot act by itself. We may almost compare it to a locomotive, which cannot move except under the influence of steam; or the sails of a ship, which cannot act except under the power of the wind. So the new man of grace needs the power and influence of the blessed Spirit breathing upon it to move it forward into heavenly actings. Under, then, his divine influences and sanctifying operations, the spirit in a man's breast repents of the sins of the flesh, falls down before the footstool of grace, confesses and acknowledges them, and begs for some sensible manifestation of mercy, as feeling how suitable mercy is to a poor sinner's case.

2. The spirit also is *believing*. If you watch the movements of divine life in your own breast, you will find that there are two opposing principles there. There is that which doubts and disbelieves, and there is that which credits and believes; there is that which is always suggesting arguments, objections, difficulties, ever casting confusion over the plainest principles, and questioning the reality of every truth, however clearly revealed in the Scriptures, or traced by the hand of God in the soul. This I find and feel every day that I live. I find my carnal

heart the very seat of unbelief; and that this spirit of unbelief is no dead principle, lying motionless, like a stone at the bottom of a clear brook; but is a living principle of action and movement, objecting, questioning, surmising, and raising up all manner of suspicions against every one of those vital truths which my heart most dearly loves. Would that it would give me a little rest; but that is not in its nature, for it is ever restless, unceasingly at work, and continually seeking to confuse and darken the mind, and utterly to ruin the soul, by casting it down into the fathomless depths of infidelity. But the spirit, in opposition to this wretched spirit of unbelief, is *believing*. If the Lord has blessed you with a spirit of faith, you will find from time to time there is that in you which does believe, and yet may be sadly opposed by a contrary principle of unbelief. We see the conflict between the two principles in the man who fell down before the Lord with the words, "Lord, I believe." There was the spirit of faith in his heart, but he felt, as we feel, another principle in him, which could not, and would not believe; and he also felt that nothing but the power of the Lord could subdue that obstinate, unbelieving, principle. Therefore he cried, "Help thou my unbelief." Here we see the two principles plainly at work, which we ourselves so often feel. But everything that we have received in faith we have received in the new man of grace, not in our unbelieving nature. "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" asks the apostle. (Gal. 3:2.) When we hear in faith, then we receive the Spirit in his witnessing testimony to the reality and to the divine origin and nature of our faith, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," as made "spirit and life" to our soul. (Rom. 10:17; John 6:63.)

3. This Spirit is also *loving*. God is love; and the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of his saints by the Holy Ghost. The blessed Spirit is a Spirit of love, not only in himself as a Person in the glorious Godhead, but as a spirit of love in a believer's heart. We, therefore, read of "the love of the Spirit." (Rom. 15:30.) If ever we feel—and I hope at times we do—heavenly affections mounting upwards, and a sweet flow of love to the Lord of life and glory; if ever we love him with a pure heart fervently, and

love not only him, but his word, his truth, his people, his cause, his grace, his glory, all that testifies of him, comes from him, and leads to him; if ever his name be to us "as the ointment poured forth," it is by the Holy Spirit influencing the new man of grace in which this love resides, drawing it forth into holy exercise, fixing it upon heavenly things, and especially upon the glorious Person of the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. So it is with love to God's people: we have no love to them in our carnal mind. The flesh hates God, and in hating God, hates those who bear the image of God. But the spirit in loving him that begat, loves those who are begotten of him; in loving the Lord, loves those who are beloved by the Lord; in loving Jesus, loves those in whom it can trace the mind and image of Jesus. And though this love may sink at times very low in the soul, yet as drawn forth by the operations of the blessed Spirit, it springs up and rises again; and under these gracious renewals there is once more a sweet flowing forth of love toward those who love the Lord. I know there is a spirit of love, not only to the Lord himself, but to his dear people, from my own experience, for I do feel at times sweetly springing up in my heart love to those in whom I see the likeness of the Lord Jesus, and I love them for his sake.

4. But this new spirit is also opposed to the flesh as being a *prayerful* spirit. There is no true prayer in the flesh. There is in it formal prayer—mock prayer, I may call it, but no spiritual prayer, because the Spirit of God does not move upon the flesh as a Spirit of prayer, nor does he act upon it by any divine influence so as to draw prayer out of it. But he does move upon the new man of grace, upon the spirit of his own begetting, and that as a spirit of prayer; for he is in us a Spirit of grace and of supplications, and intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. We are therefore said "to pray in the Holy Ghost," and "with the Spirit." (Jude 20; 1 Cor. 14:15.) Thus the Spirit of God in a believer's heart is a prayerful spirit, all true prayer springing from his powerful operations and divine influences. Now you may take up this point as a matter of self examination, and see from it how far you have an evidence of being a partaker of grace, from being able to find from time to time springing up in your bosom a spirit

of prayer. If you have a spirit of prayer, you have the spirit spoken of in our text, and if you have the spirit it must be born of God; and if you are born of God you are a child of God. Thus you may sometimes, by looking at this evidence, trace up your heavenly genealogy, and find an internal evidence of your being a partaker of grace, and as such an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. (Rom. 8:17.) The Spirit itself is said to bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:14); and this inward witness is not merely his direct testimony in the sweet assurance of faith, but his indirect testimony in helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26, 27.)

5. This spirit is also a spirit of *hope*. There is no real well-founded hope of eternal life in the carnal mind. The unregenerate, therefore, are declared to be without hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:12.) It is true that there is a false hope, such as thousands have in the indefinite mercy of God. This is what the scripture calls the hypocrite's hope. And what does the word of truth say of it? What is its nature and what is its end? Its nature the blessed Spirit compares to a spider's web, and its end is to perish and to be cut off. (Job 8:13, 14.) We see in scripture fearful instances of this. We see when God poured out his wrath upon those who had sinned against him with a high hand and had no faith or repentance given unto them, that their hope perished as in a moment. Saul's hope; where was it when he fell upon the sword? The hope of Ahithophel; where was that when he took a halter and hung himself? Judas's hope; where was that when he fell and his bowels burst forth? Yet Saul prophesied; Ahithophel went to the house of God in company with David; and Judas preached and wrought miracles. Could they have done these things without having some hope? But when the hypocrisy of their heart became manifest, then their hope sank and died. Thus it proved like a spider's web; not a good hope through grace as an anchor sure and stedfast, but the hope of the hypocrite which perishes and comes to nought. But the spirit in you who are born of God is a spirit of hope. With all your doubts, and fears, and difficulties, you are still hoping in the Lord, as David encouraged

his soul when cast down within him, "My soul, hope thou in God." When you look at things without, and more especially at things within, you are sometimes almost cast down into despair. Your trials are so many, your sins so great, your heart so vile, your fears so strong, that it seems as if you must give all up; that there is still a spirit of hope in your bosom, and as this has been already the anchor of your soul in many a storm, so you again cast it forth that it may enter within the veil. You cannot give up that, whatever else you may give up. And you do well in holding it fast, for "we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24); so that if you have a good hope through grace, and the spirit in your heart is a spirit of hope, you have salvation already in your soul.

6. But the spirit also in the believer's bosom is a spirit of *praise*. The flesh cannot praise God. It can murmur, fret, rebel, be peevish, and be filled with self-pity, but can never bless and praise God for manifested mercy. It is always unthankful. Even the very bounties of providence are for the most part received by it without gratitude. But the spirit in a man's bosom, as wrought upon and influenced by the Holy Spirit, thanks and praises God not only for what it receives in providence, but much more for every blessing in grace; and when drawn forth into love towards his gracious and divine Majesty, a foretaste of heaven, a beginning of eternal bliss.

iii. But we read, to pass on further with our subject, that "the flesh *lusteth against the spirit*, and the spirit *against the flesh*." I have already explained the meaning of the word "lusteth," that it signifies earnest and intense desire. But besides this natural and innate lusting against the spirit, the flesh has three powerful friends who sustain it in all its lustings, and act upon it so as to maintain them in strength and vigour. First, there is *Sin*, which is its very element, its very constituent principle, and its own darling, firm, bosom friend. Sin is continually prompting, suggesting, and stirring up the flesh to its movements against the spirit. The flesh would, so to speak, lie at times dead if sin were not in its animating breath. But sin being the living, moving, acting principle in it, is ever stirring up its lustings. Do you not find this by personal experience? You feel at times that the flesh

in you seems dead, without any particular movement towards evil, though still a lifeless lump as to any movement Godward. But at other times there is a strong and active moving in the flesh towards evil, a lusting after things that God abhors, and which I need not further name. Here is sin working in it, acting upon it, influencing it, and moving it toward the positive commission of evil.

Nor is sin its only friend, foul friend though it be. *Satan* is another; for how *Satan* can, when permitted, work upon our carnal mind! What rebellion against God he can stir up! What enmity excite! What vile thoughts, dreadful suggestions, and base imaginations he can infuse, even to such heights as I dare not hint at, much less express. How the flesh resembles the sea! How calm at times is the natural ocean—how it mirrors the very heavens in its face! I have seen it with scarcely a ripple upon its surface. And I have seen it in a storm. But how different under these two aspects. It seems scarcely the same ocean in a calm, and when the yeasty billows rage as though they would sweep away every thing before them. So is the flesh; at times as calm as a millpond, and at others lashed into angry waves by *Satan*, who, as the Prince of the power of the air, acts upon the heart of man as the wind acts upon the ocean, exciting it to madness and rebellion.

Then there is the *World*, a fast friend of the flesh, which does not act upon it as *Satan* does, to stir it up into waves of rebellion, but to seduce and draw it aside, encouraging every movement of it against God and toward evil. So what with the corrupt nature of the flesh in itself, and what with these firm friends, though deadly foes to God and godliness—*Sin*, *Satan*, and the *World*—how can we wonder that this flesh of ours is ever lusting against the spirit, and desiring every thing contrary to God and godliness in a believer's bosom; and if it cannot obtain its desires, yet exerts its whole power and influence to have its lusts gratified. Thus the flesh is continually lusting against the spirit. If the spirit, for instance, wants to repent, the flesh lusts against any and every feeling of contrition, brokenness, or sorrow on account of sin, by

hardening and steeling the heart against it, or by suggesting self-justifying excuses. If the spirit wants to believe, the flesh lusts against faith by raising up unbelief, and stirring up doubts and questionings, with a whole host of infidel objections against the truth. If the spirit wants to love the Lord or his people, the flesh immediately opposes it by stirring up enmity and dislike. If the spirit wants to pray, the flesh lusts against it by distracting the soul with wandering thoughts and in manner of vile imaginations, so as to confuse the mind, and as if to drown out prayer with a flood of abominations. If the spirit would be meek, submissive, filled with holy thoughts and gracious affections, looking up to the Lord and seeking after fellowship with him, desiring his presence and manifested love; if it ever be seeking conformity to Christ's image, to know his will and do it, or to be spiritual and heavenly-minded, the flesh lusts with bitter hostility against these gracious actings of the spirit, and shows its vile, earthly nature by interfering continually with every spiritual movement, damping the rising flame, pouring water upon it, and if it cannot quench it, endeavouring to mingle itself with it, so as to pollute it with its own stench and smoke. It is indeed impossible to describe the craft and subtlety by which the flesh manifests its deadly opposition to every thing spiritually good. The more spiritual the employments are, the more is this enmity and opposition manifested and for this reason, because the flesh instinctively knows that the great object of the Spirit is to crucify and mortify it. The flesh does not therefore dislike a natural, formal religion, which does not interfere with its lusts, but allows it its own will and way; but a religion which interferes with its lustings and actings, which curbs it, represses it, and will not suffer it to rule and reign, but crucifies it daily, the flesh cannot brook. It is like a man with a very bad temper: please him, he is all smiles; fret him, he is all frowns. Do the thing that he wants, he is the most agreeable man in the world; oppose him in the least degree, his very eyes flash fire. So with our flesh: gratify it, fondle it, please it, its face is clothed with smiles; not a wrinkle or a ruffle is seen on its countenance; though really dragging the soul to hell, it strews the path with flowers, and flatters its victim with heaven at the very moment that it hurls him over the precipice. But

oppose it, mortify it, crucify it, contradict, subdue, and subjugate it, put a bit in its mouth, a saddle on its back, and plunge your spurs into its side, you will then find what the flesh is—as violent as the greatest termagant, as furious as a loosened madman, and as contradictory as a passionate drunkard.

iv. But I must not dwell entirely upon this point. There is the contrary side of the picture; for it would be sad indeed if there were in us nothing but this dreadful flesh, with these vile and furious lustings. Through infinite mercy, through rich, superabounding grace, the spirit lusteth against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit. I have shewn you who are the friends and backers of the flesh in this battle; but, through mercy, the spirit has its friends too, as well as the flesh, or it would come off very badly in this unceasing conflict; and very powerful friends too, for "greater is he that is for us than those that are against us." We may say that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—a triune God—is the friend of the spirit. But more especially fixing our eyes upon the Son of God as incarnate, we may view him as the especial friend of the spirit, for he is the sinner's friend, and being the sinner's friend, he will never let the poor child of God come off worst in this conflict. Left to itself, the spirit could not resist: it needs a divine influence upon it to teach its hands to war, and its fingers to fight. Abandoned to its own strength, the spirit must give way to the unceasing attacks of the enemy, for it is armed with all the powers of earth and hell. But the Lord comes to the rescue; the Son of God fights our battles; "for he girds his sword upon his thigh" (Psalm 45:3), and he rides forth "conquering and to conquer." (Rev. 6:2.) But *how* does he come to the soul's help? With the promises which he applies with power to support and uphold the fainting spirit; with the sweet manifestations of his Person, work, and love, which arm it with a power not its own; with the gracious influences of his presence, which put new life into it. Secretly and yet powerfully he strengthens, he supports, he encourages, he enables the spirit to carry on the warfare even unto death. The Holy Spirit, too, is especially tender of his own work upon the soul. He originally formed it; it is his own spiritual

offspring; and as a mother watches over her babe, so the blessed Spirit watches over the spirit of his own creating. It is the counterpart of himself, for it is the spirit that he has raised up in the soul by his own almighty power. He, therefore, acts upon it, breathes into it fresh life and power, and communicates grace out of the inexhaustible fulness of the Son of God, thus enabling the spirit to breathe and act, struggle and fight against the flesh, so that the latter cannot have all its own way, but must submit and yield. For the spirit can fight as well as the flesh; can act as well as the flesh; and can desire good as well as the flesh can desire evil. What a mercy for us it is that there are those heavenly breathings in our soul of the spirit against the flesh, cryings out to God against it; and that the Spirit within us thus takes hold of the arm of Omnipotence without us, seeks help from the Lord God Almighty, and by strength thus communicated fights against the flesh, and gains at times a most blessed victory over it. For what can the flesh do against the spirit when animated by divine power? What are sin, Satan, and the world when they have to oppose a Triune God in arms? This makes the victory sure, that our friends are stronger than our foes, and the work of God upon our soul greater than anything sin, Satan, or the world can bring against it. This made the apostle say, after he had been describing the inward conflict, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:25.) And when he had enumerated the opposition that the Christian had to endure on every side, he cries out, as if in holy triumph, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. 8:37.)

II.—But to pass on to our next point, the *consequence* of these two opposing principles is, that "*ye cannot do the things that ye would.*" These words are true in two senses. 1. First, you cannot do the *evil* things that ye would. The flesh is always lusting towards evil, but grace is a counteracting principle to repress and subdue it. It cannot, indeed, wholly overcome its lustings, but it can prevent those lustings being carried out into open action; for the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and will not let it altogether reign and rule, nor have unchecked its own will and way. What a mercy lies couched here! for what would be the consequence if

the flesh had its full swing? What evil is there which you would not do; what crime which you would not commit; what slip which you would not make; what open and horrid fall which you would not be guilty of, except you were upheld by Almighty power, and the flesh curbed and checked from running its headlong course? So you cannot do the things that you would in the worst of all senses. You cannot utterly forsake or forget God, as the flesh would incline you to do; you cannot deny or cease to call on the name of Christ, as the flesh would suggest; cannot live in sin, as the flesh would desire; nor can you give up all religion, nor abandon your hope, nor cast your faith to the winds, as the flesh would urge. The spirit in you, as influenced from above, prevents your doing the things that you naturally would by taking the side of God against the flesh, for it is armed with his authority, and is, as it were, his vicegerent in the soul. When, therefore, the flesh would burst forth into word or action, this vicegerent acts for God, and, like a magistrate or civil officer, speaks in his name, and in his authority thrusts back the malefactor. We can hardly tell at times how we are kept from evil; but it is almost always in obedience to the voice of this inward monitor. We can never praise God sufficiently for his restraining grace; for what should we be without it? What an unspeakable mercy, then, it is that you cannot be what you would be, nor act as you would act, nor speak what you would speak, nor do the things you would do, because there is in you who fear God a spiritual principle which holds you up, and keeps you back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. How this spirit of grace and godly fear kept Joseph in the hour of temptation! How it preserved David when he had Saul in his power as he lay asleep in the cave! How it kept Nehemiah in the fear of God from extortion and oppression! (Neh. 5:15.) And how in thousands of instances it has preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have ruined their reputation, blighted their character, brought reproach upon the cause of God, and the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

So also, in a higher and somewhat different sense, "ye cannot do the things that ye would." You would be pure, holy, free from any

working of sin; would believe without any doubt, love without any coldness, hope without any despondency, and serve God night and day without any disturbing hindrance. When you pray, you would have no distracting thought; when you read, you would do so with light, life, and power; and when you hear, it would be with a blessing resting upon your soul. You would never be troubled with any vile imagination, infidel thought, or base suggestion; you would ever love the Lord and his people; have your affections ever fixed on heavenly things; be ever blessed with manifestations of Christ's love; and ever walk in peace with God and his people. But you cannot do the things that you would. And why? Because you are still in the flesh, and the flesh opposes everything which is spiritually good. Thus, in a good sense you cannot do the things that you would; and in a bad sense you cannot. Hence the conflict, a conflict that will never cease whilst we carry about with us a body of sin and death.

III.—But as time is running on, I must now come to our third point, which is, *how we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*; which is, by *walking in the Spirit*. Now observe that there is a difference between the flesh lusting against the spirit, and fulfilling its lusts. It is one thing to have the lusts of the flesh working in you; it is another thing to fulfil them, to be their slave and subject. But you may ask, "Can we be ever brought to that blessed spot where we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh?" Surely; nay more, we must be brought to it, if we are the saints of God. But you will say, How? Here it is then opened up by the finger of God before your eyes: "*Walk in the Spirit.*" It is not, then, by making the flesh any better, by forming resolutions and vows not to listen to its wiles, or be entangled in them, and so overcoming by our own strength the unruly movements of our carnal mind, that we can be preserved from fulfilling its lusts. The evil is of such a kind that if it is suppressed in one point it will break out in another. It is like some diseases in a man's body: keep the disease from breaking out, it will work within; keep it from working within, it will break without. So it is with the flesh: it will work in some shape or other, either within or without; either by fraud or force. Thus we cannot subdue the flesh by the flesh, any more than we can

subdue disease by disease. You may take a tiger and shut him up in a den: but he is a tiger still; pare his claws; still he has the tiger nature, and when his claws grow, and the den set wide open, he will use them as before. So it is with this flesh of ours: it is a chained tiger, but a tiger still. You cannot alter the tiger nature, though you pare its claws and though you draw its teeth. But how are you to be kept from walking in the lusts of the flesh, how are you to be enabled to live to the praise and glory of God, and to do those things which are pleasing in his sight? The answer is still the same: By walking in the Spirit. But what is it to walk in the Spirit? To have the Spirit of God given to us in large measure, so as to live under his influence, and to walk in the feeling possession of his power and his grace; to be baptised into the very spirit of the gospel; for the Holy Spirit to make our body his temple; and to live, and speak, and think and act as blessed with the enjoyment of his divine teachings, operations, and communications. If we walk in the flesh, we shall fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but if we walk in the Spirit, have our affections fixed upon heavenly things, are spiritually minded, have fellowship with the Son of God, enjoy his presence, live to his praise, and have him formed in our hearts the hope of glory; if we thus walk in the Spirit, then we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, for the flesh will be subdued by the Spirit, and its lusts subjugated by his divine influence and efficacious power.

IV.—Now comes our last point, which is the blessed and most encouraging *conclusion*, drawn from the Spirit's work upon the heart: that *if we are thus led by the Spirit* by walking in him; if he be our Guide and Teacher; if he be continually operating upon our heart, and bringing near the influence of his grace; if he be in its and with us, guiding us into all truth, making and keeping us believing, loving, prayerful, tender, watchful, humble, contrite, and sincere: if we are thus led by the Spirit, we *are not then under the law*. Now whilst the conflict is going on in your bosom, you are often in your feelings under the law. The law's curse is ringing in your ears, the law's condemnation piercing your conscience. The flesh in some unguarded moment, it may be, prevails: you are entangled in some evil; you slip and fall into

something which brings guilt upon your conscience. Now the law thunders; inward condemnation re-echoes its peals; and the soul falls into bondage, doubt, and fear. But if you are led by the Spirit; if that blessed Guide is pleased to lead you out of your self into Christ's blood and righteousness; if you are experimentally favoured with his blessed teachings and sweet influences, bringing with them light, life, liberty, and love, the law has no more curse for you; it cannot condemn you to hell, nor send your soul to lie for ever under the curse of God. For being led by the Spirit you are delivered from the curse of the law into the blessing of the gospel; from the bondage of the law into the liberty of truth; from law charges into gospel mercies; from the accusations of a guilty conscience, into the witness of a good, because a purged and sprinkled conscience; and to sum it all up in one sentence, are thus translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. O the blessedness of walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit!

If, on the contrary, you are continually under the dominion of the flesh, yield to every vain or sensual movement, give way to every carnal inclination, then you bring yourself into doubt and darkness, bondage and fear. The law condemns and holds its fiery scourge over your shoulders. But if the Lord is pleased to bring your soul into the sweet liberty of the gospel, and baptise you into the love of Christ, then you are not under the law to condemn and curse you, but under the gospel to save and bless you. And this will not only save but sanctify you, for as you walk under the influence of the blessed Spirit, you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; you will have power to subdue them, and walk before God in the light of his countenance. I do not say that we are always or indeed often here; but I am sure there is no real peace or happiness except as we know some measure of these things in vital experience.

Thus, in the words of the text, we have not only the conflict described, but the victory also. We are not left by it wounded and maimed in the field of conflict, doubting whether we shall come off conquerors; not left in uncertainty whether it will be a drawn

battle, or whether sin, Satan, and the world shall overcome the grace of God. But we have the blessed testimony of God himself, that if led by the Spirit, we are not under the law, but under the saving blessings of the gospel. O blessed spot, to walk in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free! Not to be entangled in the yoke of bondage; but to know the truth and feel its sweet influence and power in our heart, bringing us out of the condemnation of a fiery law, and setting our souls down in blessed liberty at the feet of Jesus, in the sweet enjoyment of the blessed gospel of the grace of God, and thus divinely furnished to every good word and work.

## **ISRAEL BLEST AND KEPT**

Preached on Tuesday Evening, August 17th, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Num. 6:24-26

I once heard this text adduced as an argument for a form of prayer. It was argued that there could be no intrinsic objection to forms of prayer, seeing that God Himself had prescribed a distinct formula in the words of the text. But if that argument were valid in one point, it would be in others; and upon the same ground we might set up the whole of the Jewish ritual, and bring back circumcision and sacrifice. The spirit of the New Testament is not one of forms. These might suit the old ceremonial law, but are alien to the new covenant dispensation. Prayer is not a lip-liturgy, but a heart-breathing; and flows, not from a prayer-book, but from the Spirit of grace and supplications. I no more believe that when Paul prayed with the elders at Ephesus his prayers were made for him beforehand, than that their tears and kisses were manufactured to order. Nor do I believe that when he prayed on the sands with the disciples at Tyre he prayed out of a book, any more than that when he preached at Troas until midnight he preached a written sermon. The Spirit of grace and supplications, which intercedes for us and in us with groanings which cannot be uttered, supersedes all forms; and if He cannot make intercession for us according to the will of God, it cannot be done by a collect or a litany.

Two things are worthy of notice before we come to our text.

1. First, that the blessing was put into the mouth of Aaron, the high priest: "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them" (Num. 6:22, 23). Aaron in

this, as in other points, was a type and figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest over the house of God. But Aaron could only pronounce the blessing, Jesus gives it. Words only fall from the lips of a man; blessings fall from the heart of the God-Man.

2. But, secondly, we may observe how by implication that fundamental, cardinal doctrine of our most holy faith, the Trinity, is here set forth. Observe in the text the triple use of the word Jehovah: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Why this triple repetition, except upon the same ground that the seraphim in the temple three times proclaimed, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts?"

I. *"The Lord bless thee."* The high priest could only use the words; he pronounced the prayer, but he could not give that which was contained in the prayer. It was therefore not such a blessing as the Pope claims to give, but such a blessing as a poor sinner might ask; not a magical incantation to charm away sin, but a humble petition of one himself compassed with infirmity. The key to the words, "The Lord bless thee," is, I believe, to be found in Eph. 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;" for the blessings prayed for in our text would seem to be chiefly spiritual blessings. Not that we are to think lightly of temporal favours. They are left-hand blessings, if not right-hand mercies; they are gifts to be thankful for on earth, if not graces that take to heaven; provision for the perishing body, if not food for the immortal soul. Health, strength, such a measure of worldly goods as shall keep the wolf from the door, and enable us to owe no man anything but love; children growing up to be a comfort to their parents; a kind and affectionate partner; warm and faithful friends; an untarnished name; and a little provision for those dear and near to us, that their tears over our body may not be doubly embittered by poverty and dependence; who shall say that these are not blessings for which

God is to be praised? Viewed by the eye of faith, blessings in providence come down from heaven steeped in mercy. And yet how short, O how infinitely short, do these temporal blessings, which perish in the using, fall of spiritual blessings, which endure for evermore! A striking proof of this is that when we are privileged to draw near to a throne of grace with some measure of faith and feeling, the heart's desire is wholly towards spiritual blessings; and the eye of the soul is so wholly and solely fixed upon them, that there is scarcely left place either in the heart or lips to ask for any other.

Let us, then, as the Lord may enable, look at a few of these. They are indeed innumerable, and scattered up and down God's Word in such rich profusion, that we can glean up but a few. Like the trees in Paradise, so laden with promised mercies are the Scriptures, that we can but gather a cluster here and there. To gather the whole crop, that hangs so richly and luxuriantly from the boughs of promise, is beyond our power, as beyond our grasp. Yet a few we may safely gather.

1. *Godly fear* in the heart, that fountain of life by which an awakened sinner departs from the snares of death, is not that a blessing? and of all blessings first and foremost, because the "beginning of wisdom?" When, then, the priest spoke the words, "The Lord bless thee," may we not well believe he was to hold in his hand this blessing of godly fear, to drop, not only from his mouth, but also from the heart of God into the souls of the people prayed for? It is indeed such a blessing that there is no other blessing without it; for though it is "the beginning of wisdom," it is also "the principal part" of it (Prov. 1:7, margin). It is, therefore, not a bud which drops off the bough, but one which expands into flower and ripens into fruit; it is not a limb which is dwarfed and stunted by the other limbs that surround it, but one which grows with their growth and strengthens with their strength. It is the companion of faith, the friend of hope, and the partner of love; it makes the conscience tender, the walk circumspect, and the life consistent. It is "a fountain of life," and, like a river, is only increased and deepened by successive

additions of grace. Let us never think we possess any spiritual blessing if our heart be destitute of godly fear. If we have not the beginning, we can have neither the middle nor end.

2. But is not *faith* a blessing too? O how rich a blessing! And *who* know faith to be a blessing? Those who are deeply exercised and tried by an unbelieving heart. None prize the blessedness of faith when given so much as those who have had, and still have, painful struggles with a heart that cannot, nay, that will not believe. When faith comes down from heaven as a good and perfect gift into such a heart, when it leaps into the soul over such dark and rugged mountains of unbelief and infidelity, it is felt to be a blessing by the sweet effects it produces. We read that "the blessing of the Lord maketh rich." This is especially true of faith, for it is an enriching grace, putting the soul into possession of all the riches of the kingdom of heaven. It is almost as if the Governor and Directors of the Bank of England took you into the Bank cellars, and said, "You may take as much bullion as your eyes can look upon, or your hands carry away;" for faith gives such a blessed introduction into the treasures of God's grace, that it may have all it can grasp, and the more it grasps the better. But this is not often the soul's privilege. When God says, "Take," faith may embrace as much of Christ's riches as its eye can see or its hands grasp. But these are rare seasons. Too often are we like the penniless pauper who walks by the Bank, but to whom its cellars are closed, and all entrance effectually barred.

3. And is not *hope* a blessing too? I scarcely know how it is, but in our day this hope, which is spoken of so much in Scripture, which is termed an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, which is called "a good hope through grace," and placed by the apostle side by side and as if on a level with faith and love—this blessed grace of hope seems little thought of, and almost despised and set aside. One of the strangest and most inconsistent features of the present day is the combination of the strongest confidence with the greatest carnality. Never was there so much assurance, and never so little real faith; never so much stout wood, and

never so little ripe fruit; never so much high profession, and never so much low practice. If these high and lofty professors were tried by sin, Satan, and by a desponding heart; if they did more business in deep waters, they would more prize the anchor. But when the ship is always in harbour, moored on to the quay till masts and timbers rot, the anchor is not wanted, and is therefore little thought of. It is being buffeted by wind and wave, and being in continual peril of shipwreck, that makes the anchor prized.

4. But what shall we say of *love*? Shall we pass by that greatest of all blessings, which abides when faith is lost in sight, and hope absorbed in enjoyment? Shall we think little of that grace which is glory in the bud, the earnest of heaven, the choicest gift of God, as most assimilating the soul to His own nature, for God is love? It is the richest blessing in the whole cluster; the sweetest grace which God has to bestow; without which heaven would be no happiness, salvation no joy, and immortality no bliss.

5. But are there no other blessings? Have we now come to an end? Are we like a person who has a small income, a few shillings per week, and when Thursday evening comes finds all spent, nothing left to go to market with on Saturday? God is no such niggardly bestower of His bounties. He does not dole out His mercies like a parish officer, or treat His children like the poor needlewomen; "He giveth liberally and upbraideth not." Shall we omit patience? "Let patience have her perfect work." We read of those "who through faith and patience inherit the promises;" and if we have many trials, sufferings, and exercises, we shall not easily do without this blessing of patience and submission to God's will. It will serve us in good stead one day, even if we seem not to need it now.

6. And shall we pass by blessed testimonies of God's mercy and grace to the soul; views of the King in His beauty, and of the land that is very far off; wells of consolation in the valley of Baca; Ebenezers set up in the wilderness? Shall we omit crumbs from the bread of life, and drops from the everlasting fountain? Can anything not be a blessing which God gives? He gives no little

favours; the least of His favours is but a pledge and foretaste of the greatest. When you send your child to school in the morning, and give it a kiss, it is but a little; but it speaks the love of a parent's heart. But all your love is not spent in that one kiss; you have plenty more left, for you have a heart full of affection. Thus if the Lord is pleased to drop a kiss into the soul, are there no more to come? Has that one kiss exhausted all His love? "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." The bride wanted more than one; for the kisses of His mouth were but the language of His loving heart.

7. But are there no other blessings than these? Is not the rod often a blessing? God's frown often a blessing? His stripping hand often a blessing? His rebukes in the conscience often a blessing? The hidings of His face, the withdrawals of His sensible favour, the stripes of His heavy hand; shall we say these are no blessings? They are, though they are to our feelings blessings in disguise.

But before we pass on, just look at the personality of the blessing asked: "The Lord bless *thee*," not "*you*." And yet when the high priest pronounced the blessing he did not fix his eye upon, nor did he address his speech to, any one individual. It was spoken to the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel; and yet the words were so framed as though the blessing was for each individual. Such are God's blessings—personal, individual. Gracious souls, sometimes, when they have heard the word with any particular sweetness or power, say, "It was all for me." Well, it was all for thee; but art thou the only "me" in the place? Might not someone sitting by thy side say, "It was all for me?" Don't think that one alone is to be blessed, and all others excluded. There is enough for each and there is enough for all. But there is something so singularly appropriating in the mercy of God when brought into the heart that it seems as though it was for me and for me alone. But here is the blessedness of the mercies of God, of the riches of His grace and glory—that one having a part does not deprive the other. It is not like a natural family, where each successive child seems to withdraw a portion of the inheritance

from the others; so that, if they had the covetous feelings of up-grown people, the elder might well say to the new-born babe, "We don't want thee, thou little robber! Why art thou come to cry halves with us?" It does not narrow the heavenly inheritance that there are so many to enjoy it; if it did, it would narrow God Himself, for God is their inheritance, and in God is enough to satisfy myriads of elect angels, as well as myriads of ransomed men. There need be no envy in the things of God; it is excluded by the freeness, fulness, and richness of God's love. But I must not spend all the evening upon my first four words.

II. "*And keep thee.*" Blessing first and keeping afterwards. The blessing given, and then, when given, the blessing kept. The letter written, and then sealed; the jewel put into the casket, and then the casket locked. "The Lord keep thee." How we need this as well as the other! And he that knows most of his own heart will prize this blessing most. We cannot keep ourselves. If a man think he can keep himself he knows nothing of the treachery and deceitfulness of his own heart.

But not to spend too much time upon this point, I would observe that there are three things, if not more, from which God's children need to be specially kept.

1. I need hardly observe that the first and foremost is to be kept from positive evil. The Lord asked of the Father for His disciples, "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world"—no; let them suffer there as I have suffered before—"but keep them from the evil." They must be in the world, they must be brought into contact with the world, but O keep them from the evil that is in the world! And this will be first and foremost in the petitions of every child of God who knows his own evil heart and has suffered from its weakness and treachery, that the Lord will keep him from open evil, that he may bring no distress and guilt upon his own conscience or reproach upon the cause of God.

2. But another thing from which the Lord alone can keep His people is, error. Satan does not attack all alike. He knows the

bent of our natural minds. Some men's animal passions are strong; in others the animal passions are comparatively weak, but there is much mental speculation. Satan does not tempt the latter as he tempts the former. The passions of the one he inflames; but it is upon the speculative mind of the other that he works. Nothing is so easy for some minds as to drink down error. Their reasoning faculties are caught by the bait of some logical argument, or their speculative imagination by some deep mystery; or their pride gratified by some wonderful piece of knowledge. Now, under all this, error is usually concealed. The sweetness of the draught hides the arsenic in the cup. But no man can take even a few grains of error with impunity; it will stupefy, if it do not kill; it will weaken the soul, if it do not at once destroy life. It will and must affect his head or his heart, his hands or his feet, his faith or his walk. No man can drink down error and the spirit of error without being injured, his spiritual strength weakened, and his spiritual limbs paralysed. We are to beware of error as we would of poison. There is something in error alluring as well as sweet to the carnal mind. Many a child has been allured by the berries of the deadly nightshade first to taste, and, when tasted, their sweetness has drawn it on largely to eat. Let error once hang down its alluring berries from the pulpit, there are plenty in the congregation to pluck and eat. Therefore beware of error, and of erroneous men. I am jealous of error in proportion as I love and value the truth.

3. But there is a third thing, perhaps more fearful still, from which the Lord's people need to be kept, a thing perhaps little thought of and little noticed, and that is, a spirit of delusion. Many, many persons are under a spirit of delusion, whose lives are consistent and whose creed is sound. Their minds are mostly of a peculiar cast. They are not persons usually of strong animal passions, nor of speculative reasoning minds, but dreamy, visionary, imaginative, with a strong tinge of superstition and a tendency to natural enthusiasm. Now upon such minds Satan specially works, for he is a spirit, and, as such, has access to our animal spirits, breathing into them a spirit of delusion. It was thus he acted upon the four hundred prophets whom honest

Micaiah withstood at the court of Ahab; and so with the damsel mentioned in the Acts as "possessed with a spirit of divination" (Acts 16:16.) The Romish Church is full of the dreams and visions, trances and revelations, of their pretended saints; the visions of their St. Catherines and St. Bridgets fill volumes. So even where a sounder creed is professed there are continually found persons all whose religion consists in dreams and sights, in whom there is neither faith nor repentance, neither a sense of sin nor a knowledge of salvation. With these "light and airy dreams," as Hart calls them, they are wonderfully elated and puffed up, and feed on them instead of the riches of Christ's blood.

How we need the Lord to keep us! We stand upon slippery places. Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction. Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest, has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds; nor is there anyone, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid for him, and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God keep him not. When Elisha sat upon the mountain and his servant was distressed lest his master should be taken away by violence, the prophet prayed the Lord to open his servant's eyes. What then saw he? Chariots and horses of fire all round about the mountain guarding the prophet. Perhaps if the Lord were to open our eyes as He opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, we might see devils where he saw angels, see ourselves surrounded by Beelzebub and his legions, as the eyes of the servant saw Michael with the flaming hosts of heaven. Well, then, may it be the desire of our soul, "The Lord keep me"—keep me in His providence, keep me by His grace, keep me by planting His fear deep in my soul, and maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart; keep me waking, keep me sleeping; keep me by night, keep me by day; keep me at home, keep me abroad; keep me with my family, and keep me with my friends; keep me in the world, and keep me in the church; the Lord keep me according to His promise every moment; keep me by His Spirit and grace with all the tenderness implied in His words, "O keep me as the apple of Thine eye!" My friends, you can know little of your own heart,

little of Satan's devices, little of the snares spread for your feet, unless you feel how deeply you need an interest in this blessing: "The Lord keep thee." And He will, for we read of the righteous that they are kept "by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and that "He will keep the feet of His saints."

III. But we pass on to the third portion of the blessing: "*The Lord make His face shine upon thee.*" The allusion here seems, to my mind, to be to the sun. Sometimes the natural sun has not risen; and the world must needs be dark if the sun be still beneath the horizon. So with many gracious souls; it is darkness with them, midnight darkness, Egyptian darkness, darkness to be felt, because at present neither the Day-star has appeared nor the Sun of Righteousness risen upon them with healing in His wings. It will and must be dark with them till the Sun rise. But sometimes after the sun has risen we see not his face: clouds, deep, dark clouds, may obscure the face of that bright luminary throughout the whole day, and we may not get a single ray from him through the whole period that he is above the visible horizon. So many of the Lord's family, after the Sun has risen upon them in the morning of their spiritual life, may pass, perhaps, much of their subsequent time in the dark shadow, till perhaps at eveningtide there is light, and a departing ray gilds the dying pillow. But again, there are sometimes days when mists drive rapidly across the face of the bright orb of day, and yet occasionally he peeps through the breaking clouds. It has been much this weather to-day. And is not this, in some measure, an emblem of the way in which the Sun of Righteousness is continually obscured by the mists and fogs which spring up out of our unbelieving heart, hidden from view by the doubts and fears that, like the vapours of the valley, spread themselves, to our view, over His beauteous face? Yet there are times when He gleams through the clouds and disperses the mists. When the Lord is pleased to bless the soul and shine upon it with any sweet manifestation, then He breaks through the dark clouds; but they gather again. It is not in Christian experience one bright summer day. We do not live in Australia or Peru, where clouds and mists rarely obscure the face of the sun. Our spiritual climate is humid,

our inward latitude northern.

"The Lord *make* His face shine upon thee." Is the Lord, then, sovereign in these matters? Can we not lift up our hand and remove the cloud? We have as much power to stretch forth our hand and sweep away the mists that obscure the Sun of Righteousness, as we have power with the same hand to sweep away a London fog. How this puts the creature into his right place! and the creature is only in his right place when he is nothing, and God is all in all. The very words seem now to be dropping with some sweetness upon my spirit: "The Lord make His face to shine upon thee." How blessed to see the face of the Father, and to see it shine! not covered with lowering clouds of justly-merited displeasure, as sometimes we see in the natural sky an obscured sun looking angrily down, presaging wind and storm. It is indeed true that, when we have brought guilt into our consciences, the face of God is seen to lower with anger. We have brought His just displeasure upon our heads: though not angry with the persons of His people, yet is He justly angry with their sins; and a sense of this in the soul covers His face with clouds: "Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam. 3:44)

"The Lord make His face shine upon thee." And if He make His face shine upon thee He will make thy face shine too. It was so with Moses, when he was in the mount and was holding sweet communion with God. When he came down amongst the people, the skin of his face shone: the glory of God was reflected upon it. And if the Lord make His face shine upon thee, it will make thy face not unlike the face of Moses when thou goest among the people of God.

IV. "*And be gracious unto thee.*" How sweet the gospel is! But what makes the gospel sweet? That one word which sheds a perfume through the whole—grace. Take grace out of the gospel and you destroy the gospel; you nullify and overthrow it; it is the gospel no more. Grace pervades every part and every branch of the blessed gospel; it is the life of the gospel; in a word, it is the

gospel itself. "Be *gracious* unto thee." In what, then, is God gracious? In a broken law? What does that know of grace? In resolutions of amendment, creature performances, and human righteousness? Can the Lord, will the Lord, show Himself gracious in these? I have read of a project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers. We might as well expect to make sunbeams out of cucumbers as to make grace out of the law; it is cold as cucumbers; there is no sun in it. Grace, to be grace, must come out of the gospel. It is *in* the gospel, and *out* of the gospel must it come; and it does come, excluding all creature righteousness, putting an extinguisher upon all human merit. As the apostle argues: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6). "The Lord be gracious unto thee."

But *how* is the Lord gracious? Perhaps you have had occasion at some time of your life, to go into the presence of some one in worldly rank far your superior, and you went timid, nervous, and trembling; but you experienced what is called a "gracious reception." Did not that enable you to speak and open your petition? So it is in the things of God. A sense of our meanness and unworthiness may and does make us feel timid and trembling before the face of the Most High; but when He draws us into His presence, and receives us graciously, as king Ahasuerus received the trembling Esther, extending to her the sceptre of his grace, it emboldens the soul to lay its petition at His feet. Nothing will do it but this. But you feel and say often, "I am so unworthy." Will you ever be anything else? When do you hope to be worthy? When do you mean to be worthy? If you could be worthy to-morrow, where is your worthiness to-day? Is the old score yet paid? If you venture upon the ground of worthiness you must have the old score rubbed off before you come to the new. Worthiness! where is it? In man? Never since the day that Adam fell. Righteousness fell in Paradise; when Adam's hand touched the apple, worthiness fell to the ground, and never since has been able to raise its head. I must not, then, go to God upon the ground of worthiness. But may I go on the ground of unworthiness? I read of one who

did, and met with a very gracious reception. "Lord," said one, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." What did the Lord say of this man? That He had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. What, too, was the confession of the returning prodigal? "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." But this brought out the best robe, the ring for the hand, and the shoes for the feet. Why? Faith dwells with a sense of unworthiness; they are bosom companions; it dwells in no other but unworthy breasts. Feel spiritually unworthy and you are spiritually believing, for it is faith that gives a sense of unworthiness. You believe you are unworthy; by the same faith that you believe your unworthiness you believe God's grace. "Be gracious unto thee." That melts the heart; law and terrors do but harden. It is grace that softens, grace that melts, grace that constrains, grace that produces godly obedience.

"The Lord be gracious unto thee." But *when?* In all times, states, and circumstances. "What!" the soul says, "after repeated backslidings; after daily inconsistencies; after so much ingratitude, neglect, self-seeking, pride, worldliness; so much lightness and frivolity, so little living, speaking, thinking, and acting to the glory of God?" If the Lord take notice of these things so as to rebuke us, it is well for us; but if the Lord take such notice of them as to make them entire hindrances to His grace, where shall we find a person to whom the Lord will ever be gracious? Grace must come over all the mountains of our sin and shame, and constrain us to a willing obedience, for Christ's people are made "willing in the day of His power;" and the more He is gracious unto us, the more willing we shall be to serve Him, love Him, obey Him, and walk in His blessed ways! God wants no slaves, no hired servants in His house; He is served by sons and daughters. The obedience of a son or a daughter is a willing obedience. You have seen sometimes an afflicted parent, and you have admired, perhaps, the willing services and kindnesses shown him in sickness or old age by some affectionate daughter. Suppose that daughter were continually reminding her parent, "I do this because it is my duty. If I prop up your pillow, if I bring

your medicine, if I give you food, if I attend to your wants, it is my duty; you are my parent, and I therefore show my duty to you." How could a parent receive attention from a son or a daughter who was ever throwing duty in his face? But if he saw that every movement was prompted by love; if he felt the soft hand of love propping up the pillow, the tender hand of affection giving the medicine, an affectionate smile upon the countenance, and sometimes the passing cloud of sympathy, but all connected with the deep affection of a daughter's heart, that would be received as affectionately as bestowed. Is it otherwise in the things of God? Go to God with your duty—it is only fit to be thrown back upon your face. Go to God in love, in the obedience of an affectionate heart, and you will be accepted.

V. *"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee."* The meaning of this expression may, I think, be illustrated by a simple figure. A child has been disobedient to, or otherwise displeased its parent; or, to take a somewhat tenderer relation, a wife has not been altogether to her husband what he might expect, nor shown him that kindness and affection which are his due, and which indeed it is not only her duty but her highest privilege to give. The husband's head is then sometimes hung down, his eyes are averted, and face turned away; she is not met with that cheerfully-raised countenance and gladsome eye that she is at other times greeted with. Is there not something in this figure that may give a key to the words, "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee?" When we offend a person, his face is not toward us as at other times. It was so with Laban towards Jacob; and if we have in any way incurred a friend's or superior's displeasure we watch instinctively his countenance. Is it down or up? Does it wear a frown or a smile? Is it looking upon us with the eye of affection, or are the eyes averted? We can tell in a moment if we know the countenance. Thus is the blessing asked—"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee," as a kind and affectionate parent upon an obedient child, as a fond husband upon a loving, devoted wife; for such is God to His children—Father and Husband. And do we not, as children, often provoke Him to look upon us with frowning brow, or rather not to

look upon us at all, to "hide His face," as we read, "that we cannot see Him?" The prayer then is—"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee," with a smile upon it; free, open, forgiving, merciful, and mild, that thou mayest advance therein. When a disobedient child comes home and sees its father's face not towards it as before, it shrinks away; there is no pressing forward to get upon the knee, no throwing the little arms round the neck and snatching a kiss, but a shrinking away through guilt and shame. So is it in the things of God. When conscience tells us how in this and that instance we have disobeyed, been inconsistent, transgressed, and done amiss, when we go into God's presence there is a hanging back, a shrinking away through fear of an ill reception. But O the change in the child when the frown disappears and the smile succeeds; when the little one is taken once more into the arms and the tears are kissed away! How much more so in the things of God when He kisses away the tears of the disobedient child, as in the case of the returning prodigal! There are no kisses like those kisses of forgiveness, of mercy, and of restoring grace.

VI. "*And give thee peace.*" O what a blessing! As Hart says,

"I lay me down and sweetly sleep,  
For I have peace with God."

It is this that makes the pillow easy in life, and will alone make that pillow easy in death—peace with God through Jesus Christ, peace through the reconciliation, peace through the blood of sprinkling, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Many covet great things, high things. But what said the Lord to Baruch? "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." Ministers often seek great gifts, great eloquence, great knowledge of mysteries, great congregations, great popularity and influence. They are wrong in seeking these so-called great things. Let them rather seek *real* things, gracious things, things that make their souls blessed here and hereafter. The blessing that the gracious soul most earnestly covets is peace; for this is the sweetest honey-drop in God's cup. It is true that it does not

make the heart overflow like joy, nor to dance with exultation, like the first beaming in of the rays of hope, nor melt it down like the visits of love; but it is in some respects sweeter than all, because it so settles down the soul into sweet assurance; it is the realisation of the Saviour Himself, for "He is our peace," and may thus be called the crowning blessing.

But see how the links of this divine chain meet, somewhat like that which we were treating of last Lord's day evening. Just look at these links for a moment. "The Lord bless thee"—link the first; "and keep thee"—link the second; "the Lord make His face shine upon thee"—the third; "and be gracious unto thee"—the fourth; "the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee"—the fifth; "and give thee peace"—the sixth. Six blessed links, and all united into one continuous chain; for when the Lord begins to bless, He ends with peace. We need wish no greater nor pray for a higher blessing than peace, for God has none greater to give. When a father dies he leaves his children all his goods. Jesus, before He died, said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." It was His last legacy; His dying gift; in His own eyes of the greatest value, and it should be such in ours.

It is not my habit to preach introductory or farewell sermons. I often think there is much flesh in both, and, to my mind, the less the flesh appears in the pulpit or the pew the better. Natural feelings are to be discouraged by ministers rather than encouraged, for they are very deceptive, and often pass off for spiritual feelings; and this makes me dread them. To work upon people's natural feelings is to be an actor, not a preacher; I therefore rarely, in leaving my own congregations, take leave of them, and when I return I preach as I should have done had I been with them for weeks. But as I would not in ordinary life be deficient in courtesy, neither would I in the things of God; and as these words came to my mind this morning with some little measure of sweetness and savour, it seemed as though they were adapted to close up my ministry this time in London. We cannot have greater blessings than the Lord has here bidden His

servants to pronounce; and may it be our blessed desire that the Lord would fulfil in our souls every one of these blessed petitions. I could not leave you six more blessed petitions than these; if I were to ransack God's Word from beginning to end I could scarcely find blessings more weighty, blessings more precious, or blessings more suitable. Therefore I would say, in the name of the Lord, addressing myself to each who fears God in this place, though not for a moment putting myself in the place of Aaron, but simply using the words of the text—"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

## Israel's Departure and Return

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening, July 17, 1849

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Hosea 14:1, 2, 3

Our text is rather a long one; but it presents such a connected chain of blessed truth, that if I were to attempt to make it shorter, I could only present to you broken links and scattered fragments. As it stands, it is complete in itself—a beautiful and blessed exposition of divine truth. But it is only so as taken in its connection. Tear it asunder; take separate verses; and the beauty and sweetness of it are lost. I shall, therefore, as our text is long, and contains much matter, proceed at once to consider its contents. And I think that we may observe in it three or four leading features.

I.—*First*, the *charge*; "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

II.—*Secondly*, the *invitation*; "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *response* of the church to this gracious and tender invitation; "So will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us: we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods." And to these three leading features, I may add a *fourth*, which seems to put a crown upon the whole; "For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

I.—The *charge*—the accusation that God brings against Israel; "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." But there may be some here who are inwardly saying to themselves, 'These words do not apply to me; I have never fallen by mine iniquity; I stand upright; what has this to do with my case?' If there be such secret feelings at work in any of your minds, it does not show that the text will not apply to you: it merely shews, that the veil of ignorance, self-righteousness, and unbelief is still upon your heart. For, were that veil taken away, and you had a sight of yourself as you stand in the eyes of a holy God, you would find, that in one sense or other you have much to do with the accusation; and then, so far from putting the charge from you, you would be the very first to fall under it.

The book of Hosea is filled with expostulations, warnings, admonitions, invitations, and promises. Spiritually viewed, these are applicable only to a certain character, one who has departed, or is departing from the Lord. And, as I believe in my conscience, there is no child of God who really knows his heart, that has not departed from the Lord, and is not, more or less, daily departing from him, in thought, word, or deed, this charge belongs to the whole family of God. But if you think it does not apply to you, stand aside, and let those hear who have ears to hear.

But what is the substance of the charge? The Lord is speaking here to his own people, whom he addresses by the name of Israel; and in order to make the charge more pointed, he puts it in the second person; "O Israel, *thou* hast fallen by thine iniquity."

The words will need a little opening up.

1. What are we to understand, then, by "*iniquity*?" Are we to limit the expression to open acts of sin? Are we to say there is no iniquity except that which consists in words spoken or acts performed? that nothing short of drunkenness, adultery, theft, falsehood, and other such open sins, can be designated by the word iniquity? A man who thinks and argues thus, can know very

little of the character of God; he can know very little of the holiness, purity, majesty, and power of the Lord God Almighty; and he can know very little of the wickedness, sinfulness, and depravity of his own fallen nature. Every, yea, the least departing from God, is iniquity; all that does not lie level and straight with the divine character. Just as when a straight rule is laid upon a curved surface, it detects the least crookedness; and as the slightest crookedness whatever maybe called a departure from a right line, so every departing of the heart from God is iniquity. Or, in the same way as a grain less than the real weight makes the weight defective, so the least deviation from the purity, perfection, and holiness of God, is iniquity. A man that is not aware of this, and is not keenly alive to it, can know little either of the character of God, or of the character of sin.

2. But what is it *to fall*? "Thou hast *fallen* by thine iniquity." Must we refer this falling only to something outward? Are there no other falls but positive words or positive acts of sin? Is nothing to be designated a fall but that which may be brought before a church as an act to be visited by its censure? A man must be as ignorant of what falling is, as he is of what iniquity is, if he thinks that there is no other falling but that which consists in some words spoken, or some acts done. There is a falling inwardly. There are secret thoughts, desires, lusts, and workings of our depraved heart by which we fall; and the more a man is acquainted with his own heart, and the character of God, the more will he be alive to these inward slips and falls, even when to the eye of man, however keen it may be, there may seem to be nothing inconsistent or unbecoming.

I wish to explain this matter fully at the very outset, in order that I may throw the net as widely as possible, and include in its capacious folds every one whose soul God has quickened to fear his great Name. For, I am certain, if the grace of God be in your heart: if your conscience be made and kept alive and tender in God's fear; if you have light to see, and life to feel, you will acknowledge and fall beneath the charge, "Thou art fallen by thine iniquity."

When the Lord is first pleased to draw us near to himself by some manifestation of his mercy, goodness, and love, we walk with him in simplicity and godly sincerity; he has our hearts and our warmest and most ardent affections, and our delight and pleasure is to have sweet communion with him. And here for the most part we stand so long as the blessed Spirit is drawing up our hearts and affections, and fixing them where Jesus sits at God's right hand. But when he leaves us; when he withdraws his inshinings and the visitations of his mercy and favour, then, like Abraham, we return to our place, and it may be said often of us too truly, "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

But in how many ways do the Lord's people inwardly fall when God keeps them from slipping outwardly! Some fall by *spiritual pride*, even those whom the Lord has specially blessed. The very blessings of the Lord may be and are abused by the carnal mind; as Hart says, and to my mind he never wrote a truer line,

"The heart uplifts with God's own gifts,  
And makes e'en grace a snare.

The Apostle Paul found this. After he had been caught up to the third heaven, "lest he should be puffed up with the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, was sent to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure." (2. Cor. 12:7.) Spiritual pride was working in him; even from the manifestations and revelations that God had favoured him with. And who that knows anything of the visitations of God to his spirit, does not feel that when these sweet seasons are withdrawn, he is lifted up with pride, thinks that he stands nearer to God, and higher in the divine favour than others, and has something to boast of over his weaker brethren? Others fall by *worldly pride*. Pride is a tree with many branches. Some who are free, to a certain degree at least, from the outward manifestations of worldly pride, are eaten up with spiritual pride; and those, perhaps, who are kept humble in their souls, and in whom spiritual pride does not manifest itself, feel one of their

chief enemies to be worldly pride. Others fall by *covetousness*; "the love of money, the root of all evil," entangles and draws them aside. Others fall by *worldly-mindedness, earthly cares, and temporal anxieties*, that seem to eat up, like the locust, every green leaf of the life of God in the soul. Others fall by *presumption*; and others fall by *despair*. Each person that knows his own heart is best acquainted with that which entangles him, and draws him aside.

*Sensuality* is the snare of some. An inclination to *strong drink* is a temptation to others. *Worldly relations and connections* are a besetment to a third; *family cares and anxieties* are a temptation to a fourth. Each may have his own besetment; each may have his own snare; and yet the end and result be the same in all and each. "O Israel, thou hast fallen by thine iniquity"—'by that iniquity which has more or less power in thy heart to entangle thee, to bewitch thee, to allure thee, to blind thy eyes, to draw thee aside, to turn thy feet out of the narrow path, to carnalize thy mind, to deaden thy spirit, to harden thy conscience, to weaken the influences of faith, hope, and love.' Let conscience speak in the bosom of each, (who know what it is to have a conscience), and it will point out to each some besetment connected perhaps with his situation in life, or some temptation springing perhaps out of the peculiar relationship in which he stands. Each whose eyes are opened to see the workings of his heart, may see (if God be pleased to show him) that there is some iniquity, some besetment, some temptation, some lust, some idol, some snare; that there is something working in his heart whereby he continually falls away from communion with God; from the actings of faith, hope, and love; from his steadfastness; and from the sweet feelings that the Lord has from time to time blessed him with; so that his mind becomes more or less carnalized, darkened, and deadened.

Now if you cannot go thus far with me, I have no hope whatever that you can go one step further. If there is no response in your bosom to what I have thus far been attempting to sketch out (and most feebly I confess have I thus sketched out some of

these inward departings from the Lord); if you cannot go thus far, I have not the least hope of taking you one step further. But if you have been able thus far to follow me, and conscience bears its inward testimony that I have spoken the truth, and described more or less what you daily feel and mourn under, then let us proceed in company a step further, to our *second* point, which is,

II.—The *invitation* which the Lord addresses to all who know and feel that they have fallen, and that they do fall, and that daily by iniquity. And perhaps if I could follow some of those sitting before me into their secret retirements; could I listen to their sighs and cries as they lie upon their midnight bed; could I be near them when they are engaged in their various occupations; could I watch their lips as they traverse the streets of this metropolis,—I might hear them secretly complaining and confessing to God how vile they are, how base, how filthy, how entangled, how overtaken, how ensnared, and what trouble this causes them, that they are continually falling by their iniquity.

i. The Lord speaks to *these*; *they* have ears to hear; and his words will not fall to the ground. And what does he say? He addresses them tenderly; he speaks to them in the sweetest invitation; "*O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.*" 'I know where thou hast been, Israel; I know what thou hast been doing; I see how thou hast fallen; I know what grief thine inward or outward backslidings have cost thee; mine eye hath seen the trouble of thine heart, and mine ear hath been opened to the sighs, and cries, and groans of thy lips. I am not a hard taskmaster, to cast thee off, cut thee down, and send thee to thy deserved place; "*O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.*"

But how much there is couched in the words, "the Lord *thy* God!" What still! though thou hast fallen by thine iniquity; though thou hast departed from the Lord; though thou hast nursed every abomination in thy heart; though thou hast gone, in thy fallen nature, after the filthiest idols; though thou hast forsaken me times without number; though thou hast preferred anything and everything to my ways; yet he is the Lord thy God still, who has

loved thee with an everlasting love, who hateth putting away, who will not reject thee, nor cast thee aside, nor cut thee down, nor send thee into eternal misery. He is still the Lord "merciful and gracious;" thy tender, thy compassionate, thy ever-living, ever-loving God; thy Father still, thy Benefactor still, thy sin-pardoning God still!

Now there is nothing that so melts and moves a poor sinner's heart, as when the Lord is pleased to drop such gracious and tender words into his soul as these. The Lord knows how to deal with us. He knows how to overcome us. He does not drive us to distraction by his wrathful anger; but he softens, melts, and moves the heart by tenderness, compassion, and love. He puts his hand upon the tenderest springs of our heart; he touches the right cord; he addresses to us the invitations, which when they come from his lips move and melt the soul. 'Return; I am ready to receive thee. I hold out my arm of tender compassion to thee.' "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

If you have never known the misery of departing from God, you can never know the sweetness of returning to God. If you have never bewailed, lamented, nor mourned over the backslidings, the idolatries, and the adulteries of your fallen nature, you can know nothing of the sweetness of forsaking him. You are like the elder son in the parable, who never at any time offended his father, but always kept his commandments; and you therefore have never had occasion to confess to the Lord how you have fallen by your iniquity. You stand in your own holiness, righteousness, obedience, and consistency of life; and therefore know nothing of the moving and melting breakings of heart that spring out of the Lord's tender invitations as applied to those who mourn and sigh because they have departed from him.

ii. But the Lord says also, "*Take with you words;*" as though he would put words into our mouth; as though he would himself suggest to us the most prevailing arguments. Some have contended from this language of the prophet for written forms of

prayer; but, I think such have sadly overlooked the real spiritual meaning of the text. I think I may illustrate it by a very simple figure. Here is a criminal in a court of justice who is so cut up with shame and guilt, that he has not a word to say; but there stands by his side an advocate, a councillor, who knows the whole of the case; and he puts words into the criminal's mouth, and such words as he knows will have the greatest prevalence with the judge and jury. He tells him what to say, because he knows that the words which he puts into his mouth are the best to make use of, and such as will carry the greatest weight and power with those before whom he stands. And thus, when the Lord says, "Take with you words," he does not mean to put forms into the mouths of any. It is not to furnish a written formula for them to use; but it is to put prevailing arguments into the mouth of those who are so cut up with shame and guilt, that they have not a word to plead in their own behalf. It is as though he would himself put into Israel's heart and mouth arguments that would not fail to touch his own bosom, and bring down answers of mercy and peace out of his inexhaustible treasury. "Take with you words."

But what shall those words be? There are *two* which the Lord has here put into the heart and mouth of returning Israel.

1. *First, "Take away all iniquity."* How suitable is this! *Iniquity* has been the great stumbling-block, the main wall of separation, the chief cause of all the troubles, the real reason of all the controversy between God and the soul. Israel had fallen by iniquity. It was some secret idol set up in Israel's heart which had provoked the Lord; and thereby she had fallen from him. It was either her pride, her covetousness, her sensuality, her worldly-mindedness, her carnality, her presumption, her unbelief, or her infidelity; it was some idol, some iniquity, or stumbling-block, set up in her heart, whereby she had fallen. Therefore, until this was taken away, she would ever be in the same state that she was in before. She must therefore say from the heart as well as from the lip, "Take away all iniquity."

Now, before the soul can use these words, it must see it has iniquity; and it must see *that* iniquity in particular whereby it has fallen. Therefore, I said, if you did not feel the application of the *charge*, I would not ask you to go a step further: I said, you had better stand aside, and give place to others. But when you have eyes to see there has been *this* iniquity whereby you have fallen, *this* lust, *this* pride, *this* worldly-mindedness, *this* besetment, *this* temptation, *this* indulgence in something sinful, *this* secret departing from God, *this* forgetfulness of prayer, *this* neglecting his word, *this* hardening of your heart against the truth—when you begin to see and feel you have departed from the Lord, and say, 'I have not that sweet enjoyment of God's presence that I once had; I have not that communion with him which my soul once enjoyed; I have not those manifest answers to prayer, not those visitations of his grace and favour, not that access unto him, not that delight in reading his word, not that love to his people, not that satisfaction I formerly had in hearing his truth;'—when you begin to see a little of the malady, then you are fit to receive the remedy. If you had some inward disease, and went to a physician, the first thing he would do would be to find out what the disease really was. He would ask you a number of questions; he would perhaps strip you to find out what was really the matter with you: and when he had found out the disease, he would address himself to the cure. So if you do not see or feel that there is some idol, some temptation, some besetment, some snare, something unlawful, something evil which you have been indulging in: and that *this* is the cause why you have not those sweet manifestations of God's favour and love to your soul, and why you are living for the most part in a careless and hardened state: I say, unless you see the real root, and dig down into your heart to find out whence all this springs, you cannot come to the Lord, and say, "Take away *all* iniquity." But, besides that, you must have *suffered*; you must have groaned, cried, and almost bled beneath the iniquity, the lust, the idol, the temptation, the besetment, before you can say, "Take away *all* iniquity." 'What *all*? Must *all* be taken away? Take away what I love so much? Take away what my carnal heart so delights in? Take away what I have gone out in such secret desires after? Take *all* away? This is

taking my life! It is taking away all my worldly happiness: it is taking away all that my carnal mind finds pleasure in.' But when we have suffered and learnt to value one smile of God in the heart beyond a thousand carnal pleasures and pursuits, and would make any sacrifice so that he would appear for us, and bless our souls with the sweet manifestations of his love—when we can come here, we can *then* say, "Take away *all* iniquity," and enter into the real meaning of the words, into the very heart of the text.

But you may, like those of old, with your mouth show much love, and in your heart go out after your covetousness. (Ezek. 33:31.) You may get up in the morning, fall upon your knees, ask the Lord to keep you through the day, to preserve you from that temptation which has entangled you before, or from the besetment whereby you have fallen; but directly you get off your knees, or leave the room, you are as weak, as powerless, as much off your guard, and as ready to fall into the temptation as ever the devil is to bring that temptation before you. Now, if you are there, you cannot use the words from an honest heart, and say, "Take away *all* iniquity." But when you see and feel what a horrible thing sin is! how hateful and dreadful! and what a filthy, base, depraved and wicked creature you are, for having been entangled in this bewitchment, for having been overcome by this temptation, or drawn aside into this snare; when you can smite upon your breast, and say, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24,) or, when you can smite upon your thigh, and say, 'Woe is me! was there ever such an one as I? so soon thrown down; so easily entangled, so quickly drawn aside; such a weak and wicked creature! Was there ever such an one as I? O, I could tear out this heart of mine it gives me so much trouble!'—when a man is brought by the secret operations of God upon his heart into this spot, then he can say, "Take away *all* iniquity." He will not say, 'Spare me this or that sin. Is it not a little one? May not I have *this* lust? May not I indulge *this* pleasure, if I give up all the rest? Let me have but this; O, I cannot part with *this*?' I say, if a man is there, it shows that he has not had a real sight and sense of sin; he has not been

made sick at heart, nor has he been made really honest before God.

Now but few persons are brought here by divine teaching and divine power. It is not standing with presumptuous notions upon the heights of Zion, but it is being brought down by the power of God to lie at his feet that will do this. But if you can travel thus far with me, we will go a step further.

2. "And receive us graciously." Not only, "Take away all iniquity;" take away the *guilt* of sin by sprinkling my conscience with atoning blood; take away the *filth* of sin by washing me in the fountain once opened for sin and uncleanness; take away the *power* of sin by shedding abroad thy constraining love in my heart, and enabling me by every sweet constraint to live to thy glory. I say, not only do we, or can we thus use the words when we say, "Take away all iniquity;" but the Lord bids us to add, "Receive us graciously." How this seems sweetly to explain the other! 'What!' a person may say, 'if I go to the Lord, and he takes away all iniquity, shall I not then stand upon a better footing than before? Shall I not then have something that I can boast of?' No! "Receive us *graciously*." Free grace must still reign. 'Receive us into thy bosom, into thine heart, into thine arms, into the manifestations of thy mercy and favour, into the sweet testimonies of thy pardoning love and restoring grace. "Receive us *graciously*." Let "grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life" in the superaboundings of thy sovereign grace. This must ever be our prayer. It is grace that makes us see our iniquity, and makes us feel that we have fallen by our iniquity; it is grace that brings us to the footstool of mercy, to say unto the Lord, "Take away all iniquity;" and it is still grace that we plead, when we say, "Receive us graciously." 'Receive us for the sake of thy grace into eternal life, into the manifestations of thy mercy, and the superaboundings of thy favour, whatever we have been, whatever we have done, whatever we have said, whatever we have thought; however far we have departed, however long we have gone astray, however hardened our heart, however fallen into the snares and temptations of the devil.' When we can find

these two things (and they always go together) "take away all iniquity," and "receive us graciously," they carry with them a proof that the Lord is working in our hearts, and speaking his own invitation with a divine power into our souls.

III.—But we pass on to the *response*; the reception that these words meet with in Israel's breast; "So will we render to thee the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

We observe in these words two leading things; 1, what Israel says she *will do*; and 2, what Israel says she *will not do*.

i. What, then, does Israel say she *will do*? "So will we render unto thee the calves of our lips." The figure is taken from the sacrifices of calves and lambs which were offered under the law. So that when Israel says, she will "render the calves of her lips," she declares, that she will yield the sacrifice of praise. And this is a sacrifice acceptable to God; that we should not render to him merely carnal and worldly offerings, but, "the calves of our lips," the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, of blessing and extolling his holy name.

Now, if ever there be the incense of praise on the lip, it is when the sweet invitation of the Lord comes with power into our soul; when we not only come to him, and say, "take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously," but have a sweet and blessed answer that he has taken away all iniquity, and so receive us. O how sweet it is to be able to praise God with joyful lips! and when we can do this from a sense of his goodness and favour let down into our souls, it is the sweetest and most blessed feeling that can possibly be enjoyed. And yet see the connection. Here is Israel; she has fallen by her iniquity, been indulging some secret lust, caught in some bewitching snare, drawn aside from the Lord, has departed from him, and got entangled in something that the Lord and the soul knows is not right; she is cut up with guilt, and filled with despondency, shame, and self-loathing, and almost driven

into the very depths of despair. Now when the Lord is pleased, under these circumstances, to melt and move the heart by some gracious invitation, and the soul can hear the voice of God speaking in his word, and can come to him, and has power to say, "'Take away all iniquity;" break to pieces the snare; remove the temptation; let not that besetment reign with which my poor soul has been entangled; let it never entangle me again; Lord, thou knowest all my weakness, and all my wickedness; and how, if left to myself, I must fall; take away the snare; break it to pieces; let me never, never, never, be overcome with the temptation again'—when the Lord hears the sigh and cry of the poor prisoner, delivers him, takes away the temptation, removes the besetment, gives godly sorrow, and enables him to say, "'Take away all iniquity;" take it clean out of my heart; let it not reign or rule there for a single moment; at whatever cost, at whatever sacrifice; however deep it may cut; yet take away everything displeasing in thy holy and pure eyes; take away everything which intercepts the rays of thy mercy and favour; remove every stumbling-block, however near and dear; and deliver me from every temptation, however it may cut close into my very heart's fibres; "receive me graciously" in the blood and obedience of Jesus; and let thy grace shine forth in restoring and pardoning my soul'—I say when we can thus come before the Lord, and there is some sweet echo and response in the soul from its inmost feelings that the Lord has taken and is taking away all iniquity, and casting it into the depths of the sea; that he is removing the temptation, and subduing the power of sin, and accepting us in his beloved Son—if ever there be a feeling of thankfulness; if ever there be a note of praise in a sinner's heart or in a sinner's lips, it is then. The church therefore says, "So will we render thee the calves of our lips." 'We will not sacrifice the blood of calves and bullocks; we will not render to thee costly offerings of gold and silver; we will not build churches, nor erect altars, nor subscribe to painted windows, in order thus to obtain some manifestation of thy mercy; but "'we will render to thee the calves of our lips.'" As we walk up and down our room, we will thank and praise thy holy name; as we lie upon our bed, we will bless and extol thee with every faculty of our soul, and with every

breath of our lips. As we are engaged in our various occupations in life, our heart shall be continually blessing and thanking thee for thy mercy; a tear of gratitude, mixed with godly sorrow, will trickle down our cheek; and when no eye sees, and no ear hears, we will thank and praise and bless thee for what thou hast done for us.' This is the sacrifice of praise that God accepts at our hands; and it is all that we can give him for his mercy, goodness, and love.

ii. But Israel not only tells the Lord what she will do, but she tells him what *she will not do*. And what will she not do?

1. "Asshur shall not save us." Where had she been? What had been the main cause of her departing from the Lord? What had been the secret root of her iniquity? Why; looking to Asshur; that is, Assyria, which, spiritually, means some foreign help.

Let me try if I cannot trace out in this the very feelings of your heart. There is some temptation which you have been overtaken by; some besetment which has drawn you aside and entangled your affections. Let us dig down to the root of this; let us look, if it be possible, and see what gave this temptation such power, and what made this besetment so strong. It was because you were secretly leaning upon Asshur; you were not looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ; not trusting wholly to his blood; not hanging entirely upon his arm; not resting solely upon his power. But when we have learned by fatal experience what looking to Asshur has cost us; and seen that whenever we have looked to the creature, or rested upon an arm of flesh, we have only been strengthening some temptation, putting force into some besetment, or adding power to some entanglement, the soul says, with holy indignation, "Asshur shall not save us." 'I have made resolutions and promises, and relied upon self to keep me when I went into temptation; my eye was not upon the Lord; I was looking more to my own strength or righteousness, or something in me or others; but it shall be so no longer; "Asshur shall not save us.'"

2. "Neither will we ride upon horses." Horses were forbidden the kings of Judah; they were used for the purpose of war, pride, splendour, or activity; and it is from this the figure is taken. This perhaps is the meaning of the words, "We will not ride upon horses;" 'we will not take unlawful means of advancing ourselves.' When the children of Israel went out to war, they were not to use horses; and if they used them, it was contrary to the divine command. How often have we been entangled in the same snare! When we have gone out to war, instead of using the means which God has appointed, as faith, prayer, and watchfulness, we have used means of advancing ourselves which were forbidden by God's word. The same thing is spoken of in Isaiah (30:16), "Ye said, we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee; and we will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift." They would try to get away when they were pursued; but those who pursued them should be swifter than they. Now every means of advancing or lifting up ourselves, which we take to supersede the leadings and teachings of God may be said to be "riding upon horses."

Now can you see anything of this in your experience? In your business, perhaps, instead of confining yourself to your lawful calling, you have been getting upon horses; you have been doing something unlawful; you have not kept within right bounds; let honest conscience speak. Or, in the church, perhaps, you have taken a high position; you have exalted yourself above your real standing, and thought more of your religion than it is spiritually worth; got higher in doctrine than in vital experience; have a better informed head-piece than a heart established with grace; and instead of being a poor, toiling, labouring, groaning pilgrim, kept upon level ground, you have been desiring to obtain a something whereby you might advance yourself, and get beyond others. Now when you are convinced of these things, and seen how foolishly and wickedly you have acted, you can say, "We will no more ride upon horses."

3. "Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods." This was the besetting sin of Israel, to worship idols.

And have you never said to the work of your hands, "Ye are our gods?" Never been pleased with yourself on this or that account; never thought highly of yourself; never looked into your heart, and thought there was something in which you might take delight? If a man does not see that the root of all idolatry is *self* he knows but little of his heart. Perhaps, if you have walked into the British Museum, and seen the idols that were worshipped in former days in the South Sea Isles, you have wondered that rational beings could ever bow down before such ugly monsters. But does the heart of a South Sea Islander differ from the heart of an Englishman? Not a bit. The latter may have more civilization and cultivation; but his heart is the same. And if you have not bowed down to these monstrous objects and hideous figures; though you have never prostrated your body before Juggernaut, there may be as filthy an idol in your heart. Where is there a filthier idol than the lusts and passions of man's fallen nature? You need not go to the British Museum to see filthy idols and painted images. Look within. Where is there a more grovelling idol than Mammon, and the covetousness of our heart? You need not wonder at heathens worshipping hideous idols, when you have pride, covetousness, and above all that hideous idol *self* in his little shrine, hiding himself from the eyes of man, but to which you are so often rendering your daily and hourly worship. How often have you said in your heart, 'This is my god; I love it; I cannot part with it; it is too sweet and pleasant to give up; I embrace it; I adore it; I bow down to it; it shall be my god.' But when the Lord is pleased to break our hearts with a sense of our sin and misery, then we can say to the work of our hands, 'Ye shall be no more my gods, I will not worship any but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and truth.'

IV.—And then comes the last point, which crowns and puts as it were a blessing on the whole, "for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Poor fatherless children, spiritually, who have none to look to but the Lord; who have no hope or refuge but in God; "in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." "Thou art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee." And therefore, "we will render to thee the calves of our lips." When

under divine influence, we say, 'we will do none of these things' (God knows how soon we may be entangled again). "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

## **ISRAEL'S HAPPINESS**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, March 6, 1859.

"Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shall tread upon their high places." Deuteronomy 33:29

Moses, the man of God, in being appointed to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, had the heaviest load put upon his shoulders that mortal back could bear, and at the same time the highest honour given into his charge that human hands could receive. It was not a task that he took upon himself, unchosen, uncalled, uncommissioned. It was no flight of heroism that impelled, no outburst of patriotic ardour that urged him on to liberate his countrymen from slavery; but the express call and commission of God. It may indeed be said of him, as is said by the Apostle of Aaron his brother—"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." (Heb. 5:4). Nor was it a matter of chance or good fortune—that infidel way of putting God out of the government of his own world—that such a man as Moses was found just at the very time when he was specially needed. It was not more of chance that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, than it was of chance that Jacob 430 years before went down to sojourn there, or of chance that at the end of the 430 years to the very day, they came up with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. (Ex. 12:41.) God, who sees the end from the beginning, chose him for the work, and every step that He took with him was to qualify him for it.

If we view these steps with a spiritual eye, we shall see wisdom and power stamped upon them all. By a special interposition of God's providential eye and hand, Moses was preserved from a watery grave by the daughter of the very king who had determined on the extirpation of his race; by her was brought up

in the court of his greatest foe; and became so enriched in her affections as not only to be made her adopted son, but as her heir, at Pharaoh's death, would have ascended the throne of Egypt. He was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, and had at his command all the luxuries that wealth could purchase, and all the honours that a prince and heir-apparent at a royal court could receive. Yet amidst all the blandishments of that luxurious life—in the full splendour of that regal city, the very ruins of which now fill travellers with astonishment and admiration, grace touched his heart, and taught him "to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Grace opened his eyes to see that God had a people here below—that the outcast Israel, the despised slaves who were building the treasure cities, and whose hands were soiled with mud and clay, were the chosen of the Almighty; and cleaving to them in faith and affection, he preferred "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Thus when Moses came to years, "he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" renounced all the honours and enjoyments of an earthly court, and went forth to visit his brethren. I need not mention the cause of his being obliged to leave Egypt and flee to the land of Midian, where he tarried forty years. And O what lessons he learnt there!—lessons without which he would have been utterly unqualified to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Many a stripling hot from the university, or fresh from the academy, thinks himself fully qualified to lead the church of God. But Moses was not' qualified, when full forty years old, by all the learning of Egypt to lead the children of Israel. He had to go for forty years into the wilderness, not merely to learn by painful experience the external hardships to be afterwards met with there, but the temptations and trials, the perils and sufferings of a wilderness heart, where there are fiery serpents that bite more venomously, and angry scorpions that sting more sharply, than any serpent or any scorpion that drags its slimy trail across the barren sand. There he learnt the terrors of God in that law of which he was afterwards the typical Mediator, and there he learnt, too, the blessings of the gospel, when he saw by

the eye of faith an incarnate God in the burning bush, and became "the friend of God" by the manifestation of everlasting love to his soul.

Time will not permit me to enter further into the character of Moses. We find him, then, here in the book of Deuteronomy, at the end of the forty years sojourn in the wilderness, matured not only in years, like as a shock of corn cometh in its season, but ripened also in grace. Under the special inspiration and influence of the Holy Ghost, causing His doctrine to drop as the rain and His speech to distil as the dew, He poured forth His soul in that sweet language which animates every chapter and almost every word of this blessed book what we may call this Old Testament Gospel, the book of Deuteronomy. If blessed with any measure of his faith, what a view we shall have in our text of the special privileges and rich favours that belong to the church of God!

For us, then, so far as we belong to the spiritual Israel, Moses stood upon Pisgah's top and viewed the land spread before his eyes; for us he looked down upon the tents of Israel spread at his feet, and inspired of the Holy Ghost to view in Israel after the flesh Israel after the Spirit, he saw by faith the mystical body of Jesus the Bride of the Lamb—the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Viewing, then, by faith, the privileges and mercies vouchsafed to the Church of God, he burst forth in the words of our text—"Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars under thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

We may observe, I think, four things in our text:

I.—**First**, the admiring **declaration**—"Happy art thou, O Israel."

II.—**Secondly**, the universal **challenge**—"who is like unto thee?"

III.—**Thirdly**, the distinctive **reasons** why such a challenge is given:

1. That Israel is "**a people saved by the Lord.**"
2. That he is "**the shield of her help.**"—And
3. "**The sword of her excellency.**"

IV.—**Fourthly**, the gracious **promises** which belong to Israel as being so highly favoured:

1. "**Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee:**" and
2. "**Thou shalt tread upon their high places.**"

I.—As the whole of our text hinges upon the true meaning of the word "Israel," we must first clearly settle its right interpretation.

1. The term "Israel," as I have already hinted, has a spiritual meaning. Moses did not mean by the word Israel after the flesh—the literal Israel whose tents filled the plain; for as the Apostle says—"They are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." (Rom. 9:6, 7)

We may view, therefore, the word "Israel" in our text as the distinctive appellation of the **manifested** people of God. For God has a people not yet manifested—a people still buried in the womb of time, but included amongst the members of Christ's mystical body; for in God's book, "his members were written when as yet there was none of them." (Ps. 139:16.) Thus I take the word "Israel" in our text to mean not so much the Church of Christ viewed in all its glorious fulness as the universal assemblage of the elect of God, as His manifested people by a work of grace upon their hearts. I think we shall easily find

testimonies in the Scriptures to prove the truth of this assertion. I will limit myself to three.

i. "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. 2:28, 29.) There Paul points out the true Israelite, who, by a work of grace upon his soul, is made a Jew inwardly, and as such receives that circumcision of the heart whereby he becomes a spiritual and acceptable worshipper of God.

ii. What said the blessed Lord of Nathaniel? "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." (John 1:47.) There the Lord puts His broad stamp upon what Israel is as the manifested people of God "without guile." How well this testimony agrees with the blessing pronounced upon the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered—"in whose spirit there is no guile!" (Ps. 32:2.)

iii. Take a third testimony:—"We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. 3:3.) Circumcision, we know, was the outward badge of Israel after the flesh; but the Apostle tells us what is the true circumcision, and that it consists in three gracious marks. Can you find these three marks stamped by the hand of God upon your soul?

a. Do you ever worship God in the Spirit? Do you know, do you see, do you feel, by a ray of inward light and by a movement of inward life, that God is a Spirit? And approaching Him as such, do you offer a spiritual sacrifice when you draw near to the throne of grace? Are you spiritually and experimentally acquainted with the meaning of those words—"The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered?" Have those words of the Lord been impressed upon your conscience by His own power—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth?" Can you look into your heart and find

that there is—I will not say always, but at times, in favoured moments—a spiritual worship there? Then you have one mark of belonging to the true circumcision of being one of that Israel upon whom such blessings are pronounced.

b. Can you find another gracious mark stamped upon your heart as laid down in this searching passage? Do you "rejoice in Christ Jesus?" Have you ever rejoiced in Him as of God made unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; or have you come to this point in your own soul, that there is not anything else to rejoice in? Is He more to you than husband, wife, child, house, or land? Was He ever made dear and near to your heart by any gracious discovery of His beauty and blessedness, suitability and all-sufficiency? Did you ever see Him by the eye of faith, taste His presence, feel His love, and delight in Him as the "chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely?" Then you have the second mark of being a true Israelite.

c. Have you the third, in "having no confidence"—not so much as a grain of it—"in the flesh?" Have you seen the real character of your own righteousness, that it is "filthy rags," and of the law, how broad it is, so that from a deep and daily experience of your own sinfulness and weakness, you have come to the solemn conclusion, that "in you, that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing." and thus have been taught and brought to have no confidence in the flesh? Its wickedness, treachery, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy have been so opened up to you, that you are more afraid of yourself than of anybody else, and are thoroughly convinced that all religion which stands in the flesh is a bed too short and a covering too narrow.

If you can find these three marks stamped upon your soul by the hand of God, you belong to the "Israel" of whom our text speaks. These vital matters should be cleared up in a man's conscience. How can he, with any degree of faith and hope, take hold of the promises that are made to Israel unless he has some evidence in his conscience that he is one of that favoured people? Here is the grand delusion of our day, that some from ignorance, some from

self-righteousness, some from hypocrisy, and some from presumption, claim the promises as their own, without any testimony from God, or any internal mark of His grace being in their hearts. The Lord keep us from walking on such perilous ground and treading such dangerous paths!

2. Having seen who "Israel" is as the grand subject of our text, we shall now perhaps be better prepared, with God's blessing, to enter into the peculiar happiness ascribed to him by the man of God "**Happy** art thou, O Israel!" What are the sources of Israel's happiness? Are they such as the world accounts to be streams of perennial joy? No. The Lord for the most part dries up or embitters the streams of earthly happiness, that Israel may not drink at them, and so forsake or neglect the fountain of living waters. When the children of Israel came to the waters of Marah, they could not drink of them, for they were bitter. After being three days without water, fain would they have quenched their thirst at them; but even the dry tongue and parched throat shrank from the bitter draught. So the Lord, for His own gracious purposes, usually puts gall and wormwood into the streams of earthly happiness. Look at some of these springs of earthly joy, you that have longed or are longing for some sips and tastes of worldly happiness, and see whether they have not been made for you bitter at the fountain head.

i. Is not **health** a primary element of earthly happiness? Let the Lord give you what He may of earthly good, if He withhold that indispensable foundation of daily, hourly happiness, does not the absence of that embitter all the rest? I know from painful experience that there are few things which more embitter all earthly happiness than a continued state of ill-health. Much of the very pleasure of living—for there is a charm in existence itself—is derived from that buoyancy of spirit, that gush of strength and vigour, that overflowing delight in air and exercise, that sallying forth into the pure breath of heaven which gives purity to the blood and colour to the cheek—all of which are denied to the pale and sickly invalid to whom life itself is often a burden that he would gladly lay down. My own observation for many years has

brought before me many of the Lord's dear family, some of them friends of my own, as thus afflicted; and could we look through the walls of houses as we pass from place to place, we might see many of the choicest saints of God at this moment lying on beds of languishing and pain. Israel's happiness does not, then, spring from the enjoyment of bodily health, though those who possess it may well be grateful to the Lord for this greatest of all earthly favours.

ii. Nor can we grovel so low as to fix Israel's happiness in that almost universal object of men's desire—**wealth** and riches, and an ample supply of all those comforts and luxuries which money can purchase. The great bulk of the Lord's people are very poor as regards earthly possessions. We are expressly told that God "hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith;" and even where the Lord has seen fit to bestow upon any of His people a larger measure of earthly goods, He generally takes care to put a heavy weight into the opposite scale. Let not the poor then harshly judge, or think lightly of those of their spiritual brethren who are more highly favoured than themselves with this world's goods.

The apostle says to his beloved Timothy—"Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." (1 Tim. 6:17.) From this we clearly gather that there are rich as well as poor in the Church of God. Indeed, how for the most part could the cause of God be carried on, unless there were those who had means to support it; or how could the poor themselves obtain aid, if all in the living family were at one level of poverty and want? But I have observed this, for I have known, since I became acquainted with the saints of God, those who have been possessed of a good measure of earthly goods, and yet not been destitute of grace, that either they have been much tried in mind, or have been afflicted in body or family, so as to carry a heavy load upon their back, if their soul has been kept alive, or else they have been much sunk in doubt and fear, or kept in so low and barren a state as to have little to say of the goodness and love of God as personally experienced. Surely Israel's happiness is too pure, too

holy, too heavenly, to be derived from a source so earthly and polluted as that golden stream which God in His providence, pours out at the feet of some of His greatest enemies, and in which too many even of those who profess His name are drowned in destruction and perdition.

iii. Nor can we put so low an estimate upon Israel's happiness, as to make it flow from those **family relationships** and social ties which bind heart to heart in such tender bonds. Yet who can say that our families, our domestic ties, are not in a certain measure streams of earthly happiness that the Lord has given us whilst we sojourn here below in this wilderness state? Surely they are; and none but those who are destitute of natural affection, or so shut up in selfishness that their heart cannot expand itself to wife or child, brother or friend, will deny it. But sin has embittered these streams. Even the pure cup of wedded love, the source of all the rest, which was presented by the Lord's own hands to Adam in Paradise had gall and wormwood dropped into it when he sinned and fell; and thus though they still flow, yet these streams of earthly happiness are often, in the providence of God, made to run in so scanty and crooked a channel, or are so much dried up, or muddled by sin and sorrow, that though still drunk, they minister at best but a mingled draught.

I cannot dwell any longer upon this negative side. Let one word suffice. Israel's happiness arises from, centres in nothing below the skies—nothing short of God and heaven. Here, then, is the solution of the question. "Happy art thou, O Israel." Why art thou happy? Happy because God has chosen thee unto salvation in the Person of His dear Son; happy because He has loved thee with an everlasting love, and sometimes enables thee to love Him in return; happy because He has called thee by His grace, that He may one day crown thee with everlasting glory; happy because mansions of eternal bliss are reserved for thee in the skies, far beyond all the storms and waves of this troublous world; happy because the Lord is thine everlasting portion—because God is thy Father and friend, Jesus thy Redeemer, husband, and elder

brother, and the Holy Ghost thy Comforter, teacher, and sanctifier. Then "Happy art thou O Israel."

Hard may be your lot here below, ye suffering saints of the Most High, as regards external matters; painful may be the exercises through which you almost daily pass through the rebellion and desperate wickedness of your carnal mind; grievous temptations may be your continual portion; many a pricking thorn and sharp briar may lie in your path; and so rough and rugged may be the road, that at times you may feel yourself of all men to be the most miserable; and so indeed you would be but for the grace of God in your heart now, and the glory prepared for you beyond the grave. Yet with it all, were your afflictions and sorrows a thousand times heavier, well may it be said of you—"Happy, thrice happy, art thou, O Israel!"

Whom upon earth need you envy if you have the grace of God in your heart? With whom would you change, if ever the love of God has visited your soul? Look around you: fix your eyes upon the man or woman who seems surrounded with the greatest amount of earthly happiness, and then ask your own conscience—"Would I change with thee, thou butterfly of fashion, or with thee, thou gilded dragon-fly, that merely livest thy little day, sunning thyself for a few hours beneath the summer sun, and then sinking into the dark and dismal pool which awaits thee at evening-tide?" Then with all your cares at home and abroad—with all your woes and trials, sunk under which you feel yourself at times one of the most miserable beings that can crawl along in this vale of tears, would you change with anybody, however healthy, or rich, or favoured with the largest amount of family prosperity, if at the same time destitute of the grace of God? Then let reason or unbelief say what they may, shall we not repeat in your ears again and again "Happy art thou, O Israel?" And O that we might be even now enabled to realise this blessing, and instead of poring over our sins and sorrows, our temptations and trials, might feel springing up in our own bosom the happiness here spoken of as Israel's peculiar portion.

II.—I pass on **to the challenge**. What a bold challenge the man of God gives! How he stands, as it were, upon Pisgah's top and looks around upon all the nations of the earth; and then, having taken a survey of that wide expanse from pole to pole, he cast his eye downward upon Israel's tents in all their lowly humility, and cries aloud in the triumphant language of faith, "Who is like unto thee?" It is a challenge, and a noble one; and the answer must be—"No; there is none like unto thee, Church of the living God."

But how is it that there is none like unto Israel? Is there not one among the nations of the earth worthy of comparison with the Israel of God? Do not the children of men in almost every point outshine the children of God? Is Israel as rich as they? Is Israel as learned as they? Is Israel as courted, admired, respected as they? Is Israel as favoured with rank, power, and every source of earthly happiness as they? No. But that is not the meaning of the challenge. Moses' eyes were anointed with heavenly eye-salve. He looked through the mists and fogs of time into the serene regions of eternity. He was not comparing the multitudes of Israel that lay spread in the valley with the mighty nations around in all their plentitude of wealth and power. He spake as the man of God, whose thoughts, views, faith, and feelings were divine, and was therefore lifted up by them beyond the vanities of time. He spake as one who had been on the mount with God, and whose face had shone with the reflected glory of His presence. Viewing, then, Israel as the people of that God whose glory he had seen, he cried aloud in the language of faith—"Who is like unto thee?" No one.

1. Who is like unto thee in the **distinguishing favour** that God has from all eternity had in His bosom toward thee? Couldst thou by any of thine own exertions, or by any of thine own merits have drawn to thyself the special favour of a God so great, so glorious, and so holy? No; thou couldst not have done it. But He loved thee because He would love thee, and He had favour unto thee because He would have favour unto thee. Is not this His own language—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom.

9:15) and again, "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you." (Deut. 7:7.) Who, then, is like unto thee? None but those whose names are written in the same book of life as being loved with the same love, and who are travelling the same path to the same happy home.

2. Who is like unto thee in **being redeemed** with such a costly price as the precious blood of God's only begotten Son? Where is any redemption like thy redemption? What is the blood of bullocks and of goats compared with the blood of the Son of God?

Where is there any **righteousness** like thy righteousness? What is the righteousness of any human being, however godly or upright? I might add, of all the holy angels in heaven compared with the obedience, the meritorious obedience, of the spotless Lamb of God? Who then is washed in blood such as thou art washed in? Who is clothed with a robe such as thou art clothed in? Who is like unto thee?

To bring this more vividly before your eyes, let me call up one of the Lord's striking parables.

Fancy yourself standing in the streets of Jerusalem, and looking into the banqueting-hall of the rich man of whom the Lord speaks in the parable. Might you not say—"Who is like unto thee, thou man of wealth and substance? Who wears garments so deeply dyed in royal purple? Who is clothed in linen so white and so fine? Who has his table spread with dainties so delicate? Who has rosy wine to flow in the cup in such abundance and of such flavour? Who is like unto thee, thou rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day?" And then you might have turned and seen another sight—a beggar at his gate—and you might have said—"Who is like unto thee, O Lazarus? Thou hast not a friend to put a rag to thy leprous back. Thou has not wife, child, or relative to bring plaster or poultice for thy ulcerous sores, and has to thank the very dogs for licking the gory matter

off thy bleeding face. Thou hast no one to feed thee even with a piece of bread, and art glad to hold out thy hand to catch the crumbs as they fall from the rich man's table. Who is like unto thee, Dives, in all thy wealth and luxury? who to thee, Lazarus, in all thy poverty and leprosy?"

Let a few years pass; now look into the abyss beneath: what dost thou see there? The rich man in misery, crying in torments for a drop of water to cool his tongue. Who is like unto thee, Dives, now, in the depths of hell, thy tongue parched with flame and thirst, and an impassable gulf between thee and Abraham's bosom? Turn away thine eyes from this fearful sight, and look up into the courts of bliss. Who is like unto thee now, poor beggar, whose sores the dogs once licked—who hadst not a friend on earth, and wert thrust into thy last resting-place by the cold hand of grudging charity? Thou art in Abraham's bosom, enjoying the smiles of God, basking in the beams of the Sun of righteousness throughout an endless day?

All this we see by the eye of faith. But how does the world look upon Dives? It says, "O thou great and noble Dives, who is like unto thee? I kiss thy feet; I admire thy wealth and luxury; I worship thy rank; I bow to thy fashion. Thou art rich, respectable, noble. I cannot but envy thee, for thou hast all my heart is longing after. But what doest thou here, thou poor leprous beggar—a nuisance under the very nose of the honourable Dives? Take away out of his noble sight thy rags and thy sores. Thou spoilest his appetite, and remindest him of death and the grave." Is not this the language of the world; still admiring those whom God abhors, and hating those whom God loves?

Look beyond the ways and thoughts of men to the ways and thoughts of the Lord. Let a few years pass; now view the scene with a spiritual eye. Where are all the butterflies gone? They are all passed away; for "the world passeth away and the lusts thereof:" darkness has covered them all, and down they have sunk into the chambers of death. But where now are the lepers and beggars, the martyrs, the sufferers, the mourners in Zion,

the poor afflicted ones, who loved Jesus, and whom Jesus loved? In the bosom of their God. Then may we not say of, and to every believer in Jesus, however poor or despised, "Who is like unto thee?" Which would you rather be—a poor, despised, persecuted, afflicted child of God, or enjoy all the pleasures and honours that the world could pour into your bosom? But what a mercy it is that the Lord did not make it a matter of your natural choice, but with His own hand put you amongst His people, and not only wrote your name in the book of life, but has given you even now a name and a place among His believing sons and daughters. "Who is like unto thee?"

Well then may we say—"Lord, with all Israel's faults, failings, short-comings, back-slidings, infirmities, miseries and woes, we re-echo Thy words and say 'No; there is none like unto Israel.' With them be my portion in life, in death; may I live whilst here below in sweet communion with Thyself and with them, and may I rise after death to be with Thee and them in Thy presence for ever."

III.—Moses, gives three **distinctive reasons** why none is like unto Israel.

1. The first is a reason indeed. It clears up the whole mystery at once. It does indeed show that none can be like unto Israel—"O **people saved by the LORD!**" Can you fathom the depths of these words? I cannot. I may attempt to gather up a few crumbs from this feast of fat things: I may attempt to dip my cup into this ever-flowing, overflowing crystal stream to bring out a few drops; but it is a pure river of mercy, love; and grace that has neither bottom, bank, nor shore. "O people saved by the LORD." To understand these words, even in a feeble measure, we must look at the three Persons in the glorious Godhead, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and see how they are all interested in the expression. Israel is a people saved by each of the three Persons of the glorious Godhead.

i. She is saved **by God the Father**, —by His own eternal purpose, His fixed decree, His unalterable word and oath. He has decreed to save Israel. Can that decree be altered? God would cease to be God if He could waver or falter in His eternal purposes. If He could forfeit His work. He would not longer be Jehovah. Then who is like unto Israel, if she be a people saved by God the Father—not **to be** saved, but saved already, in His own eternal mind? so that the salvation of every member of the mystical body of Christ is as complete now as it will be in eternity to come. "Who hath saved us and called us." (2 Tim. 1:9.) How then can one member of Christ's mystical body be lost? How can the feeblest joint be cut off from the Head and die? if Israel is a people saved by the Lord; if God the Father has already saved her in His own eternal mind by fixed decree, who is to separate Israel from her God?

How sure then the salvation of all the elect race! Their being saved by the Lord determines the point without fear of contradiction. O how many have tried to save themselves! How many now, at this present moment, are fleeing, some to a broken law, that can only accuse and condemn; some to their own righteousness, which is as filthy rags; some to their own resolutions, which are but spiders webs; and some to hopes of amendment, which will all prove to be a lie. Look at Israel how distinct she stands from all these; she is saved by the Lord. Therefore she wants no other salvation. **That** is complete. And being saved by the Lord, her salvation is indefeasible and indestructible.

ii. Look at her salvation **as accomplished by God the Son.**

The Son of God became incarnate. The Son of God took our nature into union with His own divine Person, and in that nature suffered, bled, agonized, and died. By His obedience to the Law, He wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and by shedding His blood upon the cross offered an availing sacrifice. Look at Israel and ask the question again—"Who is like unto thee, saved by the Lord?" What! Has God the Son justified thee by His

meritorious righteousness, and washed thee in the fountain, which He opened for thee in His own precious blood on Calvary's tree? Has God the Son groaned, and sweat, and bled, and suffered, and died for thy personal redemption in that body which the Father prepared for Him, and which He took as an act of voluntary and acceptable obedience? Then "who is like unto thee?" And if thou, who hast fled for refuge to the hope set before thee, ever hast had an evidence in thine own conscience that God the Son suffered for thee personally, individually, in the garden and upon the cross, who is like unto thee? Whom needest thou envy? With whom wouldst thou wish to exchange? Wouldst thou, like Esau, sell thine inheritance for a mess of pottage? Wouldst thou give up thy hope of eternal life for any consideration, or part with it at any price?

iii. Then there is being saved **by God the Holy Ghost**—by His personal work upon the heart, by His sanctifying influence upon the soul, by His manifestation of salvation to the conscience, and by the setting up of the kingdom of God with His own divine power in the inmost affections.

Look then once more at the words—"Who is like unto thee?" If God the Father has saved thee by fixed decree—God the Son by meritorious obedience—and God the Spirit by personal manifestation. "Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the LORD?" If in any measure blessed with faith to look unto and believe in a salvation like this, do we, can we, want to save ourselves? Do we want anything which the creature can perform to be added to this blessed salvation from the Triune God? Our mercy is to believe it, our blessedness to know it, our happiness to enjoy it. If your soul has ever tasted that precious salvation, you want no other—it is so complete, it brings such glory to God; it is so suitable to the wants and woes of man that all other is but misery and ruin.

2. There is another reason why Israel stands alone and is not numbered with the nations: "**the shield of thy help.**" Is this wanted also? Have we not had enough in the words "O people,

saved by the LORD?" Have we not exhausted in that one sentence the whole of God's grace? No; we have something still to add. Israel, in passing through this world, is not without her foes. She wants, therefore, a shield to guard her in the day of battle, and against the innumerable foes who thirst for her destruction. Look at some of them.

i. There are the **curses of a fiery Law**. The law is revealed against all sin and all unrighteousness, and speaks in words of thunder against every transgressor: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die; Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Though saved in the purposes of God, yet, as guilty of actual transgression, the Church is exposed to that fiery law, and under its terrible threatenings her guilty conscience sinks. She wants then a shield. Who is this shield? An incarnate God. How did He become the shield? By receiving into His holy body and soul the curse of the law, and thus drinking up the wrath of God revealed in that fiery dispensation. Thus as a shield in ancient times protected the warrior's breast, so the incarnate God, by receiving the arrows of the law into His holy body and soul, became the Church's shield; and not a single dart can slay her, for He stands between.

ii. Then there is **conscience**, for, strange to say, we want a shield against our very selves. Has conscience no arrows? Do you never want a shield against the spears of your own guilty conscience? Why that has been the sharpest conflict that your soul has ever been engaged in. What are accusations without to accusations within? it is what your conscience testifies against you that makes you doubt and fear. If you had but conscience on your side, you could fight to some purpose; but O, a guilty conscience! how it takes up arms against you, and, like the avenger of blood, pursues you up to the very throne of God. O, if you could have your conscience purged from guilt by the application of atoning blood, you would feel as happy as the day is long. Now Jesus must be your shield against the accusations of

a guilty conscience; for His atoning blood alone can pacify it, and speak peace and pardon to a troubled heart.

iii. There is **Satan**. You want a shield against the fiery darts of the wicked. What shield shall that be? An incarnate God, to interpose Himself between those fiery darts and your trembling soul. As the Lord rebuked Satan when he stood at Joshua's right hand to resist him and gave charge to take away the filthy garments from him, so does the blessed Jesus still rebuke the evil one, nor will He suffer him to accuse the saints of their filthy garments, for He clothes them with change of raiment. Thus. Jesus becomes the shield of the soul against a fiery law, a guilty conscience, and an accusing devil, not to speak of a thousand minor foes over whom He makes it more than conqueror.

3. **"Who is the sword also of thy excellency."** What! a sword as well as a shield? Yes. What would the ancient warrior have done unless he had had a sword wherewith to fight as well as a shield wherewith to defend himself? The shield would not do Without the sword, nor the sword without the shield: the shield to defend—the sword to attack; the shield to guard against the hostile thrust—the sword to cut the enemy down. What! have we enemies then? Yes, many. Shall we, then, take up the sword? Yes, if it be a right one—not the sword of the flesh. Peter had enough of that when he cut off the ear of Malchus. Take not Peter's sword: the sword of the Spirit be ours. And the Lord especially—who is "the sword of thy excellency—let Him fight your battles. All we have to do is to be still in the matter. Let the Lord fight. Yet we may in some sense fight too. As the Psalmist says—"Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight."

I hope the Lord has made me a swordsman. I should not stand here to any purpose unless He had put a sword into my hand, and that not a sheathed one. The sword in the scabbard would never reach your conscience. I must draw the sword and thrust it into your conscience up to the very hilt, if you are to feel its keen point and edge. Your hard hearts would never feel a blow of the

sword in the scabbard. It might bruise your flesh, but it would not "pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." But the Lord must be "the sword of my excellency." I must not stand here with carnal weapons, with logic or learning, with human arguments and passionate appeals. I must stand with the sword of the Spirit in my hand, with the fear of God in my heart, and with the strength of Christ in my arm. Then it does execution. O what power there is in the word of God when the Lord speaks in and by it—when the Word incarnate speaks by the word written. Then, and then alone is real execution done.

Upon what? Your lusts, those internal enemies—yourself, your greatest foe; your pride and self-righteousness; your unbelief and infidelity; your worldly-mindedness, and all those evils of our fallen nature that are ever fighting for the mastery. Against them, whether in myself or others, let me ever take the sword. I have had many enemies from without—from the world and from the church—from profane and professor. I expect to have them to my dying day. But I hope the Lord has kept me from using against them the sword of the tongue or pen, nor as a minister do I ever wish to use carnal weapons, though frequently called upon to fight the Lord's battles. Let my weapons be faith and prayer, and the word of God. O that the Lord may ever be the shield of my help and the sword of my excellency, and then I shall be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and fight his battles to some purpose. Be not, however, surprised if the sword of the Spirit sometimes pierces you to the very quick. The conscience sometimes needs to be pierced. You may have inward gatherings of pride and self-righteousness, of which the blood and matter need to be let out; you may have sluggish and indolent tumors of long-standing that want to be opened; you may have a swelling, puffed up heart that requires lancing; you may have festering sores which will not kindly heal unless the point of the sword reach down to the very bottom of the wound. Therefore, if I do use the sword sometimes, and do not merely brandish it over your head but thrust it into your conscience, I do it not to kill you but to cure you. Nothing is really slain thereby but the Lord's enemies and

yours; and you know God's own words concerning Himself. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up."

IV. I pass on to our **fourth** and last point, which contains two sweet promises.

1. The first is,—"**Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee.**" I have been speaking of enemies. I have thought sometimes that the people of God dwell too much upon their outward, and too little upon their inward enemies. The less you think of your outward, and the more you think of your inward opponents, the better it will be for your soul. Turn your eyes away from outward foes. However numerous, however formidable they may appear, they will never do you any real harm.

i. Keep a watchful eye upon **every inward foe; and if** you fight, fight against the enemy that lurks and works in your own breast. I may almost say to you, in the language of the King of Syria—"Fight not with small or great, only with thyself." I have ever found myself to be my greatest enemy. I never had a foe that troubled me so much as my own heart; nor has any one ever wrought me half the mischief or given me half the plague that I have felt and known within; and it is a daily sense of this which makes me dread myself more than anybody that walks upon the face of the earth. But God has promised that our enemies shall be found liars unto us. You may have had your external enemies, who may have prophesied your downfall. When I have been laid aside by illness, enemies have rejoiced in the hope that my mouth was stopped, and expressed their kind wishes that it might never be opened again. But I have been raised up again, nor is my mouth stopped yet. It is still my privilege here and elsewhere to preach His truth and proclaim His great and glorious name. I have no unkind feeling against a single foe, and I hope that they may be proved not to be the Lord's enemies, though they may be mine. You, too, may have had enemies, who may have said of you—"Ah, he is nothing but a hypocrite: you may depend upon it that he has not the root of the matter in him: he will sink and fall

as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow." Have they yet seen you sink and fall? You may live to see them fall, when grace makes you to stand.

ii. **Satan**, too, has been a cruel foe, and as such has doubtless presented many gloomy prospects before your eyes, and been to you a prophet of evil—not of good. He shall also be found a liar, if indeed you are one of God's Israel. You shall not die, as he has sometimes told you, in the dark, nor in despair, nor be sent to hell with all your sins upon your head.' This enemy to your soul shall be found a liar.

iii. Even the accusations of **your own** guilty **conscience** shall all eventually be found liars. God will prove Himself to be true, if every one else is proved to be false. What a mercy to have God upon our side! Whom, then, need we fear—what need we fear? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But I may add, if God be against us, who can be for us? If God be for you, not all the powers of hell can keep you out of heaven. If God be against you, not all the angels, were it their will, could pull you in. Remember, I am assuming an impossibility, for devils could not, and angels would not defeat the purposes of the one great and glorious Sovereign of heaven and earth.

2. Now a few words upon the second promise. "**And thou shalt tread upon their high places.**" Your enemies now may be very high and you very low; and it may seem at times to you that they will always be up and you always down. Presumption may seem to carry the day for a time; your enemies may succeed for a moment. But the time will come when the humble child of God will "tread upon their high places." Remember the step that is to tread them down—not the step of pride, "but the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy." **Isa 26:6** The time will come, if you are one of God's Israel, when however high the enemies of your soul may have raised their fortifications, you shall tread them down, not with the foot of revenge, but of humility.

May the Lord be pleased to raise up in your souls who fear His great name, a sweet and blessed evidence that all these mercies and promises are yours, that you may have the comfort, and He may have the glory!

## **Israel's Strength and Righteousness**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, April 3, 1859

"Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Isaiah 45:24, 25

To a conscience divinely awakened, to a soul spiritually quickened to see and feel the guilt and burden of sin, no question can be so urgent, so pressing, so full of the deepest importance as this: "How can my sins be pardoned? How can I, a guilty criminal, stand before the judgment bar of God? I know there is a wrath to come, for even now I feel an earnest of it in my breast. How then shall I escape in that terrible day?" Men dead in sin are too much taken up with the world, or too much buried in its lusts; men dead in profession are too deeply steeped in self-righteousness, to bestow an anxious thought on a matter to them apparently of such little significance, as whether their souls be saved or lost. A rise in stocks or shares, or a fall in the corn market would be to most persons, a much more weighty or at least more interesting subject than such gloomy topics as heaven and hell. But to a man whose conscience is awakened from above—made alive unto God by regenerating grace, it is the question of questions, a matter of life and death. It is with him as if eternal happiness or eternal misery, heaven or hell, hung before his eyes trembling in the balance, and he looked on with fear and trembling as scarcely knowing on which side the scale will fall.

In the exceeding riches of his grace, in the depths of his boundless compassion and infinite mercy, God has not left us to struggle on in the dark, and at last miserably perish, without affording us a solution of this important question. Pitying our lost, our miserable case, he has given out of his own bosom the Son of his love, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life." This wondrous plan of redeeming love he has revealed in the Scriptures of truth, in which the way of salvation shines to an enlightened eye, as with a ray of light, from the opening page to the closing chapter; and to those who fear his name, and whose souls are made alive by a divine power, he gives his Holy Spirit, that he may lead them into all truth. By these divine teachings, they in due time arrive at a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, and are thus delivered not only from the wrath to come, but also from the stings of guilt and the fears of hell by a manifestation to their soul of pardoning love.

In Paradise itself, where man sinned and fell, the glorious plan of salvation first began to dawn. No sooner had man incurred the penalty of offended justice, than mercy stepped in. Scarcely had the serpent twined its wily snare amidst the leaves and flowers of Eden, and entangled first woman and then man in transgression, than grace, like a heavenly dove, descended with that gracious promise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Stronger and stronger did this holy light shine, in type and figure, rite and sacrifice, prophecy and promise, through the Old Testament, until in due time the blessed Jesus came and brought life and immortality to light in his own Person, blood, and righteousness, as they now blaze forth in the glorious rays of the everlasting Gospel. Thus a poor, guilty sinner has not now far to seek where salvation is to be found, and how mercy is to be enjoyed. So far as the Lord is pleased to enlighten his eyes and touch his heart with his Spirit, he is led to see mercy, grace, and truth stored up in the Person and work of God's dear Son: for "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.) And let us not think that only in the New Testament is salvation by the blood and righteousness of God's dear Son set forth. Though it is more clearly and fully there revealed, yet to an enlightened mind it shines in the Old Testament in almost as clear a light as in the pages of the New. What testimony, for instance, even in the New Testament, can exceed in plainness, beauty, and blessedness, the words that have just sounded from my mouth, and are, as it were, even now ringing in your ears? "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I

righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

Three prominent features seem to my mind stamped upon these blessed words:—

I.—*First, in whom Israel has righteousness, strength, and glory.*

II.—*Secondly, the promise that to that same Lord in whom Israel finds righteousness, strength, and glory, men shall come.*

III.—*Thirdly, the solemn denunciation pronounced by the unerring lips of God himself against all that are incensed against this mighty Saviour: "All that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."*

I.—You will observe that I have brought together two scattered clauses of our text: the first, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" and the second, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." I have brought them together to show how in the Lord the seed of Israel have three rich blessings: righteousness, strength, and glory. But I shall now separate them that I may examine them more distinctly and individually, and thus enter into the meaning of the text in a fuller, clearer, and larger manner.

1. Observe, first, who they are of whom the Lord here speaks, and firmly fix your eye on this grand leading point—that the word of promise in our text does not embrace men at large, men in general as they stand upon this earthly ball, on this stage of time, in innumerable masses before that All-seeing eye which views heaven and earth at a glance; but that this declaration comprehends and embraces Israel only; and yet as if with peculiar specialty and marked, determined emphasis, it enfolds in its firm and capacious grasp "all the seed of Israel." The text may have a prospective and prophetic aspect; and, indeed, I believe it has; for we have every reason to believe, from the testimony of

God's inspired word, that a day will come when the literal Israel—Israel after the flesh, the now divorced and cast off Jewish Church—shall have a manifested interest in the promises of the Gospel. The apostle Paul has most clearly declared this in that remarkable chapter where he treats of the Gentile and Jewish churches under the figure of an olive tree, and shows that the natural branches—that is, the Jewish church, were broken off for a time, that the wild olive tree, or Gentile church, might be grafted upon the root. But he adds, "And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." (Rom. 11:23); "And so all Israel shall be saved." (Rom. 11:26.)

But that is not the view of the text which I shall take this morning. It has, besides this prophetic aspect, a spiritual and experimental signification; and as that more immediately concerns us, it is that to which I shall chiefly, with God's help and blessing, direct your attention.

By "the seed of Israel" then, thus spiritually and experimentally viewed, I understand all the elect of God—that Israel which is not Israel after the flesh, but Israel after the spirit, that Israel of whom we read, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. 3:3.) Of this Israel, we have God's own declaration here, that it shall be *justified in the Lord*; and not only so, but that each of the seed of Israel shall arrive at a blessed testimony of this in his own conscience, so as to be enabled to say, and that with unfaltering lips and unwavering tongue, "In the Lord *have I righteousness.*" We see, then, a distinction between these two points. We have first the express declaration of the Most High that all the seed of Israel shall be justified in the Lord: and then we have added to that a special promise, that not only shall all the seed of Israel be thus justified, but that each member of that mystical Israel shall, in his own time, have that sentence of justification in his own heart and conscience, whereby he shall arrive at the happy knowledge of it. The mere doctrine of justification, however plain and clear, will not suffice for an

exercised conscience. The mere truth—the bare, literal fact, that all the seed of Israel shall be justified in the Lord, will not speak pardon and peace to a guilty soul. The Holy Ghost must take of the things of Christ and reveal them to the heart with a divine power and a sealed testimony; pardon and peace must be spoken by the mouth of God, and an inward sentence of justification be given and received, before we can take the blessed comfort contained in the text, or read our own title to so clear and gracious a promise.

But if the seed of Israel is to be "*justified in the Lord*," it evidently excludes all other modes of justification. Could Israel have been justified in any other way, what need would there have been for the coming of God's dear Son? If righteousness could have been by the law, there would have been no necessity for the Son of God to suffer, bleed, and die. But by the law no soul can be justified. If you look at the law—if you view it with a spiritual eye, you will perceive how impossible it is for anyone to be justified thereby. The law is holy; we are unholy. The law is righteous; we are sinful. The law is good; we are evil. The law not only aims its alarms and terrors against words and actions: it arraigns thoughts and desires before its severe, its merciless bar. "Thou shalt not covet," and "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," is a two-edged sword which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12.) The very character of God as a heart-searching Lord requires this. He cannot from his very nature accept an imperfect service. Obedience, to be satisfactory to him who reads all motives and cannot be deceived or mocked by lip service or hand labour, must be perfect and entire. The law, therefore, necessarily requires a perfect obedience; and as there is no entire obedience but that of love, it demands perfect love to God, and that without a wavering thought. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." And as our lot is cast among our fellow men, it also adds—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But to be operative, a law must have a penalty for

disobedience, as well as a reward for obedience. Its language, therefore, is—"If thou do not thus love God and man all the days of thy life, without breach, cessation, or intermission, thou art cursed for ever and ever." But who can render to God an obedience of this kind? Who has ever loved him—who, in a state of nature, can ever love him with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength? Therefore, the law being so strict, so holy, so just, so righteous, so reaching to the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and claiming at our hands an obedience which we cannot render, it necessarily curses and condemns us all. As the apostle says—"That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Rom. 3:19.)

Now as this is opened up in the heart and conscience of a quickened soul, of a divinely awakened sinner, he begins to look out for a righteousness in which he can stand before God. His own righteousness, he sees and feels, is a bed too short, a covering too narrow. The curse of the law is ringing in his ears. The sentence of the law is burning up his spirit. The wrath of God is felt in the depths of his conscience. He is burnt, if I may use the expression, out of house and home, and stands before God as a justly condemned sinner, as a guilty criminal. Condemned by the law without and by conscience within, he knows not where to hide his head; for he is sensible that he cannot escape the eye or elude the hand of that Almighty Being who surrounds him with his presence and encompasses him with his power. He knows that he is, as a creature of his hands, as a rational, intelligent, responsible agent, amenable to the righteous wrath of God as a transgressor. He, therefore, feels that if he die unpardoned, unjustified, he must sink into the billows of eternal fire, without hope or help. Now this experience of the wrath of God revealed in a broken law is the fruit of a work of grace upon the soul; and by these teachings and convictions it is brought to see and feel the justice and holiness of God, and that the law is exceedingly broad. It is under these feelings and exercises that all fleshly righteousness fades and dies, all creature goodness yields up the ghost, and all human strength and wisdom wither before the touch of God's hand, as the mown grass before the scorching

sun.

But O what a blessing it is, that amidst this darkness and condemnation, this wrath, fear, guilt, and bondage, there is a ray of light that shines out of heaven's own gates—a stream of grace that pours down from the Mediator at God's right hand, and which, when revealed to the soul by a divine power, lifts up the eyes and heart of the poor, self-condemned criminal to him in whom mercy is to be found, to him in whom a righteousness is to be obtained.

"In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." God foresaw the fall from the beginning. The covenant was made between the three Persons of the sacred Godhead with a fore-view of that fall. The Son of God freely gave himself up in the eternal covenant to be made flesh, and in that flesh to pay an obedience that man could not render—to die under the curse of the law which he knew must fall upon man's guilty head, and thus, by being a substitute, to bring in an everlasting righteousness in which the Church of God might be freely, fully, and eternally justified. O what a salvation is this! How complete in all its parts! How glorifying to God; how suitable to man! how adapted to heal the pangs of a bleeding conscience! What wine and oil it pours into those rankling wounds that the law has made, and, with more than Samaritan kindness, provides for all the wants of the stripped and wounded pilgrim, not only for time but for eternity! To view the Son of God coming down from heaven to earth, to assume a nature in which he could work out such a perfect and complete righteousness as the law demanded—a nature to be offered as a bleeding sacrifice, and by the atoning blood thus died to appease the wrath of God, blot out transgression, cancel crime, and clothe the sinner in the robe of righteousness which he wrought out by his active and passive obedience—what an object for faith is this! And as the rich surpassing grace herein revealed is made experimentally known, faith springs up to receive what the blessed Spirit discovers. What encouragement does this view of bleeding, dying love drop into the soul of the believing saint! What hope and love it raises up in his desponding

mind! And though perhaps unable to lay firm hold of this salvation in the full assurance of faith, yet what access it gives him to the throne of grace to pour out his heart with sighs and cries that this righteousness might be revealed to him, put upon him, and that he might stand clothed in it before the eyes of a heart-searching God in the day of Christ's appearing. Many who really and truly fear God are here in the feelings of their heart. For many a saint of God, who has not been fully blessed, knows that he has no righteousness of his own in which he can stand. He has no hope of being saved by a condemning law, or any obedience which he can pay to the precepts of the gospel. He knows that if he live and die an unpardoned sinner, where God is he cannot come, for no unforgiven, unjustified sinner can stand in the judgment before this holy and terrible God. (Psal. 1:5; 1 Sam. 6:20.) But how to get this pardon fully into his soul; how to obtain this sentence of justification clearly and undeniably from the mouth of God; how to be experimentally clothed in this robe of righteousness so as to stand accepted in the beloved, and how to get an evidence of it in his own heart and conscience by the sealing testimony of the Holy Ghost: here he is often at a stand. For at Mount Sinai, in the smoke of whose outskirts he at present stands, there is nothing but darkness, cloud, and storm. His own evil heart is continually suggesting matters of accusations; a guilty conscience is ever condemning; the fears of death are often haunting; Satan, like a flood, is frequently rushing in through the breach; whilst his own desponding sensations of alarm and fear serve but to aggravate the weight of the whole. But all this gives occasion for renewed and unceasing prayer and supplication. This painful and bitter experience weaning him from weak and fallible testimonies, of which he proves the uncertainty, leads him to search the Scriptures for himself with prayer and supplication that in them he may find hope and help, for everything but God's inspired word he knows and feels is an insufficient foothold for faith. This makes him to come eagerly and gladly under the sound of the preached gospel, in hope that a word from a servant of the Lord may reach his heart, and speak encouragement into his desponding mind. This separates him from the world, for its company and spirit are a burden to his

wounded heart; draws him away from the things of time and sense, and by laying on his conscience the solemn weight of eternal realities, makes him walk cautiously, tenderly, and circumspectly in the fear of God. "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of their spirit." Unless they pass in a measure through this furnace, they lose neither their dross nor their tin; unless they are thus put upon the winnowing floor, their dust and chaff are not driven away. All must in a measure pass through this process: all must be exercised in their conscience, that it may be made tender and contrite; and all must be brought down with heart labour into the dust, before God will lift them up. Men may despise this humbling religion, and there is a generation of proud professors—"O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up" (Prov. 30:13), who do not spare to cast their scorn upon it. But the unerring testimony of God's word has stamped it with his approbation. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." (Lam. 3:26, 27, 28, 29.)

But the exercised family of God are not always kept in this school. When the Lord has been so far pleased to exercise their mind and make their conscience alive and tender, he removes the veil of unbelief and ignorance that hangs over their heart, and gives them from time to time rays and beams out of the glorious gospel and as each ray shines in upon their soul with fresh and increasing light, it draws forth faith upon the glorious Person of the God-Man. A view by faith of the grace and glory of the Son of God raises them out of their bondage, darkness, and misery into the light of God's countenance; and thus by renewed and repeated communications of spiritual life and light, their feet are guided into the ways of truth and peace.

Let me ask, in all faithfulness and friendliness, how far your mind has been exercised in these important matters? Have you yet learnt that you are a sinner in the sight of God? Have you ever felt the length, breadth, and spirituality of his holy law? Do you

feel in your very soul that without Christ's righteousness being imputed to you, and his blood being sprinkled upon your conscience, you must die in your sins and never reach the heavenly shore? Has this ever been, or is it still a matter of anxious solicitude to you? Has it ever caused sighs and groans to come out of your heart? Has the Spirit of prayer ever been given, to make you plead with the Lord for the forgiveness of your sins, through the merits of a crucified Saviour? And have you any hope but in his blood, righteousness, and finished work? Now if the Lord has been pleased to exercise your soul in this way, if he has not yet granted the longing desire of your heart, he certainly will in due time reveal his dear Son in you as the God-man who has saved you from death and hell; he will apply his atoning blood to your conscience, bring near his glorious righteousness, shed abroad his dying love, give and strengthen faith, and draw it forth into a blessed assurance of your interest in the Son of his love. Or if your manifestations should not be very bright and conspicuous, he will give you a good hope through grace, as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast; and will draw up your affections to that blessed Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father in power, majesty, and glory. And as he does this, he enables the believer thus favoured and blessed to take these words into his lips—*"In the Lord have I righteousness."* He cannot say it before. He may know that there is no righteousness but in the Lord; he may have utterly renounced his own; he may have sunk very deep into guilt and bondage: but until the Lord the Spirit is pleased to liberate him, he cannot come forth into liberty; until he has the witness of the Spirit, he cannot cry, "Abba, Father." But when the Lord is pleased to bring near his righteousness, to reveal his dying love, and to shed it abroad in his heart by divine power, then he can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness." And when he has this, he wants no other: it is complete, which no other can be. It is acceptable to God; it is available in the courts of heaven; it will bear him up through all the storms of time; it will smooth a dying pillow, and land him safely in a glorious eternity.

But there is something very expressive in the phrase *"in the*

*Lord.*" Twice is it repeated. "Surely, shall one say, *in the Lord* have I righteousness." Again—"In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." What is the meaning of the expression "in the Lord?" It signifies union with him—a being in him, as the members are in the body, the branches of a vine in the stem, the stones in the building—all which are scriptural figures to show the intimate union which the Church has with Christ. Only so far, then, as any one has union with Christ, is he "in the Lord;" and only so far as he is in the Lord by a present, living, and experimental union, is he so sensibly and assuredly justified by his righteousness that he can say with unwavering lips, "In the Lord have I righteousness." Justification as regards God, is what divines call an "immanent" act, that is, it always was in his own eternal mind a settled, permanent transaction. Union with Christ must exist before it can be made known; must be before it can be felt to be. My feeling union with Christ no more created union than the felt warmth of my hand or foot put my hand or foot into my body, or seeing or hearing placed eyes and ears in my head. God, therefore, never viewed his people but as righteous, for they were always looked on by his approving and loving eye as one with Christ in covenant ties; as one in him, as the Father and the Son are one. Being thus viewed in the Son of his love, they were always viewed as righteous, for "the goings forth" of Messiah to justify "were from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2.) But as far as regards the way whereby this righteousness was wrought out and brought in, there was a necessity that the Son of God should come from heaven to earth to work it out by obedience and suffering; and in order to realise and enjoy a personal interest in the fruits of this obedience, union with Christ must be revealed and sealed with a divine power upon the heart. This we may call *sensible* union, producing communion, and is that to which all believers are called, as the apostle declares, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:9.) Thus we may view justification under three different aspects, and taking place, so to speak, at three different periods:—1. Justification from all eternity, as an immanent act in God's unchanging and unchangeable mind, for with him there is no past, present, or to

come, but all is one eternal now; 2. Justification when the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross and rose again for our justification; and 3. Justification when the Holy Ghost seals the blessing home upon the heart, applies the blood, brings near the obedience, and sheds abroad the love. And in this last and most blessed sense, as alone confirming and ratifying the others, not only "in the Lord is all the seed of Israel justified," but each of the chosen seed, each of the mystical members of his body, shall before death comes to close the scene be enabled to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness."

Now think of these things. Must you not one day stand before the bar of God, and under the heart-searching eyes of him who reads every thought, listens to every word, and knows every action? How can you stand before that awful bar, that dreadful and yet glorious Majesty of heaven, who is a consuming fire against all sin and disobedience, in your own righteousness? I ask thee, I appeal to thine own conscience, if indeed thou hast one in thy bosom, dost thou not tremble to think of standing before the bar of God in thine own righteousness? Can that avail thee before him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity? Wilt thou be able to stand before the Majesty of heaven in those robes of thine, so tattered and torn, so stained with guilt and crime, on which God has already passed the condemning sentence that in his sight they are as "filthy rags?" What hope, then, canst thou have except in the righteousness of the Son of God? Believe me, or rather believe the word of God from me, that there is no other justification before the bar of God but this; for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20); but "by him," that is, by the Son of God, made flesh and crucified and risen again, "all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39.) If then the Lord has brought thee to believe in the Son of his love, thou art justified from all things from which thou couldst not be justified by the law, or by any such obedience as the creature could render. And if not fully blessed and delivered, be still assured of this, if God has wounded thee with the law, he will heal thee with the gospel; if he has

inwardly condemned thee by a sentence of condemnation, he will inwardly acquit thee by a sentence of justification: and if he has put thee out of conceit with thine own righteousness, he will make thee fall in love with the obedience of Jesus.

ii. But I pass on to show that Israel is not only justified in the Lord, but is *strong* also in him as well as righteous. For we read—  
"Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and *strength*."

When Adam sinned and fell, he lost all his strength: he was as Samson when his locks were cut. "When we were yet without strength," says the Apostle, "Christ died for the ungodly." By the fall Adam lost all power to do God's will, to obey his commands, and to walk with him in acceptance as an obedient child. He lost not only power but will; was stripped not merely of ability, but even of the very inclination to obey. And this want of will and power he transmitted as a sad legacy to all his posterity. We have therefore by nature no strength to serve the Lord, to do his will, to keep his commandments, or to bring forth fruit pleasing in his sight. When, therefore, the people said unto Joshua, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord," Joshua answered, "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God." (Joshua 24:19.) We have then to learn this important secret for ourselves—a secret hidden from the eyes of all but the Israel of God, that we have no strength; and a most painful lesson it is feelingly and experimentally to learn. But though painful it is most profitable. For it is the grand turning point from error to truth, from self to Christ, from sin to salvation. It is here that men are for the most part so fatally deceived, that they think they have strength when they have none. Many a man hugs himself in his sins till death cuts him down, as believing that he can at any time forsake them; or wraps himself up in his own righteousness, in the secret persuasion of his mind that he can or will one day or other certainly be a better man, live a religious life, and prepare himself for death. Alas! he is not acquainted with that fatal secret that man has lost his power to serve God acceptably; and does not see that his very deferring the day proves that he has no will, for

we do not put off what we love to do, but we do it at once. Vain anticipation of a better and more suitable time than the present hour! But he puts off the day in the fond anticipation that when sickness, old age, or death shall draw near, he will then repent and return to God.

But the Lord does not leave his dear people so to perish in deceit and delusion. The same blessed Spirit who shines as with a ray of light and life into the conscience, to make it feel the guilt of sin, the curse of the law, and its own miserable state as a transgressor, leads it also into this secret, that it has no strength. Have you not some inward testimony that I speak truth here? Have you never felt that you were utterly powerless—that you would believe, but could not; would hope, but could not; would love, but could not; would keep God's word, but could not; would obey his commandments, but were not able? Has a sense of your own miserable impotency and thorough helplessness never pressed you down almost to despair? You felt sure that there was a faith, a hope, a love, a blessing, and a blessedness in the truth of God; a pardon, a peace, a heavenly joy; an assurance of salvation, a union, and a communion with the Lord Jesus, which you saw, but could not reach. You felt that if you could believe, all would be well, but believe you could not. When kept in despondency whether these rich blessings would ever be yours, you would fain hope, but could not raise up a solitary ray; you would try to love God, but felt your heart cold and dead, and more disposed to rebel against him than submit to him. Thus you learnt you had no strength; and this we have to learn again and again by repeated tuition and almost daily experience. I have been a preacher more than thirty years; I have been a professor—I hope a partaker of grace, more than thirty-two years; and yet I feel now weaker than ever. My experience may be deeper, both of sin and salvation; my knowledge greater of the Lord and his truth; my hope stronger; my faith and love firmer and warmer; but O, my strength is as little as before. No past experience can give me power to believe, to hope, or to love as I fain would bring forth these heavenly graces. And not only as a Christian but as a minister, I am all weakness. Though I have

preached hundreds, I might almost say thousands, of sermons, I cannot of myself find a text from which to speak, or have I any power to open up any part of God's truth with utterance, liberty, life, or feeling. I stand before you this morning as I stand before God, depending wholly upon his strength made perfect in my weakness. If I have learnt anything, it is my sinfulness and weakness; and I know and feel that if I am anything, have anything, do anything, speak anything, write anything spiritual and acceptable to the church of God, it must be by the operation and influence of the Blessed Spirit upon my heart.

Now as we learn our weakness in this way, we begin to learn also in whom is our strength; and as we get access to Christ by a living faith, we receive strength out of him for a supply of our spiritual necessities. "Because I live, ye shall live also." As the branches are united with the stem, and through it alone the sap flows into them, causing each branch to put forth bud, and flower, and fruit; so it is with the believer and the Lord Jesus. His own words are—"I am the vine; ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5) It is, then, by virtue of this union that faith and hope and love, with every other grace, flow into the soul out of the fulness of Christ, as the sap flows into the branch out of the fulness of the stem. We therefore read that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:19); and that "out of his fulness we receive grace for grace." (John 1:16.) Paul therefore declares that "the life which he lived in the flesh, he lived by the faith of the Son of God." And what enabled him to live that life of faith but that Christ lived in him? (Gal. 2:20 ) Yet he learnt his weakness in the same school in which he learnt his strength; for he tells us, though he had been caught up into the third heaven and had heard unspeakable words, yet there was given unto him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. But it was in this way he learnt his strength as well as his weakness; for Jesus spoke to him as with a voice from heaven, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Then he could "glory in his infirmities," that the power of Christ might rest upon him. (2 Cor. 12:9.) As, then,

we learn our weakness, we begin to learn our strength. Despairing of all strength in self, we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, at the right hand of the Father, to give us his; we lift up our prayers and supplications to the great High Priest over the house of God, to strengthen us with strength in our soul; and when he is pleased, in answer to prayer, to send down his Spirit and grace, we are "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." (Col. 1:11.) This is being "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10); and a being "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16.) Thus Abraham was "strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20); and thus the ancient worthies fought and conquered who "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth 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." (Heb. 11:33, 34.) It is only, then, as we thus receive strength out of his fulness that we are made strong to believe, to hope, and to love; to fight against our besetting sins, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and by the grace of God to mortify the whole body of sin. I believe I may appeal individually to every man's conscience who knows anything of his own heart, and ask him, Can you of yourself resist temptation? Can you fight against besetting sins? Can you crucify the flesh? Can you deny yourself the enjoyment of any strong inclination which nature pleads so hard to gratify? Who can come out of the world, repent of sin, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, be humble, prayerful, holy, spiritually minded, full of gracious thoughts, heavenly desires, pure affections, and every fruit and grace of the blessed Spirit, except by the special power of God? Who can raise up a grain of saving, living faith in his own bosom? I cannot. Who can give himself a good hope through grace? I cannot. Who can create a spark of heavenly love? I cannot. I must depend upon the Lord to do all these things in me and for me, as the earth is dependent upon the rain to fall and the sun to shine that it may bear a crop. My heart is by nature, I well know, a barren wilderness: no good thing, naturally and originally,

grows therein. Nor can self-culture mend the soil, or secure a harvest. The Lord must make me fruitful in every good word and work, if I am to walk in his fear, do his will, and live to his praise. And so he himself tells me, for he says, "From me is thy fruit found." (Hosea 14:8.) What gave David victory over Goliath, God's strength, or his own? Saul's armour, or the smooth stones out of the brook? When all men forsook Paul, who but the Lord "stood with him and strengthened him?" (2 Tim. 4:17.) And when we come to die, and flesh and heart alike fail, who can in that last and trying hour be the strength of our heart but he who is our portion for ever? (Psalm 73:26.) All will fall but those who can feel and say, "In the Lord have I strength." For we read as God's own description of those who fall and those who stand, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:30, 31.)

iii. But there is another blessing also which the seed of Israel obtain from the Lord, and that is "*glory*." The promise runs—"In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." What boasters most men are! You can scarcely fall into five minutes' conversation with any person without either hearing him praise himself, or without seeing an under current of self-exaltation flowing beneath his words. But how opposed this is to grace and godliness! The Lord will teach his family not to glory in self. For "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches." (Jer. 9:23.) As then the Lord is pleased to open up the length and breadth and spirituality of his holy law; or to discover to us that deep fountain of inward iniquity of which the heart is full, he inwardly and experimentally teaches us not to glory in ourselves or in any other. What have we to glory in? Can we glory in sin? for that is all we really can call our own. Can we glory in the wickedness of our own hearts? What cause of glory have we there, where every fresh discovery should only fill us with increasing shame and sorrow? Can we glory in our graces? Who gave them to us? Can we glory in our gifts, if we have any? Who bestowed them upon us? Can we glory

in our experience; in our knowledge; in our consistency? Can we glory in any fruit we may bring forth in heart, lip, or life? Whose are these gifts? From whom come any of these graces? If any man then glory, let him glory in the Lord.

Now as the Lord is pleased to sink the soul and depress it in self, he raises it up in Christ; and as he shows us more and more of the emptiness and sinfulness of man, he shows us more and more of the beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus. We then begin to glory in him. How glorious is the King in his beauty! How glorious his Person as God-Man! in his atoning blood, as cleansing from all sin! in his imputed obedience, as justifying from all transgression! his dying love, as manifested on behalf of our fallen race! How glorious is he in all these relationships and characters! O to behold his glory!—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth! This is something to glory in. If we do glory, let it be wholly and solely in the Lord; let Christ be our Object and Subject; let his blood, obedience, and love; his Person and work; his grace and glory; his beauty and blessedness; his pity, compassion, and suitability; his promises and precepts; his holy life and suffering death; his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, and his second coming with all his saints at the great day,—be the boast of our heart and the theme of our tongue. Thus to praise and bless his holy name is to walk in those gracious footsteps trodden by the saints of old: "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." (Ps. 145:10, 11, 12.) If we must speak well of any one, let us speak well of the blessed Jesus. Let man sink; let the Lord rise. Let the creature fall into his right place, and be nothing, yea, less than nothing and vanity (Isa. 40:17); and let the Lord be exalted in our songs of praise as God over all, blessed for ever.

II.—But, to advance onward to our *second* point, there may be those here—a majority, it may be, of those who truly fear the Lord—who have not fully received the rich blessings of salvation

by grace with divine power into their soul, yet, like the saints of old, have seen them afar off, and are persuaded of them, and embrace them to the utmost extent of their faith; but still come short.

And there may be others who have scarcely gone so far as to have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," yet feel their deep and daily need of him. To both these characters the second part of our text speaks, and to them the promise which it contains is given:—"*Even to him shall men come.*" The Lord has given an absolute promise that "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." And no less absolute is the addition, and as it were divine corollary to that promise, "To him shall men come." What men? The very men who by coming and receiving shall be able in his own time to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Then they come to him that they may receive these blessings from and out of him; for from him alone can they receive either righteousness, strength or glory. But how can they receive these things from him if they come not to him for that express purpose? And who gives them will and power to come? The Father himself, according to the Lord's own words, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44.) But will the Father draw all the chosen vessels of mercy to Jesus? Surely he will; for the Lord adds, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45.) But who are these "all" who are thus "taught of God" and by him drawn to Christ? Are they all the human race, or even all who hear the preached gospel? What prophecy does the Lord quote here? Is it not "*all thy children* shall be taught of the Lord?" And who are "thy children" but Zion's children—the sons and daughters of "the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all." (Isaiah 54:13; Gal. 4:26.)

But this coming may be your present experience. You can scarcely rise beyond this point—that you are a coming sinner—a praying, suing, seeking, begging soul; often a guilty, self-

condemned criminal in your own conscience, yet crying to the Lord to manifest his forgiving mercy and pardoning love to your soul. If this be your experience, you have most clearly an interest in the promise that "to him shall men come!" God the Spirit is now working the fulfilment of that promise in your heart; for you are coming. Are you not coming even now to his feet? Why have you come this morning to hear his word of grace and truth from my lips? Is it not that you may hear something to give you a hope of your interest in the blood, love, and obedience of Jesus? A word of comfort that may encourage your soul still to look, and long, and wait; or that the Lord himself by his word applied with power may clearly manifest to you your adoption into the family of God? Why did you kneel before the Lord this morning in secret prayer? Why did you lift up your heart and voice in earnest supplication to the throne of his grace with this petition on your lips, that he would bless you with a sense of his pardoning love, would manifest himself unto you as your Lord and God, and give you a testimony that you were his for time and eternity? Was not this for the most part the subject of your secret cry? This was a coming. Whilst I have been speaking this morning, of his grace and glory, and the blessedness of being able to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," have there been no secret breathings of your soul towards God—no inward desires that the Lord would manifest these rich blessings to your soul? This is a coming. Every act of faith whereby you look to Jesus is a coming. Every beam and ray of hope in his blood and righteousness is a coming. Every sigh, groan, or tear; every contrite feeling, every breathing desire of a broken heart,—all are a coming. So that though you may not be able to realize as fully as you could wish an interest in the former part of the promise, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" yet there is wrought in your soul by a divine power that secret coming whereby you have a manifested interest in the second part of it—"Even to him shall men come." We cannot come until we are drawn. "Draw me," says the bride, "we will run after thee." (Song 1:4.) "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jerem. 31:3.) When we are

drawn, then we come and cannot but come. It is good to come. Even those who have received must be ever coming. We get nothing but by coming. Our daily life, as one of faith and hope, is a life of coming. Our continual prayer is a continual coming. I preach that you may come; you hear that you may come. For the language of the church still is, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.) Thus must we be ever coming that we may be ever receiving; and so everything that makes us come has in it a real or an implied blessing. Nor will you come in vain, be you who or what you may. "For him that cometh to me," the blessed Lord himself has said, "I will in no wise cast out."

III.—But I cannot close my subject without dwelling for a few moments upon the last point—the solemn *denunciation* that God has pronounced: "*All that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.*" Here is a clear division between the Lord's friends and the Lord's foes; between those who believe, and by believing, receive righteousness, strength, and glory, and those who are incensed with anger against that most blessed Lord. O how numerous, may I not add, innumerable a class! how many in our day are incensed against the God of all grace, simply because salvation is alone of grace, when, from man's fallen condition, and his actual as well as original sinfulness, it cannot by any possibility be in any other way. How they rise up in arms against the blessed Jesus, because out of him there is no righteousness or strength. How they will not have him to reign over them, because they must part with their sins that they may serve him with an obedient heart, and a holy, godly life. How they rebel against his eternal Sonship, though it is his very mode of subsistence, as well as his rightful claim and dearest title; against his Person as God-Man; against his atoning blood, his justifying obedience, and what he is as the Christ of God at the right hand of the Father. Or if they dare not fully vent their rebellious thoughts against the Lord himself, how they are incensed against his people, his servants, his truth, his ordinances, his revealed will, and his strait and narrow way of trial and tribulation. But O,

what will be the awful consequence of all this angry displeasure against the enthroned King of Zion? "They shall be ashamed"—it may be not in this life, for "the unjust knoweth no shame," (Zeph. 3:5) and there is such a thing as "refusing to be ashamed." (Jer. 3:3.) But there is "an awakening to shame and everlasting contempt" in that day when they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan. 12:3.)

In that day when the Judge of all shall sit on the great white throne, from whose face the earth and the heaven will flee away, then, "whosoever is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15.) How then those who, in this life, were incensed against the Lord of life and glory shall be covered with confusion, and shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them and hide them "from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." But they shall call in vain, for he who cannot lie has already pronounced their fearful doom—"All that are incensed against him shall be ashamed," for "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh." (Isaiah 66:24.) And as surely as God is true, as surely as he hath sworn by himself that in the Lord, his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, so surely all, without exception, that are incensed against the Son of his love shall be ashamed; for he who has "ordained a lamp for his anointed," or his Christ, has declared of him, "His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish." (Psalm. 132:18.) "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matt. 21:44.) Well then may we add this word of sacred counsel, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." (Psal. 2:12.)

We say, then, to each, to all, Look to the matter as regards your own conscience, your own way, and your own end. Religion is a personal thing; for "none," however desirous, "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Psal. 49:7.) Here are three distinct characters spoken of—two on the right side, and the other on the left. Two on the line of life, and the other on the line of death. Those who can say "In the Lord have I righteousness," and those who are coming to him,—both are safe in the hollow of his hand; these have an interest in his blood and love. "All things are theirs; for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:22, 23.) But there are those, it may be, under the very sound of my voice, who are incensed against him; and of them God has said, "they shall be ashamed." I sound it in their ears, and may God, if it be his will, sound an alarm in their heart. The God of truth and righteousness will be faithful to his own word, and will not give the lie to his own testimony.

## ISRAEL'S SUN AND SHIELD

Preached at Oakham, Rutland, on Lord's Day Morning, July 9th, 1854

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." Psalm 84:11, 12

Judging from internal evidence, there can be but little doubt that David, when he composed this psalm, was deprived of the privilege of worshipping in the courts of the Lord's house. Now, there were only two seasons, as far as we can gather from his history, in which David, for any length of time, was banished from the sanctuary which he loved so well. One was during the period of his persecution by Saul, when he was hunted like a partridge on the mountains; the other, when he fled from Jerusalem, driven thence by the rebellion of his son Absalom. On which of these two occasions, we may ask the question, was this psalm written? According to the date in the margin, it was written during the latter period, namely, when Absalom's unnatural rebellion had made him a wandering fugitive, and, but for the special providence of God, would have stripped him both of crown and life. And to this point of time we seem tied down by the word Zion in the seventh verse: "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Zion did not belong to the children of Israel in the days of Saul, but was still possessed by the Jebusites, the ancient inhabitants of the land, from whom it was only conquered by David, who made it his own city, and afterwards brought up into it the ark of the Lord.

Being, then, deprived of the privilege of worshipping in the courts of the Lord's house, he breathes forth in the psalm before us his desires after it. "How amiable," he cries—that is, how lovely, how desirable—"are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth," and, as if that expression were not strong enough to

convey his feelings, he adds, "yea, even fainteth"—as though his desires after them were so intense that he swooned under the weight of absence from them—"yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." His desire was to enjoy the presence of the living God as he had felt it in the tabernacle, and to see His power and glory as he had seen them in the sanctuary, as he speaks in another psalm: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary."

I have thought sometimes, and I believe it is true, that the Lord in those days was wont to manifest Himself in the tabernacle to His believing people in an especial manner—a manner to which we have no full similarity in His earthly courts now; for though it is a blessed privilege to meet in the house of prayer, to worship Him in spirit and in truth, to hear His Word, and sing His praise, yet we have nothing in the assembling of ourselves together exactly parallel to what the worship of the tabernacle was to the believing Israelite. It was there, and there only, that God recorded His name; it was there, and there only, that His presence was specially pledged; there alone were the sacrifices offered; there only the altar of incense sent forth its odoriferous breath; there, and there only, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat sprinkled with the atoning blood, and the Shechinah, or divine cloud, manifesting the presence of God as resting between the cherubim, were seen. As the tabernacle was the place where the Lord especially dwelt, so He appears to have made Himself especially known in the manifestations of His presence to the believing Israelite when he came to worship in the Lord's house. This made Daniel open his window toward Jerusalem when he knelt and prayed three times a day; this, also, led Jonah, when in the whale's belly, and in his own feelings in the very belly of hell, to say, "Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple."

The promise which God specially made to Solomon was, "I have

hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put My name there for ever; and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." This blessedness we cannot be said indeed to have altogether lost, because we possess in substance what they had but in figure—Jesus Christ, the true tabernacle, which God pitched and not man. But we cannot expect to realise in our assemblies that peculiar blessedness which the believing Israelite enjoyed in the earthly sanctuary. Our sanctuary is not on earth, but in heaven; and as every desire of the believing Israelite, in ancient days, went out towards the tabernacle, as the standing type and visible representation of the promised incarnation of the Son of God, so every desire of the believing Christian now goes out after and centres in the Lord Jesus, He being the true antitypical tabernacle in which the fulness of Godhead dwells.

Time, however, will not permit of my running, even in a cursory manner, through the whole psalm, though it is full of beauty and blessedness. I pass on, therefore, to the words of our text, merely observing, by way of showing their connection with the general bearing of the psalm, that when David uttered them it was as though he said—"Here I am, a stranger in the wilderness; driven from my throne and home by my ungodly, unnatural son; deprived of the privilege of worshipping in the Lord's courts, and banished from that sanctuary where I have been so blessed and favoured. But is all lost, because I am deprived of these highly-prized mercies and privileges? Is all my hope for ever gone? Is not God still the same in every place? Is He not still full of mercy and goodness?—my God, my sun, my shield, here as well as in Jerusalem? and though I cannot see Him in His earthly tabernacle, as in days past, days looked at and longed for, yet can I not, and do I not, feel Him here in the wilderness still precious to my soul?" Look now at the words of the text in the light of this short commentary. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

In opening up these words I shall, with God's blessing, follow the

order of the text, taking up the four clauses as they lie before me; but they seem so full of blessed truth, that I feel I shall not do justice to the text, to you, or to myself, if I crowd all my thoughts and feelings upon it into one sermon. I shall not attempt, therefore, to venture beyond the first clause this morning. The Lord give His blessing to what I may speak in His Name.

"The Lord God is a sun and shield."

How simple, beautiful, and expressive are the figures of Scripture! They are so pregnant with divine meaning; there is lodged in them such a fulness of heavenly truth, and at the same time such a suitability to the wants and exercises of the family of God, that they cannot be too closely examined, or too highly prized. Let us then endeavour to gather up the spiritual meaning of these two striking figures, each in its order.

i. "The Lord God is a sun." Bear in mind that whenever the Scripture speaks of "the Lord God," it usually means Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one glorious Essence. There is no division or discord in the Holy Trinity. All the thoughts and acts of the three divine Persons are one, though their operations differ according to their several undertakings in the covenant of grace. What the Father wills, the Son wills, and what the Son wills, the Holy Ghost wills. When, therefore, the Scripture speaks of the LORD God, it does not speak of the Father to the exclusion of the Son, nor of the Son to the exclusion of the Spirit, for in Deity there is neither division nor disunion—"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one Lord!" but as the Lord Jesus Christ is especially spoken of in the prophet Malachi as "the Sun of Righteousness," we may view that figure as especially applicable to the second Person in the glorious Godhead, Immanuel, God with us.

Now, look at the sun—I mean the natural sun, that blazes in the midday sky; and see what a beautiful representation it is of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The sun is the *centre of our system*. It is only by its attraction that the earth is kept in its orbit. Without the sun the earth would not only be a miserable chaos, but could not even exist; nor was there ever a period when there was earth without sun, for "in the beginning," we read, "God created the heavens and the earth." So the Church has no existence separate from Christ. He holds her in her orbit, and draws her to Himself by His attractive influences, as the sun attracts the earth. "Draw me, we will run after Thee." From this primary connection between the sun and the earth come all its subsequent operations and influences.

2. From it, for instance, comes *light*. How darksome is the earth in the absence of the cheering orb of day! What would the earth be without the light of the sun? A chaos of miserable confusion, without life or inhabitant, a wild, desolate waste, worse than the crater of a volcano. Jesus is to the Church of God that divine light of which the sun to the natural world is but a dim representation. The sun is but a creature—a dead and lifeless creature. He is the Creator. The sun shines only by divine command, and exists only by divine sufferance. Jesus shines in the rays of eternal Deity, and will continue to shine when the light of the natural sun is quenched. But as without the light of the sun the world would fall into desolation, so without the light and sustaining influences of the Son of God the Church would fall into nothingness. As, too, the sun gives light to the whole earth, "his going forth being from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it," so Jesus gives light to all His believing people; for there is not a ray nor a sparkle of divine light in the soul which does not come out of His glorious fulness.

But was not the sun made to shine? Is not this its appointed office? When the creating voice of God set that glorious orb in the sky, was it not placed there by Omnipotence itself, that it might shine forth in countless rays of blazing splendour? Thus we may say that in shining the sun only fulfils the office which God gave it to perform; and the more brightly and gloriously it shines, the more does it accomplish its appointed work. So we may say of the blessed Jesus. He is the Sun of the church; and when God set

Him as the great High Priest over the house of God, at His own right hand, in the heavenly places, He put Him, so to speak, as a Sun in the spiritual firmament; that, as the natural sun gives light to the world, so Jesus might give light to the church. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." We read, therefore, of John the Baptist, "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:8, 9); or, as the words might be rendered, "that was the true light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man;" that is, every believing man, every partaker of grace. Now can the earth produce light of itself? Can she call up from her dark caves and inward abysses any beams for her own illumination? Neither can a child of God produce light in his own heart, or raise up from its dark caverns any cheering rays to gladden and illuminate his own soul. But does the sun wait until he sees some light previously kindled on earth before he begins to shine? He rises at the appointed hour; and when he bursts forth from his chambers in the east, he gives forth his bright beams without waiting for any previous light kindled in his absence, through ignorance or rivalry, to supply his place. Is it not so in grace? You may try to elicit some light from the depths of your own heart; you may search its inward recesses, hoping to find in them some cheering beams of hope, some rays of divine comfort. But what heavenly light can you find in that fallen nature of which the apostle said, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing?" To look then for light in ourselves, distinct from that which shines into the soul out of the fulness of Christ, is to look into earth's dark caverns for sunshine. Not to speak of its hidden caves, the very face of the earth is dark without the sun. Such is the face of the soul without Christ. But when He, the Sun of righteousness, rises upon the soul with healing in His wings, He brings light with Him; and in this light we not only see Him, but every other object on which He shines. Our evidences, waymarks, and testimonies all shine forth as He shines upon them. We can no more see Jesus by the eye of faith without seeing light in His light, than we can see the

natural sun without seeing his light shining all around. But sometimes the natural sun is obscured. It is so to-day. When I was here last, it was shining brightly into our midst. Now the day is cloudy, and his bright beams are veiled from sight. But have we not light enough to see one another and surrounding objects? By the light of the sun, though himself you saw not, you walked hither, and by the same light you will walk home. On the last Lord's day that I was here, the sun brightly streamed through every window. Now his light is comparatively dull, and his rays are hidden by clouds. Yet is he not the same sun now as then? So it is in grace. We have not always the same bright light shining into the soul, nor do we always feel the Lord's presence gladdening the heart. The Sun of righteousness, according to our feelings, is then beclouded, and His light dim and dull; yet it is the same light that enlightens us when we walk in darkness as when we walk in the light of the living. Nay more, not only may clouds veil his face, but he may for a while set, as he will certainly do this evening; but will he not rise again at the appointed hour, and shine brightly as before? So Jesus, the Sun of the church, seems at times to set—as if He were gone and gone for ever; but He rises again at the appointed season; as He said to the disciples, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."

3. But whence come all warmth and heat? Is it not out of the sun? He is not only the fountain of all light, but the source of all heat, that is, as regards the face of the earth. So Jesus is the source of all divine warmth in the soul. How cold, how frozen, our hearts often are—the flowings and gushings of love and affection locked up as if in chains of ice. Can you at such wintry seasons raise up one living affection towards the Lord of life and glory? Can you produce one genial glow, one soft, melting sensation, when frost and ice thus congeal your very heart? No; nor can you melt yourself into contrition, brokenness, godly sorrow for sin, weeping and mourning with and over a suffering Man of sorrows, any more than the earth can thaw itself into softness, or than a brook, when locked up in frozen chains, can of itself flow down into a running stream. The chilled earth and ice-bound brook

want the sun to shine upon and into them; and when his beams burst forth in their genial heat, more is done by them in five minutes than without his warmth they could do for themselves in five centuries. So it is in grace. We may try to pray, read, and meditate, and thus seek to warm our cold, icy heart into love, submission, and obedience. Alas! it is but chafing a frozen limb with snow. If a momentary glow be obtained, it soon becomes cold as before. But one ray of love shining out of the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ is able in a moment to give us that heavenly glow, that divine warmth, that melting of soul, and dissolving of heart which we could not produce by all our own exertions, separate from grace, if we were engaged in them every moment of our lives.

4. And whence come joy and gladness to the earth? Does not the sun gladden the whole face of creation? What a contrast between a day of gloom and of sunshine! How when the sun bursts forth, the very birds hail with gladness his returning beams, and sing to him their grateful songs of joy. How every glowing and beautiful tint is reflected in the clouds above, and lights up mountain and vale beneath. How it even cheers our animal spirits to walk abroad in the early spring with the bright sun shining in full lustre over our heads. How it seems to refresh the wearied body and restring the slackened nerves. Is not this also true of the spiritual Sun? Whence comes every gladdening sensation of the soul; whence all spiritual joy, all real heartfelt happiness? Only, only from the shining in of the beams of the Sun of righteousness. It is only He that puts gladness into the heart more than in the time that the corn and wine of worldly men increase. What joy and gladness His presence creates in the soul of a downcast sinner, when he can say, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness" (Psa. 30:11).

5. And is not the sun also, in a certain sense, the source of all life? In winter how all creation seems buried in torpor and death. But when, with returning spring, the sun once more climbs his airy height, and darts forth his former beams, how nature at once

revives out of its state of wintry death; and what new life is put into all animated creation! Is it not so with the Sun of righteousness? What life is there in the soul except what He is pleased to bestow? What life is there in praying, preaching, hearing, or meditating, except He is pleased to revive His own work in the heart? This made David say, "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

6. And is not the natural sun the cause of all fruitfulness? Where would the harvest be without the sun? Where bread for man, or food for animals, except as produced by his ripening influences? What fruit, too, could arrive at maturity and flavour were it not for his genial rays? So, where is any Christian fruit except as produced by the Sun of righteousness? How unable is the soul to bring forth any fruit to the honour and praise of God except as that gracious Sun is pleased to make it fruitful in every good word and work! O it is not our own exertion, or any strength of the creature, that can produce in our hearts, lips, and lives any fruit acceptable to God. "From Me is thy fruit found;" "Without Me ye can do nothing," is the testimony of the Scripture, and the express declaration of Jesus. That all Christian fruit is only produced by the beams and rays of this blessed Sun of righteousness is a truth which every child of God will most heartily subscribe to; nor is there one truly taught of God who will not say that as the Lord Jesus is the only source of his light, life, heat, and gladness, so is He the only source of all his fruitfulness. If, then, these be the real feelings of your heart, have you not the same experience that David here speaks of? "The Lord God is a sun." This he knew, for he had felt His beams; he knew also what those beams produced; he had seen His light, and felt His life; it had gladdened his eyes, and warmed his heart, dispelled his gloom, and revived his soul.

Thus he knew there was a spiritual Sun by soul experience, as he knew there was a material sun by bodily experience, and he could therefore say, in the language of faith and love, "The Lord God is a sun. Let men say what they will, He has been, and is, even now in this wilderness, a sun to my soul." It will be a blessed thing for

us if we can see eye to eye with David in this important matter, and say the same thing from a similar experience.

But is not the sun sometimes eclipsed? Do not clouds and darkness often veil his face? And does not the soul in a similar manner often go, as one speaks of old, "mourning without the sun?" It does. But is the sun then utterly extinct? Do the clouds that hide his face sweep him from the sky? Is there no sun because we cannot see him? "No," you say, "the sun is still there, even though he be eclipsed, and he still shines behind the clouds, though I cannot see him on account of them." But you will see the sun by-and-by shining the more brightly for his temporary absence. After the cloudiest morn is there not often a bright afternoon; and even if the whole day has been one of clouds, does not the sun sometimes go down without a single wreath to intercept his beams? So in grace. How many of God's dear children have walked in darkness the greater part of their days, and yet have made a good end! The rays of the Sun of righteousness have gilded their dying pillow, and gladdened their hearts, before they shut their eyes on earth to open them for ever in heaven.

ii. But He is also a shield. "The Lord God is a sun and shield." How diversified are the figures of Scripture! First the Lord is spoken of as "a sun" to shine, and then as "a shield" to protect. David, we may observe, does not say, "The Lord is like a sun," but he says, "He is a sun." And so he does not say, "He is like a shield," but, "He is a shield." How is the Lord a shield? What is a shield? It was a warlike implement used in ancient times to protect the person of the warrior, but now discarded as useless, through the improvement, if I may use such an expression, of the arts of warfare. When men fought with spears and arrows, then the shield was a very useful weapon of defence, it being made of light yet tough materials, such as hard leather or steel, so as to receive and ward off the thrusts of the enemy. The leading idea, then, couched under the figure of a shield, is a weapon of defence.

Now, look at this idea in connection with the Lord Jesus. A shield

implies that we are exposed to the spears, arrows, and other deadly weapons wielded by numerous, yea, innumerable enemies; and that the Lord Himself is our only protection from them.

1. Look, for instance, at the law. O, what a curse belongs to it! How fearful is the language which it breathes! "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Have you ever felt what it is to be cursed of God in your getting up and in your lying down, in your coming in and in your going out? O to be cursed of God! No language can describe the horror of a man's soul who feels or fears he is under His curse. We need not wonder that a man should be tempted to commit suicide if he feel the curse of God in his soul. It seems as if he could not do anything less, were he not prevented by the special providence and sovereign grace of God. But O! how the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, interposed as a shield between the curse of God's righteous law and the souls and bodies of His people. The shield receives into its bosom the thrusts of the sword and spear and points of the deadly arrow, and thus preserves the warrior unharmed. How this thought seems to bring before our mind's eye the sufferings and sorrows of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the shield of the warrior is pierced with the arrows and spears of the enemy, so the curses of God's righteous law pierced the holy soul and body of Jesus. "Thine arrows," He says, "stick fast in Me." Those curses which would else, through all eternity, have lighted upon the Church, all fell upon the Church's Head; and thus by piercing the incarnate Son of God, they could not reach her; for she stood as if behind the shield which He interposed between the Law and her, when He presented His sacred body and soul to drink up all the bitter wrath of God. O what a glorious and blessed truth, that all the penal wrath of God due to the Church fell upon Him, and by falling on Him was intercepted, so that not a single arrow or dart can ever take effect upon the bride and spouse of the Lamb, her covenant Head and Husband having bled and died for her.

Now, if your soul has ever been favoured with a taste of mercy,

with a sip of the brook by the way; if ever your conscience has felt the application of atoning blood, or the love of God has ever been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost, when the law comes to curse you, endeavour always to bear in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ stands as the shield between you and its curse. The law has therefore nothing to do with you that believe; it has cursed Jesus Christ for you; as the apostle declares, "He was made a curse for us;" and again, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," &c. Therefore the law has nothing to do with you who believe in Christ Jesus. He has intercepted the curse for you, and, by receiving it into His own body and soul, bore it harmless away from you. It is a blessed act of faith when you can thus take Christ in your arms and hold Him up as a shield between the law and your conscience. And this the apostle seems to hint at in a measure when he says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;" for many of these fiery darts are taken from the law. It is indeed a great and especial act of faith thus to take Jesus Christ in the arms, and, holding Him up in the face of the law, to be able to say, "Law, thou hast nothing to do with me; Jesus has fulfilled all thy righteous demands, and endured all thy tremendous curses. He is my shield, to protect me from thy condemning sentence; and all thy curses are harmless; they all fall short of me, because they all fell wholly upon Him." I say this is a special act of faith, because we cannot do it except as divinely enabled. Otherwise, it would be but an act of presumption. I may add, also, that it is a very rare thing to be enabled so to take Christ and hold Him up as a shield against the curses of the law; but when done under the influences and operations of the blessed Spirit, it is an act of faith which God approves of and honours. Nor is there any other shield to intercept its tremendous curse.

2. But what accusations there are also from a guilty conscience! What inward condemnation on account of the slips, backslidings, and inconsistencies that we are continually guilty of; and what self-reproach and self-abhorrence there is or should be for all these things! How are we to get relief from these stings of

internal guilt and self-reproach? By the same all-gracious and all-glorious shield; by interposing the Lord Jesus between the conscience and the accusations of guilt that alarm and terrify it. When we can see the Lord Jesus dying to redeem us from all our sins, and washing us from them in His own most precious blood, then and only then do we get any true or spiritual relief from the accusations of our own condemning conscience. A guilty conscience is a very trying thing. It brings great darkness into the mind; stops the mouth of prayer; beclouds all evidences; seems at times almost to drown faith, bedim hope, and damp the flame of love, until it is relieved by the application of atoning blood, pardoning grace, and manifested mercy. Till then, we have no sweet liberty of access to God, nor is there any real peace and joy in believing.

3. But there are also the fiery darts of Satan. The great object of Satan is, first, to tempt a child of God to sin, and when he has entangled his feet in his net, then to turn accuser, and tell him he has now sinned beyond all reach of mercy. These accusations are some of his "fiery darts." We must not think that Satan's fiery darts are only blasphemous suggestions. He can and does make great use of our own guilty conscience, as well as of the law, and often forges his arrows, as well as sharpens and tips them, in the inward furnace of our own creating. This, indeed, is the sharpest arrow in his quiver; for there is none that sinks so deep, or makes such galling wounds, as that barbed shaft which is first dipped into the fire of a guilty conscience. Nor can it ever be fully or rightly extracted until we see it lodged in the heart of Jesus, and can believe that He bore these and all our other aggravated sins and backslidings. Here it is chiefly that we see what "a shield" He is against the fiery darts of the enemy.

4. But, in addition to these inward darts, we have also outward reproaches to meet with, if we walk consistently with our Christian profession. These taunts and reproaches are very cutting and lacerating to our feelings, especially if they come from those who are near and dear to us in the flesh. But how are these best met? Here we shall have occasion to use the same

shield. When we can see how the Lord Jesus was reproached, slandered, wrongfully accused, and despised when here below in this ungodly world, this is interposing Him as a shield between us and all our reproaches for His name's sake.

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

But let us seek to bring the points we have been considering this morning more to a head. O what a mercy for the Church of Christ that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus has not left her, as He might justly have left her, to perish in her sins, but has provided for her a Saviour, and a great one, and does from time to time encourage every poor, self-condemned sinner to hope in His mercy! The very things, poor exercised soul, that most try your mind are the very things that make such a Saviour suitable to you. You are dark; this makes the Sun of righteousness exactly suitable to enlighten you. You are cold; this makes you want the Sun to warm you. You are cheerless and cast down; this makes you want the Sun to gladden you. You are barren and unfruitful, and lament that you cannot bring forth fruit to God's glory; you want the Sun to fertilise you. You are, at times, very dead in your feelings, and can scarcely find any inclination to pray, meditate, or read the Scriptures; you want the Sun to enliven and revive you. Are not, then, these very trials and temptations necessary to make you feel that the Lord Jesus is the Sun, the very Sun that David felt Him to be? What value do those put upon the Lord Jesus who make a fire for themselves, and walk in the sparks of their own kindling? What is Jesus to those who know no trouble of soul? What real and earnest prayer or fervent desire have they after Him? what ardent longing for His appearing? what breathings to see and feel His blood and righteousness? O! it is sharp exercises, manifold trials, and powerful temptations that make the soul really value the Lord Jesus.

Now, is not the sun made to shine? It is his office to do so. So it

is with the Sun of righteousness; He is made to shine. And does the natural sun lose any of his light by shining? Why, the more he shines, the more light he seems to have. For ages he has shone as brightly as now. His beams were as glorious before we had birth or being, and will be as glorious when the eyes which now see him are mouldering in the dust. Thousands of harvests has he ripened, millions and thousands of millions has he fed; but he shows no sign of exhaustion or decay. And does Jesus lose anything by communicating His light, life, love, and grace? He is all the more glorified thereby; and the more you look to Him as the Sun, that as such He might shine into and upon your soul, the more you glorify Him as the Sun of righteousness. When in the morning we throw the shutters back, or draw up the blinds, it is to receive the sun into the dark room. So the more we are enabled by divine grace to throw back the shutters of doubt and fear, and draw up the blinds of unbelief which hang down over the mind, the more we glorify the Lord Jesus by receiving out of His fulness, and grace for grace. O! it is good to be sometimes enabled to look beyond and above doubts, fears, misgivings, and the many things that try the mind. You may pore over your sins and miseries till you fall well nigh into despair; you may look back upon your wanderings, inconsistencies, and want of fruitfulness, till you are almost ready to sink down without hope and die. To do this is to resemble a person wandering in a dark room, tumbling over the furniture, and at last sitting down and saying, "There is no light." If he can but throw back the shutters, the sun will shine into the room. So we sometimes may sit pondering over our many inconsistencies till we say, "There is no light in my soul; there never was, and there never will be." O to be enabled (when I speak thus, I know well, from soul experience, that it is only God who can do it in us and for us) to throw back the shutters, and look away from those things that so weigh down the mind! Look up, O sinking soul, and see the blessed Sun still shining in the firmament of heaven. Why, the very power to do this, the very act of doing so, brings with it a felt blessedness.

How good, also, to be enabled to make use of Christ as a shield! O how often we go to battle without this shield upon our arm! But

depend upon it, the Lord would not have provided such a shield for you unless He knew that your enemies were too many for you. Doubt, fear, darkness, despair, the law, the accusations of a guilty conscience, the fiery darts of the devil—how can you fight against these enemies without a shield? Why, you would be like a soldier going out against the Russians without either sword or musket, and laying his bosom bare to all their weapons, without Minie or bayonet in his hand to defend himself. So, to go into combat against the law, the accusations of a guilty conscience, and a desponding heart, and have no blessed Jesus to hold up as a shield against these deadly foes, would be enough to sink a man into despair. But if he be enabled to make use of the shield that God has provided, and to hold Christ up against a condemning law, a guilty conscience, an accusing devil, and a desponding mind, and say to them all, "Christ hath died, and died for me," then he receives into the shield those darts which would otherwise sink into his soul, and then they all fall harmless, because they all fell on the Lord Jesus.

Now, whether you can see it or not, feel it or not, believe it or not, it is still the same grand truth in God's holy Word. You may lack the comfort of it, but there it is; and if God be pleased to seal it on your heart with a divine sweetness and power, you will say, "Blessed be God that there is a spiritual Sun to warm my soul, and gladden my heart; and blessed be His holy name, there is a shield, for without that my soul would sink into interminable despair."

## **Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, May 26, 1861

"Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John 6:67, 68, 69

At the time when our blessed Lord appeared upon earth, there was a general and wide-spread expectation that some great Deliverer specially sent from God would shortly arise. "The dark places of the earth were full of the habitations of cruelty." Almost every then known land was groaning under the iron rod of oppression and violence, for the Roman Empire, described by Daniel under the figure of "the fourth beast," which was "diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass," had devoured the nations, broken them in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet. (Dan. 7:19.) Men's minds, therefore, full of agitation and distress, were looking to some quarter whence help and hope might come, and were specially turning their eyes towards the East, the quarter of the sun; for in the West all was increasing darkness and gloom, that being the head-quarters of the Roman Empire and, therefore, as now, so then, the seat of the beast by a singular coincidence, some such expectation also prevailed among the Western nations themselves, for we have still extant writings of Roman historians and poets wherein express mention is made of a general expectation that at this time some mighty king was to arise in the East who should obtain universal empire. We have, for instance, a Latin poem by the Roman poet Virgil still extant, in which in most vivid and beautiful imagery he describes the blessedness of the reign of this King, and depicts a return to the fabled Golden Age of universal happiness and peace, when, to put his thoughts into scripture language, "the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the lion should eat straw like the ox." (Isai. 11:6, 7.)

But if this vague, undefined expectation of a Deliverer to arise in the East prevailed even amongst the heathen, much more was it so at this time amongst God's ancient people, the Jews; for in the Gentile world it was but a faint tradition, defaced by superstition and mingled with fable; but that favoured nation, to which among their other numerous privileges were "committed the oracles of God," (Rom. 3:2,) had a more sure word of prophecy which shone in a dark place until the day dawned and the dayspring from on high visited them. (2 Pet. 1:19; Luke 1:78.) There was, for instance, the first promise given in the garden of Eden, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." There was the inspired declaration and consoling promise uttered by Jacob on his dying bed, that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh came, and to him should the gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:10.) Balaam himself, who, though "he loved the wages of unrighteousness," yet in this instance spake by inspiration, declared, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." (Numbers 24:17.) But, beside these scattered intimations in the prophetic word, the Lord raised up a series of prophets who testified of a Messiah to come. Take the familiar instance of Isaiah. His prophecies, we know, were read aloud in the synagogues, for our blessed Lord read one of them in that at Nazareth (Luke 4:17); and so full was his testimony of the promised Christ, that those who had faith could not unroll that part of the sacred Volume, without seeing in almost every page some declaration of the Messiah that was to come. Other prophets followed in the same strain, and thus as the prophetic scroll was more and more unrolled down to Malachi, with whom the Old Testament canon closed, more clear and full intimations were given that "the desire of all nations" would come, and that "the Lord would suddenly appear in his temple." (Haggai 2:7; Mal. 3:1.) What can exceed in clearness that last swelling note of the prophetic trump with which the last of the Old Testament prophets closed up that sacred volume? "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with

healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." (Mal. 4:2.) We find, therefore, that when our blessed Lord appeared in the flesh there were those, as Simeon, Anna, and others, who were at that time looking for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:38); so that before he entered upon the public exercise of his ministry, when John his forerunner was preaching in the wilderness, the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not. Thus they sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John "Who art thou?" as having some expectation that he was the promised Christ (John 1:19); and so when at the feast of the dedication Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's court the Jews came round about him and said unto him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us plainly." (John 10:24.) But beside this general expectation of the Messiah, who, according to God's promise, was about this time to appear, when they saw his miracles, they could not but believe that none but one endued with the power of God could work such signal prodigies; when they heard the words that fell from his gracious lips, they felt that this holy Instructor taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes; when they saw his godly, holy, and self-denying life, they must have been inwardly convinced there was one now amongst them different from all others whom they had ever seen, heard, or known. Thus, though the Scribes, Pharisees, and high priests, and all that loved unrighteousness hated, despised, and eventually nailed him to the cross in ignominy and shame, yet there was a conviction evidently pressing upon the minds of many that he was indeed the Christ, the Messiah whom God had promised to send. We find, therefore, in various places of the Gospels, and especially in that of John, intimations that many even of those in high places were persuaded of the divinity of his mission; as, for instance, in the declaration, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." (John 12:42.) From this passage it is evident that many who believed in him as the promised Messiah were not wrought upon by a divine power or had a faith given to them by the Holy Ghost to receive him into their hearts as the Christ of

God. This faith, then, of theirs being but natural, gave them no power to resist temptation or to overcome the world. We, therefore, read that "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." We see this halting between two opinions, this natural faith and rational conviction overborne and overcome by the opposition of the flesh, remarkably displayed in the chapter before us. (John 6.) We find the Lord in it speaking to the people who had taken shipping and come down to Capernaum seeking after him, words of admonition mingled with keen reproof, "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. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." (John 6:26, 27.) But instead of receiving these words into an obedient heart, they began to cavil, to ask him for a sign, and to contrast his works with that miracle wrought in the wilderness, when God gave their fathers bread from heaven to eat. But when the Lord set before them this great and glorious truth, that he was the bread of life; that the manna which their fathers ate in the desert was but a type of the bread which God had now given them in the gift of his only begotten Son,—then they were offended; they murmured at him and said, "is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it, then, that he saith, I came down from heaven?" (John 6:12.) There were three express declarations, one after another, from the Lord's lips, as recorded in this chapter, which raised up such rebellion and encountered such a storm of inward opposition, that not only the carnal multitude murmured, but even many of his disciples from that time forth "went back and walked no more with him."

1. The first of these was, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:51.) What was the consequence of this declaration, "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:52.) To their carnal apprehension, the Lord meant that they must

literally and actually eat his flesh and drink his blood. Not having the teaching of the Holy Spirit to enlighten their minds; not rising beyond the gross apprehension of the words in their literal signification, they could not see that there was a feeding upon the flesh of Christ in the soul, a drinking of his blood in the actings of faith. They were staggered, therefore, by the declaration of the Lord, that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood; and being unable to receive that testimony into their consciences, they stumbled and fell. But did the Lord modify or even explain his statement? On the contrary, he only repeated it with greater force, declaring, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53.) We need not wonder that the carnal multitude should have risen up in rebellion against such declarations; but we find that many even of his disciples when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?"

2. The Lord, however, added another declaration, which as it fell from his gracious lips still more grievously offended them: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." As long as they could do something; as long as any hope, or shade of a hope, was afforded them that there was something in the flesh whereby they might obtain eternal life, they would consent to be his disciples. But when he cut off that last hope, and left them not a shadow of refuge in the creature or in the works of the law, but insisted that it was the Spirit that quickened the soul into eternal life, and not only so but quickens or puts life into prayer and into every acceptable word and work, that the flesh profiteth nothing as regards salvation or sanctification, and that the words that he spake, and those words only, were spirit and life, their carnal minds were wrought up to such a pitch of rebellion that they cast to the winds all their ties of discipleship.

3. But the Lord, so far from softening or at all modifying his testimony, gave them as it were a parting word, which seems to have lashed the enmity of their carnal mind into the highest waves of rebellion. "There are some of you that believe not.

Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." Here our blessed Lord declared that to come unto him so as to receive salvation from him was the sovereign gift of God's grace; that to believe and be saved was "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;" and that as he had promised that he that cometh to him shall never hunger and he that believeth on him shall never thirst; and that this was the will of God that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him should have everlasting life, so he testified that no man could come unto him so as to receive life and salvation from him except it were a special gift unto him by the Father himself.

Now what was the effect of those solemn declarations of our blessed Lord upon the minds of these disciples? Desertion, apostasy. "From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." But why was this? Why did they so sin against their own souls, and by this open apostasy cut themselves off from all help or hope? Because their proud, self-righteous, unbelieving, rebellious hearts could not receive that testimony which by cutting off all boasting in the flesh laid them low before the sovereignty of God. The Lord did not, however, relax his declarations that they might be received with more acceptance; he did not accommodate the stern, uncompromising truths of the gospel to the depraved palate of man; nor did he seek to inveigle disciples into following him by hiding from them or keeping back for a future period the deep mysteries of the gospel. But he laid before them certain vital truths, both as regarded himself and as it regarded them, and if in the obstinacy of their mind they rejected those truths, they rejected them at their own peril. There were those who would receive them if they cast them behind their back. There were babes to whom God would reveal the mysteries of the kingdom, if, in his unerring wisdom, he hid them from the wise and prudent. But it would appear that there was at this juncture a shaking even amongst his own more peculiar disciples. What with hearing such extraordinary language from the Redeemer's lips, what with seeing such a general departing of one professed disciple after

another from him, and what with the unbelief of their own carnal hearts, it seems that the minds even of his own disciples were sadly shaken, and that they or some of them were almost upon the point of quitting him too. He then who reads all hearts and searches all reins saw how their minds were wavering as it were between life and death; how tried and exercised they were whether they should go or whether they should stay, whether they should receive or whether they should reject the words which had dropped from his lips. Seeing, therefore, this wavering among them, for at that time they were very weak and but little established in the faith, he said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away? You see the others are gone: there they are receding in the distance: they have given me up, and will walk no more with me. Will you follow their example, and leave me too?" The Lord indeed knew that they would not, for he himself was holding them up with his mighty hand, but he spoke these words to try their faith, and see whether they could stand the test. Peter, then, ever forward both in nature and grace, first in warmth of natural spirit and first too in holy zeal, speaks in the name of the others, and we may well believe, from the blessed answer which he gave, that the Lord himself especially shone at that moment upon Peter's heart, raised up a special faith in his bosom, gave him a special power, and furnished him with special utterance to speak in the names of all the rest: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

In looking at our subject this morning, as presented to our minds in the words of the text, we may divide it into two simple branches:

I.—*First, the question of the Lord, "Will ye also go away?"*

II.—*Secondly, the answer of Peter, which we may further divide into three branches:—First, his pathetic inquiry, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Secondly, his honest avowal, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." And thirdly, his believing conviction, "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the*

*living God."*

I.—Now you must not for a moment think that there was any real doubt upon the point of the apostacy of Peter and the rest of his brethren; that there was any possibility of the disciples (I speak of the eleven, of course) leaving him. There was, as I think is evident from the context, a temporary wavering in their minds. But a tree may bend before the wind without being torn up by the roots, or even having a branch broken. A ship may encounter the fury of a storm without being driven out of its course. The tree springs back to its place, and shakes the wind off from every rustling leaf. The ship holds on its way, and dashes the waves from off its decks. Temptation to leave Christ is one thing; to leave him fully, to leave him finally, is another. But the disciples themselves scarcely knew the mighty power by which they were upheld, and that they were kept by it through faith unto salvation. (1 Pet. 1:5.) They were only conscious of the workings of two distinct feelings in their bosom—the tendency to go and the tendency to stay; the unbelief which have hurried them into apostacy, and the faith by which they were kept in the hour of temptation. As, then, they were members of the mystical body of the Lord the Lamb; as they had been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; as the firm purpose of God to save and sanctify them in the Son of his love was as unalterable as his own eternal throne, there was no uncertainty in the case whether they would go or whether they would stay. It was not a matter of chance, of contingency, of the free agency of the creature, of the determination of their own will, of the decision of their own mind, or any such accidental circumstance. This, however, it was not necessary then to bring before them. But the Lord addressed himself to their then existing thoughts and feelings. He saw the conflict in their bosoms, and spoke to them as though it was—which it was not—a matter of uncertainty whether they would be faithful to him, or whether they would follow the example of the other professing disciples and renounce their faith and their profession.

But in looking further into this question, it may be as well to

consider three things: First, *how* the disciples, and not the disciples only, (though we take them as an instance of all other disciples,) were first made to believe in his name. Secondly, *the temptations* which they experienced in their bosom to depart from him. And, thirdly, how they were *upheld by a mighty and invisible power*, that they could not depart, though they wavered as it were between going and staying. We cannot read John 17. with an enlightened eye without seeing the certainty of their perseverance, and yet that they only stood in and by the mighty power of God. Thus the Lord says, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me." (John 17:6.) Yet to show that they did not stand in their own strength, the Lord adds, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept." (John 17:12.) Thus, though there was an apparent wavering, yet, being kept by the mighty power of God, the disciples stood when others fell. So will it be with all those who are loved with the same love and kept by the same power. We cannot indeed see how they are kept, for the power which holds them is invisible, but not less real.

i. The work of grace upon the soul is altogether distinct from any imitation of it. However persons may seem led in the same way to believe the same doctrines and to speak the same language, yet could we read the teachings of God in the soul of one of his children and then see as if with his eye any imitation of it in the mind, or any mimicry of it in the lips of another, however near the counterfeit might approach the reality, we should yet discover a distinction between them as great as that between light and darkness. Whose eye but that of God saw the internal difference between those disciples who stood and those who fell; between John and Judas? It was necessary that the immediate disciples of our Lord should be tried, but it was equally necessary that they should stand. The Lord himself had called them in a very especial manner. Though in themselves ignorant, poor, and unlearned, they were to occupy a very distinguished place, a place settled for them in the mind of God, appointed with infinite wisdom, and determined with omnipotent power. They were to be apostles of

the Son of God, preachers of the gospel of his grace, and most of them to be martyrs for their faith. The Lord, therefore, called them in a very especial manner, that their call by grace unto the apostleship might be so signal that there could be no doubt about it, either in their own mind or that of others. It is true that we have not the circumstances detailed in the scriptures of the call of each, but we have a most distinct account of the calling of several, such as Simon and Andrew, James and John, Matthew and Philip, and these give us a clue to the call of the rest, which was as real, though not so determinately marked in the scriptures of truth. And though no especial mention is made of their conviction of sin except in the case of Peter, yet, looking generally at the work of God upon the souls of his people, we may say that none really can be true disciples of Jesus except they are made by the blessed Spirit to feel their deep need of him. This we are sure the disciples felt, for how could they have left some of their fishing nets, another the receipt of custom, and all of them their worldly employment, given up friends and relatives, and turned their back upon all that nature loved, unless some constraining power had been put forth in their soul? And what constraining power is so great to make us flee to Jesus as a solemn dread of most imminent danger, a view of eternity, and our own unfitness to enter into it; a sense of our lost, ruined condition, a knowledge of the anger of God due to sin, an acquaintance with the curse of a condemning law, and an alarming discovery of our misery, our ruin, and our hopeless state, if we live and die in our sins? Man needs to be roused by a mighty and effectual power out of his state of sleep and death. It is not a little pull, a gentle snatch at his coat, a slight tug of his sleeve, which will pull him out of his sins. He must be snatched from them as a person would be snatched out of bed when the house is on fire, or pulled out of a river when sinking for the last time. Let us never think that the work of grace upon the heart is a slight or superficial one. If we need the power of God to keep us when called, surely we need the power of God to call us, which made Paul pray that the saints of Ephesus might "know the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought

in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." (Eph. 1:19, 20.) Indeed there needs a mighty work of grace upon a sinner's heart to deliver him from his destructions. We always, therefore, find the work of grace upon the heart to begin by a spiritual sight and sense of our ruined condition before God. But this alone will not suffice to make us true-hearted disciples of Jesus. It is a preparation, a most needful preparation, for a sight of the King in his beauty, but it is not the same thing as to see and believe in the Son of God unto eternal life. We must have something far beyond any convictions of sin or any sense of our lost and ruined condition. We must have by faith, a view of the blessed Lord more or less manifested to our souls by that Holy Spirit, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and to reveal them to the heart so as to see his suitability, his grace, his glory, his work, his blood, his obedience; and to so see those divine and blessed realities by the eye of faith, as to know and feel for ourselves that they are exactly adapted to our case and state; that they are the very things we require to save us from the wrath to come; and that so far as we have an interest in them we are saved from the floods of destruction. Wherever this believing sight of Christ is given to the soul, it creates and maintains a faith that works by love. Thus wherever there is a view of Jesus by the eye of faith, wherever he manifests and makes himself in any measure precious to the soul, love is the certain fruit of it; for we love him because he first loved us, and, when we begin to love the Lord, love gives us a binding tie which creates union and communion with him. As, then, he unveils his lovely face, and discovers more and more of his beauty and blessedness, it gives him a firm place in the heart's warmest, tenderest affections, and then he comes and takes up his abode in the soul and rules there as its rightful Lord. This is a faint spiritual sketch, as time will not allow us to dwell longer upon this point of the way in which for the most part the Lord makes true-hearted disciples. Let me, however, recall to your mind the following things as indispensably necessary to true discipleship; first, a spiritual sense of our lost, ruined condition; then a knowledge of Christ by a gracious discovery of his suitability, beauty, and blessedness; thirdly, a faith in him that works by love and purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and

delivers from death and hell.

ii. And yet with all this there is a *temptation*, and that neither slight nor unfrequent, to *depart* from all this discipleship, and to forsake the blessed Lord; for did not Jesus say unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" If there had been no wavering in their minds, no strong and powerful temptation to depart, the question would lose most of its significancy. So also it is with us, for though the Lord may have brought us to his feet, and given us a measure of faith and hope toward his name, temptations continually arise which cause a wavering in the mind, and which, but for the sovereign grace of God, would issue not only in a temporary backsliding but in full and final apostacy.

1. For instance, there is the *power of unbelief*. You know a little of what faith is in its various workings, lookings, and trustings, if God has indeed bestowed that precious grace of his Spirit upon you; but as you begin to learn something of what faith is, you begin to find also an opposition made to it. A principle before unnoticed, as lying deeply hidden in the carnal mind, seems to start up and fight against it. This hitherto unseen enemy is the unbelief of your carnal heart, which opposes faith at every turn, and thus you are sometimes like the two scales of a balance. As laid in this balance faith sometimes prevails, but at others unbelief sadly depresses the opposite scale. Occasionally it assumes a still heavier and more oppressive form; for it comes in the shape of *infidelity*. Is not this enough to turn aside a Christian out of the path, and tempt him to depart from the Lord Jesus?

2. But again, when the Lord is first pleased to bring the soul near to himself, he subdues, as long as his power and presence are left, the strength of sin. But sin is never really slain: it is subdued, but never thoroughly killed; crucified, but does not give up its last breath. After a time, then, sin *begins to revive*, seeking to reclaim its former dominion; and as it begins again to work and strives to regain its ancient mastery, it employs every effort to draw the soul away from Jesus. Jesus is a mortal foe to sin. He came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, to put

away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and by the virtue of his death so to crucify our old man that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Rom. 6:6.) But sin is not easily mastered: it lies deeply hidden in the human breast, where it maintains its existence, and out of which it comes again and again with renewed power. It has a thousand lives, and in fact never dies until body and soul are separated. Thus alike unsearchable and unwearied, knowing neither rest nor sleep, but ever prowling after its prey, sin is ever seeking to draw the soul into its old bondage; and if it gain any success, thence come inward backslidings of mind and a gradual departure of the heart and affections from the Lord.

3. But there is another enemy, *Satan*. Satan ever uses sin as his grand weapon to entangle the thoughts and desires, and thus to deceive the heart, to blind the mind, to harden the conscience, to darken the understanding, and to draw the affections away from Jesus. It is impossible to describe the various ways which Satan employs to draw the soul away from the Lord. The confusion which he casts into the mind, the snares which he spreads for the feet, the gins and traps that he lays in our path, the fiery assaults that he makes upon the soul, are all various means that he makes use of to draw the soul away from Jesus, and seduce it from him by sin or drive it from him by terror.

4. Then there is *the world* with its anxieties or its allurements, its cares or its pleasures, all assuming various shapes and forms, according to the characters with which it has to deal, but the end of all its ways and works being to entangle the soul in its destructive snares, and draw it away from the Lord.

iii. Thus there are continual temptations working in all directions, and assailing the mind with various degrees of force, but all aiming at one end,—to draw the heart away from the Lord, bring it into darkness, bondage, and death, and, if it were possible, snap asunder the tie that unites the soul to him. But this never can be. God's purposes can never be defeated. Sin can never prove stronger than Christ; Satan can never rend the soul out of

the hands of him who is able to save to the uttermost. Whatever temptations, therefore, to backslide, whatever wavering there may be in the mind, whatever darkness, doubt, or uncertainty beset the soul, God's purposes are sure, and as such never can be disappointed. Thus the saints of God are upheld by his own fixed and firm decree, which stands for ever recorded in heaven, and this decree is that they never shall perish, and that none shall pluck them out of his hand.

II.—But now we will pass on to our second point, to look at *Peter's answer to the Lord's inquiry*. The Lord said to his disciples, "Will ye also go away?" as though he would kindly and affectionately remonstrate with them, would speak to them with all the moving accents of his own tender voice, and ask them with those lips into which grace was poured whether *they*, his disciples, who had walked with him so long, whom he so loved and who so loved him, would follow the example of the apostate multitude? Now this tender remonstrance of our blessed Lord drew out of Peter's bosom that memorable answer which has been made so precious to many a saint of God. He met the Lord's question as if by a counter inquiry, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" The Lord had said, "Will ye also go away?" Peter asks him in return, "Canst thou tell us to whom we are to go? Thou seemst to put the option into our hand, and to give us the choice whether we are to go or stay; but canst thou tell us to whom we shall go if we leave thee? Canst thou point us to any other Saviour of our souls, any other Son of God, any other Redeemer from death and hell? To whom, then, shall we go for life and salvation?"

i. But let us first examine Peter's *pathetic inquiry*, and from it gather up to what or to whom he and his fellow disciples might have gone if the Lord had suffered them to depart; and yet they would not and could not go because they felt in their hearts the secret yet constraining influence of his grace holding them up in the trying hour. But, in examining Peter's inquiry, I shall somewhat enlarge it so as to embrace ourselves as well as the disciples, so far as we are exposed to the same temptations, yet are upheld by the same superabounding grace and power.

1. Shall we then go to *the world*? Have we not had enough of that? Were we not in it before the Lord was pleased to call us out of it by his grace? But was there any true happiness there, any real satisfaction, contentment, rest, peace, or quiet? Well may we answer, "No." What was it even then but one continued scene of harassing turmoil or vain amusement and empty pleasure, the end of which we knew, even at that time in a measure, would be death? When we were in it there was for us no real happiness; and will there be happiness now when we have come out of it, and yet, in spite of every remonstrance of conscience, go back to it? Take it now at its best or at its worst: do you find any comfort in worldly company, any happiness in carnal society? Do its maxims suit you, its customs, its pleasures, its vanities? In your worst state, do you get any happiness from them? No. Then must you not at once reply, "Whatever I do, whatever become of me, I cannot go back into the world, because when I was in it I had no comfort from it, and to go back now would be but to redouble my misery and ensure my utter ruin."

2. But shall we go back to *sin*? O, perish the thought! What! sin that was the cause of such guilt upon your conscience in times past; sin that brought such a very hell into your soul! Sin that crucified a dear Redeemer! To go back to sin, to wallow in the base lusts of the flesh, to drink down iniquity, to work all uncleanness with greediness, and to spend health, strength, and life itself in those things the end of which we know is certain destruction,—O, how can we for a single moment dare to entertain the thought that we can leave a holy Jesus, a heavenly Redeemer, the sweet company of God's family, and all we have enjoyed and experienced in our hearts in their society, as well as in sacred communion with the Lord himself, to wallow in sin, and thus to bring a certain hell into our conscience, death into our soul, and the awful end of all our profession to be banishment from the presence of the Lord into the blackness of darkness for ever! O Lord, whatever we do, wherever we go, we never can go back to sin.

3. Shall we go back to *the law*? The very thought of it terrifies the mind. Have we not seen enough of the blackness and darkness of that burning mountain? Have we not felt enough of its curse and condemnation and of the wrath of the Lord in a fiery law? We tremble to think of going back to the law if we have been delivered by the gospel, and to put ourselves again under the yoke of Moses when we have taken upon us the yoke of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, and under which alone we have ever found any solid rest or peace.

4. Shall we go *to ourselves*? Shall we find the wished-for rest in self? What! rest in obstinate self; rest in carnal self; rest in rebellious self; rest in righteous self? Why, Lord, self is and ever has been our worst enemy, our greatest misery; to rest then in self is to rest in that which has ever disappointed and which we know ever will disappoint every expectation of rest or peace, for we have long found it full of nothing but deceit, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness, a dangerous friend, and a deceitful foe.

5. Shall we go to *friends*? We may love them in the Lord, but how many cases and states, times and seasons, there are when the best of friends can do us no good! They may counsel and advise us in difficulties, or pity and sympathise with us in trouble, but there they begin and end. Nay, they may prove to us like Job's friends, and may wound and distress us rather than comfort and relieve. Besides which, we have, as Pascal says, "to die alone;" in that solemn hour they cannot die for us even if they would—and though they may flock round our death-bed and sympathise with us in our last pangs, yet they cannot speak that peace and consolation which our souls will most surely want to experience as we journey through the dark valley.

6. Can we go to *enemies*? Have they not wounded us enough already, persecuted us, slandered us, oppressed us, and if they could would have trodden us under their feet? What, then, could they do for us now but to rejoice over our calamities or glory in our apostacy?

Look, then, where we will, turn whither we may, what prospect is there for us, Lord, if we go away from thee? Now it is by these "cords of a man and bands of love," by these sacred drawings and operations of grace upon the heart, that one whom he has taught by his Spirit and called by his power is kept still waiting upon the Lord, looking unto him, and longing for him, though he may not have at the time any powerful manifestations of his dying love, or any sensible discovery of his personal interest in his blood and righteousness.

III. But let us now pass on to that *honest avowal* of Peter's faith in which so much is comprehended, "*Thou hast the words of eternal life.*"

1. Eternal life is a subject at times very sweet to a believing soul. The prospect of an eternity of bliss in the presence of God, where "tears are wiped from off all faces," is, as faith is raised up to believe it for ourselves, a blessed consolation to the believing heart. When we think of what this life is, how short, how uncertain; when we feel burdened with its cares and troubled with its anxieties, and, above all, are loaded and weighted with a miserable body of sin and death, is it not enough to make us sigh and say, "What is there in this life really worth living for?" But to look beyond the narrow isthmus of this wretched, dying world, to those eternal mansions in his Father's house which Jesus has gone to prepare for his people, seems to console the weary pilgrim as he travels through this vale of tears burdened with sin and sorrow in the sweet hope of reaching at last that heavenly shore.

Now this conviction that eternal life is only in Christ Jesus is deeply wrought into the mind of every child of God. We therefore read, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26 ) This life which the Father gave to the Son is his mediatorial life, which he gave unto him that, having it in himself, he might give eternal life to as many as believe in his name. But in thus giving Jesus this life, that he might communicate it out of his own fulness to all the

members of his own mystical body, God gave him "words." As he speaks in his intercessory prayer, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them." (John 17:8.) These words are "the words of eternal life" which he speaks into the heart of his people now as he did to his true disciples then, and as these words come with power from his lips into their soul, they bring with them spiritual and eternal life. It is therefore declared, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18); and again, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23.) But not only do these words bring spiritual life into the heart in the first communication of his grace, but all through his pilgrimage here below the words that Jesus speaks, "they are spirit and they are life" to the saint of God. Now what you want, if really taught of God, is to have these words of eternal life which Jesus has in himself dropped from his lips into your heart. He alone can speak those words into your soul which give and maintain eternal life; for, ever bear in mind, this eternal life is spiritual life. Heaven is not an eternity of bliss apart from holiness, apart from a spiritual enjoyment of God in the realms above of eternal purity. For spiritual and eternal life are one and the same. In giving eternal life, God therefore gives spiritual life; in giving spiritual life, he gives eternal life. But this spiritual and eternal life is given as a free gift of God, by means of those words which the Son of God has received from his Father, that he might give them out of his own fulness to all his believing people, and that by the application of those words eternal life might flow into their soul from him as their living Head. Now do you not feel at times your deep and urgent need of some word to be spoken with power to your heart? You are labouring, it may be, under a heavy load of guilt, are feeling the condemnation of sin and the curse of the Law; you want pardon brought into your soul by a divine power. You know that none but the Lord can pardon your sins, but you want him to speak a word to your heart such as he spoke to the sick of the palsy: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." But until that or some similar word come from the Lord's lips into your heart, you have no clear testimony that your sins are pardoned so as to rejoice in a full and free

salvation.

Or you may be filled with doubt and fear, not only of your interest in the blood and righteousness of the Lord, but as to the end and issue of some present heavy trial. Or you may have many temptations that assail your mind or difficulties spread over your path both in providence and grace, so as to cast your soul down into much trepidation. In these and a variety of similar circumstances you want a word from the Lord. If, then, he be but pleased to speak the word, "Fear not," that word takes away your fears; it relieves your sinking mind from these trepidations, and dispels those dark clouds of temptation which threaten to burst upon it. Or again, you may have been lying for some time under great darkness of mind, so as to have lost well nigh all your evidences, and yet you feel quite unable to bring into your soul any enjoyment of the Lord's power or presence. You want to be revived out of this heavy bondage, this carnality and death, but you cannot do it yourself. Now the Lord has words committed to his trust and charge of spiritual and eternal life, and as these words are spoken by his lips to your soul, they revive the work of God within you, bring you out of your darkness and bondage, renew the life of God within, and make you once more run the way of his commandments with an enlarged heart. And even if he do not speak these words in this special and marked way, yet there is from time to time an application of them with more or less power to the hearts of his people, whereby he maintains the life of God in their breast. Now who can speak to you these words, which not only give and maintain spiritual, but bestow eternal life, but Jesus? You therefore must ever feel and say, "Lord, if I leave thee I leave eternal life. I ensure to myself eternal death. I leave all the promises, all the truths, all the invitations, all the declarations, all the precepts, all the warnings that have fallen from thy gracious lips. In leaving thee, I leave all thou hast to bestow upon me for time and eternity; for canst thou give me a greater blessing than life here and hereafter? How, then, can I leave thee? Where can I go? To the world? To sin? To the law? To the flesh? To my own strength, wisdom, or righteousness? If I depart from thee I depart from life; I choose death, I rush upon despair. Thou hast the words of eternal life,

and even upon a dying bed, if not before, thou canst speak that word to my soul which would make every fear flee away and carry me safe into thy bosom." Thus you see how the true-hearted disciple, amidst all his waverings, difficulties, doubts, and apprehensions, still hangs upon the Lord's lips, because he knows that Jesus has the words of eternal life, which he can, if it be his sovereign will, speak in a moment to his drooping, desponding heart.

iii. But now comes Peter's *believing conviction* which seems to rise out of every doubt and fear, and, like a liberated dove, to soar upward into the pure atmosphere of faith . "*And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*" I said I believed that the disciples were wavering. They were like ourselves, men of like passions. Unbelief was in their heart as in ours; Satan was allowed to tempt them as he tempts us, and they had their difficulties in believing in Jesus such as you and I daily experience. But they were upheld from falling by a mighty yet invisible hand, for they were "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." An unseen cord bound them to the horns of the altar; and it was this secret power of God upon their heart, this heavenly influence upon their soul, which kept them in the faith when the false-hearted disciples departed from it. But this secret power and divine influence chiefly manifested itself in raising up the actings of a living faith in their souls. "*We believe and are sure.*" That is, they believed and were sure of what the others neither believed nor were sure of. The others knew nothing of the operations of heavenly grace producing a living faith in their bosom. They listened, they saw, they professed outwardly to believe as the disciples believed, but they knew nothing of those secret and sacred teachings from above which had wrought that living faith in the heart of the disciples which at first brought them to the feet of Jesus, and then kept them there in the hour of temptation.

But now let us look a little more closely into what they believed, and not only believed, but were "sure of." First, then, they believed that Jesus was "*the Christ;*" that is, the anointed one,

the Messiah, for whom the saints were then looking in Jerusalem. God had promised that he would send an anointed one. It was a usage of divine appointment to anoint the high priests, and afterwards the kings, and the prophets. Therefore, the Messiah, the Christ, signified, according to their believing apprehension, an anointed priest, an anointed king, and an anointed prophet. This anointing was typical of the unction of the Holy Ghost, which was given to our blessed Lord without measure, and qualified him to be Priest, King, and Prophet of the Church of God.

1. Let us, then, first look at him as *an anointed Priest*. As the Christ, he was that high Priest over the house of God who was to offer sacrifice, and that of no less than himself; who was to shed his blood as a propitiation for sin, and, by for ever putting it away, to reconcile vile guilty, transgressors to the Lord their God. In believing, then, that he was the Christ, the disciples believed him to be the great high Priest over the house of God who by sacrifice should put away sin. But why did the disciples believe and were sure that Jesus was the Christ, and as such, the anointed Priest of whom Aaron was but a dim and feeble figure? Because God had shown it unto them, given them some manifestation of it, and raised up a living faith in their hearts whereby he was received and apprehended as the Messiah that should come. This was the grand turning point—was Jesus the Christ or not? If he were the Christ, he was the Shiloh, "the desire of all nations," "the messenger of the Covenant," "the Branch" who should "bear the glory, and should sit and rule upon his throne and should be a priest on his throne." (Zech. 6:12, 13.) If he were not the Christ, what was he? I will not say, for faith admits not the alternative and will not utter the word.

2. Then, again, view him as the disciples saw him by the eye of faith, as their and your anointed *King*. Who reigns in your affections? Who holds the reins of government? Whom do you serve? Whose law is your law, whose word your word, and whose will your will? "Jesus," you say: "he is my King; I have given myself up to him; he has taken the reins of government into his hands; I have touched his sceptre; he is my Lord, and I worship

only him. Other lords beside him have had dominion over me; but by him only now do I make mention of his name." In so receiving and submitting to him, you receive him as your anointed King.

3. Who is your *Prophet*; your *teacher*? Who is your instructor in the truths of God? At whose feet do you receive lessons which plainly show you the way of salvation? "Jesus," you still say. "Like Mary, I would ever sit at his feet and hear his word. God hath made him wisdom to my soul as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and as such would I ever look to and learn of him." Then he is your *anointed Prophet*. Thus looking to him by faith as offering himself a sacrifice for sin, you believe in him as your anointed Priest. Submitting to his righteous government as your Lord and your God, you believe in him as your anointed King. And sitting at his feet to receive his words into your heart, you receive him as your anointed Prophet. And thus you believe in him as the Christ the Messiah, the one anointed of God to be all this to the Church of God.

But, Peter, speaking for himself and his fellow-disciples, added, "*And we are sure.*" Here is assurance—certainty—undoubting persuasion. To believe is not enough; we must be sure. But how can we be sure? If we have seen a thing with our eyes, we are sure of that. If we have touched a thing with our hands, we are sure of that. And if we have walked to any place with our feet, we are sure of that. So it is in spiritual things. If I have seen the Person of Jesus with a believing eye; if I have heard the words of Jesus with a believing ear; if I have touched the hem of Jesus with a believing hand; if I have walked in Jesus with believing feet, then I not only believe but I am sure that he is the Christ. Now this believing assurance Peter had, and this all the saints of God in their measure have. It does not say that you are always sure of your interest in him, and never doubt nor fear; it does not say that you have no infidel temptations, no departings in thought, no waverings of mind, no sinkings of feeling. But have there not been times and seasons when you believed and were sure that Jesus is the Christ? You have had such a manifestation of his Person, discovery of his grace, revelation of his love, or of

his sufferings, as received by a living faith, that you are sure that he is the Christ. Now this kept Peter and this will keep you. Nothing else will. Sin, Satan, the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, with the various temptations spread in your path, will surely draw every one aside who has not Peter's faith wrought in his heart by Peter's God, so as to believe and be sure that Jesus is the Christ.

iv. But we believe and are sure of something else. We believe and are sure that Jesus, who stood before the apostle Peter and was then conversing with him, was *the Son of God*,—"the Son of the Father in truth and love;" God's "only-begotten Son," who had come out of his Father's bosom, in which he had ever lain, to bleed and die with poor lost, ruined man. But in viewing him as such, Peter and the disciples saw him as the "brightness of the Father's glory and the excess image of his Person," which he could only be in his divine nature, for in that only he and the Father are "one."

I do not wish to enter here into the field of controversy, though by it error is often exposed and truth established. But I would simply ask any unprejudiced person what Peter could mean by the words, "the Son of the living God," but that Jesus was his true, actual, and proper Son? It had been revealed to him, not by flesh and blood, but by the Father himself in heaven, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:17); and what had thus been revealed to his heart he confessed with his tongue. What did he know or want to know about his being the Son of God only by name, office, character, or covenant? His faith soared above all such perversions whereby erroneous men have laboured to destroy a mystery never revealed to them by the power of God, and it embraced in love and affection the simple yet sublime truth that Jesus was that only-begotten Son whom the Father gave, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

Now, whatever men may think or say, this is the grand turning point—whether we believe or not that Jesus is "the Christ, the

Son of the living God." John declares that such are born of God, overcome the world, and have the witness in themselves. (1 John 5:1, 4, 10.) He testifies also that he who thus hath the Son hath life, and that he that hath not the Son of God hath not life; and declares that "whosoever" is possessed of this faith and "shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." How needful then is it for us in this day of error, when men are everywhere mystifying and explaining away, or denying the true and real Sonship of our adorable Lord, to know clearly for ourselves what we believe and in whom we believe, so as "to abide in the doctrine of Christ, and thus have both the Father and the Son." We shall then be able to say, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20.)

Can you, then, say that you believe and are sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? How are you to believe it and to be sure of it? Because the Bible says so? How do you know that the Bible is true? Because I say so? How do you know that I am not a deceiver? You must know it, then, for yourselves by the teaching of the blessed Spirit in your heart; and you only can know it in the same way that Peter knew it. Did not the Lord himself say unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven?" (Matt. 16:17.) Men may despise revelation and prefer reason. One is possessed by all; the other is given but to few. The wise and prudent as knowing everything cling to reason; the babes as knowing nothing cleave to revelation. And thus are the Lord's words made good. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11:25.) If, then, you have Peter's faith, from enjoying a measure of Peter's revelation, you will be kept as Peter was. Can you not say, in the secret depths of your soul, "Lord, amidst all my waverings, doubtings, sinkings, fearings, trials, temptations, griefs, burdens, and sorrows, as I turn my eyes on every side I

ask my mind the solemn question, 'To whom shall I go?'" and the answer still is, "All is darkness, guilt, wrath, and despair except in Jesus." Is that the conviction of your mind? Is that wrought in your heart as a feeling of which you are distinctly sensible as being even now in your bosom? Thus far, then, Peter's faith and feeling are yours. But can you go on a step further with Peter? for Peter's faith began to rise as his soul began to be warmed by the power of God. Do you know that Jesus has "the words of eternal life?" Has he ever spoken a word with power to your heart? Have spiritual feelings and affections, such as a good hope through grace, repentance unto life, love of the Lord and his people, ever been communicated to your soul by some word dropped with power into your conscience, so that you know for yourself that he has the words of eternal life, and that he has spoken them to you? And does not this make and keep you still looking to and longing for some fresh word to be spoken again as a renewed pledge that you are indeed saved in him with an everlasting salvation? Then can you not go on and declare from his own testimony in your conscience and from what you have seen and felt of his blessedness and beauty, grace and glory, that you believe and are sure he is the Christ the Son of the living God? If so, concerning faith, you will never make shipwreck; you will never depart from the Lord. You may have many temptations so to do, but you will never turn away from him as he will never turn away from you; for he is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

## **JESUS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Afternoon, June 11, 1865

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" John 11:25, 26

What a beautiful, what an interesting family picture has the Holy Ghost, by the pen of the apostle John, drawn in the sacred narrative of the gracious household, which once dwelt in the little village of Bethany, near Jerusalem. In it we seem to see the rare spectacle of a family living together in happy harmony, united by the strong ties of nature, and united still more closely by the firmer and more enduring bonds of grace,—Martha, Mary, Lazarus. What an echo there is in our heart to these names. May we not also picture to ourselves our gracious Lord, when He had been at Jerusalem wearied—for we know He was subject to human infirmity and could be weary, for He sat weary once on Samaria's well—when our gracious Lord returned from Jerusalem, wearied in body and grieved in spirit, how He would come to this happy household, and there solace Himself with the company of these two gracious sisters and their no less gracious brother? for we read that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." (John 11:5.)

Our Lord went about doing good, and spent much of His time and exercised much of his ministry in Galilee; which being situated in the north part of the Holy Land, lay at a considerable distance from Bethany. But it would appear that at this time He was not in Galilee but beyond Jordan, in the place where John at first baptized, which lay at some distance to the east of Jerusalem. Now when He was thus absent, engaged in performing His gracious errands of mercy, a dark cloud began to gather over this happy household. It might have been at first only as small as a man's hand, but it gathered thick and fast, and every hour

seemed to hang upon them more and more densely. Lazarus had fallen ill. Now the first movement of his gracious sisters was to send a message to their dear Lord, that he whom He loved was sick. They knew His power as well as His love; and that as by the one He would at once come, so by the other He could at once heal. They naturally therefore expected that He would come speedily in a case so urgent as this, for in that climate disease makes rapid progress, and were doubtless looking out every day and almost every hour for His arrival.

But Lazarus gets worse and worse every hour. Denser, darker are the clouds, which hang over the house. Jesus tarries; for we read that "when He heard that he was sick, He abode two days in the same place where He was." Jesus comes not. All hope dies in their breast. The disease gradually increases until at last Lazarus sinks under its pressure. Now what a mercy it was for these two sisters, and their brother too, that Jesus did not come; and may I not add, for the Church of God also for all time? What treasures of mercy and grace were involved in His delay. What a stupendous miracle gave occasion for Him to work. What a demonstration of His power it afforded that He was truly the Son of God, and what a lasting blessing has it been made to successive generations of saints. Though the Lord well knew, in His omniscient mind, all that was transpiring in that little household, yet for His own wise and gracious purpose His footsteps tarried, and mercy made Him stay for a while as mercy made Him come at last.

I need not dwell further upon the features of this interesting narrative, though every part of it is pregnant with holy instruction, but shall come at once to that part which precedes our text. It is the interview of Martha with the Lord at Bethany. Martha, true to her character, could not stay at home; she was a restless body, for on a later occasion when she had obtained the Lord's company she could not be satisfied with merely listening to His gracious conversation. She must needs think about the dinner, nay come and ask Him to bid her sister help her to set it out properly, and not spend her time so—I will not say

unnecessarily, but so long sitting at the feet of Jesus. Like many of our Marthas, she loved religion and the things of God; but being a bustling, active character, worldly business would intrude on her mind, and to this she would sometimes give a first place when it ought to have had but the second. Are you not sometimes like her, thinking more of business than of Christ, and even in the house of prayer, instead of listening to the word are thinking about the dinner?

Martha, then, true to her character, leaves Mary at home, praying, watching and waiting upon God in secret, and hurries out at the very first tidings of His arrival; but as soon as she meets Him, almost in the language of reproach, not very unlike the way in which she addressed the Redeemer with respect to her sister upon another occasion, says, "Lord if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Do not the words sound almost as if she was reproaching the Lord because He was not there? And yet the blessed woman, with all her infirmities, had faith in her soul, and this faith manifested itself in the midst of her complaint. "But I know that even now,"—though the case seems so desperate—"I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God wilt give it Thee." O, Martha, thy faith was somewhat lacking here. Thou shouldest have looked a little higher than this, and seen that he was the true God Himself who stood before thee, and that He had but to speak the word, and Lazarus would rise. Thou shouldest have seen that He held creation in His fists, and that life and death were at His supreme disposal. Jesus, in that calm, blessed manner in which our Lord ever spoke, unruffled, unmoved, in all the quiet dignity and glorious majesty of God-head, saith unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha still shows faith, and yet evidently mixed with much weakness. "Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then the Lord uttered those words which I shall, with God's help and blessing, endeavour to lay open and bring before you this afternoon: "Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

I think we may observe three leading features in our text.

**I.—First, the gracious declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life."**

**II.—Secondly,** the two gracious consequences, which are connected with, and flow out of this declaration:

1, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" and, 2, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

**III.—Thirdly,** the gracious **appeal**. "Believest thou this?" I.—How blessed are the gracious declarations which the Lord has given of Himself, His own testimonies to His Person and work, such as, for instance, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me; .... I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep; .... I am the bread of life." What grace there is in these declarations of Himself, and how He seems to unfold Himself in and by them to the Church of God that she may receive these words from His lips and exercise faith upon them. Let us then view this gracious declaration, and observe in it two things which our Lord declares Himself virtually to be—"The Resurrection and the Life:" Let us consider each of them separately.

**I. "I am the resurrection."** The Lord does not say "By Me shall men rise," or "I at the last day will raise the dead." But he declares of Himself, "I Myself am the resurrection." Surely, there is something deep in these words. Surely there is some profound truth, if we can but penetrate into the bosom of it. Let us see, then, whether, with God's help and blessing, I can take you by the hand and lead you into the very bosom of this truth, that you and I may walk in it, feed upon it and know what it is to the joy of our souls.

1. The resurrection of Christ is, in the first place, the **grand cardinal doctrine of our most holy faith**. And why? Because on it our faith virtually rests. Our faith, if it be the faith of God's elect, is that Jesus is the Son of God. Now that our faith may not be a shadow but a substance, it must rest upon some solid foundation. What proof then have we that Jesus is the Son of God? His resurrection. We therefore read that He "was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4.) His resurrection was thus God's own attesting seal that He was his dear Son. He was put to death as a blasphemer, because He said "I am the Son of God." When God therefore raised Him from the dead, He set his own attesting seal that Jesus really was what He said He was—the Son of God. It is for this reason that the resurrection of Christ is the grand cardinal, fundamental doctrine of our most holy faith; for upon it hangs the substantial proof of His declaration, that he was the Son of God, and had come as the Son of God from the bosom of the Father to do the work which the Father had given Him to do.

2. But there is something more in the resurrection of Jesus Christ than the mere attestation of God and the declaration with power from on high that He was His dear Son. When our gracious Lord rose from the dead, **the whole Church virtually and mystically rose in and with Him**. We therefore read in the epistle to the Ephesians, that God "raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 2:6.) How and why? Because the Church of God mystically and virtually rose together with Christ. No sooner did the Head lift Himself up out of the grave than all the members rose together with Him. It was with Him spiritually as with us literally when we rose from our bed this morning: every member rose with our Head. So the Church of Christ as members of the mystical body of the Lord the Lamb, virtually and mystically rose together with her rising Head.

3. But there is something in the resurrection of the Lord more than this. On the resurrection of Christ hangs **what He now is to the Church of God**. If He had lain beyond the due time, lifeless in the tomb, not only would there have been no attestation by the

power of God that He was His dear Son; not only would the Church have lain dead and buried with Him in the tomb where He lay; but He could not have fulfilled those present offices which He now sustains at the right hand of the Father as "the Mediator between God and men." He could not have been "the High Priest over the house of God." He could not have been King in Zion, waiting "till all His enemies should be made His footstool." He could not have sent the Holy Spirit down to testify of Himself. He could not commune with us from off the mercy seat, and unfold the glories of His lovely Person, the efficacy of His atoning blood, and the beauty and blessedness of His justifying righteousness. Our faith would have had no Object, our hope no anchorage within the veil; and where would our love have been without a Person upon whom that love could have been fixed?

Every grace of the soul, therefore, hangs upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If we believe, we believe in a risen Christ; if we hope, we hope in a risen Christ; and if we love, we love a risen Christ; for a dead Christ is no Christ to us who want a living God to fulfil the desires of a living soul. But blessed be God, Christ is risen from the dead; He is gone up on high: He is even now at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. He has opened a way through the veil of His rent flesh, and our prayers, desires and supplications, with all our loving affections, may ascend to Him within the veil and enter into the holiest, even the presence of God, where He has gone as our forerunner, to sit down there until He comes a second time without sin unto salvation. Thus not only every doctrine of our most holy faith, but every experience of a living soul hangs upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Look at this in the light of your own experience. I was speaking this morning of the Son of God being come and our knowledge of it, and I endeavoured to show that one way whereby we know that He is come, is because we follow Him up by faith to where He is at the right hand of God, and communes with us from off the mercy seat. Faith must have a divine Object on which it may fix its eyes, which it may embrace, to which it may cleave and

round which it may twine. This Object is Jesus as risen from the dead, and now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." To Him therefore looking "as the Author and Finisher of our faith, we run with patience the race that is set before us" in the lively hope of His bringing us off more than conquerors over every foe and every fear. But if He be not risen from the dead, then of all men we are most miserable: we have no hope beyond the grave; no sins pardoned, no transgressions forgiven, no righteousness brought in, no present grace, no future glory. This is the reason why the apostles in all their sermons, as recorded in the Acts, preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33.)

II. But our most gracious Lord is not only "the resurrection"—I shall bring that point to bear more fully upon your experience when I come to my second part—but he is also "**the life.**" Adam had life, for God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7) but he lost it in and by the fall; and the image of God in which he was created was thereby thoroughly marred and defaced. He thus became dead in trespasses and sins; and as he begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness, and we all partake of this fallen, corrupt nature, we come into this world dead in sin. But what union, what intercourse, what communion can a soul dead in sin have with the living God? Will you take a corpse into your bed, and embrace it as a suitable wife for a living husband? Our blood runs cold at the thought. When death seizes the wife of your bosom, you say with Abraham, "Let me bury my dead out of my sight." A cold clay corpse is no longer the partner of your bed; the coffin and the grave are now its fitting place.

How then can you think that Jesus can take to His bosom a dead bride? Or how can a dead soul enter into the courts of a living God? What union, what communion can there be between a soul dead in sins and a God living in the light of His own holiness? Life, therefore, must be communicated and breathed into a soul before

it can have union and communion with God here; before it can be fitted for His presence on earth, or enjoy the mansions prepared for it before time began in heaven. Now that this spiritual and eternal life might be breathed into, and communicated to the church, it pleased the Father that the fulness of this life should dwell in Christ: "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." This life, of which the Lord thus speaks, is not His life as the eternal Son of God, but His mediatorial life, which can be communicated; for there is this difference between His life as the Son of God and His life as Mediator, that the one is communicable and the other not. Thus when Jesus says here, "I am the life," He speaks of His mediatorial life, that spiritual and eternal life which was treasured up in Him as Mediator, that it might be imparted and communicated to the members of His mystical body. We, therefore, read, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4.) So also, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (1 John 5:11.) He therefore says of Himself, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

How often we are looking and looking in vain for life in ourselves. True it is that if God has quickened our souls we are partakers of life divine, of life spiritual, of life eternal, of the life that is in Christ and comes from Christ; and yet how often we vainly seek to find it warm and glowing in our breasts. If once given it never dies; but it is often hid beneath the ashes, and thus though it slowly burns and dimly glows, yet the ashes hide it from view, and we only know it is there by some remains of warmth. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3.) and therefore not only hidden as treasured and stored up safely in God, but hidden from the world, and even hidden from the eyes of its possessor. Christ is our life. There is no other.

To look, then, for life in ourselves independent of and distinct from the fountain of life is to look for that in the creature which is lodged in the divine Creator, is to look for that in man which dwells in the God-Man; to look for that in self which is out of self,

embosomed in the fulness of the Son of God. And observe that it is not merely that life is in Him, but He is the life itself. As the sun not only has light and heat, but is light itself and heat itself, so the blessed Lord not only grants life, but He Himself is what He grants. As a fountain not only gives water but is itself all water, so Christ not only gives what He is but is all that He gives. Not only, therefore, is He the "resurrection," centering in himself everything both for time and eternity which resurrection contains and resurrection implies, but He is "the life," being in Himself a fountain of life, out of which He gives from His own fulness to the members of His mystical body. But as He has to teach us what He is thus in Himself by lessons of personal experience, I shall now, with God's help and blessing, enter upon the second branch of my subject, in which I was to show.

**II.—The two gracious consequences** which are connected with, and flow out of the Lord's being the resurrection and the life.

These two consequences are,

1, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" and,

2, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." If you read these words with any measure of gracious understanding, you will see in them a bearing upon the two characters which the Lord claims for Himself as "the resurrection and the life," and will perceive in them a remarkable fitness as a connecting link between His being the resurrection and the life and the two gracious consequences which arise out of it.

I. The first gracious consequence is connected with His being "the resurrection." He says "I am the resurrection." Now see how there flows out of this declaration a spiritual consequence, which very much meets the experience and feelings of God's family; and as such I shall unfold it. "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

1. What is resurrection? What does it imply? Out of what state does resurrection bring? A state of death. Death is necessary to resurrection. Was not our Lord dead when He was raised from the grave? So His resurrection, viewed with a believing eye, as pregnant with gracious fruits, carries with it this most blessed consequence, that it meets the case, is adapted to the experience, and embraces the spiritual state and condition of those who are dead. It will do so one day as regards **the body**. Christ is the resurrection both of body and soul. When then He comes again a second time without sin unto salvation, His voice will quicken the dead; the graves will burst open, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible; for His voice will call the sleeping dust of the saints out of the tomb, and they will stand up in all the glorious vestments of immortality. Do we not, therefore, read "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." (1 Cor. 15:20-23.)

But His resurrection has also a spiritual import—a gracious fruit in this life, as well as that which is to come. There is a **spiritual** resurrection consequent upon His resurrection from the dead, as there will be a literal resurrection when the body is raised from the tomb at the great day. As, therefore, none can and will be raised but the sleeping dead, by virtue of His being the resurrection, so none can be raised from a spiritual death but by His power and influence as the same. But whom does the text mean by the dead? Let me open this. It does not mean the dead in sin; I will tell you why. The character pointed out in our text is said to believe, which no man dead in sin does or can do. Look at the words: bring to them your spiritual understanding. Follow me, if you have any confidence in me as a spiritual guide: see whether I cast any light upon the meaning of the words, and if you see with me then follow me on. I will lead you safely, if God give me ability. I would not deceive you, for I would not deceive

myself. The dead spoken of in the text are not then those who are dead in sin or dead in a profession; because they are said to believe, which no man dead in sin ever did. "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." But how can one who is dead believe? He can, or our Lord would not have said so. I will show you how. He is a living man as quickened into life by the power of the Spirit of God, and yet he is dead. How can we reconcile this mystery? It is one of those paradoxes, which form a part of the great mystery of godliness.

**(a)** First, he is dead as **slain by a killing law**. He is alive unto God, and yet he is dead in law. The law has come; it has discharged its fiery contents into his bosom and slain him outright. Therefore, though he is a living man, has the love and fear of God in his soul, he is dead in law and dead also to the law, because he is slain by it as to any hope of justification. Thus he is dead.

**(b)** But he is dead in another sense: **according to the verdict of his own conscience**. Take a man upon whom the law has passed its condemning sentence. The judge sentences him to death; he is taken away from the bar, and shut up in the condemned cell. Though not yet set upon the scaffold, though not yet executed, he is virtually a dead man. The law has condemned him; he is condemned in his own feelings; he knows he must die; and therefore he feels to be a dying man. Thus when a man's own conscience seconds the verdict of God's holy law, and he falls down before the throne of God, slain by its condemning sentence, and this is ratified by the verdict of his own guilty conscience, he is dead as falling down dead before God. And yet he is a living man. The man in gaol is a living man, and yet the law pronounces him dead; for every gloomy hour, and every tolling bell, and every striking clock, falls upon his ear and strikes the death-knell into his soul, as knowing how soon he must before assembled spectators make an awful end.

**(c)** But he is dead also in a third sense: as to **any exertion of his own strength**, wisdom or power to do his soul any spiritual

good; for he feels unable to raise up any living faith—and he knows that nothing but living faith will be of any avail—any gracious hope, or any warm, living love. So he is dead by law; he is dead by conscience; and dead by a sense of his own spiritual helplessness and inability. As Abraham knew that he was dead in body, so he knows that he is dead in soul.

Now see how suitable to this dead man is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is said to believe: mark that: "He that **believeth** in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." There is then in the breast of this dead man a living faith. This is the deep mystery, that though he is dead in law, dead in conscience, dead in helplessness, yet God the Holy Ghost has breathed into him and deposited in him a seed of living faith. By this faith he cries, by this faith he sighs, and by this faith he hungers and thirsts after righteousness: yea, more, by this faith he looks unto and believes in the Son of God. He scarcely knows that he has faith. His faith is so weak and so small in his own estimation, that he dare not say he has faith; and yet he has all the fruits of faith, all the marks of faith, and all the evidences of faith. Take as a parallel case Jonah in the whale's belly. Had he faith or had he not faith? How low he sank when the waves were heaped over his head, when carried through the boundless deep in the belly of the whale. Yet even there he could say, "I will look again toward Thy holy temple." Had he no faith? Yes, he had; and by that faith he was saved, justified, accepted, brought out and delivered, and able to say, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Take Jeremiah in the low dungeon, when it seemed as though every hope was closed, and he sank deep into the mud and mire. Even there, when the waters flowed over his head, his prayer could enter into the ears of God and bring down a gracious answer. Does he not say: "I called upon Thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon? Thou hast heard my voice: hide not Thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee: Thou saidst, Fear not." (Lam. 3:55-57.) Take Hezekiah upon his bed of sickness. Had he no faith? How then could he turn his face to the wall and pray unto the Lord? How

could his eyes fail with looking upward, when he said, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." Take David in his mournful journey, when he went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up barefoot, with his head covered, at the time of Absalom's rebellion. Had he no faith? How then came he to pray? "O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." And why did the Lord answer that prayer, if it were not the prayer of faith?

In all these men of God, sunk though they were almost to the last and lowest point, there was still the life of faith; and by that faith they called upon God. They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. Here then is the connection between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and the experience of this seemingly dead soul. When Christ died, He bare the sins of this poor dead soul in His body on the tree, and thus atoned for them and put them away. When Christ rose from the dead, this poor dead soul rose with Him, as a member of His mystical body. When Christ went up on high, he ascended with Him. And when Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father, he virtually and mystically sat down with Him in heavenly bliss. Therefore, because Jesus is the resurrection, and because as such he has an interest in Him, he that believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

How often, dear friends, we sink into places where we are in our feelings dead men. Has sin never slain you? Have convictions never, so to speak, knocked the life of God out of your soul? Has Satan never come with his fiery darts, with all the artillery of hell, and sought to scorch up every gracious feeling and every living desire? And have you not sunk at times in your soul into such miserable deadness of spirit, that it seemed that not only there and then you were devoid of all grace, but that it was an impossibility for grace ever again to renew and revive your soul? Here you were dead. I have been often here which enables me to describe it to you. Yet with all this there is a longing look, a heartfelt groan, a heaving sigh, a resisting unto blood, not an utter giving way, nor sinking down into miserable despair.

God the Spirit kept alive His work upon the soul, and Christ Himself as the resurrection dropped into our bosom, raised up and drew forth towards Himself some fresh movements of that life which is in Him. There was thus fulfilled that gracious consequence of His resurrection, "Whosoever believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." O, amidst all our deadness, all our gloom and desolation, all our emptiness, barrenness and helplessness, if there be in our souls a longing look, a heart-felt cry, an earnest groan, a sincere desire toward Him who is the resurrection, our prayer will ascend into His pitying, sympathising ear; and as He is the resurrection, He will once more raise up into life and feeling our dead and drooping soul. We have no other source of life. If we were altogether and really dead, we should always continue dead unless He were the Resurrection. But because He is the Resurrection, He can re-animate, revive, renew and requicken us by pouring into our hearts fresh life and feeling. It will be our mercy to be ever looking unto Him, hanging upon Him, believing in Him, trusting to Him, and giving Him no rest until He appear again and again to the joy and rejoicing of our heart.

I fully believe that very many, perhaps I may add, the large majority of the people of God feel much of this death, which I have been describing; and perhaps, though it may seem singular so to speak, those who are most lively feel it most. Were we totally dead, we should have no sensible feeling of our death at all, but should be like those described by Heman: "Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom Thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from Thy hand." (Ps. 88:5.) Were we half or three parts dead we should feel it just in proportion to the amount of our life over our death. It is in spiritual things almost as in natural; the more a person is paralysed the less feeling he has. Thus, though it may seem a paradox, the more life that you have the more do you feel your death. How light and trifling, easy and unconcerned most professors are. Why? Because they have not enough life to feel their death.

It is good then that we should feel our death; for it not only shows us more clearly and sensibly our wretched case and state by nature, but by driving us out of all help and hope in self, makes us to prize more dearly the life that is in Christ. How suitable then, how comforting, how reaching down to the utmost extremity of our case, are the words, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." When, too, we see and realise the connection of every gracious revival with the resurrection of Christ, how sure and firm it makes those revivals to be, those visitations which preserve our spirit. This made Paul long so ardently to know the power of Christ's resurrection. (Php. 3:10.) It was not the bare doctrine or the mere fact of His resurrection that he wanted to know, but the power of it as revealed and made manifest in his own heart. But it is by believing in Him that we receive these gracious revivals—not by looking to ourselves, but to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

II. But I now come to the other gracious consequence, connected, like the last, with the gracious declaration, which fell from the Lord's lips, "I am the resurrection and the life." It would almost seem as if the Lord divided His people into two classes. They are both believers, for you will find the same thing spoken of each. "He that believeth in Me," and "Whosoever believeth in Me." They are therefore both partakers of the same faith, for there is but "one faith;" and yet our Lord speaks of one class as dead, and the other class as living. How is this paradox to be explained? I will endeavour to show you. The dead I have described as those not dead in sin, nor dead in profession, but dead in feeling.

We have then to explain the living in a similar way. "He that liveth" is one who has the life of God warm in his soul; one that knows something of the living experience of faith and hope and love; one who can and does rise by the power of God out of darkness and death, and knows something of living union and living communion with a living Lord; one in whose heart the kingdom of God is set up with a divine power; one who has

righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; in whose heart the holy Dove nestles; over whose soul He sheds his gracious influences; whom He stirs up as the eagle stirs up her nest, and makes him alive and lively too.

You will find this striking difference among the family of God. There are some who scarcely seem to have, or at least to realise the life of God in their souls. You will find them almost always complaining of a body of sin and death; always full of doubt and fear, always crying out bitterly against themselves and mourning and sighing under the pressure of heavy burdens, constant trials and continual afflictions. Now and then it is true they get a little relief, a little lightening of their burdens, tokens for good, helps from the sanctuary, encouraging promises, and gracious gleams of light and life across their path. But for the most part their almost daily experience is to feel and bewail their own deadness. Now to these the resurrection of Christ is blessedly adapted. He who is the Resurrection folds them in His loving embrace, though they can hardly realise His sustaining arms. But who keeps them from utterly falling, or from time to time revives their drooping hope? None but He who is the Resurrection. The gracious Lord who feeds his flock like a shepherd, gathers these lambs with His arms, carried them in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young.

But there are others of God's family, a small minority perhaps, who are more favoured, more blessed, whose souls are kept more alive and warm in the things of God. I have known a few of these in my time, though but a few, for we live in a dark and gloomy day when the Spirit of the Lord seems much straitened, and His gracious consolations little vouchsafed. But these are the most profitable Christians that we can have intercourse with; for sometimes they seem to warm us by the influence of their own warmth, are made instrumental in stirring up our sleeping graces, or reprove us in our consciences for our coldness and deadness.

Thus we get good from their company and find their society strengthening and profitable. Their prayers, too, whether in public

or private are a blessing to the Church of God; and if they be ministers, as having life and power in their souls, they can speak with more unction and savour to the hearts of God's family than their brethren who are more borne down by a body of sin and death. Not but that the Lord makes use of both—His tried and tempted servants to feed His tried and tempted people, and those who walk more at liberty to feed that part of the family who are similarly favoured and blessed. And yet they are as dependent on the Lord of life as the others. They have to believe and do believe in the same Lord, hang upon the same atoning blood, shelter themselves beneath the same justifying righteousness, trust to the same faithfulness, and cleave to the same blessed Redeemer as their less favoured brethren. But to them in an especial manner He is "the Life," as to the others He is "the Resurrection." Sitting in His risen glory at the right hand of the Father, He contains in Himself life in all its fulness; and as they feel and realise this, it draws them up into sweet communion with Him.

The Lord Jesus is first the Resurrection and then the Life, for necessarily He rose from the dead before He ascended on high. Each has its special power and virtue. By virtue of His resurrection He quickens the dead; by virtue of His life He maintains the life that He gives. Thus as dead, we both need and realise His resurrection; as living, we feel and realise His life. But it is by looking unto him and at Him, by contemplating His Person and work, by going out after Him in earnest breathings and desires and by receiving out of His fulness that we realise Him to be the life, and draw life out of Him into our needy and empty souls. As then those that live thus believe in Him, He indulges them with visitations of His presence and grace, communes with them from off the mercy-seat; keeps their souls tender in the fear of God; separates them in person, in heart, in affection from an ungodly world; makes them spiritually-minded, which is life and peace; and draws them near to His bosom, where they find food and shelter.

And yet it is the same living faith, though stronger, which we have seen acting in those who are lamenting their death; and as

stronger exposed to sharper trials, weighted down by the pressure of heavier afflictions, carrying a more heavy daily cross, and fighting harder against the world, the flesh and the devil. This may seem strange; but was it not Paul's experience to be "sorrowful yet always rejoicing?" So it is with these. None more burdened, none more blessed; none more afflicted, none more favoured; none fighting harder battles, none gaining greater victories. Thus their very afflictions are made use of as goads to urge them forward; their crosses though heavy to bear, are employed as means to make them move on, if more slowly, yet more surely; and those very circumstances which most deeply try them prove in the end their richest mercies. Thus, take the whole family of God, whether they be in the class which I have first described, dead in law, dead in feeling, as Berridge says, "**Self condemned and self abhorred,**" scarcely able to trace the life of God in their own souls, and often sunk very low in gloomy fears, still they are believers in the Son of God; for He who is the Resurrection can and does raise up in their hearts some living faith in Himself. And yet for the most part they drag wearily on from this deadness of spirit and coldness of affection. But the other class, fewer indeed in number, yet still partakers of the same faith, and looking to the same Lord, enjoy more of His manifested presence and love.

Now see the two promises which are made to each. Of the first it is said that "he shall live;" of the second, that "he shall never die." How precious are these promises in themselves. How much more precious is, or should be, the Lord Himself who made and gave them, and who is Himself their sum and substance! I could wish for myself and you, to find their fulfilment in our daily experience; that we might prove the firm foundation on which they rest, and that as spoken by the mouth of Christ, they are spirit and life to our souls. We shall never get the least benefit by looking to ourselves; for all that we are and have is sin, darkness and death. We must look out of ourselves, come out of ourselves, live out of ourselves to find resurrection and life in the risen Son of God.

But we may stretch our thoughts a little further still. The promise has a future aspect as well as a present one, a literal as well as a spiritual meaning. One part of it embraces those who are gone before and now lie sleeping in their graves. As Christ is the Resurrection, these though dead shall live again when He comes to call forth their sleeping dust; for they will hear and answer His voice. As Job says, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." (Job 14:15.) And so speaks Paul: "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15:51, 52.) The second part of the promise where the Lord declares that "whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die," seems to have a reference to that change which will pass upon the living saints when Christ appears; for these will not die but be changed in a moment, death being swallowed up of life, (2 Cor. 5:4) and they caught up together with the risen dead in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4:17.) O that we could live in the daily experience and blessed enjoyment of these divine realities. What an effect they would have on our daily walk and life.

III.—But I come now to our last point, which is **the gracious appeal** which the Lord made to Martha's faith; and I would use the words of our gracious Lord as if they spoke individually to my and your conscience: "**Believest thou this?**"

Can you then by a living faith set to your seal that these things are true, for this was the meaning and import of the Lord's address to Martha? And you will observe that His appeal embraces the whole of His declaration, "Believest thou that I am the Resurrection? Believest thou that I am the Life? Believest thou that he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live? Believest thou that whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die?" How close the appeal! How piercing the enquiry! How it seems as if the eyes of the Lord looked into her immortal soul. And those same eyes, which are "as a flame of fire," now

also read the thoughts of our heart. If, then, you have the life of God in your bosom; if you are amongst those who believe in Christ, in which of these two classes do you rank yourself? How shall I put my hand upon you that I may guide my fingers aright? Ephraim and Manasseh stood before Jacob, each to receive a blessing. God guided his hands aright, though his eyes could not see. I cannot see your hearts. God guide my hands aright, that a suitable blessing may come to each as I lay my hand upon you!

I. I will first take those who feel much of the state of death and darkness into which sin has brought them, and who for the most part are little able to rise out of it. And I would say to you, "Believest thou this?" Believest thou that though thou art condemned by law, condemned by conscience, condemned by the feelings of thine own soul, as being much shut up in darkness and death, there is in thee some living faith in the Son of God?

Dost thou believe that Jesus is the Resurrection? What evidence hast thou that He is? Has He quickened thy soul? Has he convinced thee of thy sins and given thee repentance for them? Has he brought thee out of the world? Has he turned thee from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Has he raised thee from the dead—that death in sin or death in profession in which thou once walkedst? Dost thou ever feel any movements of divine life in thy soul, such as sighing, crying, groaning, hungering, thirsting, longing, panting and mourning? Hast thou any spirit of prayer in thy breast? Any earnestness, sincerity, self-abhorrence? Hast thou any contrition, brokenness, humility, softness of spirit and tenderness of conscience? Hast thou any godly fear working in thy bosom in buying and selling, in your daily walk, in your families, in your business, in the various matters and movements of your dally life? Do you find a fountain of life in you to depart from the snares of death, and some power and strength communicated to fight against your corruptions and overcome them? Has Jesus at any time or in any measure manifested Himself as a suitable Saviour to your soul? I say suitable, for that is sometimes the first view, which we have of Him. Has He in any measure drawn out a faith in Himself as such,

and in the power and experience of that faith you have received and embraced Him as the Son of God?

Believest thou that He is the Resurrection? Why do you believe it, and that Jesus has risen from the dead? What evidence have you of that cardinal doctrine of our most holy faith, that vital, glorious truth, which shines in the world like the sun in the sky to illuminate the whole page of revelation with its gracious and glorious beams? Is this your evidence that you have seen Him as such by the eye of faith, and life flowed through it into your soul? Then you have a real, experimental evidence, though perhaps not a very sure one in your own feelings, that He has quickened you into divine life; that He raised you up with Himself when He rose from the dead, and that you are a member of His mystical body.

Do bear in mind that these things can only be received and realised by faith. Your faith may be small and yet blessedly real. But you say, "The law condemns me, my conscience accuses me, my sins are a heavy burden to me, under which at times I seem almost ready to sink, and I do feel such thorough inability to bring myself any relief, such complete helplessness and miserable impotency to deliver myself out of my state, that it seems as if I shall die in my sins. O that pardon would reach my breast." But is there no longing look to the risen Son of God, no ardent cry, that He would manifest Himself and drop a word into your soul? Is there no breathing in your heart after Jesus that He would graciously come over the hills and mountains of your sin and shame, and break in upon you with some beams of heavenly light? Have you never seen Him suitable to your case? Have you never beheld his Person by the eye of faith as the great and glorious God-Man? Have you never seen the efficacy of His atoning blood, the beauty and blessedness of His justifying righteousness, and have you never heard some gracious words from His mouth? Has His holy word never been opened up to your mind so that you have seen light in God's light, and believed what you read from the sacred, solemn power, which attended it to your Soul? Have you never been blessed under the preached word, and found faith raised up to receive and believe what

dropped with sweetness into your ear and heart? This was faith; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Then, though you feel dead, as slain by the sentence of the law and the verdict of your own conscience, yet if you find any living faith in the Son of God as the resurrection, you shall live. The Lord has declared it, and His word will stand when the world is in a blaze, "Thou shalt live." Thou shalt live here by a life of faith in the Son of God. Thy small faith shall be increased, thy hope be enlarged, and thy scanty love, which now steals through the weeds almost unseen, like a little tiny brooklet, will open into a stream, and before thou art laid upon a dying bed, or perhaps there, thy peace shall flow like a river. It is hard to believe this, for we look so much to self and so lose sight of the freeness and fulness of sovereign superabounding grace. But do weigh these things in the balance of the sanctuary, and especially by the word of the Lord in our text. Do you not find in your own bosom these two things—death and life? Your own death as a condemned sinner and your life, which is hid with Christ in God. Then, by this death and by this life you have a manifested interest in the promise, "Though he were dead, yet shall he live."

II. But now I will take the other character, of whom the Lord says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." And may I not also say to you, "Believest thou this?.... Yes," you answer, "I do believe it; for I feel the sweet assurance and blessed earnest of it in my own soul. I know that Jesus is the life, because I live upon him, and he sustains my life by daily supplies. Sometimes I get a sweet portion out of His word to comfort my heart; sometimes a touch of His soft hand to melt my soul; sometimes a smile from His loving face to cheer my spirit; sometimes a word from His gracious lips to instruct my understanding; and by these things I live."

"I find," you say, "that these things separate me from the world, make me live much alone, teach me to prize my Bible, bring me often to close dealings with God, favour a spirit of prayer in my breast, and make me feel that there is a blessedness in the things

of God which nothing else can give. But I have my changes and these very many; for I cannot keep alive one warm or tender feeling. 'If two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?' (Eccl. 4:11.) When I am left alone I soon grow cold; and when the Lord suspends His gracious operations upon my heart, I sink down into carnality and death. So that I do believe He is 'the life;' for I am sure I have none in myself, and it is only because 'He lives that I live also'."

Then you can set to your seal that Jesus spake words of grace and truth when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Your faith, my dear friends, will ever be embracing Him in these two characters: sometimes dead and embracing Him as the resurrection; sometimes living and embracing Him as the life. But whether He be the Resurrection to raise up our dead and drooping souls, or whether He be the Life to maintain in our bosom the life He gave, we come to this one point, that the only life we can live worthy of the name, or attended with any fruitfulness in any good word or in any good work, is by a life of faith in the Son of God. And do bear in mind that the life of Christ within must be evidenced by a corresponding life without. Wherever there is faith there will, there must be the fruits of faith, and these will be manifested in a godly life, in the performance of every good work to which we are called by our station or position, so as to make it manifest that our faith is not a dead but a living principle, and that by it we glorify God in our body and in our spirit which are His.

I shall add no more. I have laid before you according to my ability the way in which the Lord for the most part leads His dear family; and if you can find any clear mark or blessed evidence of the grace of God being in your breast, thank God and take courage. Jesus lives at the right hand of the Father: He lives to save, He lives to bless, He lives to bring you off more than conquerors through His own blood and love and grace.

## **Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 1, 1857

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6

A child is born into this world; it lives and thrives; it grows up into a boy, a youth, a man. He now occupies a certain definite station in life; the station which God has provided for him, be it high or low, be he rich or poor. He may be a farmer or a tradesman, a poor labourer or hardworking mechanic. These are mere incidental, external circumstances, quite unconnected with the point at which I am now aiming. But whatever he be externally, viewed internally, he is at this time, as the Scripture emphatically describes, "without God and without hope in the world." His life is at best but the life of an animal—not much removed from that of the beasts that perish; for though he has reason and intelligence, or it may be even an educated, cultivated mind, earth contains and bounds all his desires and hopes. Thus he lives, and thus but for the grace of God he would die, as thousands and tens of thousands die daily. But he is not so to die. There are thoughts in the bosom of God towards him, thoughts of an eternal date; plans and purposes, means devised, that his banished be not expelled from him. (2 Sam. 14:14.) As time then rolls on, it brings these secret purposes of God to light. Hitherto they have been like a river flowing underground, which at a certain spot emerges to the surface; or like those hidden springs couching deeply in the bosom of the earth, which gush up at a certain point, forming first a gentle rill, then a rapid brook, then a flowing river, which loses itself in the all-embracing ocean. The Lord, then, has a purpose of grace and mercy to manifest to this man—this animal man, this carnal, worldly, careless, thoughtless man, if no deeper, no darker, no blacker title rightfully attach itself to him by the just judgment of God and his fellow men. But how does the Lord disclose and bring to light these hidden purposes—these thoughts of his heart towards him

for good and not for evil? It is by beginning a work of grace upon his soul. But how does that work begin? It is scarcely possible either to define or describe it. The Lord has such various means of beginning and carrying on a work of grace, that we cannot lay down any definite mode for him to work by. But I believe the first stone of the spiritual building is often, if not usually, laid in a season of trouble. It was the case with myself about 30 years ago. I was, through a concurrence of circumstances, which came almost unexpectedly upon me and over which I had little or no control, cast into one of the most painful and perplexing trials that I have ever known in all my life. Now it was under, and in the midst of this most distressing trial, which in itself was not at all connected with religion, that the Lord was pleased first to communicate divine life to my soul. I have often questioned whether I have divine life, but if I have, I have never questioned as to the time when it was first communicated. I have thought sometimes that these seasons of trial, which though not themselves grace, yet seem to precede and prepare the way for grace, are described in the word of truth as "the breaking up of the fallow ground so as not to sow among the thorns" (Jer. 4:3); "as the preparation of the heart which is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:1); as the "softening" of it, of which Job speaks, and making it "tender," and susceptible of divine impressions, as in good king Josiah. (Job. 33:16; 2 Chron. 34:27.) In and by these troubles, then, the Lord often works; for these afflicting times become, as I found them, praying times, as the prophet speaks: "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." Thus the Lord may cast the man whose case I am now considering upon a bed of sickness and languishing. It is now with him as Elihu describes: "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out." (Job 23:19, 20, 21.)

But in this affliction the Lord works with divine power upon his conscience; and now he feels, under the fears of death and the

terrors of the Almighty, that "his soul draweth near unto the grave and his life to the destroyers." Eternal things begin to press with a hitherto unfelt power and weight upon his mind, and are seen in a light in which they were never seen before. With this new, this peculiar and vivid light on eternal realities, new life works. He gets his Bible down from the shelf, or, most probably buys a new one. The Scriptures that perhaps he learnt to read as a boy, but has much neglected, he begins to read with an earnestness, an attention, a diligence, an understanding of their meaning he never had before. Light as if from heaven falls upon this or that hitherto unobserved passage, and from it as thus opened to his understanding life enters into his conscience. He is thus brought into a new world. He now begins to see and feel that he has a soul to be saved or lost; and as eternal things press with greater and greater weight and power upon his mind, earthly things begin to sink in comparative value. His business that he is so deeply engaged in, his shop, his farm, that occupied so large a portion of his thoughts begin to drop their fast and firm hold upon him, and other thoughts, other feelings, other anxieties press upon his mind and occupy it nearly night and day. "I have a soul to be saved or lost," he often says within himself. "Death must soon come, or if delayed, it will come at last. As death leaves me, judgment will find me: how stand matters between God and my soul?" The character of God as unspeakably holy, just, and righteous; the law as condemning all sin and reaching to the inmost thoughts and desires of the mind; and his own miserable condition as a sinner against and before the Majesty of heaven, and therefore exposed to the full fury of the wrath to come, without shelter or refuge—all these feelings and considerations press with increasing weight upon his conscience. No one need tell him that he is a sinner, and the worst of sinners, for he sees and feels it as plainly as he sees the sun at noon-day.

Now by this little sketch of the thoughts and feelings of an awakened soul I am not laying down a certain definite path for the Lord to walk in in his first movements upon the heart, but I am simply assuming, by way of throwing light upon the subject, that the Lord, by his Spirit and grace, produces some such or

similar feelings and exercises in a man's quickened conscience. When, then, a man's eyes are thus enlightened and his soul quickened into spiritual life, and such effects as I have described follow upon it, he, as if instinctively, begins to look out how he may escape the wrath of God, what he shall do to be saved, how he shall obtain the pardon of his sins, find peace in death, and acceptance in that great and terrible day when the world shall be judged in righteousness. But why have I drawn this sketch? What is my object, and what connection has it with my text? This man, not altogether an ideal man, but one like whom many live and breathe, and perhaps some even here—this man is just the person who would have an ear for the words of the text. To this man, to such a man under such feelings and exercises, Jesus would seem specially to speak in them; for they contain the guidance, the instruction, the truth which he wants. They are words adapted eminently to a man whose eyes and ears and heart, are just opened to see, to hear, to feel the things of the kingdom of God, and to whom the solemn matters of eternity are become present and living realities. Such an one wants something clear, positive, direct—something simple that he can understand, certain that he may believe, powerful that he may feel. I would not set one part of God's word above another, nor exalt one declaration of Jesus above another that fell from the same gracious lips; yet I cannot but think we can scarcely through the whole compass of divine revelation find words more suitable to a man in earnest about the salvation of his soul than those now before us. To him Jesus speaks, as it were, peculiarly and expressly, and drops these words into his anxious, inquiring spirit: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." It is almost as if he said: "Wanderer, forlorn wanderer, stumbling upon the dark mountains, or lost in some wild, tangled wood, without guide or companion, desirous to find the path, but unable to see the track, art thou seeking and anxiously longing to know the way to heaven? I am that way. Art thou sick and weary of this lying world, of thine own lying heart, of the lying profession of the day? Art thou seeking after truth, and wouldst buy it at any risk and any price? I am that truth. Art thou surrounded and encompassed by death in every shape and

form, and wouldst fain be delivered from it? Is there death within thee and death without thee? Art thou seeking and longing for the pouring in of divine life into thy soul? I am the life. And wouldst thou come unto God and receive mercy at his hands, but knowest not how to come, fearest thou mayest be rejected, or art in any way trying to come in thine own strength or righteousness? Let this be written as with the point of a diamond upon the tablets of thine heart, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In unfolding these words, in harmony I trust with the Scriptures of truth and the experience of the followers of the Lamb, I shall divide my subject into two leading branches, corresponding to the two clauses of our text; and show,

I.—*First*, how Jesus, according to his own declaration, is "*the way, and the truth and the life.*"

II.—And *secondly*, explain and enforce that memorable declaration which should ever stand before our eyes in all our approaches, in public or in private, to the Majesty of heaven, and which deserves to be written deeply upon every awakened soul: "*No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

I.—In showing how Jesus is "*the way,*" let me direct your thoughts back to the case which I assumed in the opening of my discourse, and to make the application still more plain and more pointed, let me assume that it is yours. You, then, are the anxious seeker, the earnest inquirer, the poor forlorn wanderer, the sensibly lost sinner who is groping for the wall like the blind, and groping as if he had no eyes. You are the man that wants to find the way to heaven. But what has put this into your mind? What has made you think about heaven and hell, death and judgment? How came your thoughts to be so exercised night and day on these things? Are you afraid of hell? Are you desirous of heaven? Was it always so? Has it been long so? How long? Was there not a certain beginning to these convictions of sin, and of your lost, undone condition, to your sighs and cries for mercy, to

your desires after God? There is always a beginning in a true work of grace. We may not indeed in every case be able to discern plainly and clearly the exact, precise commencement; but if it be, as the Scripture declares, a divine work, a spiritual, supernatural operation upon the heart, and thus distinct from any or every work of the flesh, it must have a beginning, though that beginning may be hidden or obscured. The Lord himself tells us, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) There is something very remarkable, and I may add exceedingly instructive in these words. We see from them; 1. first, the *sovereignty* of grace. The wind bloweth where it *listeth*, or "willeth," as the word means; 2. that there is some *audible* and therefore *manifest effects*, "Thou hearest the sound thereof;" 3. an ignorance "*whence it cometh*," so that the soul cannot tell whence its new feelings spring or that they are from God; 4. an ignorance "*whither it goeth*," that is, of the blessed deliverance in which these convictions issue, and the glorious inheritance of which they are the pledge. Using the Lord's own figure, we know that there are certain divine operations and influences upon a man's conscience which the Lord compares to the wind blowing upon the earth, and as when the wind blows we know the fact that it does blow by the sound that it makes, and the effects it produces; so though you may not be able to point out the exact moment when the life of God entered your soul, yet there was a sounding, as it were, of the voice of God in your heart, and there were certain effects produced to which you can, more or less, look back. We are bidden to judge of a tree by its fruits; and so we are to judge of a work of grace by its effects. Now, then, just look back and see if you can find any of these effects as I shall attempt to describe them.

i. Your conscience being awakened and alarmed, the first thing you probably did, was to flee to your own obedience. You endeavoured to lead a new life; to leave off your old habits, to forsake your usual companions, to break off the practice of open sin and profanity, and become very strict, precise, and upright in

your walk and conversation. By these means you sought to recommend yourself to the favour of God, to avert his displeasure, and make some amends for your past carelessness and neglect. But by degrees light broke in more fully and clearly upon your mind; your conscience became sensitive and tender to a point never felt before; you began to see what your own works really were; that sin was mingled with all you said and did. This discovery somewhat tried and perplexed you; and not exactly knowing where the real fault lay, you set about to amend what was wrong, straighten what was crooked, and supply what was deficient. But with all your mending you could not much mend matters. Sin, like an old sore or a bleeding cancer, still kept breaking out, and forcing its way through every plaster and bandage, for they only fretted, irritated, and made the wound worse. It was with you like the leprosy in the house of which Moses speaks. Though the leprous stones were taken out and fresh ones put in; though the walls were thoroughly scraped and the house fresh plastered from the top to the bottom, yet the plague being in the wall again and again appeared. You became now more concerned than ever. But this led you to pray, and sigh, and groan more over your sad state and mournful condition; and you found some encouragement in praying; for a spirit of grace and of supplication was communicated, whereby you were enabled to pour out your heart before God. But this, though it gave some little relief, did not heal the sore, or remove the burden. You now got very unhappy; your mind became more and more distressed; guilt fell with greater weight and power upon your conscience; the law, which you never had thought about, or taken any notice of, except perhaps carelessly and formally to ask God to incline your heart to keep it, began to take notice of you, and, like a masked battery, to open its curses and threatenings. You began to see its exceeding strictness, its awful sanctions; its spirituality as reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart; and all this brought your soul sensibly into bondage and condemnation. But all this guilt and condemnation did not bring you off a covenant of works; your eyes were not yet anointed and enlightened to see that you were altogether out of the track; nor did you know the meaning of the Lord's words in

the text, "I am the way." You went on therefore as the Babel builders did, burning bricks for stones, and using slime for mortar. It was still your own obedience, diligence, resolutions, striving after holiness; and thus you were still building up your own works. But as you built, the Lord threw down; as you strove to please the Lord by works of righteousness, more and more did the law flash before your eyes; more and more was the sentence heard thundering in the secret depths of the soul, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." So that unless you continued "in all things"—and O what a broad sweep does that make! for "all things" embrace perfect love to God and perfect love to man, and you had neither,—you found yourself brought under the tremendous curse of God's holy law.

Now all this trying and painful work in your conscience, though you could not see it at the time, prepared your ears to hear, and your heart to feel and welcome the glad tidings of salvation by grace. You wanted this work, and you had not at all too much of it. If there be a building to erect, there must be a foundation laid in some proportion to it. The higher the wall, the heavier the roof, the larger the building, the stronger and deeper must be the foundation. So would the Lord erect a temple of mercy in your soul and fill it with his heart-gladdening presence, he has to lay the foundation deep; and this he does by giving you to see and feel your lost and ruined condition; opening up the spirituality and curse of his holy law, and making you tremble at his displeasure.

Now after a time, as your eyes were enlightened by the blessed Spirit, and you read the word of God with an understanding heart, you got dissatisfied with the ministry under which you had hitherto sat, and with the professors of religion with whom you associated. Some unexpected circumstance brought you under the sound of the preached gospel; you got into the society of the living family of God; your ear was opened to hear and receive the one, and your heart to love and embrace the other. Now as you thus received the love of the truth you were led more and more

to search the Scriptures with a prayerful heart, and as the Holy Spirit, the testifier to and revealer of Jesus, enlightened the eyes of your understanding, in these rays of divine light that broke in upon your mind, you began to see Jesus in a way you never saw him before. There was a veil hitherto upon your heart; the Lord Jesus had no beauty nor comeliness; you had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but your eye never saw him. But guilt and wrath and fear, exercise of soul, deep distress of mind, and it may be powerful temptations that almost drove you to despair, opened your ears to hear about Jesus Christ. This was the circumcision of the ear, or unstopping it, or uncovering it—all which are scriptural figures and expressions, to lay it bare for the entrance of the word with power. Jesus now began to appear to you in a new light, and you saw or began to see the beauty and blessedness of such a declaration as this, "I am the way." It was as if he spoke to you from heaven and said, "What, sinner, what are you about? Are you going to a broken law to save you? That can only curse and condemn you; there is no life and peace, nor rest, nor healing there. What, sinner! are you going to your own works to obtain justification thence? Is not sin mingled with all you say, think, and do? Can justification be there?" Thus would he now speak from the cross in his bleeding love, in his dying agony; he would speak from the sepulchre in which he lay entombed; more especially would he speak from the throne of his grace where he is ever interceding for us. From all these would he speak to your inmost soul in heart-moving accents, "I am the way." And if he be the way, can there be any other?

ii. Now let us, with God's blessing, see *how* he is "the way;" and to see that, we must look a moment at who he is. He is God-Man. He unites two natures in one glorious Person. As God he is the co-equal, co-eternal Son of the Father. This he is by nature, by his very mode of subsistence as a Person in the glorious Trinity. But he has taken into union with his own Divine Person a nature like our own, but not a fallen or sinful nature; a nature human, yet without the sin of humanity either original or actual, but pure, perfect, spotless, holy; a nature that could suffer, bleed and die, for that was needful to put away sin; but a nature in which no

spot or speck of sin could be found. In that human nature he has suffered and bled and died, and his intrinsic Deity giving to these sufferings and to that sacrifice eternal validity, he has become "the way" from earth to heaven, from sin to salvation, from error to truth, from misery to happiness, from sorrow to joy, from temptation to deliverance, from self with all its attendant miseries to himself with all his attendant mercies. How blessed it is when we are surrounded on every side with darkness, scarcely knowing what to think, or how to speak, or what to do, to have any light shining upon the path that leads from earth to heaven; to have any view of a crucified Jesus, any faith raised up in our soul to believe in his name, any hope communicated to cast anchor within the veil; and any love shed abroad in the heart towards him as a bleeding Lamb. When once he is thus presented to our spiritual eye, and manifests himself to our believing heart as "the way," we are made to walk in it; for if he be the way he is so, that we may walk in him as such. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." (Col. 2:6.) If I wish to go from one place to another, I must walk in the road that leads me there. I might see that road correctly drawn in a map; or I might stand upon a hill top and see it spread before my eyes; and yet never walk a single step in it. But, if I am to reach the place where that road leads to, especially if there be no other road to it, I must walk in it. Thus if Jesus be the way, the only way to heaven and God, I must walk in Jesus if I am to reach heaven and God; in other words, I must have a living faith in Jesus raised up in my soul by the power of God, for all other is in the flesh and worthless—a faith which gives me union with him, communion with him, nearness unto him, access to his blessed Majesty. But before I can thus believe in him he must be revealed to my heart, made known to my soul by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit. Only in this way can I live a life of faith and prayer, be continually looking up unto God through him as the Mediator; receive his words as he speaks them; believe his promises as he manifests them; obey his precepts as he has revealed them; and day by day walk forward in him as the way from earth to heaven. If there be a way which leads from one place to another, the more you walk in it the more you will see what the way is, learn

its nature, and get acquainted with its various points and parts. How familiar some roads are to us. How we know every hedge and tree, every turn and winding, and almost every stone in it. It may be a very rough road, very intricate and hard for strangers to find; it may be much up and down hill, and in some places so strait and narrow as hardly to be passable. Still, it is the way; and by long and continual walking in it, you come at last to know all its windings and turnings. Your feet get used to it, and being convinced it is the right, the only way, you press on and persevere in it. So in grace; if Jesus be the way, I cannot know him as such except as I walk in him. To walk in him I need spiritual eyes to see him; spiritual hands to take hold of him; spiritual ears to hear his voice, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" and spiritual feet to move forward as his voice directs. Now if I am to do all this—not merely talk about it, but actually do it, it will be a daily exercise for faith, a daily subject of prayer, meditation, soul-exercise, and spiritual watchfulness; for directly I cease to walk in Christ as the living way, I walk in pride, self-righteousness, worldly-mindedness, unbelief, carnality, sensuality, and selfishness. If I walk in him, I walk in simplicity, sincerity, godly fear, uprightness, watchfulness, and prayer. If I walk in him as the living way, I shall lay my heart open to his heart-searching eye; I shall be longing and desiring to have my conscience sprinkled with his peace-speaking blood, and my soul to be clothed in his justifying righteousness; I shall earnestly desire to receive words of grace and truth from his lips, and smiles of pity and love from his face. I shall want him to guide me and keep me every moment; for if he is the way and I have to walk in him, I must keep close to him or else I shall go astray.

But as I seek thus to walk in him the living way, I shall find on every side allurements to draw me away from him. Sometimes a flowery mead may attract my footsteps as more pleasant to walk in than the rough, stony road; sometimes the way maybe so intricate and the path so narrow that there seems to be no road at all. I come to a stand still. There is no road; at least I can find none. At last I find it; but soon night comes on, and I cannot see the road on account of the darkness. Now may I leave it? No; I

must wait till light comes; and when a beam of light falls upon Jesus in his Person and work, he is at once seen to be the way.

But again if I walk in him as the way, I shall have suffering, persecution, and contempt to endure, for all these lie in the way. I may offend near friends, dear relatives, bring myself and my family to poverty, or what some dread as much, come down in the world, and lose caste and position. But did not Jesus walk in that way before me? Was not he despised and abhorred—"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" Was he not called "the carpenter," and were not his chosen companions poor fishermen? If then I walk in him, I must take up the cross and follow him. I must suffer with him that I may also be glorified together; for if we suffer with him we shall reign with him. I must not dream of a path of ease, worldly comfort, and self-indulgence, nor look for and expect the praise and approbation of men. I must expect to be misunderstood and misrepresented; to be vilified and slandered; hated by professors, and despised by the world. If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more those of his household. It must be with us as the Lord said to his disciples: "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." (John 15:18, 19.)

But Jesus also walked in a path *separate from sinners*. This was his character: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26.) He was *in* the world, but not *of* the world. He went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men; but never united himself to their company, or was one with them. So must we be separate in our walk and conversation from this ungodly world. Indeed we have no promise of acceptance whilst we are in it and united to it: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord

Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.)

But it is a way also of *tribulation*, for "through much tribulation must we enter into the kingdom of God." We have to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ (Col. 1:24); that is, fill up our measure of the afflictions which are appointed for Head and members. We have to be conformed to his suffering image to drink of his cup, and to be baptized with his baptism; to take his yoke upon us, that being yoked together with him in suffering we may learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.

It is a way also of *temptation*. We know how sorely the Lord was tempted in the wilderness; and though there victorious, yet Satan only "departed from him for a season." So must we be tempted by the Arch-tempter. Did not the Lord say to his disciples at the close of his sojourn here below, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me?" (Luke 22:28, 29.) If we are to inherit the appointed kingdom we must not only be tempted as he was, but continue with him firmly and steadfastly in his temptations. James, therefore, bids us "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2); and Peter tells us there is "a needs be" even if we are "in heaviness" through their number and variety. (1 Pet. 1:6.)

It is also a way of *obedience*. The Lord came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him. If he then be "the way," and he walked in obedience to his Father's will, so must we walk in all holy obedience to the will and word of God, as the Apostle speaks: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:14, 15, 16.)

The way to heaven is therefore a way of *holiness*. This is God's testimony: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass

over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." (Isa. 35:8, 9.) As Christ is the way of salvation, so he is the way of sanctification; for he who of God is made unto us righteousness to justify, is also made sanctification to sanctify. (1 Cor. 1:30.) "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); and though in our day men despise obedience, and hate the very word holiness, yet they will find at the last day that they only are "blessed who do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14.) Thus we see what a comprehensive direction the Lord gave when he said so simply and yet so clearly, so softly and yet so powerfully, "I am the Way." And if he is the way, he is the way at the end, as well as at the beginning and the middle. Dying Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59.) The dying martyr saw him at the right hand of God as the end of the way, stretching out as it were his loving arms to receive the spirit as it went forth from his mangled body. O what a safe way; O what a glorious way! and be it ever borne in mind the only way in which any can reach the heavenly shore.

But how we need the Lord's special help and grace thus to walk in him as the way. The life of a Christian is a life of faith and prayer. The moment he ceases to lead that life, I will not say he becomes dead, but spiritual life is brought to a low ebb in his soul. Nor is he safe for a single moment except as he is living a life of faith on the Son of God. Satan watches him when he is off his guard. To be off his guard then, to be away from the watch-tower, is to expose himself to the subtle temptations of the wicked one. Where is he safe for a single moment from the curse of the law, the accusations of a guilty conscience, the fears of death, the terrors of hell, the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, except as he is walking in Christ as the way, and keeps close to his wounded side?

Thus, though Christ is the way, none can walk in that way except

the Lord enable him by his Spirit and grace. But "what is impossible with men is possible with God;" and as "the lame take the prey," and the promise is sure to all the seed, and "the ransomed must all come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads," the Lord the Spirit does sweetly constrain, and powerfully enable all the saints, according to the measure of their faith, to walk in that way, and by walking in it to find present peace and future glory.

ii. But Jesus is not only the way, he is "*the truth.*"

We are surrounded with error, encompassed with it on every side. The world is full of it; for what are all its pursuits and pleasures; its objects of covetousness, pride, or ambition; its very cares and anxieties, but so many wanderings and departings from the living God? Is not this *practical* error? And what are all its ideas about religion but *speculative* errors—errors in opinion, as its pursuits and pleasures are errors in practice? How God is to be worshipped; how sin is to be pardoned; how the sinner is to be accepted and justified; how he is to be led, and taught, and made meet for heaven—what wild, what vague, what erroneous opinions does the world hold on these most important points! And how full of error is the professing church! What blind leaders of the blind preach from the pulpit; what erroneous men, and many in high places, spread their pestilent doctrines from the press. We ourselves under what errors, what false views of religion were we for many years held. And it needs must be so, unless we are taught of God. A veil of unbelief, is by nature over our mind, so that, even when we read God's word, the fountain of pure truth, we cannot understand it through ignorance, or misapply it through perverseness. Was it not so with the Jews of old? To them "were committed the oracles of God." (Rom. 2:2.) They held in their hands the Scriptures that testified of Jesus. (John 5:39.) But did they believe them? No; for as the apostle speaks, "their minds were blinded" (2 Cor. 3:14); and thus, according as it was prophesied of them, they could not believe, nor see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts. (Isai. 6:10; John 12:40.) We may wonder sometimes when the Bible is so

universally spread in the land, that there should be still so much error taught. What is the reason? Man's heart is naturally full of error; and whilst full of error, truth, however pure, has no place in his soul. If I may use such a figure, it is like a pitcher full to the very brim of dirty water. What room is there in it for pure, clear water? Try to pour some in; it either runs over and falls to the ground, or becomes mixed with the dirty. So man's naturally erroneous spirit will either absolutely reject or pollute God's truth. Pure truth is only for a pure heart—that new heart which the Lord gives by his regenerating grace. When, then, by a work of grace upon the soul we are brought to see that we are surrounded with error, the first work is to empty out the dirty water—to see and renounce the false, erroneous notions and opinions which we have imbibed as with our mother's milk. There is something in truth especially suitable to the new man of grace. It is to the new born soul what the mother's milk is to the new born babe. When thus first divinely wrought upon, we desire to know the truth for ourselves, and this makes us go at once to the fountain head. We begin to read the word of God with anxious eyes, and a prayerful, inquiring spirit. At first indeed we may feel great darkness of mind, and our rebellious spirit may work against the sovereign truth of God, as too humbling to the mind, or too much opposed to our false, fallacious ideas of the universal benevolence of the Almighty. But after a time the Lord is pleased to bestow upon us a child-like spirit, a willingness to receive the truth as he has revealed it. We want to know the truth for ourselves, and we feel that no price is too great to pay for it. We feel the pernicious consequences of error; how it blinds the mind and hardens the heart, filling it with rebellious cavillings against the Sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. This wretched spirit causes bondage; and we feel that truth alone can make us free. In these early days there is a great struggle in our mind between truth and error, between the claims of free grace and free will. Still we desire to be right and to know the truth of God, for it is a question of life and death. I can look back to my early days, and call to remembrance how anxious my mind was to know the truth of God; how I used to read the Scriptures and books written by gracious authors, and how powerfully truth was commended to

my conscience. In those days, though I had everything at stake—nothing to win, and everything to lose by a profession of the truth—friends, independence, position in life, prospects of preferment, educated and cultivated society, and everything indeed which my natural heart loved, I was made willing to abandon all for truth and conscience sake. At that time I counted scarcely any sacrifice too great to make for the truth of God when once it became known by divine power to my soul. I cannot explain it, though I have felt it and still feel it; but there is that in the truth of God which when brought into a man's heart with divine power is made very sweet and precious to him. It makes him free; it leads out of the world; it endears the Lord Jesus Christ; it fills his heart with sweet thoughts, and leads him up into spiritual meditation; and all this being quite new and hitherto unknown, it makes heavenly things to be uppermost in his heart and take the precedence of all others.

But a man may read the Scriptures and gather truth from them, and yet not be a partaker of the truth savingly. He may have a clear and sound creed, may understand the truth in his natural judgment, and yet be far, very far from knowing it spiritually, savingly, and experimentally. Even the children of God may learn more truth in their heads than they have an experience of it in their hearts; nor may they at first see the connection of truth with the Person of Christ, and that Jesus himself is *the truth*. But when we are brought to believe in the Son of God with a living faith; when he is made in any measure known to our souls by a divine power, when he begins to speak to us out of the Scripture and commune with us from off the mercy seat, then we turn away our eyes and hearts from truth in the letter to truth in the Spirit; from truth as it stands merely in so many words and syllables in the Bible, to truth as revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ himself; for *he* is the truth. All other truth is, so to speak, dead truth. But we want living truth; we want one who himself can teach us his own truth; be in us as his own truth; open our hearts to receive what he himself says, and by receiving his words, receive himself. Almost anybody can learn truth in the letter from reading God's word, and the writings of gracious men who have laid it clearly down; but when we are divinely wrought

upon we want to learn truth from Jesus' own lips, to get the truth out of Jesus' own heart, to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his blessed voice communing with us, opening up his own word to our souls, and whispering, "I am the truth; all except and out of me is error; look to me; listen to me, keep close to me: I will guide thee, and lead thee, and bless thee." Thus to be looking up to, believing in, and laying hold of incarnate Truth, is a very different thing from merely seeing truth written in so many letters and words in the Scripture, or reading books written by gracious men who have clearly opened it up. The way to learn truth is to be much in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ; as you lie upon your bed, as engaged in your daily occupation, to be from time to time looking up to the Lord himself as he sits upon his throne of grace, and be begging of him to teach you himself, for he is the best teacher. The words which he speaks, they "are spirit and life." What he writes upon our heart is written in characters which will "stand every storm and live at last." We forget what we learn from man, but we never forget what we learn from Jesus. Men may deceive; Christ cannot. You can trust no minister really and fully. Though you may receive truth from his lips, it is always mixed with human infirmity. But what you get from the lips of Jesus, you get in all its purity and power. It comes warm from him; it comes cold from us. It drops like the rain and distils like the dew from his mouth; it comes only second-hand from ours. If I preach to you the truth, I preach indeed as the Lord enables me to speak. But it is he who must speak with power to your souls to do you any real good. Look then from me; look beyond me, to him who alone can teach us both. By looking to Jesus in the inmost feelings of your soul, you will draw living truth from out of his bosom into your own, from his heart into your heart, and thus will come feelingly and experimentally to know the blessedness of his own declaration: "I am the truth."

iii. But again, he says, "I am *the life*." We live in a dying world; and not only so, but we live in the midst of death within as well in the midst of death without. Our carnal mind is death itself. There is no spiritual life in man's fallen nature. He is encompassed, therefore, not only with error, as I have before shown, but he is

surrounded on every side with death. Even in religion, in the solemn things of God, without Jesus everything is dead. What are called the means of grace are good, not to be neglected or set aside; but they have in themselves no life. Preaching is good—dead without Christ. Prayer is good—dead without Christ. Meeting together is good—dead without Christ. Christian communion is good—dead without Christ. So we may run through the various means of grace. They are all of divine appointment; but Christ must put life into them all to make them effectual to us. Where he comes, there is life; where he does not come, there is death. Whatever soul he visits with his Spirit and grace, he brings life with him into it; whatever soul he leaves unvisited, there reign carnality and death; there sin abounds and flourishes; there pride and self-righteousness, presumption or hypocrisy bear the sway. Would we then live unto God, Christ must be our life—the life of our faith, hope, and love; the life of our preaching and hearing. In all our prayers, desires, affections—in everything of a religious nature, Christ must be our life.

And for this purpose he came from the bosom of the Father: "I am come," he says, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10.) He is "the Word of life" (1 John 1:1), "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), "the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15), "the bread of life" (John 6:48); and he has promised that "he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.)

But now the question comes, "How are we to get this life?" By drawing it out of him. Where do you get water when you are thirsty or need it? You go to the well; there it flows pure. If you lived in a mountainous country, you would take your pitcher at once to the fountain. How he invites us to come to the fountain and drink. "And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.) Let me not then tarry at the stream when there is a fountain. Shall I be little better than a Hindoo, worshipping an idol, when there is a living Christ at the right hand of the Father whom I may worship? Who can keep me from going to Jesus? If my heart is lifted up toward

him; if I have a living faith in him, and he is pleased to communicate his Spirit, presence, and grace to my soul, who is to keep me from him? Anything that keeps me from him detains me in the arms of death; anything that brings me to him brings me into his loving embrace. To know him is life; for "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To believe in him is life: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25, 26.) To hope in him is life, for "we are saved by hope," and this hope is of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. (Rom. 8:24; Titus 1:2.) To love him is life—aye, better than life; to have union with him is life; to have communion with him is life; to know the efficacy of his blood and righteousness and dying love, is life; for he himself is life, and there is no life but what comes from him and is communicated by him; for without him we can do nothing. We pray: he must be the life of our prayers. We read: he must be the life of our reading. We speak: he must be the life of our conversation. We look up: he must be the life of every look. We sigh and groan: he must be the life of every sigh and of every groan. We sit at his table; but only "he that eateth him shall live by him." (John 6:37.) Thus in all these things Jesus is "our Life;" and if he be really and truly such to us, "our life is hid with Christ in God, and when he appears, we shall also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:3.)

Let me just briefly run over what I have endeavoured to bring before you in pointing out how Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Though he said these things on earth, he is gone up on high, and thus may be said still to be speaking to us in these same words from heaven. Thus he sees us inquiring the way to heaven, anxiously desiring to reach that happy shore, yet scarcely knowing the way. He finds us wandering in a waste, howling wilderness, and it is as if he says, "My child, thou art going astray. Thou art looking here, or there, or everywhere, to thyself, to others, to all but to me, who am the way. Art thou full of fear and perplexity how thy soul is to be saved? I am the way: my blood cleanseth from all sin; my righteousness justifieth from

all things from which thou couldst not be justified by the law of Moses; my love is stronger than death; my promises must all be fulfilled. If thou lookest to me, trustest to me, and walkest in me, thou shalt arrive safely where I am, for I have gone before to prepare a place for thee—a mansion in my Father's house. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Keep close to my wounded side; never stray from me; or if thou do stray, come back to me, I will receive thee; for I am the way."

Again, he finds us full of error without and within, scarcely knowing who is right or what is right; filled it may be sometimes with unbelief, with infidelity, with many wicked and vain thoughts; puzzled with a thousand apparent contradictions in the world, in the church, in the Bible itself; unable to unravel many deep mysteries, which the more we seek to disentangle the more are we lost in and confounded by them. Yet, amidst all this confusion of mind, we are still seeking, with all simplicity of heart and earnestness of spirit, to know the truth. Here, then, the blessed Lord again meets us with his own gracious declaration—"I am the Truth." It is he, even he, who contains all truth in himself, as the sun contains in itself all light. From him all truth comes; in him all truth centres. He is the truth of all the types, figures, ordinances, promises, prophecies, and precepts both of the Old Testament and New. If, then, we know him, we know the truth; if we love him, we love the truth; and if we walk in him, we walk in the truth.

So is he "the Life." He has said, "Because I live ye shall live also;" and it is, therefore, as if he speaks from heaven to us in all our deadness, coldness, and earthly-mindedness, borne down and almost over-whelmed by a flood of earthly cares and anxieties, yet mourning and bewailing our backwardness, hardness, and want of life and feeling in the things of God—"I am the Life. Wouldst thou live *unto* me, thou must live *by* me. I must be thy life within, abiding in thee and thou in me; for as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, neither canst thou except thou abidest in me. Look, then, to me, believe in me, hope in me, cleave to me; I will maintain my life in thy soul, for I came that my sheep might have life, and that they might have it

more abundantly."

As, then, we walk in him, we find him the Way; as we believe in him, we find him the Truth; and as we hang upon him, we find him to be the Life; and thus we can set to our seal that he spake these words for our comfort and encouragement when he was here below, and now ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make them good.

II.—But to keep us from all attempts to find our way to God by any other means, or any other Mediator, our blessed Lord bars out all other access, and builds a wall up by his own interdiction against every other approach unto God: *"No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

What can be more plain than this declaration from the lips of him who cannot lie? It is as if he would say, "Every other mode of access to God is cut off." And do we not find it so by the testimony of the Spirit in our own conscience? The strict justice and eternal holiness of God bar every other mode of access to his divine Majesty. Sin has so separated between God and us; it has so defiled every human heart and polluted every human thought, that no child of Adam can ever approach a holy God by his own obedience or through a broken law. Here then we are cut off. But Jesus stands as a Mediator at the right hand of the Father with his garments dipped in blood, and says to every poor inquiring sinner, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. But he may come through me. Look not, sinner, to thine own obedience; look not, sinner, to thine own disobedience. Trust not thy good works; be not dismayed by thy bad works: No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. It is not on the footing of his own obedience, uprightness, or holiness that any man can come unto God, so as to find acceptance with him. None come right but he who comes by me."

Are not these things a matter with us of personal experience? Does not the holiness of God shut us out when we attempt to come to him, except through Jesus Christ? But we do, we trust,

come from time to time to the Father through his dear Son, and find access through him. We view his blood sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat; we see him sitting there as the great High Priest over the house of God; we behold his beauty and blessedness, grace and glory, sweetness and suitability; and our desires and affections go after him. Through his precious blood and righteousness, we venture nigh, and God does not rebuke nor frown upon us, but by his Spirit and grace enables us to pour out our heart before him. We thus sensibly feel the difference between coming with Christ, and coming without Christ, coming with our own obedience, and coming with his. If we venture nigh with our own obedience, the way is blocked up; the Majesty of God as a consuming fire, as upon Mount Sinai, drives us back. But he never drives back a sensible sinner who comes to him through Jesus. It is a way pleasing unto him, for it is a way of his own providing. You may say sometimes, "My sins are so great, my heart so hard, my nature so corrupt, how can I venture nigh?" Will you stay away? You can but perish if you go; you must perish if you go not.

## **Keeping in the Love of God** (A Posthumous Sermon)

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 18, 1869

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."  
Jude 20, 21

There is a general idea that the primitive Christians were patterns of faith and obedience, and the primitive churches models of purity in doctrine, principle, and practice. To a certain extent, this general persuasion is true, for it is based upon the word of God. Thus we read of the primitive believers—those who were called, for instance, at the day of Pentecost and immediately afterwards—that "great grace was upon them all;" that they were of one heart and one spirit, so as not to call even their own goods their own, but to have all things in common. And of the primitive churches we have this testimony, that they walked "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and were multiplied." So, also, we find Paul speaking to the Romans, that their faith was spoken of throughout all the world. To the Corinthians, that they came behind in no gift. To the Ephesians, that he had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints. To the Colossians, that the word of God bore fruit in them. To the Thessalonians, that they were taught of God to love one another. Thus, we have some testimony of the eminent grace possessed by primitive believers, and by the primitive churches. But yet this happy state of things did not last long. Clouds, dark clouds, soon began to gather over this bright scene. Thus the Galatians imbibed a legal spirit, fell from their steadfastness, went back to the beggarly elements from which they were delivered, and caused Paul to stand in doubt whether he had not laboured amongst them in vain. In the church at Corinth, there were great disorders, much strife, contention,

party-spirit, winking at sin in one of their members living with his father's wife, and committing such disorders at the Lord's table, that some had actually not enough to eat, and others had made themselves drunk by taking too large a quantity of the wine. And when we pass on to the Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter, what awful characters appear to have crept into the churches. What denunciations are launched against the men, whose character is described in such graphic language by Jude in the Epistle before us, and by the Apostle Peter in his Second Epistle. How Jude says:—"There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." How he says of them:—"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." How he declares that they were "spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." What language! What awful characters must those have been in the primitive churches, to have brought down upon their heads such denunciations and such warnings from the pen of the inspired Apostle? Now, seeing all these things, Jude felt it was needful for him to write unto the churches, and to exhort them that they should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. And knowing how soon the unstable might be drawn aside, and be entangled in error or overcome with sin, he lays before them the exhortation of our text:—"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

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

I.—*First*, to the *precept* here laid before us: "keep yourselves in the love of God."

II.—*Secondly*, to the *means*, the gracious means, that Jude lays before us of keeping ourselves in the love of God, which are: 1, by building up ourselves on our most holy faith; 2, by praying in the Holy Ghost; 3, by looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

I.—Jude knew that there was only one preservative; that error is so seducing and the love of sin so powerful, that unless those to whom he spoke put on the armour of God, and especially that portion of it which consisted in keeping themselves in the love of God, some subtle form of error would arise on the one hand, or some powerful temptation to evil would spring up on the other; and by the force of one of these two, if not of both combined, they would be entangled and fall. He assumes, then, that those in whom grace made the difference had known, tasted, felt, and handled something of the love of God. He does not speak to those who had never known anything of the love of God; but to those who had had the love of God shed abroad in their heart, so as to know its sweetness and blessedness, feel its liberating, sanctifying effects upon their hearts and consciences, and how it purifies the heart, ear, and lip from sin and the world. He addresses himself especially to such, to show them that by keeping themselves in the love of God, they would be preserved from the evils which surrounded them on every side. But you will say, "This shuts me out." Not so. If you have tasted any measure of the love of God—the apostle does not say how large a measure or how small a measure is needful, so as to know something of the love of God;—if it has been felt in any small measure, that is an earnest of more to come; that gives a sufficient taste of its sweetness and blessedness; that assures the heart, so far as it goes, of relieving it from its distresses, removing the guilt of sin, and quenching the thunders of a fiery law. That he puts forth as the grand preservative against the seductions of error and against the allurements of sin; knowing that nothing else would be strong enough to shield and guard them from the seductive

attractions of error adapting itself to their reasoning minds, or from the alluring powers of sin addressing itself to their lusts and passions. Because it runs in the preceptive form; because the naked word stands, "keep yourselves in the love of God," we are not to gather therefrom that there is any power or strength in the creature to keep himself in the love of God. All these exhortations and precepts of the gospel are based upon gospel truth; so that it is assumed that those to whom the precept is spoken are acquainted with the grace of God, and know from experience and God's own testimony that the precept can only be obeyed by the power of God's grace. When, then, we are told to keep ourselves in the love of God, he does not set a task for free-will to perform or lay a burden upon the shoulders of nature; but he addresses himself to the gracious principle which God plants in the heart by his regenerating power. And it is to that gracious principle, as strengthened and brought forth into exercise by the power of God, that he says, "keep yourselves in the love of God."

I must show you, then, how, in harmony with grace, we keep ourselves in the love of God.

1. By fostering and cherishing the least intimation of it; by not giving way to any attacks, so as to cast us out of our possession, disinherit us of our inheritance, or open a way for Satan to spoil and rob us of anything the Lord may teach us by his grace, or any communication of his mercy and goodness, any bringing in of his love and tender pity. But we are to foster it and cherish it by all the means in our power. And we foster it and cherish it most by believing it; for as faith is raised up and drawn forth to believe in the love of God, and to believe from any sweet experience of what we have received from God; if the love of God has been felt in our hearts, then to foster it and cherish it by looking for any intimation, communication, word or whisper, sign or token, that may strengthen us in the faith if we possess it.

2. Again, we keep ourselves in the love of God by avoiding everything which may damp it, discourage it, make it, so to speak, take to itself wings and flee away; everything that may

harden the heart in going from the fear of God, or bring a load of guilt upon our conscience, everything that seems to chase away the love of God and to put us into a state of questioning whether we ever knew anything about it by sweet experience.

3. Thirdly, we keep ourselves in the love of God by viewing the spiritual foundation on which that love rests; not ever looking to our own bosom to find things there to draw forth the love of God, but looking beyond ourselves, to view it in the Son of his love, and to believe that the love of God is not a transitory thing, is not dependent upon what we do ourselves, does not rest upon the uncertainties of time, or the fickleness of the creature, but is in his dear Son—fixed in him; and that if loved, we are loved for his sake. Thus, you see the firm foundation there is in the love of God; that it is not given to the creature as a creature, but given to him in Christ, in whom he stands complete; and therefore given to him so graciously, and bestowed upon him so freely, that it stands as fast and firm as the Son of God himself.

II.—But, to pass on to our next point, there are certain means pointed out by Jude, using which, in the power of God's grace, we keep ourselves in the love of God.

i. And the first is, to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. By the words, "most holy faith," we may understand chiefly the grand truths of the everlasting Gospel which are revealed unto and embraced by faith. And they are called "our most holy faith," because they are imbued with all the holiness of God; and not only so, but as they are received into believing hearts, communicate sanctification, because they have a liberating, sanctifying efficacy. The words "build up" assume that there is a foundation laid. Christ is that foundation which God hath laid in Zion—a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and where Christ is revealed to the soul by a divine power, a foundation is laid in the heart on which every subsequent truth is to be built up. The grand thing to be clear of in our own experience is, whether Christ has been laid as a foundation in our souls or not, and if he has, we have been driven from every other as finding no rest nor

peace but in him. If ever he has been revealed to our souls by the mighty power of God, then we have seen and felt in him that there is a foundation on which we can stand, and that for eternity. But as the Son of the Father in truth and love; having come to finish the work which the Father gave him to do; having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and brought in an everlasting righteousness in which we may stand justified, there is a foundation on which a poor, guilty soul may rest. When this foundation is brought nigh, and we, by the power of God's grace, are lifted up to rest upon it—

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word."

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.) Now when Christ is made known to your soul by the power of God, you have views of truth in him, and of happiness in him, and of deliverance. "As ye receive Christ, so walk in him." We receive him as the Son of the Father in truth and love; we receive him as suitable to our wants and woes; we receive him as putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and endearing himself to our heart in the sweet manifestation of his Person, goodness, and love. Now as long as Christ and the soul are together, there is no place for error, and no place for evil. He makes the soul tender, the heart upright, the spirit broken and contrite, truth precious, error hateful, and sin loathsome and detestable. And whilst he and the soul are engaged together, error cannot approach nor evil find an entrance, so as to get any standing ground in the heart. But error is very subtle: it addresses itself to our reasoning powers; and when we lose sight of Christ then error very easily creeps in; or if not error, some special lust, or something ungodly, seems by degrees to obtain power and influence, and we gradually decline from the strength of faith, the confidence of hope, and the sweet affections of love, and drop, it may be, into a cold, carnal, careless, lifeless state, where we lie open to the invasion of error and the temptations of Satan as an angel of light or an angel of darkness. Now this is not keeping yourselves in the love of God, for it is doing the things

which I showed you we were not to do if we were to keep ourselves in the love of God. But now Jude comes and says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God;" and I will tell you, if you will listen to me, how you shall do it. You must "build up yourselves on your most holy faith." God has laid a foundation for your faith in his holy word; he has laid Christ as a foundation in your own soul. That is a very strong foundation: it is of God's own laying. It is very solid: it will bear any weight laid upon it. And therefore you must build up yourselves upon that most holy faith if you would have a religion which stands; because if your religion, or any part of your religion, be built upon another foundation, it will not stand. But if you build up yourselves on your most holy faith, then everything you build upon it will stand, because it stands upon the foundation and is in harmony with it.

Look, for instance, at the grand truths of our glorious gospel—say the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one undivided essence. Now every branch of that glorious Truth, the Trinity, when received into the heart, is attended with a sanctifying influence, a liberating power; and as this sanctifying influence is felt and this liberating power known, it preserves us from being seduced by error or being entangled in sin. If a man is firmly established and well grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity,—three coequal and eternal Persons in one undivided Godhead,—error on this point cannot assail him to any purpose. He may have flying suspicions, infidel thoughts, ungodly workings, which all are subject to. But if he has received the Trinity into a believing heart, and builds upon that foundation, it is part of his most holy faith; and building himself up upon that most holy doctrine, he stands secure, so far as he stands upon it, against all the shafts of error: they fly past without wounding him, because he can hold up as the shield of faith, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to receive the fiery darts of the wicked, and they leave him untouched.

And so it is with the Sonship of Christ, his equal deity, and his incarnation in the womb of the Virgin, with his sufferings in the garden and upon the cross, his blood-shedding upon Calvary, and

his holy death: when this is received in faith, and we see it forms a blessed part of our most holy faith, and rest the whole weight of our souls upon the blood and obedience of Jesus, it is a building up of the soul upon this holy faith. It edifies the mind, instructs the judgment, comforts the heart, relieves the conscience, and fills the soul at times with sweet feelings of love and affection toward the dear Lord, for coming and saving poor guilty sinners by shedding his precious blood and bearing their sins in his own body on the tree.

So, again, with his resurrection, ascension, and glorious intercession at the right hand of the Father: it is a part of our most holy faith. As faith eyes the Mediator between God and man, the great High Priest over the house of God, an intercessor able to save to the uttermost,—as faith eyes him revealed in the word and revealed in the soul, it is a building up of ourselves on our most holy faith. And, as the love of God is in sweet harmony with the work of Christ upon the cross, with the dying, bleeding love of the Lord the Lamb, and in blessed harmony with the resurrection of Christ, and his sitting at God's right hand in glory and power, we are kept in the love of God by looking to his dear Son and being built up on this most holy faith, because by looking to him, we receive of his fulness grace for grace. And as he is pleased to open up his fulness to our mind, and to show us what he is in himself, and what he is as the Christ of God, there is a letting down into the soul a sweet sense of his suitability, blessedness, and beauty; and this being received into the heart, there is a building up of the soul on this most holy faith.

But if we turn aside from this most holy faith and listen to the voice of error directing itself against the Sonship of Christ, or against any solemn truth revealed in the word, the spirit is grieved, the mind is darkened, the soul is clouded, conscience suffers, the Lord hides his face, and we fall into confusion. And so it is if sin be indulged, lusts trifled with, the world gone out after, and sin creep in between God and the soul, so as to get in any way the better of us: we fall into guilt and bondage, darkness, confusion, and error, and there is no keeping ourselves in the

love of God nor building up ourselves on our most holy faith; for error thrusts on one side, and evil draws on the other, and thus there is a drawing us off our most holy faith and keeping us back from the love of God.

If we have known anything of the love of God and the sweetness and preciousness of gospel truth, and ever felt the liberating, sanctifying effect and efficacy of our most holy faith, we shall be safe on the one side to watch the evils and confusion that spring out of error and sin, and on the other the sweetness and blessedness of keeping firm to gospel truth, and building ourselves up on our most holy faith.

ii. But the apostle adds another blessed means of keeping ourselves in the love of God, and building up ourselves on our most holy faith, which is, "*praying in the Holy Ghost.*" Now when the Lord is pleased to begin the work of grace upon a sinner's soul, he always gives him more or less of a spirit of prayer—a spirit of grace and of supplications; and that never dies out of his soul until it is changed into anthems of immortal praise. But it will often sink very low, so as at times to be scarcely perceptible. Like a brook in summer that is so different from its full flow in winter—diminished almost to a thread, and yet never totally dry; so it is with the spirit of prayer in the soul. When the Lord first gives it, it is like a full brook in winter; but afterwards, through the power of temptation, it often dwindles to a thread, and yet it is ever running, for there is the life of God in it.

Now many of your prayers—perhaps nine-tenths of them—are not prayers of the Holy Ghost's inditing. They are the more natural prayers that spring out of your heart; and it is evident they are so, because they bring down so few answers. Look at your prayers by your bedside, your prayers in the family, and if a member of a church, even your prayers at the prayer meeting: how often your prayers are nothing but words, the mere chattering of your tongue, the labour of your lip, without the Holy Ghost prompting a desire, and without Christ in your soul.

But there is, blessed be God, such a thing as praying in the Holy Ghost; that is, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and in his divine work and most gracious witness and operation. And the Lord, from time to time, enables his family to pray in the Holy Ghost; and when they pray in the Holy Ghost, then their prayers are answered; for that holy teacher, and inditer, and intercessor never indites a prayer in a believing heart, that does not enter the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

You have seen the difficulty, no doubt, as I have traced it out, of keeping yourselves in the love of God, and building up yourselves in your most holy faith; and though your conscience has borne testimony to the truth of my words, it has been rather from a sense of guilt upon it and of shortcoming, than from being able to have the witness of a good conscience, that you have been enabled to act upon it. And yet you feel the truth and force of it, not only in the word, but in your own soul, so as to see that there is a keeping one's spirit in the love of God, and building up one's self on one's most holy faith; and that this is the pure effect of grace in the heart.

Now you may take a review sometimes of where you are, what you have been brought into, and brought from; and you may look back to the days of your youth, when the light of God shone upon your tabernacle, and your soul was happy in the Lord. And taking a review of days gone by, you say, "It is not with me as in time past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my tabernacle, and by his light I walked in darkness: it is not so with me now." Now is not all this difficulty you feel in your conscience a testimony to the truth of my words, that you have not kept yourselves in the love of God, that you have not built up yourselves on your most holy faith? For if you had, by the power of grace, kept yourselves in the love of God; if you had not been drawn aside into error or evil, but had built up yourselves on your most holy faith, you would not be in your present low state; sin would not have had dominion over you, the world would not have drawn you aside, nor would Satan have gained such power.

As these things are laid with weight and power upon your mind, you begin to sigh and cry under the burden. You look back to those happy days when you walked more humbly, tenderly, consistently with God; and you long that those days might return and you might have more enjoyment in your soul of the Lord's presence and power. Now you begin to pray in the Holy Ghost. Your sighs, your cries, your groans, your desires, your self-condemnation, your confession of sin, your longing for the return of the days of your youth, your anxious nights, your gloomy days, your wanting some sweet manifestation of the Lord's goodness and mercy—here is praying in the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Ghost helps our infirmities and teaches us how to pray—for we know not what we should pray for as we ought—and himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now here are the groanings which cannot be uttered: and here you are praying in the Holy Ghost, when he is interceding for you with these groanings which cannot be uttered, when he is enabling you to sigh and cry, mourn and weep, confess your sins, and seek healing from the Lord. Here is a praying in the Holy Ghost. For praying in the Holy Ghost does not consist in length of prayer, or loudness of prayer, or eloquence of prayer; but consists in that Holy Spirit interceding in the heart, with those groanings which cannot be uttered. And you will always find a very sweet connection between praying in the Holy Ghost, and building up yourselves on your most holy faith; because the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the soul.

So every fresh view of the glorious Trinity; every fresh view of the incarnation, blood-shedding, sufferings and death of the Son of God; every fresh view of what Christ is now at the right hand of the Father, is attended with a spirit of grace and of supplications; and the same Holy Spirit that prays in us and for us, takes of the things of Christ and makes them known with divine power to the soul.

iii. The last means mentioned in the text of keeping yourselves in the love of God is, *"look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."*

"O," says the soul, "I come short in everything." "I don't know that ever I do feel the love of God shed abroad in my heart in a very plain and clear manner," says one; "then how can I keep myself in it?" "I don't know," says another, "clearly and fully, whether I am standing upon the right foundation: how then can I build myself up upon it?" "I don't know," says a third, whether I am aware of what it is to pray in the Holy Ghost; and how am I to get at it?" Well, now, he says to all such, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We all come short, and there is no one who does keep himself in the love of God; there is no one who really is building up himself on his most holy faith, as he should do, or as he is exhorted to do. Then what is he to do? Must he give all up and say, "Because I cannot keep myself in the love of God, nor build up myself on our most holy faith; because I am a poor, vile sinner, full of filth, and sin, and misery, who never can do, never has done anything but sin against God,— must I give it all up and sink into despair and die?" "No," says Jude, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."

See what a merciful Saviour he is; how he came to seek and to save that which was lost. View him in the garden sweating great drops of blood; see him on the cross bearing the wrath of God due to sinners; behold the mercy of God shining forth in the face of a Mediator, and I would say, turn your desponding eyes and look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has kept you from error, and kept you in some measure tender in conscience, and from falling under the power of evil. He has wrought something in your heart by his own Spirit and grace, and if he has not given you those sweet manifestations of pardoning love, or revealed to you his dear Son in the same way he reveals him to others; and if your prayers are faint and feeble, so that you can scarcely believe you know what it is to pray in the Holy Ghost; yet I would say, Don't cast away your hope because you cannot lay your hand upon special blessings and call them yours. Look for the mercy of your Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. View his divine love as bringing him from heaven to earth; see what he endured in the days of his flesh; view him going about doing good, and even

speaking a word of mercy to the dying thief, as though for a moment he lost sight of his own sufferings to save him. Again he says, "Look for the mercy of God unto eternal life." By so doing, you will be kept on the one hand from error, and on the other from being entangled in the power of evil. No man can stand against either in his own strength and wisdom. If we think we can stand against the power of temptation in our own strength or wisdom, we are only deceiving ourselves. Nothing but the power of God and his special grace can keep us from being entangled in the snares of sin and Satan. But God has appointed a certain way whereby he keeps his people from both; and only as we walk in that way are we secure. If a man thinks he can master error by his own reasoning powers against it, he will be defeated by Satan at the first encounter, for he is a keen logician; and if he thinks he can keep sin at arm's length, he will find his mistake, for sin will come between him and his guard.

The Holy Ghost, who has inspired the word of God with infinite wisdom, has laid up these sacred instructions that they may be for our benefit, and it is our wisdom to attend to them, and to beg of God to enlighten our mind unto the understanding of them, and we shall find as we journey onward with humility of mind seeking the Lord's face, attending to his word and will, and earnestly desiring to be taught by his Spirit,—we shall find many dark paths made light, and many crooked places made straight, and many things in our experience very puzzling and trying made plain; and then we shall see that the love of God once fixed upon his dear people is always the same in Christ; that though we may lose sight and sense of it, it is not taken away, but always abides firm in him; and that his precious truth, though we cannot and do not always feel its sweetness and power, yet possesses a blessedness and a reality, and so far as we are led into it, we derive a measure of its liberating, sanctifying effect and influence.

Thus, though these things may not be clear to many at first, yet as the path of the righteous is like "the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day," these things will open upon his mind in their sweetness and power, confirm him in the truth

of God, show him the blessedness of the grace of God in leading him into these things, and keeping him from error on one side and from evil on the other; and then he will have reason to bless and praise God for dealing with him in mercy and not in wrath, leading him into truth, and establishing his own word with power upon his heart.

## **THE KINGDOM OF GOD HID FROM THE WISE AND REVEALED UNTO BABES**

Preached at Romney Street Chapel, Westminster, on Tuesday Evening, 6th July, 1841

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."  
Matthew 11:25

It is impossible to understand aright many of the expressions that fell from the lips of Jesus when He was tabernacling upon earth, unless we bear in mind who Jesus is. I mean, that many of the words that dropped from His lips, are only to be understood so far as we have some spiritual view of Him as uniting in one glorious person two distinct natures, of His being "Emmanuel, God with us," God incarnate, God having taken into union with Himself that holy human nature which was begotten of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. And thus, when we view Christ as a man, and as such the servant of the Father, according to those words, "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth" **Isa 42:1**, we can understand some of those expressions which He made use of, which would be utterly inexplicable if we viewed Him simply as God, one with the Father in essence, glory, and power.

It was a part of His covenanted undertaking to become man; as the apostle speaks, "He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" **Php 2:7**. It was a part of this taking upon Him the form of a servant, to have all the submission of a servant blended with all the reverence and affection of a son. As a servant, too, He covenanted to be exercised with temptations, to undergo sufferings, and by them learn submission, as the apostle speaks **Heb 5:8**: "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." So that though He laid not His Godhead by, by taking into union

with it our nature, yet in His expressions upon earth, He felt and spoke not so much as God, as man; and therefore, speaking in His covenant relationship as a servant, and yet a son, He uses expressions which could not be very well consistent were He only viewed as God essentially, as the second Person in the glorious Godhead. For instance, He says in the text, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Such a sentence as that can only be interpreted consistently by viewing it as an expression of Jesus, as the servant of the Father, because, as God, His will is identical with the Father's will, His power is identical with the Father's power, for He and His Father are one. And therefore, when He thanks Him for hiding these things from "the wise and prudent", He speaks not as one who was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, not as one who was one with Him in essence, and one with Him in glory: but He speaks as man, and therefore as man submitting Himself to the righteous dispensations of God, bowing down as a servant to the sovereignty of God, and as such fully pleased and satisfied with all the manifestations of the sovereignty of Jehovah.

The apostle says: "We have the mind of Christ" **1Co 2:16**. Then if you and I are like-minded with the apostle, we shall be brought at times and seasons to the same spot where Jesus was, when He uttered these words. Divine sovereignty will be to us no harsh, repulsive doctrine; it will not be one from which we recoil with horror; it will not be one against which we fight with enmity; nor one which we shall put away from us as something unintelligible, mysterious, incomprehensible, with which we have nothing to do. But so far as we have the mind of Christ, have the image of Jesus stamped upon us, have the wisdom of Christ made perfect in us, and some experimental knowledge of Jesus by receiving Him into our hearts as our only God and Saviour, we shall be brought by the Spirit of God to the identical spot, where He was as man, and be able to say, at times and seasons, as He was enabled to say: "I Thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou

hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

All those, then, that fight against divine sovereignty, that shoot arrows of contempt and hatred against the election of the saints before all time, and predestination of all human events, the particular and personal redemption of the church of God by the blood-shedding of Jesus, and the sure and certain perseverance of the elect to eternal glory—all that fight against these doctrines, and shoot arrows of malicious enmity against them, bear this stamp, that they have not the mind of Christ, that they are not under spiritual teaching, that they are not brought into an acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus", that they are not led into that path in which the Son of God walked, that they are not treading in the footsteps of Jesus while He tabernacled here upon earth.

We will then, with God's blessing, look this evening at that truth, to which Jesus bowed with every feeling of His soul, before which, as man, He prostrated Himself with all that reverence which dwelt in His human nature, and for which He blessed and praised God, not only as a truth, but also for the manifestation and discovery of it. We will look at the text pretty much as it lies, taking up those points which seem to stand forth in the most prominent light.

I. We find, then, certain characters spoken of in the text, from whom certain truths are hidden, and **that** by the sovereignty of God, by the special intervention and interposition of Jehovah; not merely hidden in a way of providence, but hidden in a way of direct instrumentality, so that God Himself hides them by throwing a veil over them. There are, then, two characters spoken of in the text from whom divine truth, in its reality, in its power, in its savour, in its sweetness, are mysteriously hidden. One of these characters bears the name of "wise". It is God's glory to pour contempt upon human wisdom, and to bring it to nought, to take the wise in their own craftiness, to lay low in the dust all that man idolizes, that man exalts himself in, and that

man loves and adores. If there is one thing in our day more idolized than another, it is the wisdom of the creature. If there is one idol which the world lying in wickedness and the world lying in profession worship more than another **always excepting Mammon, the great Bel before whom all fall down and worship**, it is creature-wisdom. But this text of Scripture makes a direct stab at the vitals of creature-wisdom; it levels this idol prostrate in the dust; and as Dagon could not stand before the ark of the covenant, so human wisdom must fall prostrate before this declaration from the mouth of the Son of God, and become a stump.

1. But "the wise" in the text seem chiefly to be those who are seeking to become acquainted with divine truth by the exercise of their natural faculties. We are scarcely, I think, to understand by the word "wise" those who are worldly-wise, but those whom we may call religiously wise. As to the worldly-wise they interfere not in these matters; they leave the gospel to itself. It is beneath contempt in their estimation. It is altogether a thing so repulsive to their feeling, that they take no more notice of it than if it did not exist. And therefore the word "wise" here seems to point, not so much at those who are wise in this world's wisdom, but at those who seek to introduce worldly wisdom into the things of God, who seek to bring human reasoning to bear upon God's truth. God, then, has hidden divine realities, in their manifestation and power, from all who would introduce their fleshly wisdom into the things of God.

There are indeed certain things in religion which human wisdom can attain to. A man by reasoning upon evidences may be persuaded of the truth of revelation; by comparing Scripture with Scripture and bringing forward numerous texts, he may be fully persuaded, in his natural judgment, of the truths of the doctrine of grace. He may see election, predestination and all the doctrines connected with divine sovereignty, clearly revealed in Scripture, so as to give his most unwavering assent and consent to them. He may make many sacrifices in their behalf; he may hear no ministers but those that preach them; he may associate

with no persons but those that profess them; he may write books in their defence; he may maintain the strongest arguments from the Word of God that they are true; yet live and die in perfect ignorance of them as made known to his soul by special revelation.

There is nothing which blinds men more effectually to the power of eternal things, than this introducing fleshly wisdom into divine truth; for a man most effectually deceives himself, when he is persuaded in his judgment of the doctrines of grace, and yet lacks that spiritual teaching, whereby those doctrines are brought home with divine unction and savour to his soul. He seems armed with an armour of proof against all the arrows of conviction; for he says, "I am no deceived Arminian; I profess no erroneous sentiments; my judgment is clear; I stand on the basis of truth; I understand perfectly what I hear from the pulpit; I believe most implicitly, that God has a peculiar people; I am fully persuaded that Christ died only for the elect;" and therefore, being compassed in this armour with which he has surrounded himself, not received from God's armoury, but provided from some human manufactory, he stands like the Leviathan in the book of Job; "He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear" **Job 41:27,29**; and the arrows of conviction caught by this defensive armour, glance off from him, and never touch or wound his conscience.

2. But we pass on to another character which is spoken of under the name of "**prudent**". This seems to be a character distinct from the wise. The prudent man is one who always shapes his course in the path which is most consistent with his worldly interests. "He is not a man of extremes," he says. He does not like any sort of profession which in any way interferes with his worldly prospects. He is a moderate man. He likes to steer, he says, the middle path between the two parties. He is not, he says, a man of high sentiments, nor is he a man of low sentiments. He will avoid with the utmost care professing any religious opinion which may bring him into any reproach; and will

yet have an especial regard for his moral character, lest by that being tarnished he should suffer in the world's estimation. His object therefore is, to have just so much religion as shall pacify his conscience, just such a profession as shall lull any convictions that may arise, and yet escape the difficulties, trials, and sacrifices, which are the lot of the faithful followers of the Lamb. Thus, with the greatest ingenuity and the greatest caution, like the wriggling serpent, he will steer such a path as shall always preserve him from persecution, opposition, contempt, difficulty, and sacrifice; and yet he shall so keep from everything which may tarnish his character, that he shall gain, he thinks, the estimation of professors and yet preserve the good opinion of the world.

This is your prudent man—a man who says he is no narrow-minded bigot, no harsh judge of others, no exclusive narrow-spirited censor to condemn all who differ from him, but is a man of general philanthropy, of universal charity for all who profess religion, and that wishes to be friendly with all sects and parties, and indeed with everybody who is in any measure separated from the profanity of the day, and wears an aspect of serious religion. Such is a sketch of your **prudent** man. But he is one from whom God hides His truth. His very prudence is nothing else but the wisdom of the flesh. It springs, for the most part, from Satanic delusion. His very smooth and plausible language is but the outpouring of a worldly heart, and all his gentleness and mildness is, in fact, nothing but an abhorrence of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the preference of self over the esteem of God, and it is the setting up of his own worldly interest and his own worldly character, as an idol to be bowed down to, instead of the cross of the Lord Jesus. With all his prudence, then, in the sight of God he is a fool, for he is destitute of that spiritual wisdom which maketh a man "wise unto salvation": and however adroitly he may shape his course, however dexterously he may direct his steps, he will find hell at the end. He may manoeuvre most cleverly upon earth, and escape everything that is repulsive to his carnal mind, but there is One whom he cannot escape, there is a judgment which is ripening for him, and the end of all his wisdom is death eternal.

3. But before we go on to consider what the things are that God hides from "the wise and prudent", we will look at another character spoken of in the text—"the babe". "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." There is a character, then, spoken of in the text which is the antipodes, the exact opposite of those which we have been describing; and yet one to whom the Lord graciously condescends to reveal those things which He hides from them. A babe, spiritually, is one that is brought by the operations of the Spirit of God upon his heart, into that posture, that experience of soul, that frame, of which the natural babe is a living, visible figure. The leading feature in a babe is that of **helplessness**.

Thus, the spiritual babe that is opposed to "the wise and prudent", is one, who, by the operations of the Spirit of God, in his heart and conscience, is brought to a state of helplessness before God. "The wise" could understand the truth by employing the powers of his natural intellect. "The prudent" could see how to steer between rocks on the one side, and sandbanks on the other, so as to preserve uninjured the bark that carried the cargo of his own dear reputation. But the babe is helpless in this matter; he has no understanding to make use of to direct him into "the truth as it is in Jesus"; he has no prudence to employ, so to steer as to avoid the shipwreck of his good name; but he stands in divine matters utterly helpless. He feels that he has no power to lift up a little finger to deliver himself "from the wrath to come"—that he has not by nature in his heart an atom of that which is acceptable in God's sight—that he has no strength to raise up a single spiritual breathing after Jesus, no power to utter a word that God shall listen to with approbation, no wisdom to conceive one thought that shall be pleasing in His eyes. He stands in his feelings often upon the brink of perdition, and is no more able to roll himself away from the precipice that lies underneath him, than a person bound hand and foot by pirates and left on the brink of some sea-washed cliff, would be able to deliver himself from his fearful position, though trembling lest some

movement of his body or some gust of wind should in a moment precipitate him into the sea that roars beneath.

But another striking feature of a babe, is that of **ignorance**. As it lies on its mother's lap, it is ignorant of the ways of the world, ignorant of the devices of man's heart, ignorant of every branch of all that knowledge which is necessary to fit it for the station of life which it may hereafter have to occupy. We come into the world ignorant of everything which it is necessary for us to know. Thus the spiritual babe, to carry out the figure, is one who is, at times, so deeply convinced of his own ignorance before God, that it seems to him as though he never knew a single truth aright, as though he were utterly destitute of divine teaching, as though he had not an atom of grace in his soul, as though he had never been spiritually led into the "truth as it is in Jesus," by the operations of the Holy Ghost upon his heart and conscience. He feels unable to direct himself in any path that lies before his eyes, unable experimentally to understand any one text of Scripture, unable spiritually to enter into any branch of the truth of God, unable to realise his personal interest in any one of those blessed truths, which are the consolation of the Church of Christ.

But we need not limit the word "babe" to the age of infancy. We read **Mt 21:15**, of "children crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David". These could clearly speak and understand, in a measure, if not spiritually, at least naturally, that the Son of David was come into the temple. And yet the Lord calls them babes. "Have ye never read," says He, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" Thus taking the babe in the text as applicable to one somewhat advanced beyond infancy, we observe another marked feature in its character—its **great teachability**, the implicit credence that it gives to those in whose company it is, and who take upon them to instruct it. A babe that is able to understand what you say, will receive with unhesitating confidence whatever falls from your lips. It has no idea that there are such things as lies, or such persons as deceivers; but it believes implicitly everything that is told it.

So with the spiritual babe, he is teachable. Very different from the worldly "wise", who bring their carnal understandings to bear upon the truths of God: very different from "the prudent", who can shape their winding course, so as to steer clear of everything that pains the flesh. The spiritual babe is made teachable, and as such, is often crying unto the Lord that He would apply His truth with power to his heart; is seeking wisdom from the lips of Him who alone can communicate it; knowing nothing in self as he ought to know, but seeking to derive all his spiritual knowledge from the mouth of Him into whose lips grace has been poured, earnestly desiring that he may know Jesus as his wisdom, as well as his righteousness.

The apostle says: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" **1Co 3:18**. This truth the spiritual babe has learned. He has felt in the hour of temptation, in the season of distress, that all human wisdom falls short of administering that relief, and giving him that support which he longs to feel. He is brought to realise what the Lord speaks in **Isa 28:9**, "Whom shall He teach knowledge, and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." He is deeply convinced that unless the Lord Himself speaks by His own lips to his soul, brings truth by His own mighty operation into his heart, and seals His own testimony in his conscience by His own heavenly power, he continues ignorant of everything which he desires to know. And what the Lord does thus reveal and make known, he implicitly believes. However difficult, strange, and improbable it may seem, he believes it on the Lord's own authority, having a measure of the faith of Abraham, who believed the promise that he should have a son, in spite of reason, sense, and nature.

But it may be asked, how has the babe become possessed of these feelings? What has produced this frame and disposition of soul before God? Not the exertions of his own will surely, nor the strivings of his own creative energy; for a man has just as much

power to make himself a babe naturally as a babe spiritually, and could just as easily "enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born", as regenerate himself into a new creature. But his frame of spiritual babeship arises from the Lord's revealing to him that everything in the creature is polluted, that all human wisdom is utterly defective, that nothing will stand in the great day of trial, but that which comes down from God Himself. And, therefore, the babe, being brought to this point in his soul, that there is no righteousness but Christ's righteousness, no wisdom but Christ's wisdom, no teaching but Christ's teaching, no salvation but in Christ's blood, no knowledge but in the application of truth to his soul, is made to feel, that so far only as he is indulged with these things, has he any saving acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus".

II. But we pass on to consider, what are the things that God hides from the one character, and makes known to the other.

1. **The workings of godly fear in the soul,** is a branch of divine truth which the Lord hides from "the wise and prudent", and reveals unto babes. Whatever religious knowledge, or whatever carnal wisdom, or whatever worldly prudence a man may be possessed of, if he is devoid of the life of God in his soul, he is destitute of the workings of godly fear, he has no solemn awe or reverence for Jehovah, he has never seen his sins in the light of God's countenance, he has never trembled at "the wrath to come", he has never prostrated himself with a reverential spirit before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah, that sees into the secret recesses of his bosom. But all his knowledge, and all his wisdom, and all his prudence, leave him just where they found him, unimpressed, carnal, sensual, worldly, "dead in trespasses and sins". All his wisdom never reached beyond the surface: it never broke up the crust of unbelief, so as to enter through that seared crust into the conscience, and produce living effects in it, as made tender by the touch of God's finger. But his knowledge, his wisdom, his prudence, are all floating in his judgment, and never descend into the depths of his heart.

God hides, then, the workings of spiritual fear from those who are "wise and prudent". He does not condescend to manifest Himself to them: He does not show them light in His light: He does not reveal Himself to their consciences: He does not come with power into their hearts; He does not take the veil of unbelief and blindness from their carnal minds, and show them Himself; He takes them not where He took Moses, into the cleft of the rock, "where His glory passed by"; He deals not with them as He dealt with Isaiah, when He manifested to him the glory of the Lord in the temple; He discovers Himself not to them as He did to Job, when "he abhorred himself in dust and ashes". All their knowledge of God therefore, is an external, intellectual knowledge, a mere exercise of the faculties of the mind, without any spiritual teaching, or any special revelation of the presence, power, glory, and majesty of God to their consciences.

But the babe—the living babe in Zion has "the fear of the Lord" in his soul "as the beginning of wisdom". And therefore, having this fountain of life within, he has it springing up in spiritual exercises. As the apostle speaks, "He serves God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;" he dares not rush with presumption into His holy presence. When he comes into His sanctuary a solemn dread from time to time falls upon his spirit. He has the feelings of Isaiah **Isa 6:5** when he cried: "I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" the feelings of Jacob when he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place!" **Ge 28:17**; the feelings of Moses when he stood by the burning bush, and put his shoes from off his feet, for the spot whereon he stood was holy ground: the feelings of the high priest in the temple on that mysterious day of atonement, when he entered alone, "not without blood", into the sanctuary, the holy of holies, and beheld the Shechinah—the divine presence as a cloud resting on the mercy-seat.

The babe, then, has these exercises of godly fear which carnal, unhumbled, worldly-wise professors know nothing of. And though the babe, at times, seems to have no religion which he can really call spiritual or which satisfies himself, yet he has that

tenderness, awe, and reverence which the carnal professor, however high in doctrine, however soaring in vain confidence, is utterly unacquainted with.

2. But again; God hides from "the wise and prudent" **a spiritual acquaintance with His law**. They may have natural convictions **I believe many of them have**; they may see naturally that God is pure and holy; but they have no acquaintance in their consciences with the spirituality and depth of God's law in the hands of the Spirit, as a ministration of condemnation. If they had, it would have broken into pieces their fleshly wisdom. The hammer of God would have crushed into nothingness the prudence whereby they were endeavouring to shape their course. But the babe has a spiritual acquaintance with the depth and breadth and height of God's holy law, and this being in his conscience the ministration of condemnation, makes him cry: "Guilty, guilty; unclean, unclean; undone, undone; God be merciful unto me a sinner."

3. But again; **the operations and exercises of living faith in a tender conscience** are hidden from "the wise and prudent". All that they know, they "know" as Jude speaks, "naturally", by comparing Scripture with Scripture, by the adjusting of different texts, and endeavouring to gather a light from bringing together passage with passage. They know nothing of the operations of living faith, whereby truth is received in power, in feeling, in divine application, in spiritual revelation; and thus being devoid of living faith, there are no exercises in their souls upon the perfections of God; no access as spiritual worshippers; no entrance into the mysteries of the gospel, in their sweetness and reality; no self-abhorrence and self-loathing, as the "chief of sinners", and "less than the least of all saints"; no going forth in soul towards Jesus with earnest cries, breathings, longings, and desires to feel the efficacy of His atoning blood, the manifestations of His glorious righteousness, and the discovery of His all-absorbing presence. But they mistake light in the head for life in the heart, doctrines in the brain for the feeling application of truth to the conscience, the reception of what God has spoken

in His Word into the intellect for the spiritual discovery of "the truth as it is in Jesus," with power to the soul.

4. But further; God hides from "the wise and prudent" **the exercise of a living hope**. They know nothing of "the anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil". Their hope is the hope of the hypocrite, which is to perish **Job 8:13**. It is the spider's web spun from their own bowels; "they shall lean upon it, but it shall not endure", as Bildad speaks in Job **Job 8:15**, for it is like the rush that has grown out of the mire, and like the flag that groweth up out of the water. But a good hope through grace; hope, that sister-grace with faith and love, that hope which is "the helmet of salvation" to cover the head in the day of battle, that hope of which the possessors shall never be ashamed, that spiritual hope in the soul which is raised up by the "God of hope", and by which we are saved **for "we are saved by hope"**—of that spiritual hope the wise and worldly-prudent are utterly ignorant. They know nothing of storms, waves, tempests, gusts, shoals, sand-banks and rocks, and therefore they want not an anchor. The anchor is not a useless implement, taken on shipboard for show like a figure-head, to be looked at and gazed upon as an ornament, but it is for use; and its use is, to keep the ship from being driven upon shoals and sand-banks, to preserve it from being utterly cast away. He, then, that is never exercised with doubts, fears, temptations, difficulties, gusts, storms, and tempests; who is never tossed upon the waves, nor driven by the billows, can know nothing of what it is to have an "anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and that entereth into that which is within the veil".

5. Again; God hides the **breathing forth of spiritual affections and the pouring out of divine love** from "the wise and prudent," which He reveals unto babes. The parent loves the babe. The mother will bow down over her infant as it lies on her lap, and with the fondest tenderness will imprint soft kisses upon its cheek, out of the love that springs up in her bosom toward it. The very prattlings and little actions of the babe are sweet in her

eyes, because it is her offspring. She bestows not that love upon others; it is the babe, the fruit of her own womb, that she loves. So the God of all grace, the Father of His dear family, never bestows His love upon any but the elect; He never sheds abroad heavenly affections in any but hearts which He is preparing for glory; He never gives a foretaste of heavenly bliss, or the dewdrops of eternal consolation, except to those whom He has loved in Christ before all worlds. Never did His love—no, not a drop of it—fall into the heart of "the wise and prudent".

God beholdeth the proud afar off, and "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" but into the heart of the helpless, ignorant, teachable babe, that lies at His feet in brokenness, contrition, simplicity, humility, and godly sorrow, He drops His love, because, being its Father, He loves it with a love that reaches from eternity to eternity, a love that knows no beginning and will never know end, a love that runs in one undeviating channel, that embraces all the elect, a love that knows neither height nor depth, bottom nor shore. He reveals, then, His love in a measure to the babes, by communicating out of His loving bosom some drops of that love into their heart; and when that love is communicated it makes them love in return.

6. But again; He hides from "the wise and prudent" **all the savour, and unction, and dew, and sweetness, and power of truth.** He gives them the letter. When He has cracked the nut for His child, He throws the shell into the street, and the worldly-wise pick up the broken nutshell out of the gutter, and are wonderfully pleased with it. All they can see is the shell of truth; but the marrow, the fatness, the sweet enjoyment, the blessed revelation, the honey, the milk, and the wine of gospel truth—these things God hides from them; and it is this which distinguishes the living from the dead, that the living have a measure of power in their hearts.

Dew, and savour, and fragrance, and divine sweetness, and heavenly power accompany truth to the hearts of the elect, so that the teaching of God drops like the rain, and His speech distils

like the dew. He leadeth them into green pastures, and causeth them to lie down by still waters. He says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;" "I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse." And when He comes into His garden He brings with Him milk, and honey, and wine, so that the babe is fed by the milk of the gospel. "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." And it is the power of truth felt in the conscience, and the sweet application of divine testimonies received into the heart, that nurture up the spiritual babe until he grows up into "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ".

7. But again; **the diversified and chequered path of a Christian**—the ins and outs of the divine life, the liftings up and castings down, the bitter exercises and sweet deliverances, the scenes of darkness and glimpses of light, the cries and groanings of the troubled spirit, and the lifting up of "the light of God's countenance"—this chequered path, this varied scene, is hid from "the wise and prudent". They know nothing of distress, and nothing of joy; nothing of war, and nothing of peace; nothing of despair, and nothing of hope; nothing of sinking, and nothing of rising; nothing of frowns, and nothing of smiles; nothing of long seasons of darkness, and nothing of blessed gleamings forth of light. God hides these things from them—a veil is upon their hearts. The Lord has, as He speaks of the Jews, "blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, lest they should be converted, and He should heal them"; and "therefore wrath is come upon them to the uttermost". But to the babe He condescends, in a measure, to reveal those things; and through them Christ becomes his food, and soul-satisfying portion.

Thus the babe will ever stand distinguished from the "wise" and the worldly "prudent". The "wise" may seem to know more than the babe; but, in fact, he knows far less, for he knows nothing by divine teaching. What the babe knows, he knows savingly. The wise may seem stronger than the babe, because he has a greater acquaintance with the Scriptures of truth; but in reality the babe is far stronger than he, for the strength of Christ is made perfect

in his weakness; whereas "the mighty man shall not glory in his might", for "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong"; but some temptation shall come upon him to thrust him effectually down. The carnally wise professor may seem to have a stronger hope, a firmer faith, a brighter evidence, a clearer testimony than the babe; but what is it all? It only stands in the letter of truth, it does not stand in the application of the Holy Ghost; it is not a part of that kingdom of God which is "not in word but in power"; it does not stand in the Spirit's testimony; it is not the religion that Paul describes when he says, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

God is said to **reveal** them unto babes—that is, He makes them spiritually known, He casts a mysterious light upon them, He communicates life out of them, He brings feeling with them, He sends them home with spiritual power, He testifies by the Spirit's application, and seals them upon the heart in a way of divine manifestation. And thus the things He hides from the "wise and prudent" He reveals unto babes.

Can you see your character traced out, friends? Your character is here, whether you know it or not. Here is your mirror; if the veil is over your heart you may not be able to see your features in it, but here the mirror is, if you can read your features. If you are a professor of vital godliness, you are one of these characters—the worldly wise, the prudent, or the babe. I have endeavoured, as far as the Lord has shown me, to delineate your features. Is there a resemblance? Now, if you have a conscience, you will fall under the power of truth—you will say, "I fear I have too much worldly wisdom, and too little spiritual teaching. Looking back upon my life, casting my eyes upon my daily transactions, I see there is much more worldly prudence stamped upon them than spiritual simplicity. Weighing myself up in the strict balance of God's Word, I see much that condemns me, I see little that seems really to testify in my favour." Such will be the voice of conscience, for the babe has a conscience, and it is an essential

part of the Spirit's work to give him a conscience, whereby he falls under the power of truth.

But some shall say, "I am so possessed with a feeling of my helplessness, my ignorance, my nothingness, my sinfulness, and deep pollution, and, at the same time, the Lord seems to have done so little for me, and to have revealed so little of the sweetness and power of truth in my soul, that I fear I am out of the secret altogether." Has the Lord made your heart in any measure honest before Him? Has He planted in your soul anything like godly fear, so as to bring you into His presence with feelings of solemn reverence? Has He shown to you how short of salvation everything is but His own blessed teachings and His own divine manifestations in your soul? And has He kindled in your heart, at times, an earnest "spirit of grace and of supplications," whereby you are crying unto Him to lead you and to guide you into all truth? Now these are symptoms of life. Whilst I would wish to pull down "the mighty from their seats", I would seek to exalt "the humble and weak". I would not wish to distress any tender conscience, any living soul, not even the weakest of God's family, but I could not discharge my conscience unless I took the precious from the vile, and drew a line of distinction between the clean and the unclean, though I know that none but God can make His own word effectual to the separation of the professor from the possessor, and set apart spiritual children from those that are "at ease in Zion".

## A Kingdom Which Cannot Be Moved

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, May 11, 1862

"And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Heb. 12:27, 28

In reading the pages of the New Testament, I have been sometimes struck with these two notable things: 1, *first*, the extreme *respect*, I may say *veneration*, which our Lord and his apostles paid to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In all their quotations from them, there is an evident assumption that every part of the Old Testament Scriptures is fully, immediately, and authoritatively inspired—that the whole is the sure word of God which cannot be broken. Let me give you two or three instances by way of impressing this fact more clearly upon your mind and memory—a precaution all the more needed in the present day when such subtle and yet violent attacks are made on the full inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. Our Lord himself, in what is commonly called the "Sermon on the Mount," uses this striking expression, "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." By the word "law," there we must understand more than the law of the ten commandments, for in the preceding verse the Lord had said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the *prophets*; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matt. 5:17.) The word "*jot*" is the name of the Hebrew vowel *I*, marked in that language by a small dot only; and the expression "*tittle*" refers to the shape of the Hebrew consonants, which are frequently only distinguished by a slight turn of the pen. Thus neither vowel nor consonant should suffer loss or alteration, but the whole stand as the authoritative word of God,

until the whole should be fulfilled. The perfect inviolability of the word of God is asserted in almost similar terms by the Lord in Luke, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17.) With similar decision and authority he says, "If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken," (John 10:35), plainly declaring that every word of the Old Testament scriptures was so unalterably the word of God that it could not possibly be violated by nonfulfilment.

But, as another instance, take the way in which the Lord himself met and broke Satan's temptations in the wilderness. He used one weapon, and one only, to beat back the foul adversary and quell the force of his subtle attacks: "It is written." That was the only sword or shield which our blessed Lord wielded to foil every assault of the tempter. Now if the words quoted by our Lord at three several times under three several attacks had not been the sure and actual word of God, why should Satan have given back? Had each passage not been inspired by the breath of the Almighty, and as firm as God's own eternal throne, why should Satan have been defeated when he brought against our Lord those severe temptations? But that arch-fiend knew what some of our clerical and dissenting divines have got to learn, and that to their eternal shame and confusion of face, that "every word of God is pure," and that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." (Prov. 30:5; 2 Tim. 3:16.) But take another instance. When Peter drew his sword in defence of his blessed Master, our Lord said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26:53, 54.) There was a positive, an overwhelming necessity that the scriptures should be fulfilled, which over-ruled and over-bore every other consideration, for God "magnifies his word above all his name" (Psalm 138: 2), that is, faithfulness to his word stands at the head of all his other attributes.

To impress this still more deeply on your mind, let me add one more instance from the lips of the blessed Redeemer. In his last

agony, "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." (John 19:28.) The Holy Ghost had declared of him, "They gave me also gall for my meat and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Psalm 69:21.) Jesus could not die till these words were fulfilled. What a proof of the inspiration and fulfilment of that word at which infidels mock and which Essayists and Reviewers seek to undermine! I think I need not further enlarge upon this point. I have confined myself to the Lord's own testimony; but you will see all through the New Testament what respect is paid in a similar manner by all the inspired apostles to the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. The other notable thing which I have observed in reading the New Testament is this: that the Holy Ghost gives an *interpretation* of many passages of the Old Testament which strikes us, at least at first sight, as somewhat *singular*; by which I mean that it is not obvious, or such as we should have thought of. This of course is from our ignorance. The Holy Ghost has given us in the New Testament the interpretation which was his mind when he revealed the passage in the Old. I will give you one or two instances of this interpretation given by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament of Old Testament Scriptures which seem singular at first sight. In Hebrews 1 we find this passage quoted as proof of the divine Sonship of Jesus: "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." Now if we refer to the place where that word was spoken, it was a part of the message sent by the Lord through Nathan to David, and had in the first instance respect to Solomon. But a greater than Solomon was there. Under that promise given to David on behalf of Solomon there was a promise made to Jesus as the glorious and eternal Son of God. So again: "Out of Egypt have I called my son," is applied by Matthew to the return of Jesus from Egypt, though in the passage itself, in the prophet Hosea 11:1, it seems to refer to the children of Israel. But the Holy Ghost had a deeper meaning than the simple and obvious one, and had reference to the calling of Jesus out of Egypt, when he returned with his mother to Judea.

But, not to prolong this part of our subject, though I believe a most instructive work might be written on the point had I time and abilities, let me now show you what bearing it has upon the words before us. If you look closely at the passage, you will find that the apostle gives us in it an interpretation of a passage in Haggai, which we should not certainly have considered to be the meaning of the passage had not the Holy Ghost so interpreted it by the pen of Paul. Look at the verse before our text: "Whose voice then shook the earth [this refers to the shaking of the earth at Mount Sinai]: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." If we refer to the passage thus quoted from Haggai 2:6, we shall find that it refers to the building of the second temple, which was erected upon the ruins of the first: "Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." But what vague, indefinite, and probably erroneous views should we have formed of the meaning of God's shaking the heavens and the earth, as prior to the coming of the Messiah, "the desire of all nations," had not the Holy Ghost put the right key into the hand of the apostle!

Approach, then, with me his interpretation of the passage, and observe in it the four following particulars. The apostle takes Haggai's text and builds upon it a spiritual interpretation, which I shall, with God's blessing, lay before you this morning, and, in so doing, view,

I.—*First, the basis of the apostle's argument, that whatever things can be shaken may be, and are to be removed;*

II.—*Secondly, that things shaken are to be removed, for this purpose, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain;*

III.—*Thirdly, how this becomes a part of the experience of the family of God: that they "receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken," as the word may be read, and should have been*

translated;

IV.—The *effect* of their receiving this kingdom which cannot be shaken: that they should *have* or rather *hold grace*, "whereby *they may serve God acceptably with reverence and holy fear.*"

I.—You will observe that the apostle lays this down as the basis of all he afterwards brings forward, which we may therefore call, in military language, the key of his position, or, in simpler words, the foundation of his argument, the whole substance of which I will give you in the compass of a very short sentence: *Whatever is shaken, or can be shaken, may be and is to be removed.*

i. Let us look, then, at this "divine sentence in the lips of the King," this heavenly principle, this broad and sweeping assertion; for it is of amazing weight and power, and as a mighty lever in the hands of the Spirit, such as the ancient mathematician asked for, moves the solid earth itself from its place.

And first view it *naturally* and literally, to get a clear conception of its meaning and bearing. It is true then in a *literal* sense. I have sometimes seen, to use a scriptural figure, in the street "a bowing wall," that is, a wall which from age or loose foundation, is leaning out of the perpendicular, so that, as the prophet speaks, it is "ready to fall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant." (Psalm 62:3; Isaiah 30:13.) This wall is unsafe. Can you build a house upon it? Why, the first gale may blow it all down, or it may drop down suddenly of itself. It is a thing which "can be shaken," and must therefore be removed, if you mean to put any firm, permanent building on it or in its place.

Take another example. Suppose, as I look up to the ceiling of this building, I were to see a large crack running across it; or, casting my eye upon the wall, I should see a rent from top to bottom; pieces of mortar falling from the roof, or a loose stone jutting out of the wall. Should we be safe in it? Might not the roof fall upon us and crush us? Some countries, as parts of South America, are subject to earthquakes. Scarcely any building there is not at

times shaken. I have read of the roof of a house opening and the blue sky seen through the crack, and then closing again. How should you like to live in such a country, or such a house? If, then, such a house would not do for time, how would a building equally tottering do for eternity? This, then, is the apostle's argument, that if we are to have a building which is to last for eternity, it must be of such a nature as is not capable of being shaken. And observe the force of it, especially if we adopt the marginal reading, which I think far preferable to the text: "And this word Yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that may be shaken." But, you may say, the Lord in the passage in the prophet Haggai has not fully and clearly declared, "I will remove the things which may be shaken." "O, but he has," replies the apostle, "for when he declares that he will shake the heavens and the earth," he thereby means that as they can be shaken they are virtually condemned as unable to stand, and must therefore be taken out of the way to make room for something better. This is the interpretation which he gives to the prophecy of Haggai; singular, I grant you, and such as we should never have thought of, still full of wisdom and power when rightly understood. Let me, then, carrying this interpretation with me, unfold a little more fully and clearly the words of the prophet.

1. First, then, look at God's voice as shaking *the earth*. When did God's voice, in an especial manner, shake the earth? When the law was given at Mount Sinai; for God gave the law with very terrific accompaniments, in order to impress more deeply upon the mind of the people the force and authority of the Law and the dread Majesty of the Lawgiver, that he was indeed in it "a consuming fire." "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." The whole mount

is here represented as quaking or trembling before the Lord greatly. To this quaking of the mount the apostle alludes when he says, "Whose voice then shook the earth" (Heb. 12:26); for this quaking of Mount Sinai seems to have been typical and emblematic of three things:—I, First, of the *trembling of the earth* generally, for the trembling of the mount was a type and figure of the trembling of the earth before the majesty of its Maker. This is frequently represented in Scripture as the effect of his power and of his presence. Thus, we read, "Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped" (Judges 5:4); and again, "Then the earth shook and trembled" (2 Sam. 22:8); and again, "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." (Psalm 116:7.)

2. But again, the quaking of Mount Sinai was intended also to intimate the majesty of God *in a broken law*, and, by shaking the solid ground under the feet of the people, to represent the giving way of everything earthly, however apparently firm and stable, before the indignation of a sin-avenging God. Hereby was it shown that the law was of that terrific nature, that, like a volcano, it would shake to its very foundation all human righteousness, and leave nothing that stood upon earth remaining upon its own base.

3. The third reason why the earth was shaken at the presence of the Lord upon Mount Sinai was, to show the *passing away of everything earthly*. This is the grand argument of the apostle, which I shall hope presently more fully to unfold. Suffice it for the moment to show its peculiar bearing on everything of an earthly nature. As, then, the Lord shook the earth when he appeared in majesty upon Sinai's blazing top, from this we infer that everything of an earthly nature is shattered by the anger of God in a broken Law. The first shock was at the fall, for man was shattered in Paradise: all his faculties there fell into ruin by the first act of disobedience, and body and soul alike became a wreck. As sin entered, happiness fled; for in Paradise man was happy. Then was he pure and innocent; he could serve God according to the measure of his faculties, and have communion

with him as his beneficent and benevolent Creator. He had too all the delights of nature and of sense—a garden to walk in full of sweet flowers and of pleasant fruits, watered by streams and cooled by the evening breeze, with a fond wife to love and cherish, and everything in him and around to delight his eye and gratify his heart, without sin, guilt, or fear. But all this purity and happiness, as resting on a creature basis, was capable of being shaken and removed; for innocence and happiness received at the same moment a fatal shock: sin broke up both by one blow. Yet unconvinced and unbelieving, man is still always seeking happiness in some shape or other upon earth. He does not see or feel that out of God happiness is impossible, and that to seek it in the creature is to add sin to sin. But look at this vain attempt in a variety of instances.

1. Look at people *young in life*. What romantic prospects dance before their eyes!

"What dreams  
Of love and home by mazy streams!"

But what a rude shock do these earthly dreams of happiness usually experience! This is true of most if not all who build their hopes of happiness on the creature; but particularly so in the case of the *family of God*. How jealous is he of all such schemes of earthly bliss; and how he shatters all sooner or later by his mighty hand!

2. Look, for instance, at *health*, that indispensable element of all earthly happiness! What a rude shock many of the dear family of God have experienced in their earthly tabernacle, even in their youthful days, by accident or disease, so as to mar all earthly happiness almost before the race of life was begun.

3. Look again at *wedded happiness*—that

"Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets"—

how bitter a drop often falls from the hands of God into that honeyed cup! Why sighs that mourning widow? Why does her heart swell and her eye run over? What means that scalding drop on her cheek? But even if the root be spared, is no branch ever lopped off? How many a blooming daughter has faded away in consumption before a mother's eye! How many a fine strong youth has been cut down by fever, or sudden inflammation has borne him away to the cold grave, in the very pride and prospect of life!

4. But apart from these elements of creature happiness shattered and broken, what *disappointment*, what vexation, what sorrow and care we find in everything we put our hands to! Even with health and home unbroken, wife and child untouched by death's cold hand, there is sin and misery enough in a man's own bosom to fill his heart with continual sorrow. Thus wisely and mercifully all our attempts to grasp human happiness fail and come to nought. "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh" (Psa. 29:8); and his voice having once shaken the earth, that voice shook with it all the foundations of creature happiness. Child of grace, murmur not at the voice of the Lord which has broken thy cedars, for the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. (Psa. 29:5.) He does not mean that thou shouldst have thy heaven below the sky, nor live after the fashion of this world, and thus die under the displeasure of the Almighty. It is a kind hand, though a rude one, which blasts all thy schemes of creature happiness, that breaks thy body into pieces with sickness, blights all thy prospects of wealth, and fame, and reputation, and ambition, and pours bitter gall into each honeyed cup. The passer-by who saw Lazarus full of sores and the rich man at his sumptuous feast would have envied the feaster and pitied the pauper. But the scene was altered when the beggar lay in Abraham's bosom and the reveller cried for the cooling drop. Better be a Lazarus in rags than a Dives in purple.

ii. But take God's shaking the earth in another sense. When Mount Sinai quaked to its very base, it was typical of the shaking of *the hearts and consciences* of God's people under a *fiery law*.

1. See how this shakes to pieces all a man's *own righteousness*. Have you not sought in times past to build that up? What attempts you made to conciliate the favour of God by deeds of righteousness, by countless acts of self-imposed obedience! But how this building of yours, which you were rearing up like another Babel, fancying you could by it climb up to heaven, was rudely shaken by the curse of a broken law! God's purpose is to remove everything which can be shaken; and therefore the law comes with killing power into the sinner's conscience to shake him and it all to pieces; to make him quake and tremble before the Lord, as the children of Israel quaked at Sinai's burning mount; to shatter his Babel, confound his speech, and make him cease from building his tower.

2. But see too how all a man's strength is shaken and broken when the Law comes home with power and conviction to the sinner's breast. He once fondly thought how strong he was to keep God's law, to do his will, and to conciliate his favour. But he now finds that will and power and strength he has none to keep the Law with a perfect heart. It was because we were "without strength" to serve or please God that "Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6.) Thus a sinner truly convinced of his weakness falls before God, slaughtered in his inmost conscience as to any ability to keep that law which God has commanded, and to which he has attached so awful a penalty.

3. But the same shattering stroke shakes to pieces all his *wisdom*. We all of us, though born like the wild ass's colt, think ourselves wise enough to find unaided our way to the city; wise enough to please both God and man, serve the flesh, enjoy the world, and at last manage to win heaven. But this fool's dream is rudely broken up when a man begins, under strokes of heavenly tuition, to learn the real truth of the matter. Then the inquiry is not how to serve God and the devil at the same time and almost in the same way; but which way should he turn, or what shall he do to gain God's favour? How shall he avoid sin; how obtain holiness; how live to the glory of God, and walk in all things

unblameable before God and man? Here all his wisdom is baffled; it is shattered by the same shock that broke to pieces his self-righteousness and legal strength.

iii. But I intimated that the shaking of the earth at Mount Sinai was typical and figurative of the *removing* of what could be thus shaken. Now apply this to all that I have shown you can be and actually is shaken by the voice of the Almighty. Why are all schemes of earthly happiness shaken; goods, health, family, name, fame, prospects; why are all thrown down as an earthquake buries a city in ruin? That they may all be *removed* out of our hearts' affections. And why does the Law curse and condemn all the righteousness, strength, and wisdom of man? That all may be *removed* out of the way, and a place prepared in the heart for Christ to be "made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

iv. But the apostle here, as interpreting the prophecy of Haggai, gives us an intimation that there was to be a shaking, not of earth only, but also of *heaven*. There is some little difficulty at first sight in his meaning here, but I hope, with God's help and blessing, to give you the mind of the Spirit in it. "Whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying Yet once more, I shake not the earth only but also heaven." You see that *heaven* was to be shaken as well as earth; and not only to be shaken but to be *removed*.

But what is the *heaven* which God here declares he would shake, and by implication remove as a scroll? Not surely the heaven of heavens, in which he himself dwells; not his own eternal throne. Can we suppose for a moment that heaven itself, in which the Almighty dwells in all his grandeur and glory, can tremble and fall, and be removed like a shepherd's tent? Surely not. The throne of Jehovah is as unshaken as his own eternal Being. It is not, then, that heaven which was to be shaken, but the *Jewish heaven*. Let me explain my meaning, and with it, I hope, the mind of the Spirit.

After the Lord had, in terrible majesty, given the people the Law of the ten commandments, he called Moses up into the mount, and there gave him what is usually called "The Ceremonial Law." I cannot say I much admire the term, as it almost seems to imply that it was merely a law of ceremonies; whereas the whole of it was a divine revelation which under type and figure preached a precious gospel, and was so understood and received by the Old Testament believers. The believing Israelite did not rest upon the blood of the daily sacrifice, nor the incense offered within the veil by the high Priest, when he took and sprinkled the blood of the bullock and the goat on and before the mercy-seat, on the solemn day of atonement. He looked through these figures, these types and shadows, and fixed his eye by faith on the atoning blood of Messiah yet to come. But the carnal worshipper, whose mind was unenlightened by the Spirit of God, looked merely to the type, not to the thing typified. He rested on the blood of the sacrifice, as if the blood of bullocks could take away sin. By this, and keeping strictly the fasts and feasts of the Levitical law, and by an attentive observance of every ceremonial institution, he expected at death to pass into the presence of God. Now this ceremonial law is called "heaven" here, because its types and figures were "patterns," as the apostle speaks of "things in the heavens." You will recollect that the apostle draws a distinction between the "patterns of heavenly things" and "the heavenly things" themselves. "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." And you will observe that he calls the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry which were sprinkled with blood by Moses "patterns of things in the heavens." The most holy place, for instance, was a pattern or representation of the immediate presence of God in heaven; the veil between the holy and the most holy place represented the flesh of Jesus through which alone we pass into the presence of God; the burning of the incense within the most holy place was typical of the intercession of our blessed High Priest at the right hand of the Father; and the bringing in of the blood of the atonement within the veil was typical of Jesus entering into the presence of God by virtue of his

own blood. Thus the apostle in the text speaks of the whole of this ceremonial law as "heaven;" not that he means by it the heaven of heavens in which God dwells, but a representation of heavenly things to the Old Testament Church as their guide to heaven. It was what God himself gave to the Israelite to represent to his mind in type and figure, those heavenly realities of which the Lord of life and glory is now the substance. This, then, was the "heaven" which God by the mouth of Haggai promised to shake, and as capable of being shaken and to be shaken, it was a prophetic warning that it should be removed. When our blessed Lord hung and died on the cross, there were three remarkable occurrences, which seem to have each a typical meaning.

1. First there was "*darkness* over all the land." By this was intimated not only the anger of God against sin in that stormy hour of Jesus' sufferings, but the lowering wrath of the Almighty over the Jewish people.

2. There was an *earthquake*, which was to show there was a shaking of the very earth on which guilty man and especially that guilty people stood.

And 3, thirdly, there was a *shaking of the temple* itself, for the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Thus there was not only the shaking of the earth, the earthly Jerusalem, by the earthquake which heralded the Lord's death, but the very temple itself in a spiritual sense was shaken; for the same shock that rent the veil asunder typically shook the temple in which the veil was. There was a voice in all these occurrences; and thus the veil of the temple being rent in twain and the disclosing to view of the holy of holies behind the veil, and the general shock which took place, all implied that the Jewish heaven, as prophesied, was now shaken by the voice of God; that therefore the ceremonial law was to pass out of sight, and that there was to be established upon the base of that which was thus shaken, and thus to be removed, a kingdom, which, as in **David's** [?? perhaps, **Daniel's**] interpretation of the image, should "stand for ever."

(Dan. 2:44.)

II.—But I pass on to show you that the predicted removing of those things which are shaken as of things that are made, was preparatory and preliminary to the establishing of those *things which cannot be shaken*.

i. What we want is something that can last for eternity. For eternity we were born. We carry immortal souls in our mortal bodies, and we shall exist, when this life comes to a close, in a state either of eternal happiness or eternal misery. Now every saint of God upon whose conscience eternal realities have been laid with any degree of weight and power, wants to have that which will secure his eternal happiness. God shakes therefore both his earth and his heaven, and for this purpose, that those things which cannot be shaken, and of which he is afterwards put into possession may remain, yea, endure for ever and ever. Why does the Lord shake all earthly schemes of human happiness? To give you who fear his name happiness which shall endure for ever and ever. Why does he blight all your prospects, your plans of ambition and of success in life, your romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy? To take them out of the way, that he may give you in their room the peace of God which passeth understanding. Why shake your conscience with the earthquake of his Law? Why remove your fancied heaven built up by your own righteousness and exertions? Why was that legal and ceremonial heaven of yours, in which you would have fallen asleep until you sank into hell, shaken to pieces? Why was your self-righteousness, your creature strength, your vain resolutions of being better and of doing better, and all your expectations of going to heaven by praying, reading, fasting, &c., shaken to pieces by the anger of the Almighty, by the discovery of the evils of your heart, by the flashing in of his wrath against sin, and doubts and fears and tremblings seizing hold of your conscience? Why, that this legal, false, and fallacious heaven might fall into ruin, and the whole building be utterly removed. If a nobleman bought a piece of ground on which to erect a stately mansion, and it was occupied by hovels and miserable abodes of poverty and crime, what

would his first course be? To make a clear sweep; remove the whole, take away every stick and stone. Every trace and vestige of the haunts of filth and misery must be removed, that there may be a clear and proper site on which to erect his palace. So in the things of God. There can be no union between nature and grace; no junction of works of the creature and of the Creator. There must be a clear sweep. The old hovel, the wretched ruins into which we sank at the fall, must be swept away, that there may be a clear and open site on which the temple of grace may rise. The things thus shaken are to be removed as things which are made by human hands, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

ii. We are thus brought to that part of our subject in which we have to consider the things *which cannot be shaken*. These things are to remain when the things shaken are removed like a cloud. What are those things? Is it not of great importance to know what they are, that we may have some evidence how far we possess them? Let us look, then, at some of them.

1. The *eternal purposes* of God, what the Almighty in his Trinity of Persons and Unity of essence has determined in his own bosom,—these counsels are as firm as Jehovah's eternal throne: they can no more be shaken than Jehovah himself can cease to be. Do we not read, "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations?"

2. Again, the *everlasting covenant*, ordered in all things and sure, in which the people of God were chosen in the Lord Jesus Christ, as their covenant head, can never be shaken or removed. It is, therefore, called "the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20), as enduring for ever and ever. It is the solemn ratification of the counsel of God's mind and will, and therefore fixed and unalterable.

3. But again, *God's word and God's oath*; those "two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie," are things also that cannot be shaken. God's *word* shall stand; for "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass

withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." And God's *oath* which he sware to Abraham, that in blessing he would bless him, must surely be as firm and as valid as his word, as the apostle argues; "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath."

4. *The finished work* of the Son of God upon the cross, that full and entire accomplishment of the Father's will, when Jesus said with expiring breath, "It is finished," is a thing that cannot be shaken. His own dying words sufficiently shew that he had accomplished the work which the Father gave him to do; that he had put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that he had obeyed God's righteous law in every particular; that he had reconciled the Church to God by his own blood; had washed away all her sins in that precious fountain then and there opened for all uncleanness; had clothed her with his own spotless righteousness, and brought her nigh to God perfumed by the merit of his own intercession. That work, therefore, must stand for ever: the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

5. *The resurrection* of the blessed Lord from the dead, with every benefit and blessing for the Church of God contained therein and ratified thereby, is also one of "the things which remain." He was thereby "declared to be the Son of God with power;" and life and immortality were most fully and clearly brought to light. No convulsion of nature, no violence, no wickedness of man, no unbelief or infidelity, can ever alter that blessed fact, that Jesus is risen from the dead, yea, rose for our justification, triumphed over death and hell, and went up on high to the glory of the Father, to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

6. So also the *present power* of Jesus, and his *regal authority*, as holding the keys of hell and death; the sceptre which he sways; the grace he gives; the sins he subdues; and the execution of his

eternal purposes which he lives to accomplish in the salvation of all his people, and the putting down of all who rise up against him and them: these too are things that cannot be shaken.

7. And I may add that his *coming again* a second time without sin unto salvation to judge the world and take his people unto himself, is another thing which cannot be shaken by all the powers of earth and hell.

The earth at Mount Sinai was shaken. This was typical of the law of the ten commandments being removed out of the way, which it was when Jesus fulfilled it and endured its penalty; for "he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2:14.) So also, was the Jewish heaven shaken and removed by the same obedience and death. Ever, then, bear in mind the distinction between things that can be shaken and removed, and things which cannot be shaken and remain. Carry this distinction firmly in eye and heart, and then you may divide all things in nature and in grace, all things here and hereafter into two classes. And the question may then rise to your lips as a thousand varied circumstances come before you. "Can this thing be shaken? It can; then it may be removed. Can my health be shaken? It can; this, then, is an indication that my body must one day be laid in the grave. Do I meet with losses in providence, bad debts, reverses, and many disappointments? These shakings in my temporal affairs clearly warn me that all I hold in providence I hold with a trembling hand: for all of it may be shaken; and if so, it must be removed from me or I from it. My family, your families, may they be shaken? May death come in and take away a beloved son or daughter? May a wife be torn from the arms of her husband, a husband snatched from a loving wife? May rude shocks thus invade the happiness of a family? Like a crack in a building, this indicates that the closest family bonds, as thus shaken, must also be eventually removed. Can name, fame, or reputation be shaken? Yes; even by slander's breath. That base, then, is not sufficiently strong to build upon it earthly happiness."

Or can anything you can do to gain heaven by your own exertions

be shaken? If so, the very circumstance of its being shaken shows it will not stand for eternity; it is to be removed. So look round; view earth's fairest pageant; and as in this wide panorama object after object rises to view, still the same thought surges up to the weary eye, sinking heart, and quivering lip, "This thing can be shaken. Even now it trembles as I look at it. Like an illumination it is but a show; lamp after lamp flickers and is gone."

iv. But let me now look at what *cannot be shaken*; let me lift my eyes from earth to heaven. What do I see when I look up in faith to Jesus on his throne of grace and glory? I see the firm purposes of God, and the unalterable counsels of his eternal wisdom and love, established in the Person of his dear Son; I see the "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure;" I see the election of God's people to eternal glory; I see the Son of God at his right hand, having finished the work which his Father gave him to do; I see him waiting till all his enemies are made his footstool, and he himself to appear in the clouds of heaven. These I see are things that must remain. And if I am to remain too, I must have an interest in them. My affections must be fixed on things above and I be one in heart and spirit with those things which remain, so that I may stand in them and with them now and to all eternity.

III.—But this leads us to our next point, the "*receiving the kingdom which cannot be moved*." I rarely like to find fault with our admirable translators. We have reason to bless God every day of our lives for the translation of the scriptures into our own language. But I wish that instead of using the word "moved," they had used the word "shaken," for it is precisely the same word in the original; and I think that by the change of the term we have lost some of the clearness and almost essence of the passage. Let me read it then as I think they should have translated it:—"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken." The apostle had been speaking in the preceding verse of things which could be shaken and things which could not be shaken; and then applying the subject in a personal manner,

says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken." You see how he thus brings the whole subject into the very focus of individual experience, takes as it were in his hand a thing which cannot be shaken, and lodges it in the believer's breast. Thus you see there is "a kingdom which *cannot* be shaken." What is it? The kingdom of grace as preparatory to the kingdom of glory. And by receiving this kingdom, we receive into the bosom as a firm, inward possession those things which flow out of the purposes of God and stand connected with the finished work of his dear Son.

i. The work of God upon the soul is often spoken of in scripture as "the *kingdom of God*" or the "*kingdom of heaven*;" and the reason is, because by virtue of God's grace, we are made subjects of the glorious King now sitting at the right hand of the Father. Thus we read "The kingdom of God is within you;" "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This, then, is "the kingdom" spoken of in our text, and called "a kingdom which cannot be shaken" as standing on the same immoveable basis as the word and oath of God.

But the word "receiving" implies an embracing of it in vital experience. Thus, we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken when we embrace by faith those divine and heavenly realities which stand firmly fixed in the Person and work of the Son of God, for by receiving them into our heart we come into a manifested possession of them. In this way a union is created and cemented by the blessed Spirit between a believing heart and the things which cannot be shaken at the right hand of God; for so far as we are concerned, they are of no use to us, nor indeed do they seem to have any real existence for us, unless they are brought into experimental possession; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What will the death of Christ avail you unless you believe in him by a living faith? Or what will his blood avail you as a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness if not received into a believing heart? Just look, then, at this; for it has a deep, personal, individual meaning, and

a most truly experimental bearing on all the family of God.

1. There is, for instance, *the pardon of sin*. This flows only through atoning blood, because it is through the blood of the Lamb alone that all sin is pardoned. When Jesus said, "It is finished," sin was cast behind God's back, thrown into the depths of the sea, and washed away for ever in his most precious blood. But we have to receive it as our own, for it is a most precious part of the kingdom of grace. When the Lord, then, is pleased to manifest a sense of his pardoning love to the soul, it is a receiving of that which cannot be moved, for it is God's own revealing and sealing of the blood of his dear Son upon the heart and conscience.

2. Thus also the *justification of the person* before the throne of God by the imputation of Christ's obedience is a most blessed truth. But this can only be received by faith, for only as "being justified by faith we have peace with God." (Rom. 5:1.) You thus receive in justification a kingdom which cannot be shaken. How do you expect to stand before the throne of God at the great day? In your own righteousness or Christ's? If you stand in your own, God has already shaken it when he shook Mount Sinai with his mighty voice; and as thus shaken it must be removed, and you too with it. But if you stand before the throne clothed in Christ's righteousness, you will hear the welcome words, "Come ye blessed of my Father."

3. But there is also a receiving of the *spirit of adoption*, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father," and receive the witness of the Spirit to our spirit that we are God's children. He who receives this receives what cannot be shaken, for it is a part, and a most blessed part of the inward kingdom of heaven.

4. So again, any *clear testimony* that God is your Father and Friend; any intimation of his love to your soul; any whisper of his Spirit to your heart; any application of the blood of the atonement to your conscience; any unexpected yet gladly welcomed breaking in of light, life, liberty, and power—the

receiving of these manifestations of mercy and grace is receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved.

But you may say, "I am often moved. I have felt all this, or a measure of this; but am often much shaken about it." Yes, so you are. But *you* may be moved and *the thing* itself not be moved. These are two very different things. Look at it in this point of view: You may be moved about the Scripture being true, for we have infidel doubts as well as unbelieving fears. But your doubts do not shake the inspiration of God's word. You may have a doubt about Christ being the Son of God, though I trust only a passing one; but were you even a bold denier of that vital truth, your doubts or your denial would not alter the blessed fact that he is the Son of the Father in truth and love; else you make man's unbelief stronger than God's veracity. So it is as regards the work of God upon your soul. You may be and are much tried about it, but your being shaken about it does not alter the blessed reality, if indeed you possess it.

"If Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is for ever mine."

The sun is now shining in the sky: we see it; we know it by the evidence of his bright beams. But suppose the day were obscured with cloud, would that sweep the sun out of the sky? So it is in grace. If the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you with healing in his wings, and shed a beam of sacred light into your soul, it may be afterwards long and deeply veiled in clouds; God may hide his face, and you may sink into darkness; but that does not destroy the blessed fact, that the Sun did once shine into your heart.

ii. But as this is an important point, let me show how it bears equally upon *every grace of the Spirit*. If the Lord has given us a living *faith*, that faith is never shaken; if a *good hope* through grace, that good hope is never shaken; if *love* to his dear name, that love is never shaken. But you say, "You fairly astonish me; for you contradict all my feelings, and not only so, but a good

deal of your own preaching and experience." Yes, I do, if you make your feelings to be the judge, or if you misunderstand my preaching. Let me then clear up this point. Is it your *faith* that is shaken, or *you* about your faith? Are not these two things different? Apply it to the grace of hope by way of proof. You may be shaken about your hope. But if "a good hope through grace," it stands firm, whether you doubt about it or not. When the anchor is down deep in the sea, the pilot may be shaken as to whether it will hold fast. But his fears have no effect upon the anchor itself: if the anchor be good and if it be firmly fixed in the sand, it will hold whatever the pilot thinks of it. His fears of being tossed upon the rocks will not toss him there; if the anchor is good, the anchor will hold the ship, whether he fear or not. So it is in grace. If you have a good hope through grace, and that is anchored within the veil, your doubts and fears will no more destroy that hope than the doubts and fears of the pilot will snap the cable or break the anchor. Don't you know that the faith of all true believers "stands not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God?" Then how can true faith be shaken; I mean shaken by the voice and power of God so as to be removed by him? Faith can be tried, as gold is tried in the fire; but the trial no more destroys faith than the furnace destroys the gold. So with *love*; if shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost, it is a precious part of the kingdom of God; and if so, it cannot be shaken by the voice of God so as to be removed and pass away, like the veil of the temple when rent in twain. If it were so, the graces of the Spirit would have no more permanence than the blood of bullocks and goats.

It is true that we are shaken, I am sure I am, as to the reality of our graces; but the graces themselves are not shaken by the terrible voice of an angry God, or else he would contradict himself. He is not like us, ever changing, ever changeable. We do not serve a God like that. That would be Baal, to be moved by cutting the flesh with lancets. But we serve a God who is "in one mind and none can turn him;" unchanging, unchangeable, in all his glorious perfections. Whom he loves, he loves for ever. And thus though we are shaken as to the reality of our faith, hope, and love, those doubts and fears, to which all are more or less

subject, do not destroy the work of God upon the soul. Does this contradict my preaching? Have I not always contended for the permanence of grace, and that the Spirit never quenches the light of his own temple? In fact, where else is our security? You may have money in a bank, and you may say sometimes to yourself, in an anxious moment, "Is it safe?" But your fears do not affect the real stability of the bank. That does not depend upon either your hopes or your fears, but upon its own solid foundation and its own real capital. So you may have fears about the heavenly bank, or rather about your interest in it; but all your doubts and fears do not break the heavenly bank any more than they do Coutts's. You see we must not let our ever-fluctuating feelings, our darkness, unbelief, doubt, and fear be our deciding guides as to our interest in heavenly realities. If the Lord has begun a work of grace upon your soul, he has begun it; if he is carrying on, he is carrying it on and will complete it, and that work will stand. I may be shaken and am shaken nearly every day of my life about many things, but God's work will remain the same whether I am shaken or not.

But when the apostle speaks of the kingdom not being shaken, he means so as to be *removed*. Now certainly these things differ. Look at the oaks in the neighbouring park: they may rock to the base in a strong wind, but, if firmly rooted in the soil, they will stand every storm. To be shaken is not the same thing as to be cut down or torn up. In fact, this is the chief blessedness of receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, that your faith does not rest upon mutabilities. If it rested on your own good works, your present or future attainments in the flesh, your due cultivation of creature holiness, of what you would do upon a deathbed, how you were to repent when sickness came; if your hope of heaven rested upon so false and fickle a foundation, it might be and certainly would be awfully shaken, and removed like a dream. But if our faith and hope and love enter within the veil, and take fast hold of the Son of God, we, as creatures of a day, may fluctuate in our feelings as the sea moves up and down under the influence of the wind; but those fluctuations of feeling do not alter the solemn facts of regeneration, and justification,

and acceptance, and adoption into the family of God. In fact, if these things could be swept away out of the heart by the gusts of unbelief, there would be no stability for any one, and I might say, no salvation. But this is the blessedness of gospel grace, that in receiving the Spirit we thereby receive a heavenly kingdom—a kingdom which cannot be shaken; a kingdom of which Christ himself is the glorious Sovereign, "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Dan. 7:27.)

IV.—But time admonishes me to pass on to our last point, the exhortation, "Let us have" (or, as it is in the margin, "*hold fast*") *grace*, whereby we may *serve* God acceptably with *reverence and godly fear*."

The apostle here assumes that those to whom he wrote had received a kingdom which could not be moved; that they were local subjects of King Jesus; that they had believed in him to the salvation of their souls. He therefore addresses them as partakers of divine light and life, and exhorts them to "have" (or "hold fast," which is the better rendering) "grace," that they might serve God acceptably.

Several points here demand our close attention, and I am sorry that time will not allow me to press them more fully on your consciences.

1. First, then, see the necessity of *holding grace fast*, for I adopt the marginal reading as preferable to that in the text. Grace is the very foundation of the kingdom which cannot be moved. It is all of grace, from first to last. By grace we are saved; by grace we are called; by grace we are what we are. In order, therefore, to maintain our interest clear in the kingdom which cannot be shaken, we must hold grace fast; for directly we cease to do this, we lose our comfortable prospects of this kingdom, and of our own participation in it and its heavenly blessings. It is a kingdom of present grace and of future glory, therefore built wholly upon grace and not upon merit; wholly upon the favour of God, and

not upon the works of the creature. As long then as we hold fast grace, we hold the kingdom; for the kingdom stands in grace.

But why should this exhortation be needed? Is it not very easy to hold fast grace? Yes, very, when there is nothing to try it; and that is the way that most hold it—in the head, not in the heart. But the real partakers of the life of God are tempted on every hand to renounce their hold of grace, through the power of the world, the strength of sin, the subtlety of their unwearied adversary, the unbelief, infidelity, and despondency of their wretched heart. Thus sometimes we are tempted to look away from the kingdom which cannot be shaken, and descend to lower things; to stand either upon that earth which has been shaken under our feet, or that heaven, that Pharisee's heaven, which has been shaken over our heads, and thus get lost and bewildered among the wreck and ruin of those things which have been shaken and are removed. He exhorts us therefore to hold fast that grace whereby in the first instance we came to have an interest in the kingdom not to be shaken; whereby we were introduced into an experimental knowledge and possession of it; and whereby alone we can maintain a firm hold of it to the end. Whatever you do, then, however low you may sink and fall, never relinquish your firm hold of grace. It will never be more precious than when clasped by a dying hand, and clung to with expiring breath.

2. But the apostle gives us still farther blessed advice: that we should hold fast this grace for a special purpose,—to "*serve God acceptably.*" We cannot be serving God acceptably while we hold fast the world. It is not serving God acceptably to serve the flesh and the devil. We must give up these things if we are to render to the Father an acceptable service. For otherwise he may well say to us, "I hate, I despise your feast days:" "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs." "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Nor can we serve God acceptably by a broken law, nor by our own righteousness, strength, wisdom, or holiness. We must cast aside all these works of the creature, and hold on with both hands that heavenly grace, whereby alone we serve

God acceptably, as living under gracious influences, gracious teachings, and gracious operations.

3. But he adds a blessed caution not to presume upon these privileges or mercies: he bids us serve God "*with reverence.*" Reverence becomes all who name that great and terrible name of the Lord of hosts. But of all it most becomes those who are saved by the free, unmerited grace of God. View through whom that grace freely flows down to guilty man. Look at what our blessed Lord suffered to save our souls from the bottomless pit; view him in the garden and upon the cross. O what reverence should we entertain towards his heavenly Majesty! And God saves us by his grace not to walk after fleshly lusts, not to serve the world and self, but walk before him with holy reverence, as ever living under his heart-searching eye. There is nothing more unbecoming in one who professes to know the things of God for himself in sweet and gracious experience, than a want of holy reverence in his house and in his presence. Surely, if ever the Lord's power and presence, if ever his grace, mercy, and truth, had been felt in a man's soul, it would beget in him a reverence of the Majesty of heaven. To see, then, men and ministers approach the throne of God without any reverence of that great and glorious Majesty before whom angels veil their faces, clearly shows that they never had the majesty of God impressed upon their conscience. Though saved by grace, it is not to save us into presumption and vain confidence, and to walk before God in lightness and frivolity; but it is to serve him all our days with that holy reverence of his dread Majesty which becomes sinners, and especially saved sinners who have known his anger and felt his love.

4. But the apostle adds, "*And godly fear,*" that fountain of life whereby we depart from the snares of death; not the slavish fear of souls under the law, but the holy, filial fear of those who live under the Gospel, who are blessed with manifestations of grace, and who know the Lord by his own divine teaching and testimony. It is these who fear his great name in the exercise of that filial fear which is one of his most choice covenant blessings.

Thus, you see there is an ample guard against all licentiousness. Men who know not the fear of God in their own hearts, cast their arrows against the saints of God, as if they sanctioned all manner of hypocrisy and ungodliness. But that the doctrines of grace should lead to licentiousness—perish the thought! It is a libel upon God and godliness. The more we know what we are saved from by the free grace of God, the more we shall desire to walk according to the precepts of the Gospel, and serve God acceptably with that reverence and godly fear which becomes our profession, whereby we adorn the doctrine and make it manifest that we are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb that we may live to his glory.

## **The Knowledge of Christ, and of the Power of His Resurrection**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 13, 1843

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."  
Philippians 3:10

When God created man in his own image, after his own likeness, and placed him in the garden of Eden, he gave him this one prohibition, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:16, 17.) God thus prohibited Adam from seeking the knowledge of good and evil: he was to be fully satisfied with knowing his Creator, and not to grasp at any other knowledge than that which was contained in God himself. When Satan, then, tempted the woman, it was by holding out some advantage as the fruit of disobedience. His words were, "God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:5.) Elevation into Godship and into knowledge, as yet unattained to, was the bait that the arch-deceiver laid before her, the peculiar temptation that he presented to her mind. And the Holy Ghost has revealed how that temptation worked: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." (verse 6.)

Now there were three things that worked with, and constituted the chief force of this temptation. First, that "the tree was good for food." Secondly, that "it was pleasant to the eyes." And thirdly, "that it was to be desired to make one wise." To this temptation she listened; and as it entered into her mind, it bred these three desires working powerfully together—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of knowledge. Under their

united power she fell, and by so doing disobeyed the solemn prohibition of God. And then, by drawing the man, in whom as their covenant-head all his posterity stood, into the committal of the same sin with herself, she involved the whole human race in one common gulph of misery and ruin. And alas! this "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" has been in the heart of man ever since, striking its deep root downward, and bringing forth its bitter fruit upward: for the thirst which our first parents had after knowledge, at any price and at any cost, is still continually alive in their posterity, craving the same gratification. I can speak experimentally on this point; for I think few persons have had from childhood a greater thirst after human knowledge than myself. Nay, even since the Lord has quickened my soul, though fully convinced of its emptiness and worthlessness, I have felt the strongest temptations to indulge eagerly in the pursuit of it; and one of the greatest exercises of my mind, and what has often brought guilt upon my conscience, has been an inordinate thirst after the various branches of human knowledge, it being so suitable to my natural disposition, as well as fostered by the whole course of my education. But it is a seduction which draws away the soul from spiritual things, fosters the native infidelity of the heart, and leads it to seek its happiness in external things, instead of that which is to be found in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

But this was the first and strongest temptation. And I doubt not that the Apostle Paul was similarly exercised; for if he had not naturally had a great thirst after human knowledge, he would not have sat as he did at the feet of Gamaliel, who was a man so deeply skilled in all the various branches of learning then pursued. But when he had once powerfully felt the hand of God in his soul, he was brought to see that all his attainments in human knowledge were mere vanity and emptiness. He deeply felt the utter nothingness of human learning to speak pardon and peace; and, by the mighty work of the Holy Ghost on his heart, he was brought to part with every creature attainment, and all human wisdom, for the knowledge of that one grand Object, which is the only one really worth knowing, "That I may know him, and the

power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

The Apostle was in this sweet and blessed frame of mind, counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, when, under divine inspiration, he wrote this chapter. But it may be as well, before we enter into the experimental meaning of the words of the text, to trace out the work of grace which God was carrying on in his soul, and which brought him into that spiritual state of mind, so as to "count all things but dung that he might win Christ." He had told us, that those only were the true circumcision who "worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and *have no confidence in the flesh.*" It was this last expression which led him to enter into his own experience, for he says, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh." And then he tells us whence he might derive his fleshly confidence. "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." He then goes on to enumerate certain particulars, which in those days the pharisaical Jews chiefly rested in as ensuring them the favour of God, such as, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Well might he, then, on these grounds, as a blind, ignorant Pharisee, have had a feeling of confidence in the flesh; and till the day of his death would he have rested here, if God had not mercifully opened his eyes to see his own guilt and misery; and thus cut from under his feet the ground whereon he rested. He therefore goes on to say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Thus God, by a secret and powerful work in his conscience, not only cast down all his fleshly confidence, stripped him entirely of his natural religion, showed him the emptiness of every hope in which he had so fondly trusted, and by sending his holy law into his conscience, slaughtered him outright (Rom. 7:9); but also, he

manifested to his understanding, and revealed in his soul a precious Saviour, and thus drew forth all the affections of his heart, fixing them wholly and solely upon Jesus. He then saw by the eye of faith such loveliness and preciousness in Christ, that every other object of desire or affection faded away; and those aims and pursuits which once seemed his richest gain, he could now rejoice in and pursue no longer; they utterly sank in his esteem; vanity and emptiness were stamped upon them; and he counted them as absolute loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

Before, then, any one can experimentally enter into these words, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," he must experimentally pass through something of the same process as the Apostle; every thing must be taken away from him in which he once fondly trusted, every false hope must be demolished, and all creature good felt to be vanity and emptiness. These things must be wrought experimentally by a divine power in his soul; and their effect will be to bring him down into the dust and ashes of self-abasement. And when the sinner is brought thus to sink down before God into all the felt ruin of the creature, it is the work of the blessed Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to his heart and conscience, and so fill him with love to the Lord of life and glory. Then every thing else, as well as every other object of hope or desire, will sink in his esteem as dross and dung in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

We will now look, then, with the Lord's blessing, at the two main features in the text.

I.—*The knowledge of Christ.*

II.—*The knowledge of the power of his resurrection.*

I.—*"That I might know him."* But did not the apostle know him? Who ever possessed a tongue to speak forth greater or more blessed things concerning the riches of Christ's glorious Person,

atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and finished salvation, than the great apostle of the Gentiles? Were these things with him mere doctrines and theories, and had he not in his soul an experimental acquaintance with the Lord Jesus? Had he not received the secret communications of Christ's dying love into his heart? Yes, surely. It was the very manifestation of these heavenly realities which brought him to desire more of them, and more intensely and ardently to seek them. The opening up of the treasures of Christ's love and blood in his soul, brought him to pant more earnestly after the enjoyment of them. He saw such unsearchable riches in Christ, that he found he knew so little of what was to be known, felt so little of what was to be felt, and lived so low, and so much beneath the enjoyments which were to be had in Christ, that in comparison he seemed to know nothing at all. He looked at his present experience, and saw how faint and feeble it comparatively was; and this made him vent forth his longing desires to know more of Jesus. In order, therefore, to have the same desires after the knowledge of Christ which the apostle had, there must be the same teachings by the blessed Spirit in our heart which were given to him. For unless the same experimental knowledge of Christ is imparted in a measure to us, Jesus will be to us but as "a root out of a dry ground;" there will be "no form nor comeliness" in him, nor any "beauty that we should desire him."

When, therefore, Paul said, "That I may know him," he was brought to that point where God brings all his people, to feel thoroughly convinced in their consciences that no man has any spiritual knowledge of Jesus except by the special revelation of the Spirit; as he himself declares, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." So when the Lord asked his disciples saying, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" and they answered, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias; or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Then Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But what did the Lord Jesus then say? Did he compliment Peter on the exercise of his reasoning powers? No; but answered,

"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 16:13-17.) The same solemn testimony the Lord bore in those remarkable words, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 11:27.) Nature in the exercise of all her faculties, and with all her reasoning powers, never knew anything experimentally of Christ. The flesh may know him doctrinally, in the letter of the word, but it never knew him in spirit and in power, nor by experimental revelation, special teaching, and divine demonstration of the Holy Ghost in the heart.

Before, then, any person can say feelingly, "That I may know him," he must be brought to this point—that he never can know Christ by any creature ability, or by any exercise of the human intellect; that he never can receive such knowledge from man, whether it be from his own or from any other person's instruction. In order therefore that he may feel his utter inability to bring this knowledge into his heart, he must lie under the burden of this truth, "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." Thus these two things are absolutely necessary to be wrought with power into a man's experience, before he can enter into the spiritual meaning of the text; first, a deep sense in his heart and conscience of the utter inability of the creature spiritually and experimentally to know a precious Christ; and secondly, that it is the work and office of the Holy Ghost inwardly to reveal the Person, blood, righteousness, grace, and love of Jesus. And thus, the deeper the soul sinks in the knowledge of its ignorance, the higher it will rise in the knowledge of the Person and work of Christ; and the more the eye is anointed with eye-salve to perceive the ruin and misery of the creature, the more the soul will be brought to see that the glorious mysteries of salvation can only be realized by the special manifestations of the Holy Comforter, whose office it is to lead the child of God into all truth. The desire, then, of the apostle was to know Christ, and to have an experimental acquaintance with

every thing belonging to and springing out of Christ.

1. He therefore desired to know *the glory of his Person* in the union of the Godhead with the manhood, in his complex character of Immanuel, "God with us." This is a mystery which nature has never fathomed, and which human reason never can comprehend. The more we look at it in the light of carnal reason, the more we are lost in utter amazement at this mystery; and after being, perhaps, tossed for a season to and fro with doubt and infidelity, and fully convinced that we are utterly unable to extricate our souls by sense and reason from the labyrinth in which they are lost, we are brought at last to this point, to receive the truth as a little child. For it becomes sealed in our conscience, that the kingdom of heaven is not to be entered into by climbing up into gospel mysteries by the ladder of human reason; but, as a little child receives the first rudiments of human knowledge, not by doubting, but simply on the authority of its teacher, so must the soul receive the great mysteries of truth from the mouth of God with unction and power. And thus the eye being anointed with eye-salve to see the union of God and man in one glorious Person, and the conscience being divinely wrought upon to feel what God speaks, the soul is no more left to reason about it, or to puzzle and perplex itself with the mystery, "How can it be?" but is made to sink down into the posture of a little child, and to receive with meekness a truth which is so sweet and suitable to its lost and ruined condition. There can be no earnest desire to know Christ, nor any holy panting after a spiritual revelation of him, while the heart is pursuing worldly objects; nor can there be any ardent seeking after a sight by faith of his glorious Person, while the mind is only speculatively informed, or, as in the case of too many, the judgment merely enlightened, without any divine savour or spiritual affection in the soul. But he who is spiritually taught is at times not only panting with holy longing and intense desires to know Jesus as Immanuel, but also that this blessed God-Man would come down in his heavenly power, in all his sweetness and suitability, and take up his abode in his soul, conforming it to his own image and likeness.

2. But again. In desiring to "know him," the soul desires to know

every thing connected with him, and which springs out of him. It desires, for instance, to know the virtue of *his atoning blood*, which is derived solely from the union of the manhood with the Godhead in one glorious Person; for if Christ had not been God as well as man, there would have been no virtue in the blood shed upon the cross to atone for sin. But when the soul is brought to enter into the glorious mystery of an incarnate God, and the heart is drawn out to this Lord of life and glory as the centre and the object of its love and worship, then it is taught to feel the preciousness, and set a due value on the effects of Christ's atoning blood, and know it to be, as the Apostle says, "the blood of God." "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.)

As long as a man lies dead in nature's darkness, he does not know, neither has he any desire to know anything of this fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. He has never groaned under, nor felt the burden of sin; he has not smarted under the bite of that adder whose sting is unto death, and which causes a living conscience to bleed at well nigh every pore. In order therefore that he may be taught to set a right value upon the nature and efficacy of Christ's atoning blood, a man must be made spiritually to feel the greatness of his iniquity. Men talk of the blood of Jesus Christ as though any one could understand the glory of that mystery; but the blood of Jesus Christ is only to be known experimentally by the application of it to the guilty conscience. It is not for the whole-hearted, for those who are settled on their lees, and are at ease in Zion, who never groaned under the burden of sin, to know the balm of Jesus' blood. The blood of the Lamb is not applied to any but to the sin-sick, broken, and contrite heart. And whenever the spirit is broken, and taught to feel the burden of sin, sooner or later it is brought experimentally to taste the preciousness of the blood of sprinkling. And while the heart is thus opened by the Holy Ghost to feel its power, there will arise panting desires after a deeper acquaintance with its atoning efficacy and its cleansing power to purge the conscience from all its sin, guilt, and filth. Nor will these desires and this experience suffice for once only in a man's life. For whatever he

may have known of its efficacy and power, whenever any discovery is made of new sin, or any fresh breaking out of old, he will be sure to need a fresh application of the balmy blood of Immanuel to his conscience, as that which alone can cleanse and wash it away.

3. But again. In desiring "to know" Jesus, the soul that is anointed by the Holy Ghost to see Christ's glorious Person and finished work, is also panting, as the Spirit is pleased to work upon it, to know, in personal experience and by divine manifestation, *Christ's justifying righteousness*. What is Christ's justifying righteousness to a Pharisee? to one dead in sin, or buried in the world? Until we are brought by the Holy Ghost to feel the guilt of sin in the conscience, and to know that we are utterly ruined and undone in ourselves, and stand naked and filthy before God, we cannot hunger nor thirst after the appropriation of that glorious robe of imputed righteousness which Christ wrought out and brought in, and which the Holy Ghost puts upon all those that believe in his name.

4. Again. The soul that desires to "know him" thirsts also after a blessed revelation of *his dying love*. When the eye is spiritually opened to see the glory of Christ's Person, it follows him as a suffering Mediator to Calvary, there to view him as a crucified Jesus, as the Lamb of God bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. And as the child of God looks by faith to the bleeding Lamb, he desires to have a spiritual revelation and manifestation of the mystery of the cross to his heart, and by this dying love entering into his soul, he may "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." (Eph. 3:18, 19.) The dying love of Christ spiritually felt and realized can alone wean the soul from the world, and make the things of time and sense to appear in their true light, as stamped with vanity and vexation of spirit. The dying love of Christ, also, revealed to the soul, is the only thing that can make us love Jesus, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart; and nothing but this can make us willing to leave the world, and part with the things of

time and sense that so we may "ever be with the Lord."

5. But in desiring to know Jesus by the teaching and revelation of the Holy Ghost, the soul that is born of God longs after a manifestation of him *in all his covenant characters and relations*. Is he spiritually held up before the eyes of the understanding as *the great High Priest* over the house of God? As such is he spiritually longed after to be known, that the power of his priestly intercession may be felt and realized? Is he set forth in the Scriptures as *the Church's Bridegroom and Husband*? As such does the heaven-taught soul desire to realize his presence, and cry with the Bride (Song 1:2), "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine." Is he *the Church's Lord*? As such does she desire to bow at his feet, and say, "Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." (Isa. 26:13.) Is he *the Church's ever-living and ever-loving head*? Out of his ever-flowing and overflowing fulness does she long to receive, and grace for grace. Is he her *Advocate, Intercessor, Mediator, Brother born for Adversity, yea, Friend* who sticketh closer than any earthly brother? As the Lord Jesus in those different covenant characters and endearing relationships is presented to the eyes of the spiritual understanding, faith flows out towards, hope anchors in, and love clasps firm hold of him as thus revealed; and thus ardent desires and fervent longings are kindled in the soul to know him experimentally in all these relations, and inwardly realize their sweetness and power. Every character that Jesus sustains has some reference to the felt and urgent wants of his people; and thus as they are from time to time brought into those circumstances of need and distress to which he in these various characters is suited, their desires flow forth toward him, that he would thus graciously manifest himself unto them. And thus, whatever treasures of grace and truth dwell in him, "in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," as each are spiritually and successively made known to the soul, it desires inwardly and experimentally to realize them. Nor does it want the gifts severed from the Giver, or the love from the Lover; but as the enamoured bride desires to possess the husband as the

centre of her affections, so does the soul taught of God desire inwardly to possess Jesus as the centre of her spirit's worship and heart's affections.

II.—But the apostle in the text not only desired to know Christ, but also to know "*the power of his resurrection.*" What does he mean by the "power of Christ's resurrection?" In order to understand what is meant by the *power*, we must look a little at the *nature* of Christ's resurrection. The reason why the Scriptures speak so much of Christ's resurrection is, because it was, so to speak, the stamp which God put upon his work upon the cross. The visible proof that God gave that Jesus was the Son of God, was, that he raised him up from the dead. As the apostle says (Romans 1:4), "Declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the grand point which the apostles enforced in their preaching; and it makes the most prominent feature in every sermon recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the seal of his being the promised Messiah, the Christ of God. It was the Father's visible and undeniable testimony that he had finished the work which had been given him to do; and that being raised up by the power of God, the authority and approbation of God himself was undeniably stamped upon all that he meritoriously did and suffered.

But again. The resurrection of Christ is not merely the authoritative stamp which God set upon his work, but sets forth also the regeneration of the soul, according to those words, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." The Scriptures of the New Testament very much connect together the resurrection of Jesus with the regeneration of his people. The Church had an eternal union with the Son of God as her Covenant Head. She was therefore mystically crucified, buried, and raised up with Christ. The same power which raised up Christ from the dead works in her heart (Eph. 1:19, 20); so, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, she is to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4); and being "risen with Christ she seeks the things which are

above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1.) Had the Church not risen with Christ she could not have been regenerated in due time by him. But the members virtually rising with their glorious Head, each in due season receives life out of him, as it says, "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise." (Isa. 26:19.) Thus Christ's resurrection is the cause of the soul's regeneration; and regeneration is the inward proof of Christ's resurrection, and of an interest in it. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:38.)

1. As the resurrection, then, of Christ was the grand, visible stamp of God's approbation of his finished work, the decisive witness which the Father gave that he was his only-begotten Son, the promised Messiah, the Christ of God; to know the "power of his resurrection," is to know the power of God's approbation of the finished work of Jesus, and to have the stamp which God puts upon his dying love and atoning blood experimentally sealed upon the conscience. So that, in knowing the power of Christ's resurrection, the soul not only knows that the work of redemption is finished, that the Son of God has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, that he has "finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24); but in knowing the approbation of God to be put upon the finished work of Christ, it is experimentally brought to feel that its sin is entirely put away, and its iniquity for ever abolished.

2. But Christ's resurrection, I observed, is also connected with the regeneration of his people. If Christ had not risen from the dead, all his people would have eternally perished; as the Apostle says, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15:17, 18.) But when Jesus rose from the dead all his elect spiritually and mystically arose with him, and thus his risen life at the right hand of the Father becomes their quickening

life, for "the last Adam is a quickening Spirit;" and "those who have been planted in the likeness of his death are also planted in the likeness of his resurrection." To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection is to know the power of his risen and endless life in the soul, and to feel the quickening energy and efficacy of his Spirit creating vital faith in the heart.

Thus, when sunk in carnality, darkness, and death, the soul longs to feel a sweet and blessed revival, it desires to know the power of Christ's resurrection. By virtue alone of his risen life can it arise out of that miserable state of barrenness and carnality into which it is so often sunk; and did not he for ever live who is our life, long ago would it have sunk to rise no more. His "visitation alone preserves our spirit;" and when the soul pleads "Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee?" it breathes forth in that petition its desire to know the power of Christ's resurrection.

3. But Christ in rising from the dead, rose triumphant over sin. He sank into the grave overwhelmed, as it were, with sin; for according to covenant engagement, God the Father, in making his soul a sacrifice for sin, caused to meet upon him the iniquities of all his redeemed; and in bearing their iniquities he poured out his soul unto death. But when Jesus rose from the dead all the sins of his church were left in the sepulchre. The reproach of Israel was rolled away with the stone that was rolled from the tomb where the Lord lay; and he rose as a justified person, as the apostle says, "justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim. 3:16); and therefore the Lord said in prophecy, "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?" To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection is to be delivered from the guilt, filth, and power of sin in the conscience. Thus the knowledge of the pardon of sin is intimately and experimentally connected with the power of Christ's resurrection. God the Father has connected together the justification of the Head and the members, for "Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." In desiring, then, to know the power of Christ's resurrection, the soul desires to feel and know that "by him it is

justified from all things from which it could not be justified by the law of Moses." As therefore when Jesus rose from the tomb, the sentence of justification was openly and visibly pronounced upon him, so when his resurrection is felt in the soul, a sentence of justification is passed in the conscience; and to know this is to know "the power of his resurrection."

4. But when Jesus rose from the dead, it was not to tarry here below. His words to his sorrowing disciples were, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." (John 16:7.) And again, "I go to prepare a place for you." Thus he rose from the dead that he might ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God; and that his risen life might be their spiritual life. According to those words, "When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4.) And therefore the Apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection, is to know experimentally the power of that life which Christ now lives at the right hand of God for us; that he may be "our life," working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, and leading our souls up to himself that we may receive out of his fulness grace, mercy, and truth. To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection in this sense, is to know the communications of that grace which raises us up out of that deadness and carnality which so often seizes hold of us; and, by virtue of the inflowing of the life of Christ, to be experimentally lifted up and brought out of that pit of worldliness, carelessness, and sensuality into which we so often sink, and beneath the mud and mire of which we feel as if suffocated. By the power of his resurrection we are kept from being altogether swallowed up and buried in the pool of our corruptions; by the power of his resurrection we are enabled to cry and sigh for deliverance; and by the power of his resurrection alone do we ever obtain it. Jonah, the type of Christ, came out of the whale's belly by the power of Christ's resurrection; and never would he have issued

from that dark and doleful dungeon, had not his great Anti-type already, in the mind of him "who calleth those things which be not as though they were," risen from the dead.

5. Again. Does Death, the King of Terrors, ever alarm and terrify us? And is our mind sometimes perplexed how we shall be able to face this solemn messenger, who comes to summon us into the presence of God? To know the power of Christ's resurrection is to know a deliverance from this King of Terrors; for Jesus has passed through his territories, and disarmed him of his sting: he has perfumed the grave for all his saints by lying in it. Nay more; he has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." As the Apostle says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2:14, 15.) Thus "as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For, as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all (that is, of the election of grace) be made alive." When, then, by a blessed reception of Christ's resurrection into the soul, the fear of death is taken away, this is to know the power of Christ's resurrection.

6. Again. Do we backslide? Does the soul depart from its first love? Is the heart overcharged with the cares of this life? Have carnality, carelessness, lukewarmness, and worldliness laid hold of the mind? To know the power of Christ's resurrection is to know a spiritual deliverance out of this God-dishonouring state. Every touch of God's spirit in the conscience, every look of mercy or of reproof, every going forth of the heart in secret prayer, every promise made sweet to the soul, every breathing of spiritual affection, every emotion of filial fear, every act of living faith, every sensation of godly sorrow—in a word, every recovery out of darkness and death, springs out of Jesus' risen life, and is therefore a knowledge of the power of his resurrection. When we do not look to him, nor live upon him, how we faint and sink in the way. How the hands hang down, how the knees totter, how

the feet limp, how the lips stammer, how the heart becomes weak as water; and how all our religion seems to have left us, and we can scarcely find a grain of godliness remaining. Thus the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness, and the power of a risen Jesus is as much felt in raising up the soul now as it will one day be experienced in raising up the body.

If any of you, then, are brought to that spot where the Apostle was when he breathed forth these desires, it is because you have been led experimentally and vitally into these two things—to know yourselves, and to know the Lord; to know sin, and salvation; the malady, and the remedy; your wretched, lost, and ruined state by nature, and what Christ has done for every one who cometh unto God by him. Those, then, whom the Holy Ghost thus teaches, and whom he brings to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, do not learn these vital truths merely in the letter of the word, but they have an inward experience of their reality and power. But there is this peculiarity in the scholars of Christ's school, that they never can make themselves masters of their lesson. Unlike other pupils, they never "finish schooling;" and, after all the instruction bestowed upon them, die with their lesson but a quarter learnt. As Paul says, "We see through a glass darkly." Every ray of light serves but to manifest more our own darkness, and every fresh teaching convinces us more of our own ignorance. What we have only makes us long for more; and thus all the saints can join heart and hand with the apostle, in desiring to know Jesus and his power of resurrection. And this will run through every state and stage of experience. Is the soul doubting and fearing? There will be an experimental longing to feel an interest in the blood of Jesus; and these earnest desires will vent themselves in prayer and supplication for the manifestation of mercy, peace, and pardon. Does the conscience feel guilt, and lie as it were bleeding under the wounds made by sin? The longing desire of the soul will be to know Jesus, in the spiritual manifestations of himself, to take this guilt away. Does it feel darkness covering it like a pitchy cloud? Its longing desire and panting cry will be to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, that by the shining in of the beams of the glorious

Sun of Righteousness, it may see light in his light. Do temptations assault the mind? The soul desires to know him who was in all points tempted like as we are, and to feel the power of his resurrection by which he rose triumphant over them all. And just in proportion as he and the power of his resurrection are experimentally known, will the soul have a testimony, sealed with his own divine power.

A few sound Scriptural sentiments, or a mere tissue of doctrines in the head will never satisfy one taught of God. He must have an experimental enjoyment of their savour and power in his conscience; he cannot live comfortably, nor die happily without it; he must have the Spirit's own witness in his heart, and the Lord's own presence in his soul. Thus, while some are wise in the letter, and are perfectly satisfied with a mere doctrinal knowledge of the truth, he feels deeply and daily his wretched ignorance when not sensibly blest with divine teaching, and wants to be taught of God; while some are gathering together, with a wonderful deal of pains, heaps of bricks and slime to build up their Babel of confusion, he is seeking after the blessed revelations of Christ in his heart as the hope of glory; whilst others are resting their salvation upon the bare letter of the Bible, he hangs all his hope upon the finished work of Christ as experimentally made known in his heart; and while others are doing their works to be seen of men, and living upon the breath of the creature, he, in the stillness of his chamber, and in the depths of a broken heart, is looking wholly and solely unto the Lord.

How a living man can go on continually in a profession of religion for days, months, and years, contented with a sound creed and a few dreamy hopes, without any dissatisfaction with himself, or without repeated sighs, groans, and pantings after the Lord Jesus that he would make known in his soul the secrets of his dying love, and manifest himself unto him as he does not manifest himself unto the world, is a mystery which I cannot understand. It is a secret which I do not know, nor do I wish to know. Sooner than be such a professor as that, I would make no profession at all; rather than be such a self-deceived, hardened wretch, with a

name to live whilst dead, I would be a mere moral man, and make no pretensions to spiritual religion whatever. I am very sure Paul would have not owned such, for he was quite decided "to know not the speech of them which were puffed up, but the power." And what a contrast does he afford in his experience, as mentioned in the text, with such notional professors. Though he had been in the third heavens, and had seen and heard there things which it was neither lawful nor possible for a man to utter, yet he does not come forth like a mighty giant towering aloft, and looking down with pride and contempt upon the dwarfs at his feet; but he drops down into nothingness, and says, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given;" "who am not worthy to be called an Apostle;" "the chief of sinners;" "though I be nothing;" "that I may know him," as if as yet he knew nothing as it was to be known. And why was this, but because his eyes had been spiritually opened to see the unsearchable riches of the Lord of life and glory; and one view of them had filled him with a deep sense of his own ignorance. But what a contrast does his experience form with the state of those who are wise in the letter of truth, but despise and ridicule all experience and the work of God in the heart. And what a contrast does his childlike teachability and his humble lying at the foot of the cross, present to the dead confidence and hardened presumption of many modern professors!

I wonder how many in this congregation are in the same spot with the Apostle Paul! How many as they lie on their midnight couch are panting after a knowledge of Jesus by his own special manifestations of himself! How many find the world, and the spirit of it, embittered to them, so that they can find neither rest nor happiness in it, and therefore seek it all at the foot of the cross? How many, driven out of every false refuge and lying hope, are anchoring their eternal all on the love and blood of the Lamb! Now all God's people are brought to this point in their experience sooner or later. They are all brought to know their own sinfulness, ignorance, and helplessness. And when their eyes are thus anointed with eye-salve to discover their own wretchedness, the same unction from the Holy One reveals to

them what Christ has done to save them from it. They learn by this sacred teaching their own iniquity, and his atoning blood; their misery, and the bliss and blessedness which is secured up in him. And when these two extremes meet in the quickened soul, it is brought in one and the same moment, while it debases itself, to exalt the Lord of life and glory. And while it thus sinks down in the depth of creature wretchedness, it learns to glory in the Lord Jesus alone, as its "all in all," and "as God over all, blessed for evermore." Amen.

## **The Knowledge of Good and Evil**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening, August 26, 1845

"For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." Romans 7:19

Doubts will sometimes cross the mind as to the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures; but doubts will more often cross the mind as to the truth and reality of our own experience. Now there are certain considerations that are calculated to meet these doubts, whether they arise from infidelity, or whether they spring from unbelief. For instance: if we find that several children of God in distinct places, and under different circumstances, all testify to the same feelings, and if we find in our hearts the same feelings, we have so far an evidence that they are genuine. Again; if we find the experience of these people and our experience, as similar to theirs, recorded in the Word of God, it is a confirmation, not merely of the truth of the Scripture, but also of the truth of their and our experience.

I will illustrate this by what has occurred to me since I have been in London. A short time ago, I went to see a poor woman who has been bedridden more than four years, and during that space of time has scarcely ever been free from pain for a quarter of an hour. Now, she told me that all the bodily pains she had undergone were as nothing compared to the inward conflict produced by a body of sin and death struggling against the life of God in her soul. I can say the same. I have had my trials; trials of body, trials of circumstances, trials of mind, trials of different kinds; but I never found any trial equal to the internal conflict caused by a body of sin and death. A short time afterwards, I went to see another bedridden female who had been confined to a bed of languishing about the same space of time. Talking of her bodily sufferings, without my mentioning what I had felt, she said, "All this pain and languishing is nothing compared to the

pain I feel from the workings of sin in my carnal mind." There was the same distinct independent evidence, and the same response in my bosom.

When I go to the Word of God, I find the Apostle Paul expressing exactly the same feelings, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When he was suffering under persecution, there was no such piteous cry. When the stones came thick and fast round his head, we read of no such mournful groan. Yea, he tells us, he took "pleasure in infirmities, in persecutions, in reproaches for Christ's sake." They wrung no cry from his bosom. In the jail at Philippi, with his back sore with stripes, and his feet fast in the stocks, he and his fellow-prisoner sang praises unto God. (Acts 16:25.) But the workings of sin in his carnal mind, the opposition of his depraved nature to the grace of God—it was that, and that only, which made him feel himself to be truly a "wretched man."

Now is not this a confirmation of the two points I have alluded to? Is it not, first, a striking testimony to the truth of the Scripture, when we find in it our own experience traced out? And is it not, secondly, a confirmation also of the truth and genuineness of our experience, when we find it consistent, not only with the Scripture, but also with the experience of those in whom we see distinctly the grace of God?

And this, I believe, is the great blessing which the church has derived from the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. God having inspired his holy Apostle there to write down his own personal experience, and depict in vivid colours the inward work of the law and the pressure of the body of sin and death, it has met with such an echo and found such a response in the bosom of God's family, as to prove to them again and again a rich mine of comfort and strength.

In considering the words of the text this evening, I shall endeavour to speak upon them according to the two clauses, as they lie before us—"*The good that I would, I do not; but the evil*

*which I would not, that I do."*

I.—When man fell, he fell utterly. He did not fall half way, but he fell completely. And, in fact, a creature that falls at all from righteousness never can fall in any other way than completely. When the angels fell, they fell to the thorough extent of angelic nature; and when man fell, he fell to very depth of human nature. The fall of devils and the fall of man only differed in this—that the one fell to the full extent of angelic nature, and the other to the full extent of human nature. So that there is no medium, no compromise, no half way; but man in falling, fell to the very deepest point to which human nature could fall.

When the Lord is pleased, by a work of grace upon the heart, to bring his people to a knowledge of himself he bestows upon them that which is communicable of his own nature, as we read "partakers of the divine nature." Now when the Lord communicates to the soul this new nature, he gives it a new understanding; a new conscience, a new will, and new affections. The understanding of man's heart by nature is dark, depraved, benighted, and besotted; he therefore needs a new understanding, a new spiritual understanding, whereby to perceive spiritual things; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." No natural understanding, however elevated or refined, can ever receive, know, or appreciate spiritual things. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." This is called in Scripture, "the opening of the eyes."

But besides this, man's *conscience* by nature is seared; it cannot distinguish between good and evil; it is unable to feel the spirituality of God's law, or to distinguish things that differ; it is unable to believe that what God has commanded must be obeyed, and what God has threatened must be accomplished.

But further; man's *will* by nature is as depraved as his understanding and his conscience. This carnal will chooses and delights in evil, revels in it, and has no desire except in the

gratification of self and the indulgence of its lusts. Man therefore needs a new will, that his new will may choose what God approves of, and turn away from that which he forbids; that his new will may be enlisted upon the side of God and truth, to love the things that he loves and hate the things that he hates.

Man's *affections* also, by nature are earthly, carnal, and sensual, entirely bent on the gratification of self. He therefore needs the communication of new, holy, and spiritual affections, whereby his will not merely chooses what is good, but the affections also, the tender affections of the heart flow out toward it, desire it, and centre in it.

Now this new nature that the Lord thus creates in the soul, consisting of this new understanding, new conscience, new will, and new affections, is always enlisted upon the side of God and truth. It always must approve of that which God approves; and it always must abhor that which he hates. But so long as we are in this tabernacle, we shall have our old understanding, our old conscience, our old will, and our old affections. And these being susceptible of no amelioration, these undergoing no process whereby they are refined, purified, and made better, will always be bent upon that evil into which they fell when our first progenitor fell from original purity. Our natural understanding will always be darkened, our natural conscience always be hard, our natural will always be towards evil, and our natural affections always cleave to the world and the flesh. Hence springs the conflict. My enlightened understanding and my darkened understanding; my new conscience and my old conscience; my renewed will and my unregenerated will; my heavenly affections and my earthly affections, will always lust one against the other: "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."

The Apostle felt the conflict which springs from the inward workings of these two distinct principles in his bosom, when he said, "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would

not, that I do." If you observe he speaks of the will as enlisted on the side of God; his heart, his new heart, was bent Godward—sincerely, earnestly, and spiritually desiring to know the will of God, and do it. There was his new heart, his enlightened understanding, his spiritual conscience, and his heavenly affections all enlisted on the side of God; and yet, through the depravity of his fallen nature, he was continually drawn aside from the path in which he would fain walk, and continually diverted into that crooked road into which he ever dreaded to fall.

But let us, with somewhat more clearness and distinctness, trace out some of the particulars in which "*the good we would, we do not.*"

1. We would *worship God in spirit and in truth.* That is a good thing. It is one of the good gifts that come down from the Father of lights; it is what every regenerated man desires to feel and follow after; it is what every quickened soul loves to perform. But when we would worship God in spirit and in truth, when we would feel that his eye is upon us, when we would pour out our heart before him in simplicity and godly sincerity, when we would offer spiritual sacrifices, and render acceptable worship, "the good that we would, we do not." Something base, carnal, filthy, or self-righteous springs out of our depraved nature which renders us utterly unable to do the things that we would. We cannot worship God as we would in spirit and in truth. It is a mercy to be able to offer spiritual worship for one five minutes—aye, shall I further limit it?—one minute! Real spiritual worship, a sensible feeling of God's presence, a heartfelt prostration of spirit before him, the pouring out of our soul simply and spiritually into his bosom—one minute's spiritual worship of this nature is worth a whole day's prayer meeting without it. But we cannot do it; it is only so far as the Lord works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure that we can offer these spiritual sacrifices.

2. We would *believe in the Lord of life and glory.* We would receive him into our heart as our Lord and our God. We would live upon his atoning blood as our only availing sacrifice. We

would trust in his propitiation for sin, as our only pardon and peace. We would look to his glorious righteousness, as the only robe in which we can stand accepted before God. But we cannot do it. No sooner does the desire to do so spring up in the heart; no sooner is there the child-like simplicity of a believing soul, to look to, trust in, and lean solely upon the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, than some infidel, unbelieving, blasphemous, obscene, daring, presumptuous, or otherwise vile thought crosses our mind, and we are utterly unable to look to and hang upon the Lord Jesus in the way that we spiritually would.

3. We would *have a single eye to the glory of God* in all that we do. We would consult his will. We would act simply as the Lord has commanded in his word. We would have pure, spiritual, tender motives. We would have such sincerity and honesty of soul Godward, that all we say, all we think, and all we do, should spring out of singleness of eye to God's glory. This is a good that our soul at times is earnestly bent upon. But "the good that we would, we do not." Some sensual motive, some vain-glorious thought, some proud desire, some secret lusting of self after its own exaltation, springs up. Our eye becomes darkened; the glory of God is put out of sight; and we cannot do the things, we cannot speak the words, we cannot live nor act to God's glory as we would.

4. We would (and it is a good thing to do so) *make the word of God our rule and guide in all things*. We would lay it down as a pattern to which our lives should be conformed; we would desire to obey its precepts, and implicitly follow its commands with childlike faith. It is a thing that we desire to do; an attainment that we breathe after in the movements of our soul Godward. But self-will often crosses the holy word of God; self-will fights against the pure motive that works in the spiritual mind, desiring that God's will should be our will. The attempt is defeated; the flower is crushed in the bloom before it expands; it does not last long enough to become solid fruit; but a chilling blast out of the mouth of self withers the bud before it opens into blossom.

5. We would *feel the Lord's presence in our soul*. We would have

testimony upon testimony that we are the Lord's. We would have smiles, kisses, and embracements from the Lord of life and glory. We would have sign upon sign, token upon token, that we are interested in his precious love and blood. This is a good thing. It is good that the heart should thus be established with grace. But we cannot do the things that we would; we cannot procure these love smiles, love kisses, love testimonies, and love embracements. Sometimes our heart is so hard, our mind so dark, and our affections so wandering from the Lord, that we have not even a desire to feel in our souls the presence of him whose love is heaven begun below.

6. We would desire (and it is a good thing to desire it, for it is a part of that which springs from the Author of every good thing in the heart) *to have the mind and likeness of Jesus stamped upon our soul*. We would desire to be led into a fellowship with his sufferings, and to be made conformable unto his death. We would put on his holy image. We would be clothed with humility after his pattern. We would walk in his footsteps who was meek and lowly in heart. But we cannot do the good that we would. We cannot, as we fain would, have stamped upon our mind the likeness and image of Jesus; and if we have it for a few moments stamped upon our hearts, it is like a child writing his name upon the sand by the sea-shore; the first wave that comes blots it out, and leaves not a trace behind. So, if for a few moments we feel gentle, humble, quiet, meek-hearted, and have communion with the Lord of life and glory in his sufferings; if a trickling tear sometimes distils from the surcharged eye; if there be some melting sensations towards the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God—no sooner has the Spirit traced out that writing in our heart, than a wave of corruption comes over the marks of his gracious fingers, so that we can scarcely read the impression that his touch has left. "The good that we would, we do not."

7. *To live in every respect agreeable to the gospel*; so that when reviled, not to revile again; when smitten on the one cheek, to turn the other; to live a life of communion with God, of separation from the world, of deadness to the things of time and sense, of

real looking unto and living upon the Lord of life and glory, so as to live a life of faith and prayer carried on by the power of the Spirit in the heart—this is a good thing; we would desire to do it; we would desire to feel it; we would desire it should be carried out in our life and conversation. But alas! of this we must say also, "The good that we would, we do not."

8. *That our words might be such as should not be inconsistent with our profession; that our actions should not be such as the enemies of the gospel, and even the friends of the gospel, might justly point out as unbecoming—is a good at times we desire; especially when we have been pierced by the sting of guilt, or when we have had some views of the Lord of life and glory, and have had some pantings of heart that we might know him, and the power of his resurrection. "But the good that we would, we do not." Self, pride, vain glory, sin, corruption in various shapes and forms, intertwine with every thought, speak in every word, and run as in a stream through every action. I have compared sin sometimes to the thread that marks the cordage of the ships in Her Majesty's service. Every rope and every sail has a red thread running through it; you may cut the rope or hack the sail into a thousand parts, still there is the red thread to serve as a mark to detect it if depredated. So it is spiritually. Cut your heart to pieces, tear it to threads, mutilate it into a thousand fragments—the thread of sin remains intertwining, interlacing, and intermingling itself with every thought, every desire, and every imagination. There it is; you may cut the heart to pieces, but you cannot cut that thread out.*

Now it is this which makes the Lord's people such a burdened people; that makes them so oppressed in their souls as to cry out against themselves daily, and sometimes hourly, that they are what they are; that they would be spiritual, yet are carnal; that they would be holy, yet are unholy; that they would believe in the Lord, yet are often unable to raise up any faith in his name; that they would have sweet communion with a risen Jesus, and yet have such sensual union with the things of time and sense; that they would be Christians throughout in every part, in word,

thought, and deed, yet, in spite of all, feel their carnal mind, their wretched depravity intertwining, interlacing, gushing forth, contaminating with its polluted stream every thing without and within, so as to make them sigh, groan, and cry being burdened.

II.—But there is another part to this picture. We may turn it, and look at the other side of the canvass. "*The evil which I would not, that I do.*" Can this be the experience of a Christian? Can this be a child of God? Can the Holy Ghost dwell in such a heart? Is this being conformed to Christ's image? Is this being a pilgrim travelling through the wilderness? Is this a sheep of Christ's flock? Is this a member of Christ's body? Is this the Spouse of the holy Lamb of God? Well may men say that the Apostle did not describe his own experience, if they felt nothing of the same kind in their own souls. If they never groaned, as Paul did, being burdened, I do not wonder that they say "this was his experience before he was converted." "Surely, such a description as this—'The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do,'—surely such words are not the words of a Christian, of an Apostle, of one who had been in the third heavens, who had known Jesus, and the power of his resurrection; surely, surely this must have been the bent of his mind before he was quickened by divine grace." So argues free-will and fleshly holiness in the heart of a pharisee. But what a mercy it is for you and me who know the plague of our heart, who sigh and groan daily being burdened by a body of sin and death, and at times feel ourselves to be the filthiest of the filthy, the vilest of the vile, and the guiltiest of the guilty—what a mercy it is for such poor defiled worms, such crawling reptiles, such self-condemned sinners, to find that the Apostle Paul had this conflict in his bosom, and was commissioned by the Father of lights to write it down, that you and I, and such as we, may suck at this breast of consolation by having it opened up in our soul's experience.

"*The evil which I would not, that I do.*" If you observe, the will is enlisted on the side of God; and this is the difference between one dead in sin, and one who has the life of God in his soul. "Thy people shall *be* willing in the day of thy power." A willing people!

A will toward good, a will toward God, a will for things that God loves; and whatever may befall a child of God, however sin rages in him, this will remains unaltered. If he be drawn into sin, he is drawn against his will. If he do not what he desires to do, still his will is to do it; his will remains unaltered. He may fall into the deepest quagmire of sin; but still the will of his new nature is Godward, though he may be overtaken and plunged into the slough.

Let us, then, as we have attempted to describe "the good that we would, and do not," now reverse it, and look at the other side, "the evil which we would not, that we do."

1. To be continually *disbelieving and doubting* the truth of God's word, and the work of grace upon the soul; to be full of infidelity and unbelief—is not this an evil? is not this with some an almost continual evil? Is not this felt as a leprosy, a plague-spot in the hearts of many of God's quickened family? Now we would not do this. Here is the difference betwixt the believer and the unbeliever; the real infidel, and the child of God who carries infidelity in his bosom. The real unbeliever loves to disbelieve; he has no will to believe the truth. The infidel doubts, and loves to doubt; he never wants to know truth; he never wants to get rid of his blasphemies, but rather seeks things to confirm them; any argument, any book, any person that will strengthen his infidelity, and confirm his unbelief, he will heartily grasp at; but he has no desire for anything to overcome, destroy, and remove it, nor for anything that is ever an antagonist to it. Now the child of God has a conflict from infidelity working in his mind. He feels unbelief and infidelity struggling in his heart; but does he seek for things to strengthen, or to overcome them? Does he seek for arguments to confirm his faith, or his suspicions and unbelief? This is the difference between a dead unbeliever and (shall I use the expression?) a living unbeliever. To have a principle in your flesh that cleaves to unbelief is an evil, and is felt to be an evil. The children of God do not glory in, and gloat over their corruptions; they do not nourish their unbelief, or dandle it as a babe in the arms of affection; they do not pride themselves upon

it, and think the more unbelief they have the greater Christians they are. That is a libel charged upon them by their enemies. It is their grief, their sorrow, their distress; rid them of that, and you would confer upon them a blessing; take that away, and you would take away that which causes them so many groans, and so deeply exercises, tries, and plagues their souls.

2. *To be carnally-minded, and unable to lift our affections heavenward;* but, on the contrary, to go grovelling here below, buried under a whole dung-heap of carnality and filth, is an "evil." The children of God know by painful experience that to be carnally-minded is death; that it brings darkness into their minds, barrenness into their souls, hardness into their conscience, grief into their hearts. But they are carnally-minded in spite of all their desires to be heavenly minded. They feel carnal-mindedness to be an evil they are daily and hourly plagued with. Compare the moments that we are spiritually-minded with the moments that we are carnally-minded; weigh them in an even balance; how many are the moments during the day that we are carnally-minded? How every tie of nature; how every thing about us; every sight we see; every sound we hear; every object we touch; the whole world with which we are surrounded; how all feed our carnal minds! I cannot go into the street, without feeding my carnal mind; I can scarcely hear a sound, without feeding my carnal mind; I can scarcely open my eyes, without feeding my carnal mind; I cannot go into a shop, or take up a book, I cannot speak, or hear others speak, without more or less feeding my carnal mind. And yet I am continually plagued, grieved, and troubled by it.—"The evil which would not, that I do."

3. *That we should seek the exaltation of self in its various shapes and forms* is an evil, a bitter evil, known to be so to God's people. In our right minds we would trample self under foot; we would have Christ exalted in our own hearts; we would not do things in religion to please self; I as a preacher, to exalt self; you as a hearer, to gratify self. Above all, that a minister in those very things that are professedly for the glory of God, should do those very things for the glory of self; that this insatiable whirlpool

should suck into itself everything good; that this Maelstrom\* should swallow into its capacious maw every thing gracious; that this vortex at the bottom of the heart should be drinking in self-exaltation, at the expense of every thing he loves—makes use of a holy God, a holy Christ, a holy Bible—every thing divine and sacred to feed cursed self—is not this an evil? Sometimes when I have preached to a large congregation, as I often do in London, so far from being lifted up in my feelings by seeing so many people met together, I have had to bury my head in the pulpit cushion with shame and self-loathing, because hideous self would so intrude its cursed head that I could not be sincere and spiritually-minded, could not feel a desire after the glory of God, but filthy, defiled self would want to have its portion. This wretch must have his sop, and would often lay hold of the sacred truths of God that there might be a morsel to satisfy self, the devil, and pride. And when I have gone home after preaching, instead of being pleased with popularity, I have burst into a flood of tears because my heart was so vile, as to seek after its own cursed gratification at the expense of every thing that my spiritual mind held sacred and dear. This self-exaltation and gratification in religion is an evil that we would not do; and yet it is one which daily intrudes itself. Cut it to pieces by a spiritual ministry, self will intrude its hateful head into the very sanctuary of God. There is no place, nor time, nor posture free from its intrusion. But it is a mercy to hate it, though we cannot keep it out.

\*A whirlpool on the coast of Norway, which is said to draw into its bosom and swallow up the largest ships.

4. *The indulgence of sin in our carnal heart is an evil, a horrible evil—and yet who dare look God in the face, and say, it is an evil he never does? I am not alluding here to outward commission of evil. I am not speaking now of a man falling into drunkenness, adultery, or such sins as even eyes naturally enlightened see to be inconsistent with the will and word of God; but I speak of a man desiring and revelling in the inward imaginary sin. Who can say that he is pure here? who can say that he has cleansed his heart from these evils? It is an evil; we feel it to be an evil, to*

wallow in a wicked imagination, to feed upon the vilest garbage. But was there ever any sin that had not a counterpart in our carnal heart? We see the oak, the noble oak in the forest. Did not that oak come from an acorn? How many acorns of sin have we in our carnal heart, that would have become oaks, if permitted to come to perfection? The acorn is in the heart, and had it been permitted to grow, it would soon have sprung up, expanded its arms, and flourished aloft in all its gigantic forms.

5. *Want of love and affection to God's people*, picking at their faults, seeing their imperfections and magnifying them, and not observing our own—forgetting the beam in our own eye, and looking at the mote in another's—is not this an evil? What contention and strife spring out of it? What confusion in the church of God? Every man seeing so clearly the motes in other men's eyes, but so imperfectly the beam in his own.

6. How hard it is *at all times and in all places to speak the truth!* How hard to represent a thing exactly as it is! How hard not to give a shade of colouring; not to heighten, nor diminish, nor to pare off a corner here, nor to put on a jutting prominence there! How hard it is to speak with that simplicity, honesty, uprightness, and tenderness of conscience that become a child of God; and how often we have to lament, that with all our desires to speak the truth in the love of it, "the evil which we would not, that we do."

Now here is the difference betwixt a living soul under divine teaching, and one altogether dead in sin, that the living soul knows what good is as revealed in the word of God; his understanding is enlightened to perceive it; his conscience is touched to feel it; his will is bent to pursue it; and his affections flow to it. This is the state and condition of a man under divine teaching—he would, but he cannot do it. There is an obstacle, there is a hindrance; there is that which crosses every endeavour, which foils every attempt, which spreads snares in the way, entangles his feet, and throws him down, however eagerly he is bent upon running with patience the race that is set

before him. He would not be entangled in these snares for ten thousand worlds; he hates the evils of his heart, and mourns over the corruptions of his nature. They make the tear fall from his eye, and the sob to heave from his bosom; they make him a wretched man, and fill him day after day with sorrow, bitterness, and anguish; yet still he does, and can no more abstain from doing the evil that he would not, than he can do the good that he would. Now, mark me, I am not here speaking of a man living in sin; I am not speaking of a man falling into deep and open iniquity; such as brings disgrace upon the cause and grieves during his life-time his own soul; but I am speaking of the inward workings of inward evils. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Now these things are hid from the eye of others, though they are taking place daily in the chambers of our own hearts. Men may look at us; and they may see, or they may not see, there is a conflict. They may see little in our life to find fault with; yet all the time the inward grief and sorrow of our soul shall be, the good it would, it does not; and the evil which it would not, that it does.

Now, do you not find it so? Just look at these two points. Has your understanding been enlightened to see what good is, and do you believe that the will of God revealed in the word is the only rule of good? Have you seen a beauty and glory in that good? Have you seen that this good is the thing which every living soul desires to follow after, however cutting to the flesh, however contrary to self, however opposed to the natural bent of our mind? Does your will embrace it? Does your conscience fall beneath the power of it? Do your affections, at times, flow unto it, and settle upon it? If so, God has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. By nature, we cannot see what good is, we cannot feel what good is, we cannot choose what good is, we cannot love what good is. We may have a good of our own—we may have some standard of our own—our own morality—our own virtue, or our own religion. But that which is heavenly, spiritual, holy, and godlike—such as the renewed understanding sees, the renewed will embraces, the renewed conscience approves, the renewed affections embrace—none but living souls can ever see, feel, and

delight in that. On the other hand, none but a quickened soul, under divine teaching, can see what is evil, and mourn and sigh under the depravity, the corruption, the unbelief, the carnality, the wickedness, and the deceitfulness of the evil heart laid bare. Unregenerate men may see the principle of evil working in the hearts of others. Men like Lord Chesterfield, and others who have studied mankind, can see the workings of selfishness and other evils in the heart, and yet never grieve, groan, and cry under them. Men of keen observation may see what is natural good, and what is natural evil; and may confess in the distance, what a good man *this* is, and what a bad man *that*—how honourable and upright *that* man is, and how very wicked and depraved *this*. But as to any intimate and inward conviction, feeling, and sensation of sin, any mourning over and groaning under it, any sense of an internal conflict and heavy burden, so as to bring him to say in the depth of his soul, "O wretched man that I am!"—to cry out thus in the bitterness of a wounded heart, can only be produced by divine teaching. A man may soar to the highest pinnacle of religious profession, and yet never know anything of the evil of his own heart. A man may revel in the vilest sins, and yet know nothing of the inward corruption of human nature. But in the child of God, there are these principles—light to see, and life to feel the good and evil, a will to choose the good and reject the evil, and affections that flow unto and embrace that which God loves and commands. Therefore, this inward conflict, this sore grief, this internal burden, that all the family of God are afflicted with, is a mark and evidence that the life and grace of God are in their bosoms. This will end well. The afflicted, exercised, distressed, burdened, self-condemned child of God will come off more than conqueror, for strength is made perfect in his weakness. He is looking to the Lord of life and glory. He knows himself to be a ruined sinner. He therefore looks to and leans upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But a dead professor overlooks the warnings of a guilty conscience, the movements of an evil heart, the workings of inward depravity, and all the mystery of internal iniquity. But one day it will be brought out, to his confusion. He is something like a person who sweeps away all the dirt of the room into the corner, where it lies hidden and covered up; but by-and-bye, it

will be dragged out of its hole to his shame. As long as the hypocrite can keep the outside clean, he is like the filthy slut, who sweeps all the dirt and rubbish of the room into a closet, instead of sweeping it into the street, and so keeping the house tidy.

But the Lord will come and search Jerusalem with candles, and discover the pride, and hypocrisy, and depravity that is hidden in the corners of the heart. He who has never seen and known this inward depravity—never grieved, groaned, mourned, and cried under this body of sin and death—who has neglected, slighted, and overlooked all this—who has never felt the necessity of an application of atoning blood—never felt the necessity of the inward teaching and witness of the Holy Spirit—never felt the reality of the inward presence of God, coming down into this den, and cleansing it out—but has washed merely the cup and platter by outside profession—is he not a mere whitewashed sepulchre, which within is full of dead men's bones and uncleanness? But a living soul, who knows what a wretch, what a monster of depravity he is, how full of everything that God hates, who desires not to indulge in hypocrisy, to have no whitewashed profession, no varnishing of duplicity, but to be honest and sincere, comes before a heart-searching God, and tells him what he is, and says, "Lord, I am vile—I put my mouth in the dust—I am a sinner; but do thou cleanse me, and uphold me, and make me what thou wilt." None but a child of God can use sincerely such language as this; for none but he can feel the leprosy of sin, and the workings of iniquity in his very vitals, and yet experience the counter workings of the Spirit of God. Thus, whilst the one lives and dies a varnished hypocrite, with nothing but an outside profession, the other a poor desponding wretch, perhaps the greater part of his days, doubting, fearing, distressed, and exercised, but groaning, sighing, looking up to, pleading and wrestling with the Lord from the very depth of his heart, will be taken, like Lazarus, into the bosom of Jesus while he who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, despising the poor leprous beggar at his gate, will be driven ultimately into a deserved and never-ending perdition.

With these words I desire to leave you. I am rarely led to commence with introductory, and as rarely to end with farewell sermons. Therefore, as I began without introduction, so I leave without a farewell. But I know this, that the words I have spoken from this evening will be borne out pretty well every day that we live. We shall have, more or less, of this inward conflict as long as we are in the flesh. It will be our experience, more or less, day by day. And the more we are acquainted with our own depravity and corruption the more we shall desire in simplicity and godly sincerity, to know the Lord of life and glory. And thus, we shall go softly all the days of our life, in the bitterness of our soul; though we shall still be enabled to rejoice at times in the Lord Jesus Christ, as "of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

## The Knowledge of the Only True God and Jesus Christ

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford

(A Posthumous Sermon.)

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3

The day in which we live is a day of great knowledge and great research in all matters of science and learning. Not that the tide has much reached Stamford, for I scarcely know anyone who has any great pretence to anything of the sort. But there is a surprising influx of education and research in all matters of science and learning—a research spreading through the land. But of all the branches of science and learning there is one which is almost totally neglected, and that is self-knowledge. Men look at the stars, find out the tracks of comets, pry into every imaginable science, and occupy their mind with literature of every form, and yet they never look into themselves to find out of what the human heart consists, or the state in which they are sunk through the transgression of our first parent. Now this lies at the root of all true knowledge. If a man does not know himself what can he know of others? and if light has not come into his mind to discover what he is in himself what can it profit him to know a thousand things out of himself? But there is another branch of which man knows less than he does of himself, which is the knowledge spoken of by the lips of the blessed Jesus, whose words are now sounding in your ears—the knowledge *of the only true God, and the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*. And this knowledge is *eternal life*, implying thereby that those who are not possessed of this knowledge of the *only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent* will not attain unto eternal life. There is something very remarkable in the connection of the passage with the context. The Lord is here addressing his heavenly Father, and in addressing him he says these words and the words preceding our text. There is not a single man or woman in this world, from

the king in his mansion to the beggar who craves his bread from door to door, over whom the Lord of life and glory has not supreme authority, as is clearly opened up in the Lord's words, to bid him live or die: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Eternal life is the gift of Jesus Christ. God has stored eternal life in him, and put eternal life into his hands, and he has given him eternal life for an express purpose—that he should give it—to whom? To every one? Does the text say so? Neither dare I say it if Scripture contradict me. Must I not preach according to the proportion of faith given unto me, if I stand up for the majesty of heaven? The Scripture says that "he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Then the Lord Jesus Christ has power over all flesh, from the king to the beggar, to give eternal life, not to king and beggar, but *to as many as the Father gave unto him* in eternity before the foundations of the earth were laid. And of those which God the Father gave to his eternal Son, he says, "All mine are thine and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." Well, now the Lord in the words before us goes on in a most blessed manner to open up the meaning of this eternal life. It is for our benefit. It should be rendered, "This is *the* eternal life;" in other words, "This is *the* life eternal which he has to bestow." The Lord shows us here what this eternal life is. "*That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" How plain! how clear! how express the words! and how blind must be the eyes that do not see them! how deaf the ears that do not hear them! and how hard the heart that does not believe them! But happy are we if God has given us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to believe what the incarnate God has here spoken.

In opening up the words before us, with God's blessing, I shall show—

I.—First, What it is to know *the only true God*.

II.—Secondly, What it is to know *Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*.

### III.—Thirdly, How this is *life eternal*.

I hinted just now that there was one branch of knowledge which men did not and would not cultivate, which is self-knowledge, because there is a veil of unbelief on their heart. Suppose there was a noxious sewer underneath the road you walk upon, as no doubt there is, you may pass over it, ride over it, but what do you know of what is flowing beneath the arches? So in grace: man's heart is as bad or worse than a filthy sewer; but it is covered over with what is called "a veil." In Scripture we are told that when Moses read the law a *veil* was over his face; and this *veil* is over man's heart, hiding it entirely from his penetrating eye, and as you cannot see the contents of the sewer while the road is over it, and the thick brick work covers it in; but if three or four bricks are broken in or the sewer is opened and the light of the sun shines into it, then you may see that everything which is vile and filthy runs along in its course; so it is with self-knowledge. It is when the Holy Ghost breaks the arch and lets a divine ray in upon the heart that we see how true it is that out of the heart come "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." They all come out of the heart, and just as out of the sewer comes the noxious smell, so out of the mouth do these filthy contents proceed. And this self-knowledge is assistant to a knowledge of the only true God, the one flowing from and following upon the other. When God is pleased to quicken our souls into spiritual life and give us a ray of his blessed light which shows us what we are and how deeply sunk in the Adam fall, then it is that we begin to learn the upstroke of the great A—what we are as fallen sinners in our great progenitor, and we cannot have these views until he shines upon our souls. We cannot take a walk by night or day without seeing the handiwork of God, and when we look at what we are in providence we see that the same God has been our bountiful preserver in bestowing upon us innumerable favours; but we cannot know anything of the God of heaven and earth—the true God—except he is pleased to shine upon his holy word, and God has provided that word to give unto us some acquaintance with

himself: we do not know God by any vision or ecstasy of enthusiastic rapture, but by what is revealed in the Scriptures. There he has made himself known to the sons of men, but we need a divine light and faith in our soul to believe the Scriptures, and we need that childlike temper and spirit given to us whereby we can receive the kingdom of God as a little child, so that though everything is opened up in the Scriptures, until the Holy Spirit, who wrote the Scriptures, is pleased to bring life and power into our soul, we may read them, but we read in vain; but when the Holy Ghost is pleased to put life and power into the Scripture, and to quicken our souls, thereby begetting us by the word of truth, then we believe what God has said in the Scriptures, and thus we come to a right knowledge of the *only true God*. You will find, if you search and examine, that your knowledge of God and your feelings are in harmony with God's word, having been formed from the Scriptures being opened up with a divine power in your conscience. You know from the Scriptures that there is a God—you could have known that from creation—but when he speaks in the Scriptures his voice is powerful, and he gives you an ear to hear what he says in the Scriptures, and then you come to know God as he has made himself known—how just and holy he is. And you begin to know and see it in his banishing man from Paradise, in the flood, in the destruction of the cities of the plain, and in the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea, and this justice is reflected in our heart, so that we find what a holy God he is; for we see holiness in every line in the Scriptures, and we feel that we have to deal with a holy God, which makes the soul tremble before him; it sees how unholy it is before the omniscient God, who knows all hearts, and says, "I search the heart and try the reins." Again and again are we made to feel that God knows everything before it comes to pass. He has predicted man's thoughts again and again as the prophet predicted what lay so deep in the heart of Hazael. He reads our hearts. Everything is naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. He is also omnipotent; his name is Almighty. All things are not only made and preserved by him, but he worketh all things. And we are made to feel that he is able to kill and heal. We stand before him as grass-hoppers,

as the dust in the balance, as a drop in a bucket. We feel that he is God Almighty. But as the Lord is pleased to lead us more and more into his blessed truth we begin to see him in another character—we begin to see that he is not only just, holy, omnipotent, and omniscient, but we begin to see also that he is the Lord and Father of Jesus Christ, not merely the God of infinite justice and holiness, but of mercy, compassion, goodness and love. When he is pleased to drop a sense of his goodness and mercy into our heart and give us some intimation of his favour towards us we view him not merely as a God holy and just, but as a God gracious and merciful. We see the scheme of salvation originating in his love, we see him sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to die for us, and we begin to believe in him, to hope in his mercy and love his name with a pure heart fervently; for we see that he can rescue us out of the lion's mouth. We have been tried perhaps in providence and God has appeared for us, and thus we see that he is not only a God of grace but of providence. Or if he has restored us again and again, we see that he is a God that healeth backslidings, and that his love endureth for ever, and as the Spirit gives us hope and love we see not only what God is in the Scriptures, but we come to a spiritual knowledge of the only true God. I lay this down with great positiveness and clearness, for it takes religion out of the reach of enthusiasm. Many people take me for an enthusiast, preaching without any consistency with the Scriptures of truth. We know that the mind is soon led astray by fanaticism and folly, but I trust that I have something more than this—that my faith and preaching stand upon the Bible. I never desire to say or believe anything but what is in the strictest accordance with the Bible, which God has given us to guide us into all truth, and I would have those who think me a fanatic compare my preaching with the Bible. If they would compare my sermons with the Bible—I speak not boastingly—they would see I bring forth nothing but what I can and do prove by the Scriptures of truth, and I should dread to bring forth anything else—to bring forth anything contrary to the Scriptures; nor can we know the only true God except by a divine light shining upon the Scriptures and enabling us to credit what God says. But I pass on

(2) To show that there is a knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, and these are the two branches of knowledge upon which eternal life depends. It must be given us to know Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, for power is given to him over all things in heaven and in earth, and he tells us what this eternal life is; therefore it is a gift to know the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. It is not given to all, but it is given to those whom the Father hath given him. Therefore we find the Lord offering up this prayer—"I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes." Here were these things hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes, evidently showing that the wise and prudent could not look into the things of God, but that these things are revealed unto babes, so with life eternal. "That they might know thee, the only true God, and *Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" Now, if Jesus Christ were a man like ourselves it would not be so difficult to know him; if he were like Socrates or Cicero it would not be so difficult to understand him. But when we find the Lord putting Jesus Christ on the same level with God, and that it requires the same divine teaching to know Jesus Christ that it requires to know God, does it not show that Jesus Christ is God? And because it requires the same teaching, therefore Jesus Christ is hidden from the eyes of men, his glory, beauty, and blessedness, his love, blood, and righteousness are concealed from their understanding; therefore the prophet said, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord made bare?" And speaking in the name of the Jewish Church he says, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground, he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." The Jewish Church saw no beauty in him, but there were those who beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, and they received him as the Christ of God, and he gave unto them power or the privilege to become the sons of God, and the reason why, "Which were born not of man, but of God." It was because they were born of God that they knew Christ and received him. It is quite clear to my

mind that no man can know Jesus Christ except by a manifestation of Christ to his soul. I am not contending for any enthusiastic vision, but such as Paul spoke of when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him—"to reveal his Son in me,"—which is by the light shining upon the sacred Scriptures; and thus we see light in God's light, and thus we know him as Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. We have to know him first as God, for he is God. We read of him "being in the form of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God." We read of him, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." We read of him that he is "the brightness of his Father's glory" and the "express image of his person." Each discovery of him is a discovery of his eternal deity, coequal and coeternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Now, this we must know and believe. Many seem to believe it who have no real spiritual faith in it—no divine knowledge or acquaintance with it. Christ is also to be known as a man—as pure humanity—and we have to see by the eyes of faith his pure humanity as well as his holy deity, and these in union with each other. Thus we come to know Jesus Christ, and in knowing him we know what he is, as made suitable unto our heart, that God has made him unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. We have to know him in all these different phases. We have to know him as a God of wisdom to us who are so foolish. We have to know him as a God made unto us wisdom and righteousness. How foolish! how needy! how naked we are of all suitable clothing to appear in before the true majesty of heaven. All our righteousness is as filthy rags. We need a righteousness in which we can stand before God. We see this in Christ and in Christ alone. His pure obedience to God we see as a meritorious obedience, and feeling how needy we are, we are glad to take shelter in this robe! perceiving day by day how filthy we are, we are glad to find that he is made sanctification to us, and that his holiness is imputed to us! He is the fountain of all our holiness by communicating holy desires and affections to our souls. Seeing how doubly we are sunk in sin we are glad to receive him as our redemption, he having paid the ransom price. Thus we honor him in his covenant offices as our prophet, priest and king. As our priest in that he

has made intercession and offered a sacrifice, our prophet to write his laws upon our hearts, his precepts upon our consciences, and to be our guide to the end; and as our King to sit upon the throne of our heart, and bring every thought into obedience to his will. When the Lord is pleased to lead the soul further on, it submits to him as an affectionate king, it has the blood applied with every thing holy, and to him, as our great covenant head, from whom we receive every covenant grace, we look as our guide and very faithful friend, who never leaves nor forsakes those to whom he has manifested himself; as our surety who is set responsible for us in the courts of heaven. He has paid the debt. So as we come to know Christ we learn to honor him more and more as a shepherd to feed his sheep, as a door whereby we find access unto the Father, and as a life to revive our soul. So we come to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and we find that

(3) This is *eternal life*. What dreamy views and enthusiastic notions people have about heaven! How they speak of the joys of heaven just as children speak of the wonders of a city they have never seen. But heaven must begin below; there must be a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Eternal life is given on earth to the soul; we have not to wait for eternity for eternal life, for this *is* eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. When does this knowledge begin—in time or in eternity, on earth or in heaven? In this present lifetime, for as this knowledge is eternal life it follows from it that eternal life is given here below. But some people live in all manner of foolishness and carnality, and when they come to die the minister gives them the sacrament, and they think they are going to heaven without ever having had a broken heart, repentance for sin, or faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus ministers are deceiving and being deceived, dosing poor dying souls with their poisonous draughts, and sending them to hell with laudanum. But no—if we are to go to heaven we must know something of spiritual things upon earth—something of the only true God here below and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; we must revere the great name of God, repent of our sins, have a

hope in his mercy and love towards his name, and a testimony in our heart of the Holy Ghost that we are being made meet for heaven before we can enter into these beauties. What does the soul go to heaven for? To view him as he is, to see and know more of this blessed Jesus whom it knows so feebly on earth, to see him without a veil between, in the full blaze of his meridian glory in his love, in the full enjoyment of him brought into the soul by the blessed beams of his glorious Majesty ever shining through the Son of his love. Just as a child begins by the infant school and advances from one school to another and as in my case at last to the University—so in the school of Christ, the lessons learnt on earth are to be completed in heaven. We, are in the infant school here, and after learning what we have to learn here we shall go to the grand university above. Now, do you hope that the seeds of eternal life have been sown in your soul? If you have these seeds you have eternal life that can never die, and death will have been robbed of all its terrors; because when your body dies angels will receive your spirit—you will enter heaven with a shout and be in eternal glory. But as to going to heaven with no knowledge of God, no repentance of sin, it is a most delusive and soul-destructive doctrine to drag souls down to hell to be with devils. What a mercy then it is to know anything of divine teaching, to have any beginning of the work of grace; for where the Lord has begun a work of grace upon a man's soul he will never leave it till he has perfected it in eternal glory.

## THE LABOURER'S REST

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day morning, July 27, 1845

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

There are two features especially worthy of notice in the invitations which are scattered up and down the Scriptures of truth: one is, their **limitation**; the other, their largeness. By their **limitation**, I mean, that they are confined to God's quickened family; that they do not extend themselves into, what I might almost call, infinite space; but are circumscribed within a circle, and that descriptive of the characters of those in whose hearts the Spirit of God is at work. The other feature worthy of notice is, the **largeness** of these invitations as far as is compatible with their limitation.

I will endeavour to explain my meaning more fully. In the invitations the Spirit of God traces a circle; and that circle does not extend its boundaries beyond the quickened family of the living Jehovah. But within that circle there is a largeness, so as to comprehend every one of God's own people that are embraced within it. These two apparently contradictory features are reconcilable thus. God knew what was in the hearts of His people; He knew that they would require every possible encouragement that He could give them; and yet He would not stretch the encouragement beyond those for whom it was intended. He would not lavish his gracious invitations upon an ungodly and rebellious world; and yet in these very invitations, He would use language which, though within the bounds of due circumscription, should fully reach unto and embrace every quickened soul. Let us look, for instance, at the invitation contained in **Isa 55:1**, and see if we cannot trace out these two features—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

**"That thirsteth"**—there is the limitation; the utmost bound of the circle is not extended beyond those who are spiritually athirst for the living God. And yet, within that circle, how large, how wide, how comprehensive is the invitation! "Ho, **every one** that thirsteth." How widely do the arms of the invitation extend themselves, to draw into and fold within their embrace all, without exception, in whose bosom the Blessed Spirit has raised up those spiritual desires after the waters of life which are expressed by the figure of "thirst!"

Again; look at the invitation which dropped from the Lord's own lips, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" **Joh 7:37**. The Lord Himself limited His own gracious invitation to those who thirsted after Him; but within that limit, how He enlarged it to suit the case of every one who spiritually thirsted to be wholly His! "If any man"—not some, not few, not many; but "if any man"—whether many or few, whatever be their state or condition if this spiritual feature be but found in them, "let them come unto Me and drink."

So again, in the invitation, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" **Isa 45:22**, we still see these two prominent features. **"The ends of the earth,"** spiritually understood, refer to God's poor, tried family, who often feel themselves to be at the remotest distance from the Lord. But all these are freely invited. "All the ends of the earth;" all that feel themselves in that remote spot, all who know themselves to be spiritually far from a holy God, and mourn over their distance and separation, are freely and fully invited to look unto the Lord for salvation.

The same two features we also find in the text. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The invitation does not spread itself beyond the circle of those "who labour and are heavy laden." It does not extend itself so wide as to take in those who have no burden nor sorrow in their hearts. It is not lavished upon the ungodly and rebellious; and yet within that circle, how freely and graciously does the Lord

invite all in whose hearts this fruit of divine teaching is. "Come unto me," He says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden." So that while the limitation excludes the dead in sin and unregeneracy, the enlargement takes in all the quickened and the exercised; and thus while the circumscription of the circle prevents its being abused to foster self-righteousness and presumption, the wideness of the circle, by embracing all that are spiritually, burdened and sorrowful, shuts out hopelessness and despair.

Having observed these two noticeable features in this and every scripture invitation, we may go on, with God's blessing, to enlarge upon the text. We may remark four things connected with and flowing out of it:

I.—The character of the Speaker.

II.—The character of the persons spoken to.

III.—The invitation itself.

IV.—The promise connected with the invitation.

These several features may the Lord enable me so to open up, and may He so accompany the word with power, that it may be made a blessing to some of the poor and needy of His living family.

I.—We will look, first, **then**, with God's blessing, at **the character of the Speaker**. All the force, all the value of the invitation depends upon that. We cannot raise up our expectations too high, we cannot fix our eyes too intently upon the Person of Him who uttered this gracious invitation. For is it not the Lord of life and glory? Is it not the Mediator between God and man? Is it not "Immanuel, God with us," from whose lips, those lips into which grace was poured, that these words dropped? To neglect this—to overlook the character of the Speaker—is to take away the force of the whole.

Now, when such an invitation as this drops from the lips of Him, "who spake as never man spake," the words go forth full of sweetness and grace—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We want two features in the character of the Speaker made manifest to our conscience, to encourage us to receive the invitation: **first**, we must know whether He that speaks it has power to perform what He says; and **secondly**, whether He who has the power has also the **will**. It is necessary that both these things should meet in the Speaker of such an invitation as this. If He lacked **power**, He would speak in vain; for He would promise what He could not perform; if He lacked **will**, He might speak, but we should not be able to rest upon the invitation, as doubting whether His heart moved in concert with His lips. But do we not see the highest power and deepest will uniting together in the Person of the Speaker here? Look at Him in his complex Person. Is He not "God over all blessed for ever?" Is He not "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?" Is He not equal to the Father as the Second Person in the glorious Godhead? Can He then want **power**? He, "**for** whom all things were made"—He, "**by** whom all things were created"—He, "**by** whom all things consist" He, for whose glory all things were made that are made—He cannot want **power**. But does He want **will**? Do we not read of "the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush?" And how did He shew forth that will? Can we ever think too much of—can we ever look too much at His coming out of the bosom of the Father? O look at the everlasting love of God in giving up His only-begotten Son! Look at the everlasting love of the Son in condescending to stoop so low! What infinite love! What boundless compassion! What depths of mercy and grace must have dwelt in His eternal bosom to bring Him down into this lower world, there to become "a worm, and no man"—to "take upon him the form of a servant"—to be "made in the likeness of men"—to "take the flesh and blood of the children"—and to debase Himself so low that He might raise us up so high! Can He then want **will**?

But when we look at His complex Person, His Godhead and manhood in one glorious Immanuel, do we not see all power and will there shining forth? The power of Godhead, and the will of Godhead; and that power, and that will, manifested in the assumption of manhood. So that when we look upon the Lord of life and glory, "Immanuel, God with us," the infinite manifestation of eternal power, and the infinite manifestation of eternal love, can we want a stronger demonstration than this, that He has all power and all will, not only to promise, but also to perform? What more then can we want in the character of the Speaker to enforce this invitation upon the conscience?

II—But we pass on to consider the character also of **the persons spoken to**. Who and what are they? They are described in two words—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are **heavy laden**." The Lord here has selected, so to speak, two features which are to be found in the heart and conscience of all His ransomed and quickened family

1. that they labour—and

2. that they are **heavy laden**. And all that are so heavy laden, the Lord freely invites: yea, more, He Himself draws them near to His own blessed bosom.

Let us look at these two features separately:

1. What is it to **labour**? To labour is to have a load to carry, to have a task, a work to perform. Now, the Lord's people, when the spirituality of the law is made known in their conscience—when the purity and holiness of God's character are manifested in their souls, and their heart is made tender in His fear, are immediately set to work. They are compelled by their inward feelings, and by the weight of eternal realities upon their conscience, to labour to work out their own salvation, and establish such a righteousness, as they think will be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God. But they always, sooner or later, find **and it is God's purpose to make them find** that this labour is labour in vain; that it is

the toil of the Ethiopian to change his skin, and the leopard his spots; that the iniquity of our nature, the depravity of our heart is so desperate and so incurable, that there is no such thing as working out a righteousness which God can accept.

The Lord sees that many of His dear children are toiling and struggling to do something pleasing in His sight. And, whatever disappointments they continually meet—whatever rents are made in the web which they are weaving to clothe themselves with; however short they find the bed, and however narrow the garment—yet many go on foolishly endeavouring to please God by the works of the law, instead of trampling under foot their own righteousness, and looking wholly and solely to the obedience and sufferings of Jesus. To such He says, "Come unto me." Your labour is in vain; you can never work out a righteousness pleasing to God; for to be a righteousness acceptable to Him, it must be perfect: there must be no flaw in it; it must be completely without a spot, a speck, or a stain. Can you produce **this**? Have you ever produced one thought perfectly pure?—one action thoroughly holy?—one desire with which sin and self have not in some way intermingled? Were you ever fully conformed to God's holy will and word for one minute in your life? Then how can you produce a righteousness which God can be pleased with?

Now, we must learn for ourselves, by painful experience, that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and thus cast them away with self-loathing and abhorrence from us; yea, feel as Job did, "Though I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" **Job 9:30,31**. Yes, we must know and feel the word of God, manifesting His holiness and our unholiness, till we are glad to cast off our own righteousness just as we should be glad to cast off our besmeared clothes if we fell into a dirty ditch.

2. But there is another branch of spiritual labour—**a labouring under temptation**. The Lord's people are a tempted people. They do not indeed all sink into the same depths of temptation;

they are not all equally plagued and harassed with the workings of an evil nature, an ungodly world, and an ever-watchful and implacable enemy. But the quickened family, I am well convinced, sooner or later, must be exercised with sharp and powerful temptations. A desperately wicked heart will not lie idle or asleep in their bosom; sin will work with greater or less power; the world will allure or alarm; Satan will entice or harass. And when these temptations come, **labour** must attend them.

Now the ungodly have temptations; but they never resist them. There is no fear of God in their heart, whereby the keenness of temptation is felt; no holy principle in their bosom to struggle against it. They comply with temptation; and complying with it, the temptation is not felt to be temptation. The current glides along so quietly and unresistedly that its depth, force, and rapidity are wholly unnoticed. But the Lord's quickened family have a spiritual nature communicated, what the apostle Peter calls "a divine nature" **2Pe 1:4** lodged in their bosom: a holy principle, which feels and hates sin, and desires and loves holiness.

It is, then, the internal opposition of this new, divine, and spiritual nature to all sin, that makes the quickened family of God feel the keen edge of temptation. The deeper, therefore, that the fear of God is in the heart, the more sensibly alive we are to His perfect holiness, and the more powerfully that the Spirit of God acts upon that new nature, the more keenly and acutely do we feel temptation.

But let us look at some of these temptations more in detail:

1. Some of the Lord's people labour under temptations **to suicide**. This temptation may indeed, in many cases, be connected with a diseased body; but it more usually springs from the suggestions of Satan, who will often ply the mind with such fiery darts as these—'You had better know the worst of it at once; there is no hope for you; you will be a vagabond upon earth; the very brand of Cain is set upon you; you are a reprobate, and God

will hurl you down some day to the depths of woe; the longer therefore you live, the greater will be the number of your sins, and the hotter your damnation.' Many of God's family have had to labour, at one time or other of their spiritual life, under this most distressing temptation.

2. Others of the Lord's family labour under temptations to **infidelity**. They can scarcely believe at times that the Scriptures are the word of God. Doubts, questionings, suspicions, objections keep working and fermenting in their minds as they read or hear the word, or seek to meditate and pray. There is often, what I may call, 'a bass accompaniment' of these infidel thoughts sounding in their hearts—a jarring string of the vilest suggestions, which mingles its harsh and discordant notes with every spiritual movement of the soul. The Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the efficacy of His finished work, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, Christ's second coming; in a word, the most sacred truths of Scripture, and Scripture itself, are all alternately questioned and assailed by the infidelity of our fallen nature. These harassing temptations are perpetually troubling some of the Lord's exercised family.

3. Others of the living in Jerusalem are perpetually tempted **to commit some sin**. A lustful eye is perpetually entangling some; and they tremble lest they should fall headlong into adultery, or say or do something which shall distress their own souls, and bring reproach on the cause of God. A covetous spirit besets others, perpetually seeking to get possession of their heart, and bury them in carnality and worldliness. The pride of their hearts is often assaulting others, hurrying them into words and actions utterly unbecoming the gospel. An impetuous hasty temper is the besetment of a fourth, and a tongue that cannot be tamed or ruled.

Now these temptations are not occasional visitants; they are not chance callers, who knock at our doors once a month, or once a year. In many of the Lord's family they are perpetual: by perpetual, I mean, more or less frequently recurring temptations.

It is this which harasses them, wears out their strength, makes this world a vale of tears to them—that temptation is so perpetually at work, and that they find they have a nature so headlong prone to comply and fall in with the temptation: that they find little but weakness where they hoped to find strength: and that, instead of resisting and fighting against these temptations, and in the fear and strength of the Lord overcoming them, they feel little else but a feeble wavering heart which is perpetually giving way: and that thus they are only kept from time to time by the skin of their teeth.

4. Others, again, of the Lord's people labour under **doubts and fears, questionings and suspicions**, whether the work of grace was ever really begun upon their heart: whether what they have felt **for they cannot deny that they have felt something** was not a spirit of delusion—whether their convictions were not merely convictions of natural conscience, and whether their joys were anything else but the joys of the hypocrite—whether, in a word, delusion and hypocrisy have not been the root and core of their religion; and whether they shall not perish in hypocrisy, or die in despair. Many of the Lord's family labour for years under these doubts and fears as to the reality of the work of grace upon their hearts. For they cannot trifle with these things; they cannot trifle with eternity; nor trifle with a heart-searching God: nor trifle with their immortal souls: nor trifle with death, hell, and judgment. They feel these realities too solemn and important to be trifled with; standing as they do upon the brink of eternity, and only a hand-breadth betwixt them and death. For want of bright and clear manifestations, many, if not the majority of the quickened family of God, are exercised whether what they have known and felt was the work of the Spirit upon their souls, or whether it was merely the offspring of nature, hypocrisy, and presumption.

5. Others of the Lord's people labour **under almost perpetual assaults** of Satan. This enemy of the Lord and of His people, casts his blasphemous insinuations into their souls, directing his suggestions against the holiest and most sacred things, and filling

their carnal minds with the filthiest and most abominable imaginations.

Now these various temptations **and all the family of God more or less experience them, though all do not sink to the same depth** constitute **labour**. But the word is rendered in some of the old translations, and I believe it is nearer to the original, "weary." "Come unto me, all ye that are **weary**." We shall not wander, therefore, far from the meaning of the Spirit in the text, if we look at that word also. For the effect of labour is to weary. We cannot labour under the law without weariness; we cannot labour under temptation without being wearied of the conflict; we cannot labour under distressing doubts and fears without being weary of them; nor can we labour under Satan's assaults without being faint and weary in our minds. In fact, the end of all spiritual labour is to weary. The Lord's purpose in laying burdens upon us is to weary us out. We cannot learn our religion in any other way. We cannot learn it from the Bible, nor from the experience of others. It must be a personal work, wrought in the heart of each; and we must be brought, all of us, if ever we are to find rest in Christ, to be absolutely wearied out of sin and self, and to have no righteousness, goodness, or holiness of our own.

The effect, then, of all spiritual labour is to bring us to this point—to be weary of the world, for we feel it, for the most part, to be a vale of tears: to be weary of self, for it is our greatest plague; weary of professors, for we cannot see in them the grace of God, which alone we prize and value; weary of the profane, for their ungodly conversation only hurts our minds; weary of the saints, for they are sometimes too carnal for us, and sometimes too spiritual; weary of our bodies, for they are often full of sickness and pain, and always clogs to our soul; and weary of life, though often afraid to die, for we see the emptiness of those things which to most people make life so agreeable.

By this painful experience we come to this point—to be worn out and wearied; and there we must come, before we can rest entirely on Christ. As long as we can rest in the world, we shall

rest in it; as long as the things of time and sense can gratify us, we shall be gratified in them; as long as we can find anything pleasing in self, we shall be pleased with it; as long as anything visible and tangible can satisfy us, we shall be satisfied with them. But when we get weary of all things visible, tangible, and sensible—weary of ourselves, and of all things here below—then we want to rest upon Christ, and Christ alone.

But the Lord has added another word, "**heavy laden.**" Mark you, He does not merely say, "laden." A man may carry an ounce upon his back, and that may be called a load; and he may be said to be laden. But such a load spiritually would no more be a burden for the Lord to remove, than a cross worked into a Popish vestment is the cross which the Lord bids His disciples take up and carry after him. In order therefore to bar out all such pretensions, the word is "**heavy laden.**" As though the Lord would not have to do with light professors; as though He would not hold out His hand to save any but the drowning; as though He would not cast a single look of condescension upon any who had not a heavy load upon their back; as though He would neglect all who could carry their own burdens; and confine Himself wholly and solely to those who needed His out-stretched help. And why should He do otherwise? Did He come to save those who can save themselves?—to cleanse those who can cleanse themselves?—to deliver those who can free themselves? Did the Lord of life and glory come forth from the bosom of the Father—did the Eternal Son of God assume flesh, to save self-saviours, to help self-helpers, and cleanse self-cleansers? Surely, surely, we cannot think that the Son of God came down upon such a mission as that. No; it was "to seek and to save that which was lost." The text, therefore, expressly guards against any hypocritical pretensions; for in it the Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and **heavy laden.**"

But how heavy laden?

1. Some are heavy laden with the **burden of guilt.** Indeed, whenever sin is charged upon the conscience, it must produce

guilt. I have no opinion of any professor, however high, however low, whatever be his standing in the church, who has never felt guilt upon his conscience. I am sure he never can have known pardon—he never can have felt Jesus precious—he never can have believed in His name, nor cleaved to His blood and righteousness as all his salvation.

But what produces guilt upon the conscience? The work of the Spirit in the soul, revealing the spirituality of the law, and the holiness of God's character; and thus causing the guilt of sin to cut and penetrate into the conscience through the folds and veils of an unbelieving heart. But when I say, that every quickened vessel of mercy must feel guilt—guilt before God—guilt enough to bow his head down with shame, and to make him put his mouth in the dust—guilt to cut to pieces all his own righteousness—guilt to force him out of every refuge of lies, and to beat out of his grasp every false hope—when I say that every child of God must feel guilt sufficient to produce this, I am not going to lay down **God has not, and why should I attempt it?** how deep that guilt must be, or how long that guilt must last. If it has not driven the soul out of every refuge of lies, if it has not beaten false hopes completely out of its hands, if it has not forced it to flee to Jesus as its only refuge, it has not been yet deep enough, it has not yet lasted sufficiently long; it must strike a deeper root downward to make the naked embrace the rock for want of a shelter. When it has done that, it has done its work. There is no salvation in guilt; it prepares the soul for salvation, but there is no salvation in it.

2. Again. There is also a being heavily laden with a **daily conflict**. Guilt is not perpetually felt; there is a relief for it; for when the blood of sprinkling is applied, guilt is removed. But conflict between a body of sin and death and the holy, pure, and divine nature of which God's people are made partakers, lasts during the whole of our mortal span upon earth: lasts did I say? it increases in continuance. Our early battles were but skirmishes: it was but the light infantry meeting the first attacks of the cavalry. But when we have been long in the field then the battle

becomes indeed in right good earnest: for "every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood." This internal warfare is more or less experienced by all God's family. But what a burden it is to have such a daily conflict with a body of sin and death! It is the greatest burden that I have on earth. We all have our trials, heavy trials: but of all the burdens that I am acquainted with, the daily conflict with the body of sin and death, the workings of my corrupt heart, my fallen and depraved nature perpetually lusting to evil, entangling my eye, catching my affections, ensnaring my soul, dragging me, or drawing me into everything that is foul and filthy, base and vile, **not externally, through mercy, but internally,** forms the heaviest burden I have to carry. I do not know that I have for months felt this burden, this heavy conflict, more severely than since I have been in this metropolis. I do not know that I have spoken a hundred sentences beyond actual necessity to an ungodly person: and the Lord has kept my feet from all outward sin and open evil: yet the conflict I daily and sometimes hourly feel with my wretched heart has been my trouble and grief continually. Now when we are so laden with a body of sin and death, when we feel such vile sins perpetually struggling for the mastery, and such a depraved heart pouring forth its polluted streams, **and I am sure the Fleet ditch emptying itself into the Thames at Blackfriars never poured forth such a polluted stream as the fountain of iniquity in your depraved heart and mine,**—I say, when we feel this common sewer of our depraved nature pouring forth this polluted stream, must it not make us grieve and groan if we have known anything of the life and fear of God in our souls? Yes, daily make a living soul grieve and groan, draw at times scalding tears from his eye, and force convulsive sobs from his burdened bosom to feel that he is such a monster of depravity and iniquity: that though God keeps his feet so that he does not fall outwardly and manifestly, yet there is such a tide of iniquity flowing in his heart, polluting his conscience continually.

The Lord speaks to such, "**Come unto me.**" What a sweet invitation! What gracious words! "I, that am mighty to save:" I,

Jehovah Jesus, the Lord of life and glory: the once crucified, but now risen Immanuel, invite all such, "Come unto me."

But whom does He thus address? The virtuous, the moral, the upright? those who have cleansed their own hearts and hands, and in their own strength and righteousness live good lives? He does not deign these a look. These are whited sepulchres, fair without, but within full of dead men's bones and uncleanness. These are "scribes and pharisees, hypocrites," who lay heavy burdens upon others, and never touch one of them with their little finger. The Lord does not speak to such. He will not spare them one look of compassion. But He fixes His penetrating gaze, His sympathising eye upon, and opens the tenderness and compassion of His loving bosom unto those who labour and are heavy laden; to His poor, suffering, sorrowing, groaning, and mourning family; to those who have no one else to look to; those who are burdened in their consciences, troubled in their minds, and distressed in their souls. He says to such, "Come unto me." This leads me to the third branch of my discourse.

III.—"**The invitation.**" How authoritatively, and yet how graciously, does the Lord speak! Have you never observed this in the word? How differently the Lord speaks from the prophets of old! When the prophets spake, it was with a "Thus saith the Lord." But when the Lord of life and glory spake, it was, "I." He stood on earth not as a prophet, to interpret the word of God, as the spiritual instrument, or as the vessel of clay through which God addresses men. No; he spake not so: but He spake, clothed in all the majesty of Godhead. Jehovah spake when He spake; for He is God over all; God and man in one glorious Person. And what does He say? What is the gracious invitation that dropped from His lips? O that we might hear them spoken with power to our hearts: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And what is **coming**? How frequently the Lord speaks thus in the word! He says, "All that the Father giveth me **shall come** unto me; and him that **cometh** unto me I will in no wise cast out." "If

any man thirst, let him **come unto me,** and drink." "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." How frequently does the word occur! But what is its meaning? Is there not in coming some **movement?** When I come to a place, is it not perfectly distinct from standing where I am? In coming, there is a movement of my body—is there not? So spiritually **for we are to interpret these spiritual figures by their natural meaning** there is, in coming to Jesus, a movement of the soul; so that if there be no movement toward **Him,** there is no coming. But as "labour" is spiritual, and "heavy laden" is spiritual, so the "coming" is spiritual. It is not then a coming of the body. The body may come, and the heart be left behind. It is not the humble tone, the prostration of the body, the bending of the knee, or the upturned eye;—all these forms may and do exist, where the soul is dead in sin.

But coming is a movement Godward of that divine nature which God himself has implanted in the soul. It therefore implies **faith.** "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." We cannot come to Jesus except we believe in His name, and we cannot believe in His name except special and spiritual faith is in our hearts; for "faith is the gift of God," a grace and fruit of the Spirit. Before, then, we can come, there must be faith communicated through the special operation of the Spirit upon our conscience.

Now, wherever there is this special faith given whereby we see Jesus, **what a precious sight!** believe in Jesus, **what precious faith!** and move toward Jesus, **what a blessed movement!** then there will be a coming to **Him.** But we come in two different forms. I will not say there are two ways of coming; there is only one way; yet in our feelings they are often distinct. I will explain my meaning.

Sometimes we come as driven: sometimes we come as **drawn.** Sometimes the north wind blows us from behind; sometimes the south wind allures us from before. Guilt, fear, wrath, death, hell, eternity—this storm upon our back will often drive us; for we

have no refuge but Jesus where we can hide our guilty heads. For where else can I hide? In the law? That curses. In self? That is treacherous. In the world? That is under the curse of God. My own righteousness? That is filthy rags. My own strength? All is weakness. My own resolutions of amendment? They will all issue in my falling more foully than before. Then, when the north wind of guilt, wrath, and terror beat upon the soul; and at the same time, the Holy Spirit, by His internal operations, holds up to the eyes of the understanding, and illuminates the mind to see who this precious refuge, this shelter, this harbour is, then the soul flies unto Jesus; as one said of old

Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on thee.

We find this traced out in **Isa 28:16,17**, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Now, when the hail sweeps away the refuge of lies; and the waters of guilt and fear overflow the hiding-place; and the soul sees the stone that God has laid in Zion for a foundation, a tried stone, a chief corner-stone, elect, precious, it flees to this Rock for shelter, hides in this Rock of Ages, and takes shelter in his Person, blood, and righteousness. This is **coming**.

But there is another coming, and that not of a different nature; for the Spirit works in one and the same way; yet His operations are different; and that is **drawing**. Have you never felt drawn? What said one? "**Draw me**" not drive me, "and I will run after thee!" "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" **Jer 31:3** There is the putting in of the hand by the hole of the door, and a moving of the bowels towards the Lord of life and glory. There is a sweet attractive power put forth in the heart. We see His beauty; "we behold His glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of

grace and truth." We see in Jesus all the Majesty of the Godhead, and all the tenderness of manhood, and see them both combined in one glorious Person. We see the hands that made heaven and earth nailed to the bloody tree. We see the divine nature united to the human; and the infinite nature shining forth in the finite. And we see beauty, glory, and blessedness in this divine Immanuel. We hear Him speak; we catch the sound of His invitation falling on our heart; some dew and savour drop into the soul, and this melts, stirs, and breaks—this softens, moves, and draws—and this blessedly leads the soul to look to, and take refuge in a glorious Immanuel. This is **coming**. There is a sweetness in this. This is not being driven by necessity, but drawn by love. This is not being compelled through the hardness of the case, and through wrath, guilt, and fear beating upon our unsheltered head. But it is the sweet putting forth of the power of the Lord, drawing up our heart's affections unto Himself. The children of God feel both at different times and at different seasons. They need both. They are sometimes in situations where **drawing** would not do: and they are sometimes in situations where **driving** will not do. When they are carnal, worldly-minded, wrapped up in self, and going after idols, they want a driving north wind. But a driving north wind continued too long would make them rebellious, stir up the enmity of their hearts, and almost plunge them into despair. Therefore they want the drawings of divine love, the sweet attractive power of the beauty of the Lord to overcome rebellion, put down unbelief, smite the demon of infidelity in them, and lead them to the footstool of the Lord of life and glory to lay hold of His strength, and embrace Him in the arms of faith and affection. When this is done, that is fulfilled—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." There is a willingness then to be saved by Jesus. There is no self-righteousness then clamouring for its share of work and wages; no rebellion boiling within; no infidelity nor unbelief striving for the mastery; but the world drops its charms, self-righteousness is turned into self-loathing, and the soul is willing to be saved in the Lord's own way by superabounding grace, and the love and blood of the Lamb.

Is not this a sweet coming? But how many times do we thus come in our lives? Some persons would make us believe that we come to Christ once as poor guilty sinners, and when we have come once, and got a blessing, there is no more such coming again. Delusion is stamped upon all such doctrine. I venture to say this, that if a man say he has only come to Christ as a poor needy sinner once in his life, and has lived many years to make a profession after, and never came again, he never came spiritually at all; he has never known the attractive power of the Holy Ghost in his conscience; his hope is delusive, and he has nothing but a lie in his right hand. Is guilt felt but once?—pardon received but once?—then may coming be but once, and receiving but once.

Is not religion that is worth the name, a daily work? Is it not begun, carried on, and crowned by the Lord of life and glory Himself? Is it by coming once that we are made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?" What! Is all the beauty of Jesus exhausted at one view? Are there not in Him treasures of mercy? Are there not in us treasures of wickedness? Are there not in Him boundless depths of compassion? Are there not in us unfathomable depths of iniquity? Do we not daily sin, hourly provoke God? Do we not daily need mercy and compassion? Are we not daily transgressors against infinite patience? And do we not daily want that patience to be manifested? As long as we live in the body, there will be at times **would to God there were more times of it!** a coming unto this blessed Jesus. There will be a prostration of the spirit before Him; there will be a yielding up of a broken heart to His service; there will be a clasping of Him in the arms of love and affection; there will be a pouring out of the soul at His footstool. And every temptation that does not produce this, and every burden that does not effect this, and every conviction and sorrow that does not thus bring to His feet, is of as little value as the howling wind over a heath. There is no spiritual effect produced by our experience of trial, temptation, and sorrow, if it do not bring us to the only spot where rest and peace are to be found.

But this leads me, as time is waning, to the last branch of the subject.

IV.—**The promise—"I will give you rest."** What does rest imply? To my mind it implies several things.

1. **To rest is to lean upon something.** Is it not? So spiritually. We want to lean upon something. The Lord Himself has given us this figure. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, **leaning** upon her Beloved?" The figure of "a rock" on which the church is built—"the foundation" which God has laid in Zion—points to the same idea, that of leaning or dependence. Now when the soul comes to lean upon Jesus, and depend wholly and solely on Him, it enters into the sweetness of the invitation. Have we not leant upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us. Our own strength and resolutions, the world and the church, sinners and saints, friends and enemies, have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leant upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced our souls. The Lord Himself has to wean us from the world, from friends, from enemies, from self, in order to bring us to lean upon Himself; and every prop He will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon His Person, love, blood, and righteousness.

2. But there is another idea in the word "rest,"—**termination.** When we are walking, running, or in any way moving, we are still going onwards; we have not got to the termination of our journey. But when we come to the **termination** of that we have been doing, we rest. So spiritually. As long as we are engaged in setting up our own righteousness, in labouring under the law, there is no termination of our labours. But when we come to the glorious Person of the Son of God—when we hang upon His atoning blood, dying love, and glorious righteousness, and feel them sweet, precious, and suitable, then there is rest. "We which have believed, do enter into rest," says the apostle. His legal labours are all terminated. His hopes and expectations flow unto,

and centre in Jesus—there they end, there they terminate; such a termination as a river finds in the boundless ocean.

3. But there is another idea still connected with "rest," **relief**. When we rest, we find relief to our weary limbs. So spiritually. When the soul comes to Jesus, He gives it rest and relief from its burdens; as well as deliverance from anxiety, and cessation from the labour that distresses and distracts it. He promises to give this—"Come unto me, and I"—Who else can do it? None, either in heaven or earth—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and **I** will give you rest." How? By communicating to the soul out of His infinite fulness, by sprinkling upon the conscience His atoning blood, by shedding abroad in the heart His dying love, and enabling the soul to believe on His name, and cling to His Person.

In this there is rest—nothing else will do it—nothing else will give it. Other remedies will leave us at last under the wrath of God. But he that comes to and leans upon Jesus, His finished work, His dying love, will have rest here and heaven hereafter. Are not our poor minds often restless, often anxious, and pensive, because of a thousand doubts, perplexities, painful trials, and grievous afflictions—do they not all make your spirit weary and restless within you? There never can be anything but restlessness while we move round this circle of sin and self. But when by precious faith we come out of our own righteousness, our own strength, our own wisdom, our own worthiness; come to, believe in, hang upon, and cleave unto the Person, blood, and work of the only-begotten Son of God, so as to feel a measure of His preciousness in our hearts—then there is rest. This is solid, this is abiding, this is not delusive; this will never leave the soul deceived with false hopes. No, it will end in eternal bliss and glory—in the open vision of eternal love—in seeing Him face to face whom the soul has known, looked to, believed in, and loved upon earth.

## LAWFUL STRIFE

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, December 27, 1840, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." 2 Timothy 2:5

The Holy Ghost appears to have made much use of figures and illustrations in the word of God; and I believe we may find more or less of this mode of instruction from Genesis to Revelation. For instance, immediately after the fall, the Lord made use of a visible figure, when he made coats of skins, and clothed in them our first parents. What was this but a visible sign of the garment of imputed righteousness, in which alone they could stand accepted before him, connected with Christ's sacrifice, as the skin of the sacrificed animal was with its poured out blood? So after the flood, the Lord set his bow in the cloud, that, spanning earth and heaven, it might be a visible sign of his covenanted mercy from generation to generation. When we come a little lower down to the period when the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt that they might be to him a peculiar people, He still chose the same visible mode of instruction by type and figure. The paschal lamb, the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side-posts, the ark of the covenant, the whole train of sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies, with all the furniture of the tabernacle, were all so many speaking figures, whereby spiritual instruction was communicated to those who had eyes to look through the type to the thing typified.

So when we come down to the times of the prophets, types and figures were still employed. Jeremiah is sent down to the Potter's house to learn God's absolute sovereignty (Jer. 18); was commanded to wear a linen girdle, and then hide it in a hole of the rock by the river Euphrates, to show how the Lord would mar the pride of Judah (Jer. 13:1-11); and was shown the two baskets of figs, to teach them the difference between the

precious and the vile. (Jer. 24.) So Isaiah walked barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia (Isa. 20:3); and Ezekiel was commanded to take a tile and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem, and lay siege against it. (Ezek. 4:1, 2.) When we come to the New Testament, we find the Lord making great use of this mode of instruction. All his parables were so many speaking figures, under which spiritual wisdom was couched. The sower going forth to sow, the woman hiding the leaven in three measures of meal, the man finding a pearl of great price, the net cast into the sea, the door, the shepherd, the vine to which he compares himself—what are all these but natural figures, which the Lord employs to convey spiritual instruction? Indeed so apt and so beautiful are some of these figures, that it has been a question with some, whether God had not in the original creation of all things a special view to spiritual truths. For instance, when he created the sheep, whether he had not a special eye to the elect; and when he created the vine, whether he had not a spiritual reference to Christ and his members. They thus look upon all outward creation as a type and figure of the new creation. But I think there is one consideration which shows that this view is not founded on truth. We find the apostle Paul employing figures not only altogether of man's invention, but even such as contain in themselves much evil. For instance, in four different places he has borrowed an illustration from the public games of the Greeks, which, like all large and promiscuous assemblies, were doubtless accompanied with much evil. Thus we find him speaking (1 Cor. 9:24-26,) "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." The figure here is clearly drawn from the foot race and the boxing match in use among the Greeks at their public games. So again (Heb. 12:1) he says, "Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," **alluding to the multitude of spectators that surrounds the runners for the prize, as a cloud** "let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so

easily beset us," **as the racers threw aside all useless incumbrances** "and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." So speaking of his own experience (Php. 3:13, 14), he says, "Brethren, I count myself not to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here he clearly alludes to the runner in the foot race who never thinks of the ground over which he has passed, in his eagerness to press forward and carry off the prize.

The fourth place where the same apostle borrows the figure of these public games, is the verse from which I intend, with God's help and blessing, to deliver a few thoughts this morning. "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

In order to enter into the spiritual meaning of this text, I must detain you for a few minutes with the natural explanation of it. The Holy Ghost has chosen by the mouth of Paul to convey spiritual instruction under this natural figure; we must therefore break through this shell to get at the kernel, for unless we have a clear view of the figure itself, we shall have a confused idea of its spiritual signification.

The apostle then, as I have already shown, borrows a figure here from the public games in his time, where there were prizes given to those who obtained the victory in one of these five contests, the chariot, and the foot race, wrestling, boxing, and a combat made up of the two last. The "man that strives for masteries," means he who wrestles, or otherwise contends for victory, the prize being a crown of leaves, which was given publicly to the victor. Now there were certain rules and conditions, laid down beforehand, which were to be rigidly observed by all the candidates for the prize, and if any one of these what we may call "rules of the game" were broken by a candidate, then though he came in foremost, yet he lost the prize, because "he had not striven lawfully." that is, had not complied with the rules. To

borrow a comparison from the horse-races of this country, **a practice I condemn, though I use the figure to throw a light upon the text** if a horse runs the wrong side of the post, or carries less weight than the rule of the race requires, he loses the prize, though he comes in the first.

Having thus far opened up the natural meaning of the figure, we will now proceed to the spiritual instruction conveyed by it. We gather from it, then, that in spiritual things, there is a striving lawfully, and a striving unlawfully; and that the prize is not necessarily given to him who wins the race, if he has not complied with certain rules laid down.

I think then we may say that there are three distinct ways of striving.

1. There is an unlawful striving after unlawful objects.
2. An unlawful striving after lawful objects.
3. A lawful striving after lawful objects.

Of these three kinds of striving two are wrong, and one is right. To strive unlawfully after unlawful objects is clearly wrong. To strive unlawfully after lawful objects deprives a man of the prize, and it is therefore wrong too. To strive lawfully after lawful objects is the only strife that the Lord crowns, and therefore the only strife that is right.

I. But as what is right is often more clearly shown by holding up what is wrong, I shall attempt to describe first what it is to strive unlawfully after unlawful objects.

1. To strive then after the pre-eminence, to be a Diotrephes in a church (3 John 9), is an unlawful striving after an unlawful object. There is to be no superiority, or pre-eminence among the followers of Christ. "All ye are brethren," said Jesus to his disciples (Matt. 23:8); "the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is he who is most like a child." (Matt. 18:4.) "The princes of the

Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." (Matt. 20:25-26.) Pre-eminence among brethren is an unlawful object, and must therefore be always unlawfully striven after.

2. All strife about vain and idle questions is unlawful strife. "Of these things," says Paul, "put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." (2 Tim. 2:14.) So he speaks of those who "dote about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds." (1 Tim. 6:4, 5.) When men of this cavilling, contentious spirit arise in churches, woe to their peace.

3. To seek after a form of godliness, while secretly denying the power thereof, or to have a name to live when dead in sin, is an unlawful striving after an unlawful object. To strive to be a whited sepulchre, a painted hypocrite, a deceiver of the churches, is awful striving indeed.

4. To strive after fleshly holiness and creature perfection is an unlawful strife. God never designed that the flesh should be holy. In his discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus laid it down at the very entrance in the divine life, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," thus establishing an eternal and unalterable distinction between them. "I know that in me," says Paul, "that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." (Gal. 5:17.) All attempts therefore to improve or sanctify the flesh, are bidding "the leopard change his spots, and washing the Ethiopian white."

5. Again, all attempts to please God by anything that we ourselves can do, is an unlawful striving after an unlawful object. He cannot be so pleased. The corrupt fountain of our heart is

continually pouring forth its polluted streams, and therefore all that comes out of it is polluted. Nothing short of perfect purity can please a perfectly pure God; and as no thought, word, or deed has passed from us by nature which is not defiled, it cannot please God. But how many think that their prayers or their tears or their good actions are acceptable to Him.

6. All attempt to keep the law in its strict requirements is an unlawful striving. That is, it is not done as God would have it done. Jesus, and He alone of all the sons of men, kept the law; and he who would go about to establish his own righteousness, to the neglect or contempt of Christ's righteousness, strives unlawfully.

7. To strive to convert the world, and to turn goats into sheep, to seek to overthrow the eternal lines of distinction between the elect and the reprobate, and frustrate Jehovah's sovereign decrees of judgment and mercy, is an unlawful strife after an unlawful object. To break down the barriers of the church and the world, and reduce to mere nullities the distinguishing doctrines of grace, is indeed to strive contrary to every rule in the word of God.

8. To seek to find an easier and smoother path than the strait gate and the narrow way; to come into the fold, but not through the door of regeneration, as the Porter opens it; to be aiming at any other salvation than an experimental acquaintance with Christ and the power of his resurrection; to set up human talents, and creature religion as sufficient with, or without the Holy Ghost's heavenly teachings; to strive after natural faith, hope, repentance, and love—all are so many branches of unlawful striving after unlawful objects. By **unlawful** is meant as I said before, not that which is contrary to the letter of the law, not that which is not in strict accordance with the moral law, or the ten commandments, or any branch of the Mosaic law. The words "lawful" and "unlawful" in the text have no reference whatever to the law properly so called. The words "lawfully" and "unlawfully" mean a complying, or a not complying with certain rules and

conditions, laid down in God's word. The laws and rules are not legal, old covenant rules, but gospel, law covenant conditions. Mistake me not. I do not here mean conditions to be performed by the creature, but certain rules, according to which the Holy Ghost works. "We are the clay, and He the Potter;" but the heavenly Potter works according to certain rules; and could it be possible for a vessel to be made contrary to these rules, it would not be a vessel of honour meet for the master's use. I wish to explain myself clearly, for directly a man begins to talk about rules and conditions, there are plenty of persons so ignorant or so prejudiced, that they will be sure to make him an offender for a word. Remember this then, that by the word rules, laws, or conditions, I mean certain modes laid down in God's word, according to which the Holy Spirit acts, when he works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

All the striving then of carnal unregenerate professors is an unlawful striving after one or more unlawful objects.

Being destitute of heavenly teaching, lawful objects, that is, such objects as are set before the eyes of the elect, are never striven after by them. God has never enlightened them into the depths of the fall, nor brought his holy law into their conscience in its depth and spirituality. The fountains of the great deep in their heart were never broken up, nor their secret corruptions laid bare. Sin is a burden under which they never groaned, unbelief never grieved and plagued them, the utter alienation of their heart from God was never so discovered to them as to convince them of their helplessness and hopelessness. Isaiah's experience was never theirs, when he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Their comeliness was never turned into corruption like Daniel's nor did they ever abhor themselves in dust and ashes, like Job. Had this work been wrought with divine power on their consciences, had the law been inwardly applied, it would effectually have cut them off from all unlawful striving.

Nor on the other hand did the Holy Spirit ever set before the eyes of their mind the gospel of the grace of God. No carnal professor, whether Calvinist or Arminian, ever had a spiritual knowledge of law or gospel. Had he experimentally known the law, it would have cut him off from unlawful striving. Had he known experimentally the gospel, it would have cut him off from unlawful objects. Thus they never had any inward taste of the sweetness of the gospel. The outward scheme and theory they might perfectly understand, and discuss it most exactly and learnedly; but the inward power, the heavenly sweetness, the divine application of it they had never the least acquaintance with. Their heads may be at Mount Zion, but their hearts are at Mount Sinai.

These unlawful strivers after unlawful objects are never crowned. They may indeed seem to arrive first at the goal; and we well know how an unburdened professor outstrips in zeal, activity, and outward religion, the poor heavy laden, panting child of God. But he is not crowned. He has carried no weight. He has run the wrong side of the post. He has won the race and lost the prize. We hear the great Judge at the last day, in reply to all his declarations of his having prophesied in his name, cast out devils, and done many mighty works, refuse the crown of eternal life with this awful sentence; "Depart from me, I never knew you."

I shall have occasion to show as I proceed with my subject, that the Judge of quick and dead gives the lawful victor two crowns, a crown here and a crown hereafter: the crown of his love and approbation in the conscience on earth, and the crown of eternal glory in heaven. The unlawful striver after unlawful objects has neither of these crowns bestowed upon him, for the one is but the foretaste and sure forerunner of the other. He has therefore no secret crown of divine approbation set on his heart. God never smiled into his soul, nor sanctioned with a divine manifestation in his conscience his words and works. Professors of every degree may have bepraised him; but the sealing of the Spirit, the heavenly diadem of God's own putting on, was never felt nor known.

God's children themselves are often entangled in this freewill strife, especially younger days, before the Lord has purged away their filth by the Spirit of Judgment, and the Spirit of burning. We find this much in the case of the disciples, whilst their Lord was with them, before they were baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Though quickened into spiritual life, they were continually striving after pre-eminence, each wishing to be greatest. Thus the sons of Zebedee, fearful of their own persuasive powers, must needs employ the valuable tongue of a woman, that powerful weapon which so few men can withstand, to induce their master to seat them on his left hand and his right hand in his kingdom. So, on another occasion, the same two disciples would have had fire come down from heaven to consume the Samaritans, when they would not receive Christ (Luke 9:54). Thus we in our youthful religious day were striving after many unlawful objects. Holiness in the flesh, to please God by our own exertions, to make ourselves religious, and understand the doctrines of grace by reading all sorts of religious books, to please professors, conciliate the world, avoid the cross, shun the imputation of uncharitableness, soften down carnal relations, and keep up old acquaintances,—who of us has never thus striven after these unlawful objects? But we could never get the Searcher of hearts, to put on our consciences the crown of his approbation. We strove for the mastery but were never crowned because we strove unlawfully.

II. But now I come to another kind of striving, which is unlawful strife after lawful objects. The strife we have just been describing was unlawful strife after unlawful objects. In that the things aimed at and sought after were as contrary to the rules of the word of God as the mode of striving to obtain them. In the strife that we are about to consider now, the objects aimed at are lawful and good, but they are sought after in an unlawful, wrong way.

I repeat again, that lawful and unlawful here do not mean, and have nothing to do with the law properly so called, but signify a

compliance or a noncompliance on the part of the striver with certain rules, which God has laid down in his word. What those rules are we shall see before long.

There are then certain lawful objects, set forth in the word of God, as the things to be aimed at by every one who runs the race set before him by the Holy Spirit. These lawful objects are the blessings which God blessed his church with in Christ Jesus. Who sits at the end of the race to award the prize? What says Paul? "Let us run with patience the race set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith." (Heb. 12:1, 2.) Now to whom can the runners in a race look, but to him who sits at the goal? They leave the spectators behind, and without stretched necks look forward to the Judge of the prize. He is "the Author of their faith," giving them power to run, and "the Finisher," by crowning it with his approbation.

To "win Christ" then is the object set before the soul that runs the heavenly race. "That I may win Christ," says Paul. (Php. 3:8.) But what is it to win Christ? Why to have him in our hearts as the hope of glory, to embrace him in our arms of faith and affection, and to be able to say feelingly, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Again, pardon of sin, manifestations of mercy, visitations of God the Father's presence and love, the Spirit of adoption enabling the soul to cry, "Abba, Father," applications of Christ's atoning blood, and gracious discoveries of his glorious righteousness, these are lawful objects for the living family to strive after. Lawful, not because the law, strictly so called, speaks of them, for the law never did testify of them either outwardly or inwardly, but because the believer's rule, the glorious gospel of the grace of God, sets forth these blessings as the portion of the people of God in the New Testament. Now none but a living soul ever panted and longed after these spiritual blessings. Hypocrites and reprobates may desire heaven to escape hell, as Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous. But I never can believe that any but a living soul desired an eternal heaven. Pardon of sin a reprobate may desire, to escape the gnawing of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched; but I feel fully

persuaded, that no one dead in sin longed and panted with intense breathings and burning desires after the manifestations of the pure love of an all pure God.

No natural man, no, not the highest doctrinal professor, ever poured out his soul after the blessed overshadowings of the Holy Ghost. It was never his daily longing, nor midnight cry. Such a blessing he has neither a heart to ask, nor a heart to receive.

But in his gracious dealings with his own children, the Lord usually sets before them certain blessings, of which he makes them feel their deep need, and after which he kindles in their soul intense desires. I well remember how ardently not quite fourteen years ago my soul longed after the knowledge of God. It came upon me in the depths of affliction, unsought, and abode with me for weeks at times night and day. what a spirit of grace and supplication I then had after the internal knowledge of God in Christ!

But there is an unlawful striving in quickened souls after these lawful objects.

Now God has laid down in his word of truth three solemn rules, laws you may call them if you like, which constitute lawful striving.

1. The Holy Ghost must begin, carry on, and finish the inward work of grace.
2. The soul must be brought under his divine teaching to be thoroughly stripped and emptied of all creature wisdom, strength, help, hope, and righteousness.
3. The glory of a Triune God must be the end and motive of all.

Any departure from these three rules of striving makes a man strive unlawfully.

Now in early days with us we are often striving after lawful objects, but our manner of striving after them is not in compliance with these three rules, and therefore we strive unlawfully. We are not stripped and laid low in a day. It is often the work of time. I can speak well from experience here. I was not stripped, nor brought down for several years after, as I trust, the Lord quickened my soul, though from the first I was led to strive more or less after lawful objects, and could not do without an internal religion. But thorough soul poverty had not laid hold of me, shame and confusion of face had not covered me. I had not then felt what a vile monster of iniquity I was, nor loathed and abhorred myself in dust and ashes. Man's utter helplessness was to me more a doctrine than a truth; I was not acquainted with the mighty overwhelming power of sin, nor had the ploughshare of temptation turned up the deep corruptions of my heart. I therefore strove unlawfully. When I fell as I fell continually, I had some secret reserve in self, some prayers, or repentance, or hopes, or resolutions to help me out of the ditch. Have we not all been more or less here? We had a legal spirit influencing us, and there was a kind of dead hope that if we lived holy lives, believed the promises, looked, as we thought looking then was, to Christ, and kept perseveringly on, we should get the object of our desires. And though we never got a step forward in the matter, there was a dim struggling after progressive sanctification, and seeking the blessings of the gospel by the works of the law. Now what was the result of all this unlawful striving? Did God ever crown it with his gracious smiles and heavenly approbation? We know that he never did. When is the crown put on? "In the day of the espousals, and in the day of the gladness of the heart." (Song. 3:11.) And there can be no espousals, no manifested betrothing of the soul unto Christ in loving kindness, in mercies, in faithfulness, until we are dead to the law, our first husband. Then the crown is put upon the heart. God is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another. Our own strivings shall never procure us the looks of his love. Now this denial of the crown to all their ardent desires and earnest strivings sadly puzzles and bewilders the seeking soul. Nay he is almost ready to quarrel with God, and accuse him of

unfaithfulness, because he will not smile, and speak peace and pardon. Jeremiah was here, when with intemperate complaint, he cried aloud, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" (Jer. 15:18.) But we cannot learn religion, as we learn arithmetic; we cannot take the slate, and copy out the rule, and work the sum. God's teachings are of a very different nature, intended to baffle and confound all the pride and wisdom of the creature. Nor can we hasten God's work. His teachings are not hasty teachings for the most part, but line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little. I cannot stand in your experience; you cannot stand in mine. Neither of us know one jot more nor one jot less than the Holy Ghost has written upon our heart. We do not learn religion in a day. The way from Egypt to Canaan was but a few days journey, but the Lord choose to lead his people about in the wilderness, amid fiery flying serpents, drought, and famine, for forty years. And why, but "to humble them, and prove them, and know what was in their heart?" This was one part of the lesson; and the other was that "he might make them know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." (Deut. 8:2, 3.) And thus we have to learn by painful experience the inutility of all creature strivings, and to be brought down into that state where all exertions fail.

## **LAWFUL STRIFE**

III. But we come now to the only striving which the Lord crowns—a lawful striving after lawful objects.

Of the other two kinds of striving, the first was chiefly the striving of reprobates; therefore not crowned. The second was the striving of quickened souls, but not crowned, because they strove not according to gospel rules.

But now we are dealing with characters brought down to penury and utter insolvency, in the state described in the parable of the

two servants, "when they had nothing to pay." What Hart calls "perfect poverty."

'Tis perfect poverty alone  
That sets the soul at large;  
Whilst we can call one mite our own,  
We have no full discharge.

To bring this about is the work of the law. The gospel does not reduce the soul to beggary. It only steps in as a friend to pay the debt when all one's own money is gone. The law draws all the money out of the pocket by crying, "Do, do," "work, work." But when all is gone, the law can do no more. The law then has done its office. The law puts a burden on, which burden is carried until the heart is brought down with labour, and the soul falls down, and there is none to help. (Ps. 107:12.) As Paul says, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." By this death the soul becomes dead to the law, as Paul says again, "Know ye not, brethren, **(for I speak to them that know the law)** how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth." (Rom. 7:1.) When then he dies **under** the law, he dies **to** the law, and the law ceases to have dominion over him. All strivings therefore of the elect under the law, end sooner or later in death to the law. Now I appeal to your consciences, whether God ever crowned your legal strivings. What has the law done for you? what can the law do for you, but to bring its curse in your heart, lay guilt on your conscience, and stir up slavish fear in your mind? To strive lawfully then, is not to strive after the law, but after certain rules laid down in the gospel. Well then, they are called laws, as the Holy Ghost uses the word when he says, "I will put my laws into their hearts, and write them in their minds." Now we will begin with the first rule, which is this, that the Holy Spirit must work in us all the power, wisdom, grace, faith, strength, and life, that we strive with. This work the apostle calls a law in. (Rom. 8:2.) "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." "Whatever is not of faith is sin." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "The things of God

knoweth no one but the Spirit of God." "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." Now whilst striving in our own strength, the power and reality of the Spirit's teachings were little known. We could not lie passive, as helpless as the Potter's clay. All creature strength was not gone; some little store was left.

The **second** rule of lawful striving is, that the runners in this race should have no strength. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." "When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." "Without me," said Jesus, "ye can do nothing." The Lord opened his ministry with setting forth his covenant character to the poor and needy. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bruised." So he said, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that mourn, for ye shall be comforted." All the blessings of the gospel are promised to the poor in spirit, the outcasts of Israel. But who makes them poor? The Lord surely, according to that word, "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich." A man may indeed after a form make himself poor by wearing rags, and assuming the garb of poverty. I have read of a man who, from some whim or kind of madness, went about the country dressed and living as a common beggar. He had abundance of property, but he chose to dress in rags, and live on alms. Such a man was not really poor, as his apparent poverty was but a mask and a cheat. So spiritually, he that makes himself poor is not one of God's poor; and he infringes just as much upon the work of the Spirit, and is as much guilty of presumption and hypocrisy, as if he made himself rich. And a child of God who strives to make himself poor, strives unlawfully, for he acts against the rule, that all we are and have, all we know and feel aright, must be the whole and sole work of the blessed Spirit. A man that makes himself poor by throwing away outward pride, and putting on outward humility never passes in his soul through the feelings that God exercises his children with. The living family are stripped **unwillingly**; they

cannot believe the Lord is leading them in the right way. Despondency, unbelief, rebellion, infidelity work up in their heart against His teaching. Their former enjoyments, and what they thought communion are taken away, and they feel as Isaiah speaks, left as "a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill." (Isai. 30:17.) The word beacon is in the margin, "a tree bereft of branches." And thus they stand bereft of all their spreading boughs of religion, a leafless trunk stripped of flowers and fruit, naked and bare. Perhaps some of you here never were in this spot—never lost all your religion, and stood before God without a grain, like the tall, leafless, branchless mast on the top of the hill, "O no," say you, "I have been very far, but was never driven into this spot yet." Then I will tell you a secret; If you belong unto God, you have to be driven farther than you have been yet. We read (Ezek. 17:24) that "the Lord dries up the green tree, and makes the dry tree to flourish." Then you must be dried up, for you are a green tree still, before you can flourish in the courts of the Lord. And perhaps when you get to have no religion, it will be the very time for the Lord to give you some of his. We are "to buy of him gold tried in the fire." Now if we look into the fire, where the gold was being tried, what should we see? why a crucible, that is a kind of earthen pot, with scum and dross and foam, bubbling and boiling. O where is the gold? Out of sight, at the bottom of the vessel, covered with scum and foam. So it is with the soul that is in the furnace. Faith, hope, and love, are all hid at the bottom of the heart, and the scum and dross of unbelief, despondency, and rebellion are alone seen. But when the refiner removes the scum with his rod, then the pure gold shines forth. Now whilst passing through this experience, you are striving lawfully, for you are fulfilling the second rule of the Christian strife. You are a poor needy outcast, who can do nothing. You now are where Paul was, "though I be nothing." (2 Cor. 12:11.)

And this enables you to comply with the **third** rule of lawful strife—to give God all the glory. Surely you can take no glory to self, when self has been proved, and found wanting. Then if the Lord has made you poor, in order to make you rich, naked that

he may clothe you, a beggar that he may relieve you, a bankrupt that he may pay all your debts, an insolvent that he may take you out of jail with flying colours in the face of your creditors, and has brought you down to the gates of hell to lift you up to the door of heaven, then surely you must give him all the glory. He has solemnly declared that "no flesh shall glory in his presence," and "he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." But what is so staggering to nature and reason is the way that he brings about this taking to himself the glory. No man in his senses would walk in this way. But God does not act according to our senses, but "according to the counsel of his own will."

Thus we never strive lawfully till we cease to strive naturally. Then the Holy Spirit begins to strive within with groanings which cannot be uttered. No pretty prayers to tickle rotten professors; no cut and dried sentences with texts nicely assorted and fitted in like the squares of a chess-board, no flowers of eloquence to please those who are all for word and hate power. But the real striving is all inward work, sighing, crying, and groaning to the Lord. "Oh!" say you, "I will tell you what I call striving. It is to go to chapel three times on the Lord's day, attend prayer meetings, pray privately seven times regularly every day." Ah, my friend, this is striving after the flesh. The only striving that God acknowledges is the striving of the Spirit and the Spirit never strives effectually, till the flesh has ceased to strive.

Now this inward strivings of the Spirit are a fulfilling of the experience Paul describes. (2 Cor. 12:9, 10.) "When I am weak, he says, then am I strong." Why so? Because "the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness." Then if I am saved, I am saved as a vile wretch, a monster of iniquity, by rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing grace. Not a drop of heavenly favour can reach my heart by my own exertions. I might as well think of taking up the Atlantic ocean in the hollow of my hand, as bring down into my soul a drop of God's love, or a single smile of his countenance. I may sigh, cry, groan, long, and pant after the shedding abroad of his love, but I cannot bring down one grain or

atom of it within. Then if felt, must not we give to God all the glory?

Now these lawful strivers after lawful objects are crowned, and they only. This crown is two-fold—a crown here and a crown hereafter, a crown of grace set on the heart below, and the crown of glory set on the head above. Thus Paul says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:8.) This crown none will have but those who have striven, striven lawfully to enter in at the strait gate, and striven successfully. The crown below is the crown spoken of in (Ezek. 16:12), "I put a beautiful crown on thine head;" and which the church laments to have lost, "The crown is fallen from our head." (Lam. 5:16.) This crown is put on the heart, when the Lord smiles approbation and acceptance in the Son of his love. As David speaks (Ps. 103:4), "Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Now this inward crown is never set on the heart of any but a beggar, that has been on the dunghill. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory." This beggar is one who is begging for a manifested interest in God's great salvation, clothed in rags and sitting in dust and ashes on the dunghill of his own corruptions. He and he only is raised up in his soul to sit among princes, the priests and kings, the royal generation, who are invariably crowned with divine favour below, and inherit the throne of glory above.

Now of this internal crowning I believe there are different degrees. There are no degrees in glory, but there certainly are degrees of grace. There are no pious eminent saints above close to the throne, whilst the thief on the cross and Mary Magdalene stand at the door as having been such great sinners. But below there are degrees of manifested favour; there are babes, young men, and fathers. Whenever then you have been enabled by faith to rest on Christ's blood and righteousness, whenever a drop of God's favour has flowed into your soul, whenever peace has been

felt and known, and a solemn sense of God's goodness and mercy through the blood of the Lamb has been tasted; whenever in the depths of soul poverty and helplessness, help and strength have been found to cast your burden on the Lord, then and there you have been crowned as a lawful striver. O, say some, "We must have full assurance, and there is no faith without it." I believe that all true faith has a measure of assurance in it, but who can say how full it shall be. The leper who merely cried, "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean," had faith, and so had the woman who pressed through the throng to touch Jesus' garment, and so had the Canaanitish woman who sought but for a crumb from the children's table. This was a venturing faith, a faith of necessity, a faith working up and out of trials and burdens. This faith the Lord crowns as his own work, for he never crowns anything else. He crowns not our strivings but his own, not our work but the work of Jesus Christ. Have you then never felt a little of this soul melting work? "Aye," say you, "but it did not last long, and has been but rarely felt." But where is it said how long it is to last, or how often to be felt? To have had the crown on but once, and that but for a few moments, is to have been crowned. You complain that you have lost these sweet feelings. But how could you have lost what you never had? You are saying, "the crown has fallen from my head." Then it must have been there. And I will tell you another thing, that if the crown was ever set on your heart, the rim of it has left its mark behind, and upon that spot where it has left its impression, you are longing to have it again set on. See then to it that you are striving lawfully. Have you run yourself out of breath yet? are your arms withered, your legs and back broken? Then will the Lord himself bear you, as on eagles' wings, to the end of the race, and lay you at the feet of the Judge, where you will learn that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," but that "God has mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

## THE LEPER CLEANSED

Preached on August 8th, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, London.

"And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot." Leviticus 14:14

What a fearful disease was **leprosy!** and what a type and figure of that still more fearful disease, **sin**. When a man was infected with the slightest taint of leprosy, and the priest had pronounced him unclean, he was at once cut off from all social and domestic ties. The wife of his bosom, the child of his heart, the brothers and sisters who had played with him in infancy and grown up with him into manhood, the friend who had loved him as his own soul, all immediately cast him off. He became at once an outcast and an alien from family and friends, hearth and home. But this was not all. These indeed were keen, cutting strokes, but there was a keener and more cutting stroke still in reserve. He was driven from the chosen people of God, banished from the camp, and not permitted to draw near to the courts of the Lord's house. For him the altar had no sacrifice; for him the sanctuary had no incense; to him the gates of the tabernacle gave no admission. He was cut off from man and cut off from God, and as his disease generally was incurable, he had no prospect before him but to die a miserable death, the flesh rotting off his bones, and limb dropping from limb. Do we not see in this dreadful malady, and in its attending circumstances, some representation of that fearful disease **sin** as opened up in the heart and conscience of the child of God? Let the hand of God be upon you, let sin be laid bare in your soul, and the result will be—especially if the members of your family be unacquainted with vital religion, or be opposed to the discriminating doctrines of the gospel—that the very wife of your bosom will despise you: the very children who have grown up as olive branches round about your table will scorn you: the friends with whom you have walked in business or pleasure will

cast you off; and the religious body with which probably you have been connected will renounce you as a brother, and consider you but a fanatic or gloomy enthusiast. Thus we find Job expressing this portion of his bitter trial: "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me, I arose and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me." So also said Heman: "Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." Thus, too, complained David: "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off."

But besides this, however painful to the natural feelings, there is that which far exceeds all—the separation which sin makes between God and the soul.

Leprosy, then, as I was endeavouring to show this morning, is a striking figure of that fearful disease sin as opened up in the heart and conscience. But there are some points in which the type does not exactly correspond with the antitype.

1. Leprosy was, for the most part, incurable. Those who were cured, were cured by special miracle, but the generality miserably died. This does not hold in the antitype; for every one of God's family—and these are the only spiritual lepers—is cleansed. Not one of them dies in his leprosy; but all experience the healing hand of the Great Physician.

2. The ceremonial which was used for the cleansing of the literal leper was not to cure him; he was cured by special miracle before he was cleansed. Not so in the antitype. In the spiritual leprosy

the cure and the cleansing go together; the same remedy that cures also cleanses.

3. The third point of difference is that the natural leprosy, when cured, was cured entirely. Not so in the antitype; that rather resembles the leprous house mentioned in **Le 14.**, which had "a fretting leprosy" in the walls, ever breaking out in spite of all scraping and cleansing. The leprosy of sin remains in the child of God till the body drops into the grave, and the spirit returns to Him who gave it.

I was this morning endeavouring to describe somewhat of the nature and symptoms of that fearful disease leprosy, and to show how it was a figure of that still more fearful disease sin; and then I said that if we were spared to meet together this evening we would attempt to consider a little of the cleansing from this fearful disease.

We read: "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing; he shall be brought unto the priest, and the priest shall go forth out of the camp, and the priest shall look and behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper, then"—and so forth.

For the sake of clearness we may divide our subject into two general heads:

### **I. The preliminaries before cleansing.**

### **II. The ceremonial of cleansing.**

#### **I. There were several needful preliminaries.**

1. The first regards the person to whom the whole ceremonial was entrusted. The priest, as we showed this morning, was to be the sole judge of the malady; to him the supervision of the leper was specially committed; no earthly physician was to interfere, but it was left to the man of God to discriminate and to decide

upon every suspicious case. To the same divinely appointed judge was it also left to determine whether the leprosy was healed.

2. The place where examination was made and the cleansing performed was without the camp. The man was not to be brought into the camp, lest haply some taint of the disease might still remain, and communicate infection to the people. The priest, therefore, was to go to him "without the camp". There is something very noticeable here for the ministers of Christ. They are under-physicians, and their cases lie much in the hospital; they have to visit the sick wards, and must have no delicate scruples about examining and handling ulcerated sores. "Condescend," says the Apostle, "to men of low estate". The servant of Christ must also know for himself the leprosy and its symptoms, that he may go without the camp and examine the cases of others: for it was out of the camp that the leper sojourned. There are many persons in this Metropolis and elsewhere who, we hope, are children of God, and though not members of churches, yet are regular hearers of the truth. Into all their various motives for continuing thus isolated I cannot enter, but one applicable to a comparatively small section of them I will mention—a feeling that they are too base and vile to have anything to do with the manifested people of God. These are lepers without the camp. The ministers, therefore, of truth must go without the camp to meet their case; not despising them because they are lepers, but remembering how many of the Lord's people are full of "wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores".

3. But the priest was commanded to "look"; he was not to take the matter for granted. I fear, greatly fear, that this injunction is in our day much neglected. Churches, for the most part, have too wide a door; nor is there strict supervision enough exercised. Into many so-called gospel churches almost anybody with a fluent tongue and a well-furnished head can find admission. Not so in the injunction before us. The priest was to "look," to examine, to investigate, and see whether it was a real cure. But if the plague of leprosy was really healed, and the priest was well satisfied in

his own mind that the man was sound and whole, he was then to proceed with certain ceremonies, which are highly typical and very instructive if we can enter into their spiritual purport.

II. We will now consider the appointed **ceremonial** with its spiritual meaning.

**The priest was to take for him that was to be cleansed "two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop".**

Is there not something very significant in his taking the birds? Heaven is, as it were, their home; the air, the pure air, is their abode; they are scarcely denizens of the earth; they light upon it for a few moments, but their mansion is the sky: Does not this beautifully set forth the Son of God coming from heaven? When He was in the world He was not of it; as the bird that lights upon the soil is not of the earth, though on it. He said, therefore, in the days of His flesh, "The Son of Man which is in heaven." Why two birds were selected I shall presently show. But these birds were to be "alive". This we may well understand spiritually and figuratively of the life of Christ. "In Him was life." This is His mediatorial life as distinct from His self-existent life. "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself" .{Joh 5:26} Of this also He speaks, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Because I live, ye shall live also." "When Christ who is our life shall appear." The birds then were alive to signify this mediatorial life. They were also "clean". No hawk, nor owl, nor falcon, nor vulture—no unclean bird had admission here. These clean birds represent the perfect human nature of the Lord Jesus, in which there was neither spot nor blemish—a nature altogether immaculate. Two birds were appointed because the type otherwise would have been imperfect; for the one bird represented the death, and the other the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And as the slain bird could not live again but by special miracle, two were selected because the natural representation was so far necessarily imperfect.

But with the birds there was to be taken "cedar wood". This is an emblem of two things, incorruptibility and fragrance. You have heard, perhaps, of the far-famed gates of the temple of Somnath in India. These gates are made of the Deodar cedar, that beautiful tree now getting common in this country; and though above a thousand years old, are said to be entirely free from decay, or even the mark of a worm. Cedar wood was therefore selected to signify the incorruptibility of the human nature of the Lord Jesus, for His body knew no corruption. But cedar wood also is especially fragrant, and when burned gives out a most powerful and acceptable odour. Was not this the case when Jesus was burned, as it were, in the flames of divine wrath? Was not that as the smell of sweet incense in the nostrils of Jehovah? Thus there was a singular beauty and appropriateness in selecting this highly odoriferous wood.

But "scarlet" also was to be taken. The meaning of this is plain at once. What could it point to but the scarlet blood of Immanuel? So the house of Rahab was marked by a scarlet thread as a sign of delivering blood. And so we read that Moses "took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people"—scarlet being the appointed emblem of that precious blood of Jesus which cleanseth from all sin. The "hyssop", too, that little herb which grows upon the wall, was used especially for the purpose of being dipped in blood and sprinkling it, as in the case of the Israelites in Egypt upon the lintel and side posts. "Purge me with hyssop," cries David, "and I shall be clean". Does not hyssop evidently refer to "the blood of sprinkling"? Are not all these things highly significant? Do they not all point in the clearest manner to the Lord Jesus?

But one of the birds was to be killed. O how this prefigures Immanuel's dying upon the accursed tree! And to be killed "in an earthen vessel"—that the blood might not be spilt in vain; that every drop might be caught; that it might not fall upon the ground and mingle with the dust. O how valuable, precious, unspeakably precious is the blood of the Lamb, for by it sin is

cleansed and washed away, and all the ransomed family reconciled to God! Particular redemption is the blood in the vessel; universal, the blood in the dust. But it was to be killed "over running water". This seems to connect it with the gracious work of the Spirit; for we know that "running", or "living", water is the usual type of the blessed Spirit. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."

But now for the living bird which, I said before, typified the resurrection of Christ. There was a necessity for two birds, because the one that died could not be raised as the Lord Jesus Christ was, except by special miracle, which was needless merely to carry out a figure. There was, therefore, another bird provided, which the priest was to take, and with it the cedar wood, the scarlet, and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. What a representation is this of the union and connection which there is between the blood, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus! The living bird was to be dipped in the blood of his fellow, so that when he spread his wings and flew abroad in the open sky, he carried with him the blood of his slaughtered companion. So Jesus when He ascended up on high, went into heaven wearing our nature; and as the high priest, on the day of atonement, entered within the veil not without blood, so the Lord Jesus presented before the Father the merits of the blood which He shed here below.

All this was to be transacted before the leper's eyes. Because he had been a leper, and was now cured of his leprosy, he was interested in this divine ceremonial. Every minute circumstance to him had a voice; he saw all, heard all, felt all. Is not this applicable spiritually? Did not the leper's eyes see the priest kill one bird, and dip the other in the blood of his fellow? And was not there a secret witness in his bosom as he beheld this solemn transaction, saying: "All this is for thee; the bird which dies, dies for thee; the bird which, bearing blood upon its head and bosom,

mounts heavenwards, flies thither for thee. This is for thy cleansing; this God has commanded that thou mayest be restored to the sanctuary." So when there is a view by living faith of the blood, death, sufferings, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; when we see Him, as Paul speaks, "crucified before our eyes", as the healed leper saw the one bird dying in agony, and the other mounting upward in liberty, there accompanies the view this inward testimony, "He died and rose again for thee."

2. But the priest was to do something more. He was "to sprinkle the blood upon him that was to be cleansed seven times", and then "pronounce him clean". Aye! we have something here very significant. The priest was to sprinkle the leper seven times with blood. There was not only to be a sight of the blood, but an application of it. The leper was not merely to see the blood fall drop by drop from the slaughtered bird, but to be sprinkled also with it seven times. How clearly does all this point to "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel"—the application of atoning blood and dying love to the soul!

The man was now virtually clean, for we read, when he had been sprinkled seven times (**a perfect number**), "the priest shall pronounce him clean".

3. But was the whole now finished? Was the cleansed leper now restored to the courts of the Lord's house? No; not yet. More still remained to be done. "And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days" **Le 14:8**

(i) He was "to wash his clothes". This I explained in the morning, to signify the cleansing of the life and conversation. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word" **Ps 119:9** "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" **2Co 7:1** This was indispensable. When he had been

cleansed by the sprinkling of the blood his clothes were to be washed. He was no longer to wear the rent garments and filthy tatters of the leper, but to wash his clothes and manifest by his life and conduct what God had done for his soul.

**(ii)** He was to shave off his hair also, and he was to do it upon two separate occasions. First, when still without the camp, and again on the seventh day, the day before he was presented before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle. On the first occasion the command is simply that he should "shave off all his hair", but on the seventh day that he should "shave all his hair off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows". This utter removing of the old hair that there might be a fresh growth of entirely new, seems to represent the passing away of old things and the becoming of all things new. When the now cleansed leper shaved off his eyebrows, his beard, and his hair, it was not a partial clipping off, but a thorough removing of the matted and tangled, leprous and tainted, weather-beaten beggar—locks which sorted well with the old rent garments, that there might be a fresh young growth of new hair from the very roots. The cleansed leper is renewed in the spirit of his mind; he puts off the old man, and puts on the new; he walks in newness of life, and serves God in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter. He lives in a new world, reads a new Bible, has within him a new heart, worships God with a new spirit, and lives a new life unto and with Him who saith, "Behold, I make all things new."

**(iii)** But he was also to wash his flesh in water and be clean. This seems to signify the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, as the Apostle speaks: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The body washed with pure water does not mean, I believe, the ordinance of Baptism, but the washing of regeneration, as the Lord speaks of being "born of water and of the Spirit".

4. But was this all? No. We have not exhausted this subject. It is still pregnant with instruction if we can get at it. There is a blessed vein of gold in the Scriptures deeper than any Australian

mine, and richer than any Californian "digging". "The stones of it," as Job says, "are the place of sapphires, and it hath dust of gold. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen." The cleansing of the leper had three distinct stages. First, the ceremonial without the camp, comprising the killing of the bird, the sprinkling of the blood on the leper, the shaving of his hair, and the washing of his body and clothes. Secondly, what he did when restored to the camp, and still tarrying abroad out of his tent, viz., shaving again on the seventh day all his hair, beard, and eyebrows, and washing his body and garments. And, thirdly, what the priest did on the eighth day to him at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. To this point we are now come.

**(i)** On the eighth day the priest was to take "two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil...". Now these three lambs—two males and one female—were selected, the first for a burnt offering, the second for a trespass offering, and the third for a sin offering. The two males for the burnt and the sin offering, and the female for the trespass offering. This brought before the eye and the heart of the cleansed leper at what a cost he had been redeemed. The lamb offered whole as a burnt offering represented the Lamb of God burnt in flames of divine wrath. As then the smoke and flame ascended up to heaven, the cleansed leper would have a view of the sufferings of Jesus. He would see how Jesus gave His soul an offering for sin, and would view the displeasure and anger of God visited on His sacred and spotless head; he would, in spirit, sympathise with and mourn over Him, and would grieve and groan on account of the sins that put Him to such torture. When he saw the trespass offering, he would see how his inward sins deserved the burning flame; for in the trespass offering, not the outward body and limbs, but the inward parts, chiefly the fat round the kidneys and the entrails, was burnt in the flame of the altar. As then the smoke and flame of the burning fat of the trespass and sin offering ascended in the sight of the leper from the brazen altar, he would see what his sins had deserved; in the

crackling of the fat, as it melted in the fire, he would view the wrath of God due to him; and as he saw the smoke ascend, he would see how the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was acceptable to God, and was as a sweet smell to offended justice.

**(ii)** But there was to be "a meat offering" also of one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil. This was to be a thank-offering, to be presented by the priest for his cleansing, and represents the thankful heart of the sinner for that most undeserved mercy which is experienced in the cleansing from sin.

**(iii)** But there was something more to be done still. We have not yet exhausted our subject, if I have your patience and my own strength. The blood of the trespass offering was to be taken and applied in a very special manner. It was to be "put upon the tip of the right ear of him that was to be cleansed, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot".

Application still! No pardon without application! No peace without the blood of sprinkling! And where was the blood to be sprinkled? Where was the application to be? First, the tip of the right ear. This seems to represent the application of atoning blood to cleanse our thoughts. What an inlet the ear is to the mind! Some have discussed the question whether it were better to be born blind or to be born deaf. It is a mercy that this is never put to our choice. But in some respects it is a greater privation to be born deaf than to be born blind, because through the ear enters language, without which there can scarcely exist any knowledge or any definite ideas. How unfurnished, how utterly unfurnished would our minds be, what a wild waste blank, were the ear, that channel of communication with the outer world, utterly closed! But it is a channel for evil as well as for good—a sad, sad inlet for sin. Can we walk the length of the street without being conscious of it? We cannot help hearing the oath of the blasphemer, or not to speak of such gross abominations, what carnality, frivolity, gaiety and worldliness meet our ear on every side! How many incentives to evil enter through the ear! A word, a whisper, what a fire it may kindle within! Hence the blood was to be applied to

the ear to represent the cleansing of our thoughts, the application of atoning blood to wash away the guilt and filth of a polluted imagination. "I hate vain thoughts," says David: and again, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me." Aye, they are a "multitude", for every one which enters through the ear may be the parent of a million; and all, all need to be cleansed by the application of atoning blood.

Next came the application of the blood of the slaughtered lamb to the thumb of the right hand. Ah! does not the right hand need cleansing? O how much the hand has to do in buying, selling, trafficking, writing, etc.! How hard to hold the scales betwixt the thumb and finger of the right hand always correctly! And how hard when we grasp the pen with the right thumb and fingers—and I know something of pen work—always to scrawl our thoughts aright! The hand seems to signify especially actions and dealings between man and man. And does not this want cleansing? How, then, is it to be cleansed but by atoning blood? Then there is the great toe of the right foot. And does not that represent the walk, conduct and conversation? The great toe of the right foot is to receive the applied blood as its most prominent portion—first and foremost in the path. Who can say that he does not want a daily, hourly cleansing of his walk, life, conduct and conversation? The Lord alludes to this when He said to Peter, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." These want constant cleansing.

**(iv)** But was this all? No. Something further yet. The priest was to take a log **(that is about three-quarters of a pint)** of oil, and to pour some of it into the palm of his left hand, in order to dip his right finger into the oil, and apply a portion to the same places to which the blood had been previously applied—the tip of the right ear, the tip of the right thumb, and the top of the great toe of the right foot. You will observe, the oil was to be upon the blood. Is not this deeply significant, pregnant with instruction? Does it not point to the sanctifying operations of God the Spirit? Oil, we know, is specially used as a type and figure of the Holy Spirit. "The anointing that abideth in you is truth, and no lie" **1Jo**

**2:27** For what is anointing but ointment, and what is ointment but oil?

But you will observe that before the heart can be sanctified by the Spirit of God it must be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. Sin must be pardoned before subdued. The conscience must be cleansed before the heart, lip and life can be sanctified. Blood precedes oil; justification precedes sanctification. The conscience is purged from dead works before the living God is served: the soul is married unto Christ before it brings forth fruit unto God. Do we not want the one as much as the other? And the one is never given without the other. If there is justification, there is sanctification. If there is Christ, there is the Spirit. If there is blood, there is oil. See how needful it is to have the oil applied to the ear, to have the thoughts sanctified. Aye, a drop of oil on the right ear makes good hearers. Those whose ear has been sprinkled with blood and touched with oil are not wayside, stony-ground hearers, but have judgment, experience, discernment, life and feeling. They know what they hear: and as the oil sanctifies the ear, so also it opens it to receive instruction. Do you bring with you an ear sprinkled with blood and sanctified with oil? Do you know what you hear, feel what you hear, believe what you hear? Does your spirit fall under it? Do your affections embrace it? Does your conscience twine around it? Do you feel it come into your very spirit with a sanctifying, softening, and humbling effect? That is being a good hearer. Such are not the generality of hearers, who have no judgment, no experience, no feeling, no discernment. We must have oil upon the ear to make good preachers, too, as well as good hearers, for without it we cannot hear the voice of the Spirit speaking in the Word of God.

And then there is the oil upon the thumb. You tradesmen, when you are holding the scales behind the counter, does not the thumb want oil upon it sometimes to make the balances right? In buying and selling, trafficking and carrying on daily employments, does not the thumb want oil upon it? And if blood and oil be upon the thumb, will not matters be right between God and conscience? Blood without oil would but make an Antinomian; oil

without blood would but make a Pharisee; blood with oil, oil upon blood, makes the manifested child of God. They are not, they never can be really separated. How I, too, who write so much, need oil on my thumb! Does not the foot, too, need the oil, to have the walk, life and conversation sanctified by the grace of God? O, if there were oil daily upon the toe, what different lives we should lead! How the oil upon the toe would keep us out of things into which we so heedlessly run, bring us near to God, out of the company and spirit of the world, and preserve us from ungodly practices, and every kind of sin. With the oil upon the toe we must needs walk in the fear of God tenderly, solemnly, feelingly, reverentially, believingly, to the honour and praise of His great Name.

I think time will hardly admit of our entering more fully upon this subject. We have had today the leper sick and the leper well; the leper diseased and the leper cleansed; the leper out of the camp and the leper in the camp; the leper banished and the leper restored. We have seen—those at least who were here this morning—some of the symptoms of the malady, and we have seen something, I hope, this evening of the cleansing and restoration. Now comes the important question, How far our experience corresponds with these particulars? I hope that you will give me credit for having this day kept close to God's Word: I have endeavoured to do so, and close also to the experience of God's family. Now can we find in our experience anything agreeable to this? One remark I would drop. The leprosy—as I was showing this morning—was a disease that gradually spread. It was not at the worst at first. There may be those here this evening who know a little, but not much; in whom there is a beginning, but the disease is not widely, deeply spread; but it will be so if you have the beginning. At present you know little of the remedy, because you know little of the malady. And can we know the one without the other? What were all these ceremonial rites to any but the leper? Could any but the leper understand them, realise them, enter into their signification, feel their weight and power, or have any personal interest in them? None, absolutely none! They were for the leper, and the leper only.

Those who are not lepers, who have not been struck with the deadly malady, and had sin opened up in the heart and conscience, know nothing of what we have been speaking. Ask an experienced and tried child of God if he could get at these things very easily? Ask him if these pearls lie upon the surface of the water? Whether they do not lie deeply, and whether he has not had to go down to the bottom to get at them? The reality of these things is by most passed over. They are not lepers, and therefore they know little either of the malady or the remedy. But these things do not alter facts. Realities are realities, whether known or not; and there are those who know them to be realities, who enter deeply both into the malady and the remedy, and know something of both the blood and the oil. It is a mercy to know anything really of God. One grain of grace is saving. There are times and seasons when the soul would be glad to be certain it had half a grain; but one grain of grace will make a believer. The natural disease began with what seemed to be a little spot; it was but a grain, but it spread and spread till the man was infected throughout. So with God's people. They must have deeper and deeper discoveries of the leprosy till their entire being is leprous throughout, that they may prize the remedy which God has devised and provided—blood and oil, grace and mercy, pardon and peace—for these things must not be merely shut up in the pages of God's Word; their reality must be felt in the soul, and brought into our own possession by the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

O the pangs by Christians felt.  
When their eyes are open:  
When they see the gulfs of guilt  
They must wade and grope in:  
When the hell appears within.  
Causing bitter anguish.  
And the loathsome stench of sin  
Makes the spirit languish!  
Now the heart disclosed, betrays  
All its hid disorders,

Enmity to God's right ways.  
Blasphemies and murders:  
Malice, envy, lust, and pride.  
Thoughts obscene and filthy:  
Sores corrupt and putrefied,  
No part sound or healthy.  
Brethren in a state so sad,  
When temptations seize us.  
When our hearts we feel thus bad,  
Let us look to Jesus.  
He that hung upon the cross,  
For his people bleeding.  
Now in heaven sirs for us  
Always interceding.  
Vengeance, when the Saviour died.  
Quitted the believer:  
Justice cried. "I'm satisfied."  
"It is finished," said the Lord,  
In his dying minute:  
Holy Ghost, repeat the word.  
Full salvation's in it.  
Leprous soul, press through the crowd  
In thy foul condition:  
Struggle hard, and call aloud  
On the great Physician.  
Wait till thy disease he cleanse.  
Begging, trusting, cleaving:  
When, and where, and by what means,  
To his wisdom leaving.

Hart (Gadsby's No. 306)

## THE LEPER DISEASED

Preached on August 8th, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, London.

"And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled: he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." Leviticus 13:45, 46

Leprosy, that is, the leprosy of which we read so much in the Scriptures, is, I believe, a disease almost, if not wholly, unknown in modern times. There is, indeed, a malady that bears the same name, and is of a very loathsome and fearful nature; but its symptoms and character are, I understand, widely different from the leprosy described in the Old Testament. This circumstance would seem to stamp upon it something peculiar, and to distinguish it from an ordinary disease.

Leprosy, however, was not only a **real** disease, but also a **typical** one; in other words, figurative in the most striking manner of that fearful malady, **sin**, with which we are infected from the sole of the foot even to the head. That the leprosy was a typical disease is evident from several circumstances.

1. That the ceremonial purifications whereby the stain of leprosy was cleansed had all a special reference **as I hope to show, if we are spared to meet this evening** to the Lord Jesus Christ, as making an atonement for sin.

2. That the high priest was the person specially appointed to take cognizance of it; that it was not put into the hands of ordinary physicians, but was placed under the particular supervision of God's anointed servant and Messiah's representative.

3. That there was for it no appointed cure: it being in itself of an incurable nature, and therefore, if cured, cured only by special miracle.

4. We find it miraculously inflicted as a punishment, as upon Miriam, Gehazi, and King Uzziah.

These four circumstances take it out of the catalogue of ordinary diseases, and stamp upon it a peculiar and typical character.

If we read this chapter with a spiritual eye, and enter into its experimental meaning, we shall find in it much instruction, and I think we shall see in it three leading things. At least, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to point out this morning these three prominent features.

First. That there was what I may call a spurious leprosy, assuming various forms, but differing from the real disease in several important particulars.

Secondly. That the real disease had certain marked symptoms, which are described with the greatest accuracy and minuteness.

Thirdly. That when it was a decided case of leprosy, the leper was to be separated; as it were, marked off in a peculiar way. In the words of the text: "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." If the Lord then shall enable me this morning to open up what I seem to see in this chapter, I shall attempt to tread the path thus sketched out, and endeavour to describe:

**I. The false leprosy.**

**II. The true leprosy.**

### **III. The condition of the true leper.**

You will observe that to the priest was committed the supervision of this disease. If there were any suspicion that such or such a person was tainted with this fearful malady, no time was to be lost: he was to be brought at once to the priest, who had certain minute directions given him by God Himself to guide his judgment in the case. It was not left to his own arbitrary decision to pronounce a suspected person a leper; specific directions were given him to attend to certain determinate symptoms.

Before, however, we enter on the subject, it will perhaps be desirable to answer the question, "What did leprosy typically represent?" It seems to me that it was a typical representation not so much of the disease of sin in the abstract—that is, of sin generally—as of sin as opened up by the Spirit's teaching in the heart and conscience of the family of God. If leprosy represents sin generally, all mankind would be lepers, and the beauty of the figure would be lost; but by restricting it to the malady of sin as a felt disease, the force of the figure is preserved.

I. There were then cases, suspicious cases, which put on the appearance of leprosy, but were not the genuine disease. These, with their spiritual meaning, we will now consider.

**a** The first was "a rising, a scab, or a bright spot in the skin of the flesh". Looking at this spiritually, we may conceive "the rising" to signify some movement of the mind towards religion; for the flesh was not smooth and unbroken as before, but began to heave and rise. This might be the beginning of a crisis—the first index of something at work beneath. Or it might be "a scab"—the scar of a former wound, or some eruptive sore. Or it might be "a bright spot"—a boil or a pimple, with some degree of swelling or inflammation, producing on the skin a polished, shining surface. As leprosy commenced in almost a similar way, examination was immediately to be made. He was to be brought to the priest. In order to guide the priest's judgment, he was to attend to four distinct marks, which invariably distinguished the true leprosy

from the false. These four marks were:

1. That the true disease was deeper than the skin **Le 13:3**:
2. That the hair where the sore was, was turned white—in other words, had perished from the roots;
3. That the disease when real did not continue at a stay, but gradually spread; and
4. There was in it quick raw flesh. Any of these marks was decisive, and they are all deeply significant. Let us take the first case—that of a man who had "a rising, a scab, or a bright spot". He was to be brought to the priest. What was he to do? To look for the first two decisive marks. Was the hair turned white? Yes. Was the plague deeper than the skin? Yes. The case was clear. He was a leper. But was the case dubious? Was the skin white, but not the hair? and did the sore seem not deeper than the skin? He was to pronounce no hasty decision, but to shut him up for seven days. He was not to determine hastily; nor should we. It is well to be cautious. Do not cut persons off at a stroke because they do not come up to your experience. That is not common justice. Do with them as God directed the priest; shut them up seven days. But when the seven days were gone the priest was to examine the suspected case again. He was now to take for his guide the third mark—whether the disease was at a stay, or whether it was spreading. If it had spread, it was decisive; he was a leper. If it had not spread, he was to give him another trial, to shut him up for seven days more. At the end of this second period of seven days, the priest was to examine him again, still fixing his eye on the same mark. Had the disease spread? If not, it was not leprosy. "It is but a scab; and he shall wash his clothes and be clean."

But what was spiritually intended by these specific marks? The hair is given us for ornament. "Long hair" is specially mentioned **1Co 11:15** as a woman's "glory". It is enumerated among the beauties of Absalom that his hair was so thick and heavy. "His

locks are bushy and black as a raven," says the bride of her Beloved; "Thou art come to excellent ornaments;" "Thine hair is grown," says the Lord to the church in Ezekiel **Eze 16:7**. The root of the hair is deeper than the skin, being centred and growing not in the superficial cuticle, but out of the flesh beneath. In order, therefore, to turn the hair white the disease must have been deeper than the skin. It must have gone down into the substance of the flesh, to the very roots of the hair, so as to dry them up and make their very substance perish, and thus turn the hair white through its whole length. It was, therefore, closely connected with the other mark—deeper than the skin. Leprosy was thus distinguished from a mere skin disease, from a superficial, cutaneous eruption.

The religion of many persons is just this cutaneous eruption; a rising, a scab, a pimple or bright spot, but all superficial, no lower than the skin. There is a movement in religion; but it is a mere rising of the natural mind, not a spiritual work upon the conscience. The hair is not turned white; their beauty and comeliness are not become gray, perished down to the very root. Ah! the mark is wanting. It is not leprosy. The third mark, too, is not here. The disease does not spread. After being shut up, they come out as they went in. Their religion, their convictions, their anxieties are all at a stand. Week after week, month after month, and year after year, they have no deeper sight or sense of sin than before; no fuller, clearer acquaintance with either the malady or the remedy. Their religion is always at one level, like the water in the London Docks, which knows neither rise nor fall, ebb nor flow—always stagnant, and often stinking.

**b** But we pass on to consider another case. "And if a leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head even to his foot, wheresoever the priest looketh; then the priest shall consider, and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague; it is all turned white; he is clean." This case was not like the last, a single affected spot, but a kind of universal tetter or eruption spread over the

whole body.

In my view of this case, I must confess I widely differ from some gracious men who have interpreted it as one of real leprosy. This could not be consistent either naturally or spiritually. Not naturally, for when such precaution was used where there was even a suspicion, a solitary spot, is it likely that a man covered all over with real leprosy should be pronounced clean, and allowed freely to mingle with the people? It would be like shutting up half a madman and letting go a whole madman. Nor is it true spiritually, for it is confounding malady with remedy. A poor leprous sinner knows he is not clean. I view it, then, as a case of bastard leprosy. There was in it a special mark of the true leprosy missing. There was no "quick raw flesh". That decided the case. It was the bastard leprosy and not the true. But you may say, "How do you explain this spiritually?" I will tell you. A man may have a knowledge of sin; he may see himself covered with sin from head to foot, and yet not be a child of God. Many natural men know that they are sinners; persons especially who have sat under sound gospel preaching will tell you that they are covered with sin from top to toe. But just mark this point, they have no "quick raw flesh," no tender conscience. They see sin, but do not feel it; know sin, but do not bleed under it—have no quick raw flesh that cannot bear to be touched. Though the leprosy cover all the skin, it is not deeper than the skin. A sight of sin, without sorrow for sin, or a conscience bleeding under sin, does not make a man a spiritual leper.

**c** But we have a third case, "a boil which was healed"; but in the place of the boil there was now "a white rising, or bright spot, white and somewhat reddish", which seemed to look like the leprous sore. Here we come to something like feeling. In the first case it was a "rising" or "scab", and we know that in it there is but little pain. In the second case, too, though the whole body was covered, there was no quick raw flesh; therefore no pain or suffering. But a boil—those who are subject to them well know what a painful thing it is, not indeed of much consequence, but still a very unpleasant companion. But this boil has been healed,

and there seemed some disposition for it to form again. O how this represents repeated convictions of sin without conversion to God! workings of the natural conscience, fear of death, and it may be distress of mind; for I have known people distressed in mind about religion, who never manifested that they had the fear of God in their hearts, or were under the teaching of the Spirit. But the priest was to examine this boil, to see whether there was any sign of leprosy in it. And what were the marks to guide him? Two.

1. Was it "lower than the skin"? Was it deep? Did it go below the surface? was it something more than a momentary pang? was it but a carbuncle after all?

2. Was the hair turned white? Had the sense of sin been so deep as to turn all his comeliness into corruption, mar all his beauty, and turn his self-righteousness gray? If not, the priest was not at once to decide, but shut him up seven days and then see whether it had spread; if it had spread abroad in the skin, then he was to pronounce him unclean. He was a leper. His convictions were now spiritual and the work of grace begun. But if it did not spread, it was but "a burning boil". The convictions, though painful, were but natural.

**d** But there was another case, a "hot burning, a white, bright spot, somewhat reddish or white". Oh, there are cases of this kind, where the wrath of God consumes the sinner, but does not melt the dross! Look at that wretched being, Francis Spira, who slowly consumed away under the wrath of the Almighty. He felt a continual burning in his bosom, as though he had a hot coal in it. Ah! there are many poor wretches who have this hot burning; feel the indignation of God, perhaps upon a death-bed, and yet have no mercy or pardon manifested to them; fearful convictions of the wrath to come, but no manifestation of atoning blood. But even in these cases the marks of the true leprosy are missing. The hair is not turned white; all self-righteousness and self-justification are not faded, nor is it deeper than the skin. Let the sense of God's anger cease, and they are as before.

e But there is another case also in which a man or a woman had a plague in the head or beard; that is, in the hair of the woman, or the hair and beard of the man. This seems to signify how a person may have all his beauty to perish, and yet have no work of grace in the heart. Have you not been astonished sometimes at the austerities and self-denial of Papists, Puseyites, Sisters of Mercy, and other such persons who clearly manifest no work of grace? They have "a dry scall", a leprosy of the hair. They can give up the world, go into convents, macerate their bodies, dress meanly, eat scantily, and make all beauty and ornament to perish. But after all it is not deeper than the skin. It is all outside work. True religion is something deeper than fleshy austerities.

II. But we pass on to consider the **real leprosy**; for there was a real as well as a false disease, and doubtless it required great discrimination and minute examination on the part of the priest to distinguish the one from the other. I am sure it requires it now when the work of grace is not, as in the times of old, deep and powerful, but for the most part shallow and superficial. We need then be very careful, lest on the one hand we make the hearts of the righteous sad whom God hath not made sad; and, on the other, lest we strengthen the hands of the wicked.

I intimated that God had given to the priest four distinguishing marks of genuine leprosy, and to these we may add a fifth, as I hope presently to show.

a The first mark was that the true disease was deeper than the skin. Natural convictions are never **at least, taking the general bulk of those whom one has observed to be, or to have been under them**, very deep; or if deep, rarely, if ever, very lasting. But the work of God upon the soul bears this express feature, that it is lower than the skin; that is, the convictions are not slight and superficial, but deep and penetrating.

I omitted to mention one thing when speaking of the spurious leprosy. When the priest had decided that it was not a case of

true leprosy, he was to "pronounce the person clean"; that is, clean or clear from all leprous taint. It is then added, "And he shall wash his clothes and be clean." As the clothes or outer garments are used in Scripture to signify the outward walk "**Blessed is he that walketh and keepeth his garments**", there seems to be some reference here to the reformation of life and outward profession that natural convictions sometimes produce. "The rising" goes down, "the scab" rubs off, "the bright spot" heals up, the clothes are then washed, a profession of religion put on, and a decent exterior made.

Many, very many members of churches are, it is to be feared, just in this state. They have had this bastard leprosy, and they have washed their clothes, and are now clean. With this experience they have joined churches, and some have become deacons or ministers.

But theirs is not the true leprosy. That goes deeper than the skin; it penetrates, and that with power, into a man's very heart and conscience. If your convictions have not gone deeper than the skin, if they have not sunk into the very bottom of your soul, and penetrated into your very conscience, they have not God's mark upon them. And what will a skin religion do for you? A skin religion! "Holloway's Ointment" will cure that; it does not want the balm of Gilead, the blood of sprinkling.

**b** Another mark of the true leprosy was, that it turned the hair white in the leprous spot. The reason was that being deeper than the skin it destroyed the hair at the root. Thus it is with spiritual leprosy. As David speaks, "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." When the disease of sin is opened up, and the soul stands leprous before God, it makes all our fancied righteousness, creature strength, human wisdom, fleshly holiness, acquired knowledge, and religious attainments, wither from the very root, with all their natural sap and moisture perished out of them.

**c** A third mark accompanied the genuine leprosy. It did not

continue "at a stay, but spread much abroad in the skin". The disease went on getting worse and worse till in most cases it destroyed the unhappy individual. There is some allusion perhaps to this in the remarkable expression, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." So with the spiritual leper. He gets worse and worse, till he dies outright as to all creature hope—incurable but by the hand of God.

**d** A fourth mark remains which I have before touched upon. In the real leprous sore there was "quick **i.e. living** raw flesh". I have interpreted this already as significant of a tender conscience, and of a heart that bleeds under the touch of God. I think I know naturally as well as spiritually what "quick raw flesh is"; for when I was a boy I had a severe attack on my lungs, for which it was thought necessary to employ severe remedies. Among these was keeping on my chest a perpetual blister, which produced a deep ulcerated wound and an abundance of what is called "proud flesh"—the "quick raw flesh" of the text. It was necessary to burn this away with caustic before the wound would heal, and for weeks when my poor mother, now deceased, used to come every morning to touch this quick raw flesh with bluestone, O how I shrank from her hand! Painful indeed was the remedy to burn this quick raw flesh away! So with grace. The quick raw flesh of a tender, bleeding conscience cannot bear the slightest touch; and when God comes with His caustic to burn it away, how the soul shrinks from His touch, and cries and screams, as I used to do, under the painful and smarting application. Mere wordy, dead professors of religion have no such quick raw flesh; no tenderness, no smarting, no writhing under the touch of God's hand. They have no raw ulcers, nor bleeding cancers, which cannot bear the slightest touch.

**e** But another mark still remains—the disease was incurable. When I say incurable, I mean by the hand of man. No remedy was provided for it, no direction given to the priest to make use of any applications, outward or inward. It was left for God alone

to cure. All that the priest was to do was minutely to examine all the symptoms of the complaint, pronounce a decision according to the circumstances, and leave the result to God. Whether the man was cured or not, died or lived, was at the sovereign disposal of the Almighty. So in grace. There is no cure for spiritual leprosy except from the hand of God. It is not all the ministers in the world that can cure a spiritual leper. From God his cure must come, and to His everlasting praise be it ascribed, from God this cure always does come; for there is not a spiritual leper in the family of God who lives and dies without the application of the divine remedy.

III. But let us now consider **the leper's case** when the priest had come to a decision and pronounced him unclean. "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be."

Leper, canst thou not read thy case here? Afflicted, exercised, tempted, downcast child of God, dost thou not see thy character here described by an inspired pen? If not, let me read the writing for thee, and, as the Lord may enable, interpret what thou canst not interpret for thyself.

**a** "The leper in whom **the plague** is." Is sin your plague? Does it grieve you? Is it your burden? Take all your worldly anxieties, tie them up in one bundle, and put them into the scale; now place in the other scale the plague of sin. Which scale goes down? Which kicks the beam? If you are a spiritual leper, you will say, "Ah! there is no doubt upon that point; I know well which scale weighs the heavier! Oh, it is sin, sin, that I sometimes fear will be a millstone to drown my soul in hell!" And canst thou find this mark, "the leper in whom the plague is"? Is not this a very striking expression, "In whom"? I think Paul has hit the matter to a nicety; and well he might, for he wrote as a man who knew what he was writing about; he says, "the sin that dwelleth in

me". Sin is not like a martin that builds its nest under the eaves, which sticks to the house, but is not in the house. Neither is sin a lodger to whom you can give a week's or a month's notice to quit; nor is it a servant whom you may call up, pay him his month's wages, and send him about his business. No, no. Sin is one of the family who dwells in the house, and will not be turned out of the house; haunts every room, lies in every bed, nestles in every corner, and like the poor ejected Irish of whom we read, will never leave the tenement while stick or stone hangs together. Is not this the case with you? Does not sin dwell in you, work in you, lust in you, go to bed with you, get up with you, and all the day long, more or less, crave, design, or imagine some evil thing? Do you feel sin to be a plague and a pest, as it must be to every living soul? Then are you not something of a leper if the plague dwell in you?

**b** But the leper's **clothes were to be rent**. This was a sign of mourning. When the news was brought to Eli that the ark had been taken, the messenger came with his clothes rent. When Job's friends saw him sitting among the ashes, they rent every one his mantle. Jacob rent his clothes when he mourned over his lost Joseph; and Tamar when bereft of her honour. It was indeed among the children of Israel the usual sign of mourning. Now the leper here is represented with his clothes rent, and that continually. He was never allowed to mend them, but always wore rent garments. So with the Lord's people in whom the plague of sin is; their clothes are continually rent. Grief, sorrow, trouble, is their continual portion on account of the leprosy that is in them. Rending the clothes was also a sign of abhorrence. Thus "the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy", when the Lord Jesus in answer to his question affirmed that He was the Son of God. The rent clothes, therefore, of the leper shew his self-abhorrence and self-loathing. Seeing the holiness and purity of God it is with him as with Job. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He feels as the church is represented to feel in Ezekiel: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were

not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." The rent clothes was also a figure of a rent and contrite heart. "Rend your heart," says the prophet, "and not your garments"; implying that though the rent garment was a figure of a rent heart, yet the outward mark was nothing without the inward feeling. Thus when King Josiah heard the words of the law found in the temple, he rent his clothes and wept before God. His heart was rent by the sentence of the law.

There are not many such lepers with rent garments here; indeed, not many such anywhere. In all the churches and chapels opened this morning for worship, how many such lepers will be found? Many who have washed their clothes and are clean. But O! how few lepers with their garments rent in secret before God!

**c** But the leper was also to have **his head bare**. No shelter, no covering from God's wrath was allowed him; bare-headed he stood exposed to the winds and storms of heaven, bare before the lightning's flash. And does not this represent the poor sinner without a covering before God, sensible that he is amenable to God's justice and eternal indignation? He must put on no covering. O how glad would he be if he might but put on some covering before God; some hopes of amendment, some repentance for the past, some resolutions for the future! There is in God's armoury a covering for the head: "For a helmet the hope of salvation," as one said of old, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." But this is not for the leper whilst diseased. His gesture and language speak, "Lord, if Thou strike me to hell, I deserve it."

**d** But he was also to have **a covering on his upper lip**. What does this imply? We read of the ungodly, that "their throat is an open sepulchre". In fact, what is the carnal mind but a sepulchre in which are dead men's bones and all uncleanness? We are obliged to close the mouth of the grave when we have committed to it the remains of those who were upon earth to us most dear. Of his beloved Sarah, Abraham said to the sons of Heth, "Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my

dead out of my sight." The vault must be built up lest the dead pollute the living. The leper was to cover his upper lip for the same reason that we cover the mouth of the grave—to prevent the infection of his breath. If he covered but the lower lip, the breath might come forth. Have you ever thought and felt that there was sin enough in your heart to infect a world? that if every man and woman in the world were perfectly holy, and you were left freely to give vent to every thought and imagination of your carnal mind, there was sin enough there to taint every individual? It is so, felt or not; for sin is of that infectious nature that there is enough in one man's heart to fill all London with horror. Oh, when a man knows this he is glad to have a covering for his upper lip! He cannot boast then of what great performances he means to accomplish. He has at times a very Vesuvius in him, and wants no one to come within the mouth of the crater.

The cover on the upper lip was to keep infection in; and is it not a mercy to be kept in? You have sometimes at the railway stations seen what steam is when let out. Now if a little steam just let off for a few moments can make such a hideous shriek, and rush forth with such amazing power, what must be the force of the whole bulk of steam in the boiler? So from our hearts there may come now and then just a puff of steam; but what is that to the whole mass? A look, a glance, a word, a thought is a mere puff, a momentary jet; but we carry the whole bulk unseen in the boiler. Now if a man has something of the evil of his nature thus opened up to him, can he be a Pharisee? He cannot. "Where is boasting? It is excluded." If a man has a covering upon the upper lip he will not boast of his goodness.

**e** But the leper was to have **a cry in his mouth.** That cry was, "Unclean, unclean." It was a warning cry. He was to shout to the passengers, if any were drawing near, "Unclean, unclean; come not near me; I am a leper; I shall pollute you; beware of my breath, it carries infection with it; touch me not; if you touch me you will be tainted with the same malady; beware of me; keep your distance; stand off." Yes, but you say, "Come, I am not so bad as that; I am religious, and holy, and consistent. I am sure I

need not cover my upper lip and cry, unclean, unclean." O, no; certainly not! You are not a leper. You have had years ago a rising, or a boil, and at the priest's direction you have washed your clothes and are clean. But if you do not feel to be a leper, there are those who do: and such do cry, and ever must cry, "Unclean, unclean." And if they do not uncover all their sores to men, they can do so to God. The poor woman with a bleeding cancer may show it to her physician, but she keeps it covered from other eyes. We need not show our ulcers and bleeding wounds except to the Great Physician, who can alone cure them. But if we find one afflicted with the same complaint, as two poor cancered women might condole with each other when they meet at the hospital, so our mouths may be at a little liberty to speak and say, "Oh fellow-patient, fellow-sufferer, you and I are labouring under the same malady; we are brothers; we can sympathise with, we can understand, we can pity one the other!" Nay, though many may not like it, it is a part of a minister's work to uncover these cancers and ulcerous sores. He is an under-physician; and if he do not understand such diseases, if he cannot discriminate them, how are poor bleeding souls to receive benefit or consolation under his ministry?

**f** But all the days wherein the plague was in the leper he was to be defiled; he was unclean. Such is a spiritual leper; defiled by sin, polluted from head to foot, as long as the leprosy remains.

**g** But what was the necessary consequence of this? "He shall dwell alone." A solitary religion is generally a good religion. God's tried people have not many companions. The exercised cannot walk with the unexercised; the polluted with the unpolluted; the sick with the well; the leper with the clean; for "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" "He shall dwell alone." So speaks Jeremiah in the Lamentations: "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him." It is good to be alone. I am not very fond of company spiritually, though I used to be so naturally; for I can find but few to walk with. And I believe the best of our religion, I might almost say the whole of our religion, is what we get alone in the communications that God

gives to the soul in secret. We need not crave much company: "religious society," as it is termed, is for the most part little else but gossip, scandal and disputation. In such company we cannot tell out the exercises of our soul, still less can we speak of the things God is pleased to communicate of His grace. These are reserved for a private ear, or for the ear of God. The leper especially dwells alone. Oh, may we have this solitary religion! Dwell alone, live alone, talk alone, pray alone, walk alone. I do not mean be cold and shy with the children of God, those especially with whom you are in church connection. But as to the main essential points of religion, you will find, as I have ever found, and all really do find who find anything worth having, what we get alone weighs heaviest, wears best, and lasts longest. I am fond of conversing alone with the people of God, but avoid what is called religious company, tea-drinking, and the like. It sadly dissipates the mind. We speak things that we would not: we hear things we would not: and handles are often made of expressions unguardedly uttered.

**h** "Without the camp shall his habitation be." This seems to represent the leper as shut out from the tabernacle worship, and other privileges of God's house. Many, I believe, are kept from joining churches through a sense of leprosy. They say, "I am not fit to join a church; I am too vile, too polluted, too tempted, too exercised; I can find few companions; I feel it best to walk alone; I am unfit for the ordinances of God's house." I would not altogether justify this, because Christ and the ordinances of God's house are of God's own institution. But still, until there be some application of God's goodness and love to the soul, it is better to be without the camp: better to walk alone, and lay the disease before God. It is best not to come forward for church membership until there is some testimony from God, and the Lord has done that for the soul which has made it really glad.

## **THE LIFE OF CHRIST MANIFESTED IN THE DEATH OF THE CREATURE**

Preached on Tuesday Evening, October 18th, 1842, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." 2 Cor. 4:11

It is very sweet, as well as instructive, to trace the wisdom of God as manifested in the way wherein the Scriptures of the New Testament were written. They were not revealed in any systematic form; they were framed according to no dry theory of truth, or as a code of doctrines and duties, as a human lawgiver would have modelled them; but in their original form they came forth from the pen of the Holy Ghost just as circumstances arose in the Church. And, for the most part, God overruled all the evils that broke forth from time to time in the Church, that they might draw forth epistles from the breasts of the apostles, the Holy Ghost teaching them how and what to write. Thus, to the turning aside of the Galatians unto "the weak and beggarly elements" of the law, we owe that noble defence of justification contained in Paul's epistle to that church. To the persecution under which the church at Philippi was suffering we owe that epistle so full of choice experience. To the mistakes of the Thessalonians concerning the second coming of Christ we are indebted for two epistles full of power and sweetness. To the wavering character of the Hebrews we owe that blessed epistle wherein the apostle has so opened and unfolded the spiritual character of the Levitical dispensation. And to the suspicion of the Corinthian church with respect to the call of the apostle to the ministry, we, in a good measure, owe the experimental epistles addressed to them. It is sweet to observe the providence of God foreseeing that these and similar evils would exist in the Church, and permitting them to break forth in the times of the apostles, and thus preparing a remedy beforehand, which should be useful to the end of the

world, the heart of man being the same in all generations, ever teeming forth with the same corruptions, and to be met only with the same remedies.

It was, then, as I have just hinted, the strong suspicion of the Corinthians respecting the call of the apostle Paul to the ministry that drew out of his bosom much of his personal experience. The second epistle to the Corinthians more especially abounds with it, and no chapter in it more than that which contains our text. "For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

But we should indeed be mistaken if we limited the experience contained in the text to the apostle Paul, as though it were some of his personal or ministerial experience, with which we, as individuals, had nothing to do. On the contrary, it is so worded as to take in all the quickened family of God. "*We which live,*" says the apostle, as though he would include every living soul whom God the Holy Ghost had quickened into spiritual life. With God's blessing, then, we will look at the words the apostle has here dropped, and see whether we can trace a similar experience in any of our hearts.

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

I. The first thing which strikes the mind is the expression, "*We which live*"—indeed, it is the key of the whole. It cuts off at one decisive stroke all who are dead in sins or dead in a profession, and draws that narrow and discriminating line which every one taught of God will always draw. Thus it sets all aside except the quickened family of God; and with the same decisive hand that sets aside all who are dead Godward, it lays down a searching line of experience to try the people of God themselves. And this, we may observe, is one important use of vital experience as laid down in the Scriptures, that the family of God may be tested thereby, and brought to the touchstone, whether the work upon

their hearts be real or not.

Then, "we which live," includes all whom God has quickened, and into whom He has breathed a new nature—all in whom He has begun and is carrying on the work of faith with power. And how much is summed up in these words, "we which live!" For what is this life but life everlasting? As Jesus said, "He that believeth on *Me hath everlasting life*" (John 6:47). And again, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). This spiritual and eternal life was from all eternity stored up for the elect in the Son of God as their covenant Head, that they might receive it out of His fulness who filleth all in all; and into the heart of each vessel of mercy is this divine and supernatural life breathed in the appointed time. Whatever be their distance from God through sin, however "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," when the appointed time to favour Zion is come, life and light are breathed into their souls that they may live for ever, that they may see Christ's glory, and sit down with Him in His kingdom. But before they are brought to the eternal enjoyment of that weight of glory to which they are predestinated, there is a spiritual process to be undergone, a path to be trod, an experience to be carried on with power in their souls. And it is in the possession of this experience that we find the traces of the footsteps of the flock—the landmarks which God has set up in Zion.

II. The first decisive step in this spiritual process is contained in the words, "We which live are alway *delivered unto death*." But the "death" thus spoken of clearly cannot mean temporal death, for that meaning would be utterly inconsistent with the remainder of the text, and with the expression "alway;" for temporal death can be but once, whilst the death spoken of in the text is a *frequent or perpetual* one. It must mean therefore a death experimentally, a death in the soul, not a death of the body.

But it may be asked, "For what purpose is this delivering of the

soul unto death? What end is it to answer? What good result is it to produce?" We shall best answer this inquiry by showing the nature of this death. And we may define it, in a few words, to consist in an experimental destruction of everything that is inconsistent with that life which God himself has breathed into the soul. And as frequently in nature, so usually in grace, there is a lingering death before dissolution takes place. The seeds of death are in many persons months or years before the last breath is drawn. And so at the very beginning of a work of grace spiritual dying commences; the gradual dissolution of that life to self, sin, and Satan, which every natural man lives. Thus before the blessed Spirit quickened the soul it was alive to self and dead to God; but when a new and spiritual life is breathed into it, a mighty revolution takes place, and it begins to die to self, and live to God. It is this dying to self in the various branches in which the soul formerly lived to itself, of which the text speaks.

But there is something very striking in the expression, "We which live are alway *delivered unto death*." The sufferers of this death do not deliver themselves to it, but it is done for them and in them. In this sense God's people never commit spiritual suicide. No man ever put death into his own soul whereby self was crucified; but it is done in him by a sovereign act of Almighty power. The figure is taken from a criminal who is carried by the executioner to the place of execution; not one who goes of himself to die. This is the error of the Arminians; we may call them in this sense religious suicides. Though, after all, in them it is more mock than real, and rather resembles the stage death of an actor than a true self-immolation. But the people of God never commit this self-inflicted death; for it is that from which they shrink, which they rebel against, and to which they will never submit till God Himself kills them; for "the Lord killeth, and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." The same idea that it is the act of *another*, and not of *ourselves*, is contained in another expression of the apostle in this same epistle (2 Cor. 1:9), "We had *the sentence* of death in ourselves." The sentence of death is a judicial term, and clearly means not self-condemnation, but a decision from the lips of another, and

that from one armed with authority to pronounce, and power to execute it.

III. But we will look a little at the idea couched in the expression "death." We know what a ghastly object death is naturally, and that he is the king of terrors to every man who is not enjoying a sense of his interest in Christ and the favour of God. If then we are to carry the figure out, the meaning which we have couched in the expression of the apostle must be something analogous to death naturally, and to our conceptions and feelings with respect to it. Thus the death experimental to which the soul is delivered must be as painful, as dreadful, and as much shrunk from spiritually as natural death is naturally.

It points out, therefore, a thorough destruction of that which is naturally dear. Look at natural death in its aspect to the natural man. It comes to take him from all his delights, and from all his schemes; to remove him from the bosom of his family, and sever him from all on which his heart is set, and in which all his affections are engaged. It comes as a gloomy messenger to take him from the things which alone he understands, which alone he loves, in which his heart is wholly wrapped; and to bear him away to an awful and dreaded eternity. Such is the aspect that death naturally wears. Take this idea into spiritual things. This experimental death, then, to which we are delivered, and into which God by a sovereign act of power brings the soul, is that from which the flesh shrinks, for it comes as a sentence of destruction upon those things to which it so closely cleaves.

1. Our *carnal wisdom*, for instance, is a thing to which we naturally cleave. In this day, especially, when religious education and the exercise of the intellect upon the Scriptures is the great Diana of the Ephesians, the temptation to cleave to our own wisdom in the things of God is particularly strong. But when God comes by a sovereign act of power, and delivers us over unto death, in so doing He kills us to that wisdom in which we lived, and, so far as the things of God are concerned, passes an internal sentence of condemnation upon those natural abilities which we

were taught to cultivate, and in the exercise of which we found pleasure. Who ever possessed a finer understanding, or received a better education, than Saul of Tarsus? But "what was once gain to him, that he counted loss for Christ;" and he himself proved in soul experience what he so pointedly declares, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:18, 19). God by His Spirit makes an effectual stab at all creature wisdom when He enlightens the soul to see and feel its blindness and ignorance, and its utter impossibility of knowing anything savingly but by divine manifestation.

2. So, again, with respect our own *righteousness*. By nature we can have no understanding of any other righteousness than that which consists in obedience to the law. Whatever dim or doctrinal notions we may have of Christ's righteousness, we are unacquainted with it as our righteousness till it is personally revealed to us. A part therefore of the execution of this sentence "to deliver unto death," is the killing us to our own righteousness. The apostle says, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and *I died*." How did he die? Not naturally, but spiritually. The law as a manifestation of condemnation and death came into his conscience, and its spirituality being opened up to his soul, it came as a killing sentence against his righteousness as well as against his sins, manifesting it to be filthiness, and showing the pollution of his heart and the defilement of every thought, word, and deed.

3. So, again, with respect to *all false hopes*. We read of "the hope of the hypocrite that shall perish." This false hope, whatever it rest upon, whether the good opinion of others, reformation of life, acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, or anything short of "good hope through grace," must be delivered unto death. Whilst carnal hope—that is every hope which springs out of or centres in the flesh—lives in the soul, spiritual hope cannot reign. The death of the one is the life of the other; and thus they resemble two rivals for one throne; one must die, that the other may live; one

must go to the block, that the other may hold the sceptre.

4. So, too, with respect to all *our creature religion*. There are few who do not profess some kind of religion; though this is, for the most part, traditional, and based on various grounds, as well as called by different names. What these grounds or what these names are it matters little so long as it stands in the flesh, and a profession may be as much based on the creature in the highest Calvinist as in the lowest Arminian. This religion, more or less of which we all naturally possess, of whatever character it be that stands in the flesh and springs from the creature, does not stand in the power of God; is not set up by the Holy Ghost in the heart. However specious, therefore, it may be in appearance, however near it approach the truth, however undoubted by others, however idolised by ourselves, it must be delivered unto death, that the religion from God, the religion that saves the soul, the religion of Jesus Christ, the religion of the Holy Ghost, may be set up in the heart upon the wreck and ruin of all the religion of the creature.

It seems a little thing, comparatively speaking, for a man to have *his sins* taken from him and delivered unto death; it may seem in many cases a harder struggle for a man to part with his *self-righteousness*: but when we come to something deeper, something more intricately interweaved round our heart-strings—*our religion*—this is the hardest stroke of all. For *this* is to what we are trusting to save us from endless misery. To take away this is something like flying over a bridge, and seeing the last arch cut away before our eyes, and the roaring flood opened below. There is no retracing our steps over the bridge of life; and to find *our religion*, the last arch over the flood, fall to pieces, and leave us shivering in the prospect of eternity, is terrible indeed. Why, this is the last thing a man will naturally come to. A man can part with his sins, with his companions, with his pleasures: but when it comes to his fleshly religion which he has been idolizing, when the Spirit of God takes *that*, and delivers it over unto death, *that* is one of the last strokes that take place in severing the head of creature righteousness. I believe it requires some very sharp work in a man's soul to be brought here. I have known the time

when I used to roll upon my bed, and almost count how many months it might be before I was in eternity; for I feared I had a mortal sickness in my body, and felt little else but guilt and condemnation in my soul. Here was the sifting time for all my religion that stood in the flesh. When we come into these straits, and find no well grounded hope to support the soul in the trying hour, *this* will prove whether our faith stands in the wisdom of men, or in the power of God. *Then* whatever we have received of God lives, but whatever we have received from the creature withers and dies.

IV. But mark the words, "we which live are *alway* delivered unto death." What! not *once* only? What! is the head of creature religion not only once to be severed from the bleeding corpse? No; "We which live are *alway* delivered unto death." Therefore the apostle says, "I die *daily*;" "in deaths *oft*;" death *worketh* in us;" words of similar import and similar force. The flesh is like the fabled hydra; as fast as one head was cut off another grew in its place. Creature religion has a hundred hydra heads. Let one be cut off; straightway another grows out of the old neck. Or we may compare it to the ivy that grows out of the wall; you may cut it down to the very stump, and leave apparently not a remnant; but as long as the root is in the wall, it will shoot forth again. So whatever cuttings and killings our fleshly religion may receive, it will shoot out again, the principle being more or less perpetually at work.

Day by day then there is more or less of this being "delivered unto death." A sentence of execution is passed upon the flesh as it seeks to reign and rule in our hearts; a court of conscience is erected in the soul, as the solemn vice-regent of Christ, whose office it is to deliver over unto death the flesh as it sprouts forth. Does our carnal wisdom spring up? The King's commissioner passes sentence, and it is "delivered unto death." Its head is cut off. Does our legal righteousness spring up? Does it assume some new form, and wear some fresh disguise? Sentence is passed, and it is delivered unto death. Do our lusts rise, our passions begin to storm and swell? Sooner or later they are called before

this court of review, are sentenced and delivered to death. Does pride begin to work? Does hypocrisy lift its hateful head? Does presumption puff us up? The rebels may seem to have the mastery for a time, but when the blessed Spirit acts as a spirit of judgment within, the traitors are seized, and a solemn sentence of execution is passed upon them. Conscience made tender in God's fear, discerns the workings of the creature under all its shapes. It is a kind of spiritual police to detect the felon, whatever garb he wears. Much of its divinely-constituted office consists in keenly scrutinizing the workings of the flesh. Its eyes have been anointed with heavenly eye-salve to discern the precious from the vile, and its hands armed with authority to seize and execute every religious and irreligious traitor that would usurp Christ's throne in the soul.

It is in this heart and conscience work that much of the inward conflict consists. The mere professor may be puffed up with spiritual pride, and call it humility; a hardened and seared conscience he may term gospel liberty; he may walk in the most daring presumption, and call it good confidence and the assurance of faith; but no such deceit is permitted in the heart that is made honest by grace. There is a spiritual eye in the soul that detects and arrests the felon, and there is a spiritual sword that is drawn out against him as soon as detected. Do we not sometimes experience this? When we feel the risings of pride, is there not a solemn admonition against it in the soul? Or the workings of hypocrisy when they heave and ferment within, is there not a check upon them? If we have ever been betrayed into any open or secret sin, has not conscience borne its condemning sentence against us? If temper break forth, is there not something that smites us with remorse? If the lustful eye is looking on our neighbour's wife, is there not a reproach of conscience felt? If a revengeful thought is indulged, is there not a secret monitor who detects it, and passes sentence of condemnation upon it? David knew something of this when he had cut off the skirt of Saul's robe (1 Sam. 24:5).

By this secret work going on in the court of conscience, by this

daily conflict, is the living soul distinguished from every other; and in this mainly consists "being delivered unto death."

V. But *why* should the people of God be thus continually delivered unto death? The Holy Ghost, by the pen of the Apostle, gives us the reason: "*For Jesus' sake*, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." "*For Jesus' sake*,"—not for the sake of the creature. That the crown might be put upon the brow of the rightful owner; that the creature might have all the shame, and that Christ might have all the glory.

But the blessed Spirit goes on more particularly to show how Jesus is thus glorified. He therefore adds, "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." Observe the words—not merely that the life of Jesus might *be*, but that it might *be made manifest* in our mortal flesh. It is the manifestation of it—the discovery of it—the bringing it to light which the Apostle points out. Life is one thing, the manifestation of life is another. Thus in the first quickening of the soul life is communicated, but until it is delivered unto death this life is not manifested. This life is "the life of Jesus," that is, the new and hidden spiritual life of which He is the Author. Thus the apostle says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is our life* shall appear," &c. (Col. 3:3, 4). This hidden and spiritual life is only brought to light, and only comes forth into action as the sentence of death takes place within; and thus this manifestation of the life of Jesus is in proportion to the delivering of the soul to death, because in this death only it is manifested, and out of this death it springs.

1. To make my meaning clearer, I will run over some of those instances in which I have shown there is a delivering over unto death. Take our own *wisdom*. It is part of the creature, something that however refined and cultivated still stands in the flesh, a member of our earthly Adam. It must therefore come to nought. Sentence has been passed upon it (1 Cor. 2: 6); and it must be delivered unto death. But why? Not that God's people may be fools and idiots, but that *a new wisdom* may reign and

rule in its place; that we may find and feel a deeper, higher, nobler wisdom communicated out of Christ's fulness; in other words, that Christ Himself may be our "wisdom," as of God He is made to be to His Church (1 Cor. 1:30). Then, as our earthly wisdom dies, as we become less and less able to understand truth of ourselves, as our plans are defeated, as our projects come to nought, as our schemes are blasted, as we begin to find ourselves ignorant and fools in the things of God—as we thus find our once boasted wisdom and understanding given over unto death, and we acquiesce in that death, there is, to our surprise, a new wisdom communicated, a new light springing up to our solemn wonder, a spiritual understanding in the things of God into which we could not enter, the very existence of which we did not know, whilst looking to and leaning upon our natural understanding. This is called in Scripture, "An unction from the Holy One," and "The anointing which teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie" (1 John 2:20, 27). This is a fruit of the life of Jesus made manifest in our mortal flesh; and it gives light, power, knowledge, direction, opens the Scriptures, and leads the soul into those paths, into which it could not come, and of which it knew nothing whilst leaning on the wisdom of the flesh.

2. So with respect to our own *strength*. There was a time when you and I were strong in fleshly confidence, when we had no idea that we could not resist temptation and master sin, and overcome the world, and by our own strength get possession of the prize. But we have found, to our shame, the full meaning of those words, the spiritual sense of which we were once so ignorant of: "When we were yet without strength" (Rom. 5:6); and again, "Without Me ye can do nothing." We find now that we have no strength, that we are unable to bring forth anything to God's praise, that we are defenceless against sin, that we are unable to resist the fiery darts of the wicked one. We thus learn a new lesson, and after repeated slips begin to call upon the Lord to succour and help us, and then find, more or less, "His strength made perfect in our weakness." And perhaps few learn this lesson more painfully, and yet more effectually, than a minister of Christ. Till he has lost his natural wisdom, he is never wise unto

salvation, nor able to minister in spiritual things to the profit of God's people. But then to find his natural wisdom and strength delivered unto death, to see them handed over to the executioner, suspended from the gallows, and buried in the felon's grave; to have no ability to understand the Word, nor power to open it; to have no spiritual ideas but what are from time to time communicated from above, and to have no door of utterance but what He who has the key of David unlocks, not daring to go back, and yet not knowing how to go on—this is a trying spot for a minister to stand in. But to find in this death of the flesh strength and wisdom communicated, and power and savour breathed into the soul, is to experience "the life of Jesus made manifest in his mortal flesh."

3. And thus, too, with respect to our *own righteousness*. When it is delivered to death, carried to prison, and executed, the Lord opens to the eye of faith another righteousness, even Christ's spotless and glorious righteousness imparted to the believer, in which he stands without spot or blemish. Till our own was delivered over unto death, we had no eyes to see, no heart to pant after, no hands to receive this righteousness; no spiritual discovery of its power, beauty, and glory.

4. So with respect to our *creature religion*. What a loss to lose it all! But we begin to find built upon its ruins, and growing out of its death, a new religion of a totally different kind; a spiritual, heavenly, saving religion. And whatever painful struggles a man may have had as his old religion sickened and died, when he finds a new, a spiritual religion, breathed into his soul of which God Himself is the Author and Finisher, it more than indemnifies him for his loss, and at times fills him with holy wonder and admiration. He is brought to see the life of Jesus thus made manifest in his mortal flesh, working in him a new religion, of which the other was only an imitation and a counterfeit.

5. So with respect to all his *false hopes*. What a stroke to be left without hope! But to find a good hope through grace, a hope which will support the soul, an anchor sure and steadfast, and

which entereth into that which is within the veil; who would not part with all his old hope to get such a new one? Who would not part with "the hope of the hypocrite which shall perish," for "the hope which maketh not ashamed"?

6. So with respect to all *fond and fancied expectations of creature holiness*, and what is called "cultivating grace." To look for patience, and to find rebellion; to cultivate humility, and to find pride; to expect a flourishing crop of holiness, a heart calm and gentle, increasing prayerfulness, watchfulness, and thankfulness, and to find nothing but rebellion and devilism instead—this is to have our expectations "delivered unto death." But to find from time to time a little *true* humility, *true* patience, *true* resignation, *true* contentment communicated, this is to have "the life of Jesus made manifest in our mortal flesh." And is not this a blessed exchange—to have all the worthless notes of our bankrupt bank destroyed, and gold—pure gold, paid into our heart's exchequer?

VI. But what are we to understand by this expression, "The life of Jesus"? I understand by it that divine and spiritual life in the souls of His people of which Christ is the Source and Author. As He said to His disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "The life I live in the flesh," says the Apostle, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." And again, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John 6:57). This life, then, is His mediatorial life; the life that He now lives at the right hand of God, and which He breathes into His people that they may live for evermore.

But if we live spiritually by the same life that Jesus lives, it must be made manifest. Can a man have life, and there be no symptoms nor manifestations of it? If there is the same life in the quickened elect which Jesus lives at the right hand of God, there must be some internal workings, and some external signs of it. To have spiritual life, then, and have no spiritual feelings; to have neither joys nor sorrows, no temptations and no deliverances, no prayer and no answers; but to glide at ease down the stream of an undisturbed profession, must be a delusion. Such a state

resembles the "gross darkness" of which Isaiah speaks when he says, "The darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Darkness covering the profane "earth," but "gross darkness"—a deeper, blacker shade, the professing "people."

If, then, there are effects that spring out of the communication of this divine life to the soul, it may be asked: "In what do these effects consist? What are the feelings produced?" We may reply, that they are usually just contrary to what we might expect. When we first set out in religion, being young and ignorant, we made many mistakes and miscalculations. For instance, we thought that religion consisted in having pure hearts and leading holy lives; in serving God to the best of our power, and so on. And when in a measure enlightened into the spiritual nature of true religion, yet we made many mistakes how it was to be obtained. Thus we were looking for life, without knowing that it came through death; for hope, not knowing it sprang up out of despondency; for wisdom, not knowing it was to commence in a knowledge of our own foolishness; for strength, not knowing it was to be made perfect in our weakness. At least, these were my ideas. But when the Lord begins to take the soul more powerfully in hand, He teaches it by His Spirit those humbling lessons of which it was before totally ignorant. And whilst we are under this teaching, we cannot see the end; we are in a labyrinth of confusion. The Lord, it is said, "Leads the blind by a way which they knew not;" and, therefore, depend upon it, if you can always or often see your way, you are not one whom God is leading. When, then, the Lord is thus leading His people, He "brings them into darkness, and not into light." But under this strange, unlooked for leading, we are staggered, and know not what is the matter with us. Instead of holiness we find unholiness, instead of hope despondency, instead of love enmity, instead of patience rebellion, instead of every good and perfect gift, little else but the workings of corrupt nature. O, what a labyrinth! But why is this? To deliver over unto death the pretender to the throne; to put down the rival that Jesus may reign; to "overturn, overturn, overturn, till He come whose right it is." No man can ever fully or cordially receive Jesus into his soul, kiss His sceptre, bow to His

dominion, and embrace it with true affection, unless he has had these rivals dethroned, and his false hopes delivered unto death, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in his mortal flesh.

VII. But what is meant by this expression, "*our mortal flesh*?" It does not mean the carnal mind, but our earthly tabernacle; and the expression is similar to another in this chapter, "We have this treasure in *earthen vessels*, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." It is, then, in this poor body, compassed with infirmities, that the life of Jesus is made manifest. This divine life will often spring up in fervent breathings after God—in the actings of living faith, in the sweet intercourse the people of God have with one another, in reading the Scriptures, in the application of precious promises, and under the preached word. From time to time it bubbles up like a spring from its source. Sometimes, indeed, it runs underground, buried as it were under the load of "our mortal flesh;" but again and again it reappears, drawn up by the Sun of Righteousness. "Spring up, O well." But its risings are ever proportionate to its sinkings. Thus in proportion as we cease to pray naturally, do we pray spiritually; as we cease to hope in the flesh, do we hope in the Lord; as we cease to believe with the head, do we believe with the heart; when we see an end of all perfection in self, then we begin to find perfection in Christ; and when we see nothing in our hearts but sin, misery, and wretchedness, then we begin to taste spiritual consolation. Thus, in proportion as nature sinks, the life of Jesus rises, and is made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Is the soul, then, longing to have sweet manifestations of the life of Jesus? Where must it go to get them? What does the Word of God say? "Whence cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and Death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears" (Job 28:20-22). Till, then, we get to "destruction and death,"—the destruction of fleshly hopes and the death of creature religion, we do not so much as ever hear the fame of true wisdom with our ears. Thus when we get into darkness, then light springs up; when we get to

despondency, hope arises; when we are tempted with unbelief and infidelity, faith appears. Thus those are the wisest in whom creature wisdom has most ceased; those are the strongest who have learned most experimentally their own weakness; those are the holiest who have known most of their own filthiness; those are the most religious, in a true sense, who have least religion of their own. So that just in proportion as we are delivered unto death, and execution takes place on what the creature loves, so does the life of Jesus begin to rise and make itself blessedly manifest.

If this be true—if this be the doctrine according to godliness, if it be consistent with the path of life, and in blessed unison with the experience of the saints—if this be the case, what shall we say of those who know, or rather, profess to know (for it is but a profession), all the bright side, and nothing of the dark; who have all faith, and were never tried with unbelief; who have all wisdom, and never felt their folly; who have all strength, and never knew their weakness; who are all calmness, and know neither fretfulness nor impatience; who are ever full of buoyant hope, and never knew despondency? Must we not say that the life of Jesus is not manifest in them? For if it be true—and who dare say it is not, when it is written by the finger of God? that "we which live"—every living soul—not Paul, not Peter *only*, but every one possessed of spiritual life—"are alway"—day by day, for little else will satisfy the words—"delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," &c., must we not say that those who are *never* delivered over unto death have not the life of Jesus made manifest in them? Does not this follow as a necessary consequence? Is it not plain that he who knows not the one knows not the other?

There are many true children of God, who are eternally His, yet who cannot make it out to their full satisfaction. Some such may be here. But this you find as a matter of painful experience, that you are "alway delivered unto death." You find you cannot be as you would fain wish to be. The preacher, perhaps, under whom you sit tells you to be holy, and you feel that you are unclean; to believe, and you find nothing but unbelief; to hope in God's

mercy, and you find nothing but despondency; to meditate, and you find your thoughts at the end of the earth; to exercise patience, and you feel your mind full of rebellion; he exhorts to humility, and you think if there is a proud wretch on the face of the earth, you are one. You cannot make these things square, but God will make them so one day or other. You are passing now under the sentence, "delivered unto death." Why? To be destroyed? Not so. Something must be destroyed; "the wisdom of the wise" must perish, but not you. Something has the sentence of death pronounced against it, but not your soul. It is a blessed thing to part with our natural wisdom, legal righteousness, and creature religion, that the soul may be saved. If we should keep our own wisdom, strength, righteousness, and false religion, all these would be so many millstone weights to sink the soul into endless woe. Is it not a blessed exchange, then, to part with them all, that when these are delivered unto death the rightful King may reign in the soul; that Jesus may sit upon the throne of the affections? Is it not a blessed exchange to find the life of Jesus made manifest in our bodies—"our mortal flesh?" To find hope rising? Prayer rising? Feeling rising? Are not these a blessed exchange? Yes; such is the mysterious arrangement of God that one is put to death that the other may live. Have you not reason, then, to bless God, if you know anything of these blessed mysteries? If in any measure you have known what it is to be "delivered unto death?" Not like dead professors whose "eyes stand out with fatness"—who are never exercised with temptation. You have reason to bless God that you know something of these painful though profitable exercises, and thus find that in proportion as you are delivered unto death, the life of Jesus is made manifest. And that life is for ever—the beginning of eternal bliss; the foretaste of endless glory. He that knows anything of this life of Jesus here will be with Him for ever, and bathe his happy soul in that river, "the streams whereof make glad the city of God," and enjoy the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

## Life Given for a Prey

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, June 28, 1868

"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."  
Jeremiah 45:5

These words were addressed to Baruch, and addressed to him under very peculiar circumstances. Those of you who are diligent readers and students of the word of God, will perhaps recollect the peculiar circumstances to which I have alluded. But, as I cannot expect that you all are either such diligent students, or should be able to call them immediately to mind—for some very good people have very bad memories—I will briefly mention what those circumstances were. And as the chapter is short I think I cannot do better than read a good part of it to you. It begins thus: "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; 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." (Jer. 45:1, 2, 3.) The verses which I have just read will give you a clue to the special circumstances under which I have intimated that these words were addressed to Baruch. The very date is significant. Baruch is said to have "written these words in a book (or scroll, as the word means) at the mouth of Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim." Now, if you will turn to chapter 36 of this prophet, you will find that "In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day." Jeremiah, however, was at that time in prison, and was,

therefore, not able himself to go forth and read the roll to the persons unto whom it was sent. Consequently, he sends for Baruch the son of Neriah, to write it for him. Whether there was some physical reason why he could not write it himself, as, for instance, his hands being chained, or whether it was more convenient to write by dictation, a thing which I often do myself, I cannot say; but he employs the pen of Baruch, who, therefore, wrote from his mouth all the words of the Lord which he had spoken unto him, on the roll of a book. Now these words were a denunciation of God's wrath upon Jerusalem and Judah, and his determination, if they repented not, to give them into the hands of the king of Babylon, who would bring upon that city swift and certain destruction. Baruch was to read this roll in the house of the Lord, which he faithfully did; for he went up into the chamber or Gemariah, and there he read the words out of the roll of the book. But he also read them in the ear of the princes, and they, struck with amazement and consternation at the contents of the roll, mentioned it to the king. The king sent for the roll that he might hear it read; but when he had heard read part of the roll, about three leaves or rather columns, he took his penknife—he was sitting by the fire in his winter-house or winter-palace—cut it to pieces, and cast it into the fire until all the roll was consumed.

Now, these were the circumstances under which the Lord sent this message by Jeremiah unto Baruch. The power of the king in those days was absolute. There was no check upon it either by law or custom; and this made the wrath of the king so dreadful. It was, as Solomon declares, "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death," (Prov. 16:14); for the messengers of death, that is the executioners, as we see was the case in John the Baptist, followed quickly upon the king's command. Joab found no protection from the wrath of the king even at the altar; for at the command of the king, Benaiah went up and fell upon him and slew him, as he afterwards did Shimei. Well, then, might Baruch dread the wrath of the king. And as the word of God often gives us, by its graphic touches, incidental discoveries of men's natural disposition, I think we may gather from Baruch's language that he was naturally timid, and one might almost say,

disposed to give way to fretfulness and complaining. But this very weakness, if such it were, of Baruch, did not escape the noticing eye, or was it unfelt by the compassionate heart of the God of Israel, who in all his people's affliction is afflicted. He had heard Baruch's passionate lament, and reminds him of it. "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." He had already been deeply plunged in sorrow. Doubtless he was one of the men whom Ezekiel saw in vision (Ezek. 9:4), as one of those upon whose forehead a mark was set, in that "they sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem." And as believing the sure language of prophecy, that God would give Jerusalem into the hands of the Chaldeans, he might well have cause for sorrow, in seeing what a destruction was coming upon the city and the whole land. Day and night these trials, and no doubt he had others also of a more personal and peculiar nature, made him grieve and groan but now the Lord had added grief to his sorrow. He seemed to have as much before as, or even more than he could well bear. But now an additional load was laid upon his back; the weight of his cross was doubled, and the poignancy of grief was added to the load of sorrow. How suitable are these words to many of the family of God. Like Baruch, they have their enduring sorrow, the weight of a daily cross which sorely presses them down. But upon this often comes a keener, sharper, and more cutting trial. Say, for instance, that their daily cross in an afflicted tabernacle, or trying circumstances in providence, or a series of heavy family afflictions. These are their daily burdens; but upon the back of this may come some peculiarly distressing bereavement of wife, husband, or child,—or powerful soul temptations, or keen spiritual distress, or a whole sea of disquieting doubts and fears, so as almost to remove the very foundation of their hope. When, then, to their daily cross is added some especially cutting grief, then they are ready to say with Baruch, "Thou hast added grief to my sorrow. Was it not enough for me to have the weight and burden of a daily trial? Was not the cup already quite full? Why should this last drop of peculiar bitterness be added not only to make it overflow, but to make the whole draught full of gall and wormwood? Why should I

have this peculiar grief sent me in addition to all the other crosses, losses, trials, and burdens with which I have been so long and so painfully exercised? It is more than I can bear; I faint in my sighing, and I find no rest."

Now, if this be your case—and doubtless I have before me some who have, perhaps even lately, had grief added to their sorrow, and thus can enter feelingly into the mournful language of Baruch—I have a message for you; I have something to say to you this morning from the Lord. And if you ask me what this message is, and what I have to speak to you in the name of the Lord, my answer shall be the words of our text, "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."

We may observe, I think, in these words, four prominent features:

I.—We have, *first*, a *searching inquiry*: "Seekest thou great things for thyself?"

II.—We have *secondly*, a *faithful admonition*: "Seek them not."

III.—*Thirdly*, a *solemn denunciation*: "I will bring evil upon all flesh."

IV.—And *Fourthly*, a *gracious promise*: "Thy life will I give unto them for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

I.—The Lord reads the heart; we can merely see the countenance, or form our judgment of men from their actions; and though this latter is by no means a bad test of men's dispositions, yet there is in them often much that lurks in the inward recesses of their heart, which is manifested neither in their face nor by their conduct. Samuel, when he saw the stately height and manly form of Eliab, said at once, as if he were sure that he was the object of God's choice, "Surely the Lord's

anointed is before him." But Samuel, like us, could neither read God's thoughts nor man's hidden devices. "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7.) And as we cannot read the hearts of one another, so we but dimly and imperfectly read our own. Self-love hides from our view much of the secret depths of our heart; and temptation or opportunity will sometimes bring to light such hidden evils that we are ready to start back in horror from our own selves. All at once the lid is taken off, and we see unbelief, infidelity, blasphemy, obscenity, lasciviousness, adultery, envy, wrath, and murder, all seething as in a boiling pot, and ready to boil over. Now the Lord sees all this; nor is it ever hidden from him, though often hidden from us. So it seems to me that the Lord, who read Baruch's heart to the very centre, saw in him what was perhaps hidden not only from those who knew him, but hidden also from himself. There was then, it would seem, in Baruch's heart, what indeed is in the hearts of all, but in some working more strongly or more subtly than in others, an ambitious spirit seeking after great things. I judge this from the Lord putting the question so closely to him: "Seekest thou great things for thyself?" Had he not been given to this propensity the question would not have had that peculiar application to his case, nor carried with it such special rebuke. He might not have been conscious of this propensity, and his ambitious spirit might have worked in a very subtle and secret manner. As a gracious character, as one who feared and loved God above many, as Jeremiah's bosom friend and companion, as sympathising and suffering with him in his afflictions and persecutions, and as honoured of the Lord to write the words from Jeremiah's mouth, and to proclaim them to the people, he would hardly seem to have been, one would almost think, under the power of secret ambition. It was not a time, it was not a place, his was not a post wherein great things should be sought after. What was power in the court of a king like Jehoiakim? What was property in a land soon to be laid desolate? What was money, house, furniture, worldly luxuries in a city which was to

be speedily burned with fire? Or if we suppose that Baruch coveted promotion as a prophet, to occupy Jeremiah's place when Jeremiah was shut up in prison, he must have seen and known that such a promotion would bring with it Jeremiah's afflictions. If he now said, "Thou hast added grief to my sorrow; I faint in my sighing, and I find no rest," what would he say when cast into Jeremiah's dungeon? And yet with all this, the Lord, who reads all hearts, saw that there was in him an ambitious spirit, which he here reproveth.

But let me now, turning from Baruch's case, apply it to our own; and to make my inquiry more searching, let me address it specially to you. Let me ask you, all of you, each of you individually, "Seekest thou great things for thyself?" You may answer "No; I am not aware of any great things that I am seeking. I think, at least I hope, I am pretty moderate in my desires; and as to great things, I hardly know what you understand by them." But great and small are relative terms. What is great to one is small to another; and what is small to one is great to another. When, therefore, I put this searching inquiry, "Seekest thou great things for thyself?" I must adapt my inquiry to the state of the case, to the circumstances of the people before me. You may think that you are not seeking great things because you are not in a line of life which is usually considered great, even were you advanced in it much higher than you now stand; and thus you measure great things by a wrong standard, for you are looking at great and small as the world views them, and not as the word of God, or an enlightened conscience would consider them. You may also not be conscious of an ambitious spirit, and yet there may be working in your heart, unknown to yourself, an inordinate desire to rise out of present low and depressing circumstances, or a great dissatisfaction with your appointed lot of life, and a spirit of great restlessness to emerge out of it, and to advance yourself into a spot more gratifying to your pride, more pleasing to your flesh, more lifted up beyond that neglect or even contempt which is often cast upon you in that inferior condition, as you think it, that is, inferior in your opinion to your ability, skill, industry, age of life, and so on, which you now

occupy. With such views and feelings you may be thinking that it is quite right and justifiable for yourself, or if not altogether for yourself, at any rate for your family, to do all that you can to get out of your present inferior position; and if this be your desire mainly, that you may live honestly and honourably, and owe no man any debt but the debt of love, you cannot be justly blamed. But under this good appearance, under this lawful aim and object, there often lurks and works a proud, self-seeking, ambitious spirit which is seeking great things, that is, great to you, considering your station in life, which might not be great to another whose lot in providence is of a higher grade. Here we are apt to deceive ourselves. Let me then ask you, Are you content with that station in life in which God has seen fit to place you? Is there no grasping after something better, something greater, something higher and grander, something to make you more respectable before man and less dependent upon the providence of God? And how we see this ambitious spirit, this trying to rise, this grasping after something great, at least great relatively if not absolutely, in every station in life. How the professional man is ever seeking to be at the head of his profession, and frets and murmurs if outrun in the eager race, even though many are behind him probably as well skilled as he. How the tradesman is seeking if possible to enlarge his connection, add to his business, drive a flourishing trade, and is ever fixing his eye on those who seem to outstrip him in success, even though he has no real reason to complain of want of custom, and is doing far better than very many in the same line. How the mechanic, to take another instance, is dissatisfied with his position, thinks himself hardly treated because others are preferred, grumbles at his wages though fully equal to his industry and skill, and is reaching after a post which, could he obtain it, he would not be able properly or successfully to fill. Is there one here who does not think himself qualified for a higher post, or a better position than he now occupies, and does not secretly fret and murmur at the success of others, his self-love blinding him to the fact that they have better abilities, greater skill, more unwearied industry, or higher qualifications than he? Don't you want to live in a better house, have more money to spend, wear finer clothes, buy

handsomer furniture, dress your children better, work less hard, and get more pay? Could we look into men's hearts, we should see how in every station of life, from the highest to the lowest, there was a restless discontent with their condition in life, an overlooking of the hand of God in providence which has done so much for them, and a continual reaching forth of anxious desire for something greater and better than they at present possess.

Thus far have I viewed this ambitious spirit, as manifesting itself in matters of providence, but now take the words in another sense; for the searching inquiry as to seeking great things for oneself reaches far beyond mere providential matters. Take, then, religion; that which concerns us most deeply; take that which we all of us more or less profess to have, or at least, hope to be found having in the great day. How often there is a seeking great things in religion. How many ministers, for instance, are seeking after great gifts, thirsting after popularity, applause, acceptance among men. They are not satisfied with being simply and solely what God may make them by his Spirit and grace, with the acceptance that he may give them among some of his own people, and the blessing which he may make them to a scattered few here and there. This inferior position, as they consider it, so beneath their grace and gifts, their talents and abilities, does not satisfy their restless mind and aspiring turn. Their ambition is to stand at the very head of their connexion, to be looked up to and sought after as a leader and a guide, to have a larger chapel, a fuller congregation, a better salary, and a wider field for the display of their gifts and abilities. Fain would they stand apart from all others, brook no rival to their pulpit throne, and be lord paramount at home and abroad. And what is the consequence of this proud, ambitious spirit? What envy, what jealousy, what detraction do we see in men who want to stand at the top of the tree! And though these very things tend, and justly tend, to sink them lower in the estimation of men than they would otherwise be, yet how, again and again, do they seek to rise by standing, as it were, on the slain bodies of others. How also in those who are not ministers, but who may occupy some lower part, and yet not an inconspicuous one, as say, deacons in a church, or as gifted

members frequently called upon to pray in public,—how many we see seeking after great gifts in prayer, so as to be more acceptable to the people than they at present feel that they are, and to be admired for their fluency, their variety, their fervency, their superiority to their brethren, who may, occasionally, take a part with them in the same service. O the pride of man's heart! How it will work and show itself even under a guise of religion and holiness.

How often, too, do we see men employing their time and abilities in the study of the Scriptures with scarcely a thought or a desire after any savour, sweetness, or power that may flow from God's word into their heart. How anxious, also, are others to penetrate into deep mysteries and acquire a knowledge of doctrine merely as doctrine without prayerful meditation, or any earnest cry that what they read may be made life and spirit to their souls, or may lead them into a believing, obedient knowledge of God's will, so as to do those things which are pleasing in his sight. Thus, instead of seeking to know and feel the power of God's word, that it may bring into their hearts pardon and peace union and communion with the Father and his dear Son, deliverance from doubts, fears, and bondage, that they might walk before God in the light of his countenance, and bless and praise him with joyful lips, they are rather seeking after such great things, as men count them, which shall carry with them human praise, exalt them upon a seeming pedestal above others, and make men esteem, honour, and admire them for their great attainments. Few can see that in religion, what are considered great things, are really very little, and what are considered little, are really very great. How few can see that a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a humble mind, a tender conscience, a meek, quiet, and patient bearing of the cross, a believing submission and resignation to the will of God, a looking to him, and to him alone, for all supplies in providence or in grace, with a continual seeking of his face and desiring nothing so much as the visitations of his favour, a loving, affectionate, forbearing, and forgiving spirit, a bearing of injuries and reproaches without retaliation, a liberal heart and hand, and a godly, holy, and separate life and walk, are the things which in

God's sight are great, whilst a knowledge of doctrine, clear insight into gospel mysteries, and a ready speech are really very little things, and are often to be found side by side and hand in hand with a proud, covetous, worldly, unhumiliated spirit, and a living in what is sinful and evil. Now looking into your heart, unless God has humbled or broken you down, you will very probably find some of these ambitious aims secretly working there with greater or less power; and even if it is not manifested in word or action, there will be the feeling, the desire, the craving more or less clearly discovered to your view.

Now the Lord was determined that Baruch should not seek these great things. He therefore sent upon him continual disappointments. He led him into a path of daily sorrow; and at the particular period recorded in the chapter before us, he added grief to it. Seeing the necessity of breaking down this pride, humbling this ambition, and bringing him to a spot, that only spot of real safety, to be nothing good or great in himself, either in providence or grace, the Lord, in addition to the daily cross, sent him this special grief, and under the weight of it, he fainted in his sighing, and could find no rest. He was not, like most around him, blind to the signs of the times, or deaf to the threatenings of God by the mouth of his prophets. He knew that God would surely bring to pass his severe judgments denounced by Jeremiah against Jerusalem. He could see by the eye of faith, that the king of Babylon would take the city by force, and he knew well what scenes of horror would follow—such scenes as we find described in the Lamentations, when the priest and the prophet were slain in the sanctuary of the Lord, when the young and the old lay on the ground in the streets, when the virgins and young men fell by the sword, and they ravished the women in Zion and the maids in Judah. (Lam. 2:20, 21; 5:11.) As a patriot, he would mourn over the destruction of his country; as a godly Israelite, he would grieve over the sins of the people against God, and the destruction which they would bring upon themselves in body and soul; as a citizen, he could not but deeply feel the blighting of his own prospects; as a father, he would be filled with dread as to what would become of his children; as a husband, what might be

the fate of his wife, when the city was taken by storm. And we may well believe that amidst the hidings of God's face from Jerusalem, a dark cloud would also hang over his soul. Putting all these things together, we see that there were abundant reasons why Baruch should have grief added to his sorrow, should faint in his sighings, and find no rest for either body or soul. It may be so in some degree, though not to the same extent, with you. You have never been able to succeed in any one of your ambitious projects. As you have tried to be something, or get something, greater than you at present are or possess, God has thrown it down. Everything has gone against you; business has not flourished; disappointment has ever attended your path. Troubles at home, trials in your family, distress in circumstances, continual embarrassment,—all these have been so many blows upon the head of your pride. And as regards your ambition in the things of God, if you have sought to gain applause by your gifts, or to make yourself wise by doctrinal knowledge, you have found the emptiness of all gifts, when guilt lay upon your conscience; the inefficacy of all knowledge to staunch a bleeding wound; and the barrenness of all doctrine, when not attended with life and power to the soul. Now, if you know this, and have been in some measure cured of this ambitious spirit by grief being added to your sorrow, you will be able to listen to the Lord's

II.—*Faithful admonition*, which I said I would consider as a second branch of our subject; "*Seek them not.*"

i. The Lord tells us we must not seek great things as our portion in this life. They are not for us to handle, to strive after, or to enjoy. Let the world have them. Let the carnal and the ungodly have what is their portion here below. But let not the people of God aim at obtaining in this world success, prosperity, and happiness. The world is meant to be to them a place of trouble and sorrow, and they are to have vexations, grief, and disappointments, as more or less their daily lot. If then, contrary to the revealed will of God, they have set their heart upon earthly things, they are sure to be disappointed, for the Lord will not allow them to obtain, or at least enjoy any thing which shall be

really and permanently injurious to their soul. He, therefore, says to them in his providence, as well as in his word, what he said to Baruch, "Seek them not."

But you will perhaps say, "What are we then to seek?" I will tell you in one word,—*Realities*. What are these great things that you are seeking after? say in religion. Could you see them in their right light, you would see that they are but shadows. You feel, for instance, your deficiency in gift in public when you are called upon to pray, or in private when you converse with those who possess readier speech, and you want what are commonly called *gifts*, such a greater fluency of utterance, more ability to quote Scripture, and a more abundant variety of expressions, so as to make a deeper impression on the hearers—the real want being that you might stand higher in their estimation. But what would these gifts, if you had them to the fullest extent, so that men might almost worship you for them, do for you when you shall be called upon to lie upon a death-bed—when eternity is in view, and your soul has to deal with God only? You will want no gifts then. Grace will be the only thing which can do you any good.

Or perhaps, feeling your ignorance in many points of doctrine, compared with the clear views of others, you have been aspiring after *knowledge*. But what will knowledge do for you when guilt lies hard upon your conscience?

Or it may be that you have been aiming at great attainments of *assurance* and *confidence*, so as to be delivered out of a path of daily exercise and trial, and to reach a firm and settled standing beyond all doubt and fear. I by no means condemn this, for a sweet assurance of the love of God is a most blessed spot to be in; but there is often a temptation to obtain a settled assurance by resting in the doctrine of it, and thus not to be dependent upon the comings and goings of the Lord's presence. This very attainment, therefore, at which you have been aiming, might leave you when you wanted it most, and fail you in that solemn moment when nothing can speak peace to your soul but a word from the mouth of the Lord.

Thus far I have confined myself to the point of seeking great things religiously; but let me now drop a word upon seeking them naturally and providentially. Surely I need not ask what peace you are likely to get when your head lies upon a dying pillow from all that you have grasped after or gained in the things of this life. Does not your own conscience tell you that those great things which so many are seeking after in providence, when life is fast ebbing away, when divine consolation is sought for, and some balm to be applied to a bleeding conscience, will, as is said of riches, have made themselves wings and flown away, and left nothing but disappointment and sorrow? Is it not now then your wisdom to seek, not great things, but real things; divine blessings; things of which we shall never be ashamed; things which God will own, not only upon a bed of death, but at the great day when he will make up his jewels? I do believe, from what I have known and felt myself, that every child of God, according to the measure of the work of grace upon his soul, can never be satisfied with anything short of realities. He has a real soul; he has a real case. Sin is a real thing; the law is a real thing; its condemnation is a real thing; a guilty conscience is a real thing; and he must have blessings from God suited to, and, as it were, more than able to counterbalance these solemn and felt realities. Any trifle will suit and please you till the life and fear of God enter your breast. But of all trifling, to trifle with God and one's own soul is the worst: and yet on every side we seem surrounded with triflers. I do not mean the world's giddy triflers, who trifle time and life away, till, in a moment, they go down into the grave; but our churches and chapels are filled with religious triflers, who trifle with religion as worldly people trifle with dress and amusements, or even trifle with sin as Indian jugglers play with venomous serpents. Now those who do not feel the weight of divine things, whose souls have never been quickened into spiritual life, with all their profession, all their knowledge, and all their attainments, have never sought for divine and heavenly realities. They have never seen the distinction between a blessing from God—what we may call a real blessing, as carrying with it its own unmistakable mark and impress of coming from God and

such a dim and distant hope as they may attain unto by believing the letter of the word; and thus their faith stands in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God. But the Lord will take care that his people shall, each in their measure, be seeking after divine realities, and not only seek them, but obtain them.

ii. But let me explain a little more clearly what I mean by divine realities, and I shall best do so by mentioning some of them.

1. A *manifestation* of the mercy, goodness, and love of God to the soul, is a divine reality. It will do to live by; it will do to die by; it will make death a welcome messenger and not a gloomy foreshadow of apprehended wrath. But to be seeking great things and yet miss the real thing; to be aiming at gifts and miss grace; to be seeking form and miss power; to be seeking the applause of man and miss the approbation of God; to miss salvation, to miss mercy, pardon, peace, and acceptance; to miss the favour of God manifested to the soul by a divine power,—O what a fool must a man be, to speak after the manner of men, to be hunting after shadows and miss the substance; to be aiming after high things that can only feed the flesh, and to miss what many think to be low and little things, but which in the sight of God are of great price.

Hence we may see the benefit of grief being added to sorrow—of fainting in one's sighing and knowing no rest. These sharp trials and exercises of soul prepare for realities, for nothing else can live in the furnace. Wood, hay, and stubble are all burnt up in it, and nothing stands the fire but gold, silver, and precious stones. I wish you, however, to observe, that it may be a long time before a child of God gets those realities which he is longing after, and without which he can never be satisfied. But I would say to him for his encouragement that what he has already, though it be little is real. The word for instance may not come home to his soul with all the power he is longing for, yet what little may come is real. The little faith that is given has a reality in it; and so the love which is shed abroad in his heart, it may be faint and feeble in his apprehension, but it is real. It is of God, for love is of God,

and will act and work in a way which manifests that it is from him.

2. Another reality to be sought after and enjoyed, as far beyond any great thing, is a sweet *revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ* to the soul; to have a view of his glorious Person, a taste of his presence, a breaking in of the light of his countenance, a gracious visitation from his most blessed Majesty, a smile from his most lovely countenance. To be favoured with these, will kill a man to seeking great things, either naturally or religiously; for all those great things which worldly professors are seeking, would, if he could obtain them, only serve to keep out the life, presence, and power of Christ from his soul. If he had every thing that heart could wish, had risen as he once hoped in the world, and fully grasped all that his towering ambition pointed to, he would have had no heart for Christ. And if in religion he could have attained to human applause, or satisfied himself with mere gifts and acquirements, there would have been no room in his soul for the love, and blood, and blessed visitations of the Son of God. Thus he will, sooner or later, see how much better grace is than gifts, and the approbation of God than the applause of man. For when once the Lord has been pleased to manifest a sense of his love and mercy, bestowed his presence, and given a view of himself in his beauty, it has killed the soul to all other lovers and all other love. Having once tasted that the Lord is gracious, there is a continual seeking after him as a reality, compared with which, how empty and vain is all earthly good.

3. So, again, quiet *submission* to God's will; grace and strength to bear the daily cross with patience; not to be full of rebellion and self-pity: not to be given up to the sorrow of the world which worketh death; but to bear what God lays on us with meekness, resignation, and humility—this is a thing to be sought after, for in this is a divine reality. God will take care to lay cross after cross, and trial after trial upon his people, until he brings them to submission. O how soon he can give this sweet and heavenly grace! How, in a moment, he can pour oil upon the troubled waves! How he can break to pieces that stubborn obstinacy and

rebelliousness of which the heart is full, and give submission to his will! How he can bow and bend the proud spirit, fill the heart with humility and love, enable us to kiss the rod, and to fall prostrate before his dispensations, however severe they may be to the flesh!

4. To be *spiritually-minded*, which is life and peace; to have our affections in heaven; to walk with God in sweet communion; to enjoy his word, to love his truth, to feel the heart going out after him, and finding its happiness in him,—this is another reality which is to be sought after. This is not a great thing in the world's esteem, nor a great thing in the estimation of the great bulk of professors of religion; but it is a great thing to those who know its value. Does not the Lord himself declare that "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace?" What greater blessings are there than the life of God in the soul, and his peace ruling and reigning in the heart?

5. Again, to be favoured in secret with the *presence* of God; to read his word with understanding and faith, to drink into the sweetness of his promises, find their suitability to the varied trials which we are called upon to pass through, and so know the word of God to be meat and drink; this is what we should seek after as a divine reality. It may not be counted great, but it is real.

6. To have our continual *afflictions*, trials, and exercises *sanctified* and made a blessing to us; not to see merely the hand of God in them, but to feel they are working in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness, that they are producing in us a conformity to the suffering image of Christ, and working in us for our benefit—is also what we should seek after as a divine reality.

7. To *be kept from evil*, that it may not grieve us; to have the fear of God deeply planted in our bosom; to see the evil of sin, to hate it, abhor it, and to turn away from it; to be kept as the apple of God's eye, hid under the shadow of his wings, never suffered to transgress, but to walk with holy caution in this world full of snares,—this is what should be sought after; for as there is a

bitter reality in sin and disobedience, so there is a sweet reality in practical obedience and vital godliness.

8. So also, to *come out of the world*; to live separate from it; to have no companions but those that fear God; to turn our back upon empty professors and on empty profession; to live with and love those who walk tenderly in God's fear—these are things to be sought after; for there is a divine reality in them.

9. So again, to *live to God's honour* and glory—not to live to self, to pride, to the world; not to live as other men live, merely to feed the flesh, but to live to the glorifying of God in our several vocations,—this is what we should seek after as proving our religion to have a divine reality in it.

10. May I not also add, that to help to the best of our power God's dear children, if enabled to do so, by contributing to their wants; if not able, by prayer and sympathy, and affectionate intercourse,—is what we should seek after, as far more consistent with the word of God, and the path in which he would have us walk, than seeking after great things?

11. So also, to *avoid all matter of contention* and strife; not to take up cudgels upon every occasion of wounded pride or real, much less, fancied injury, but to walk in peace with the dear family of God, and, as far as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men, is another thing which we should earnestly seek after: for there can be no peace within, if there is no peace without. The Lord says to his bride, "My dove." A dove-like spirit, not that of a hawk or a vulture, is the spirit of a Christian.

12. To have our *evidences* continually *brightened*, doubts and fears chased away, backslidings healed, sins manifestly pardoned, and a sweet sense of reconciliation to God through the blood of his dear Son,—this is another choice blessing that we should be ever seeking after.

13. The *sensible approbation* of God on our walk and conduct; that what we set ourselves unto, what we say and do, and that,

with all our failures, the line of conduct we endeavour to act upon, should have the approving smile of God upon it, so that we may be able to bring it out before him, that he may shine upon it, prosper, and give a glossing to it; this is the last divine reality to be sought after, which I shall name.

Though what I have said may seem to draw a very straight and narrow line, yet I could not forbear bringing these things before you, as derived from the solemn admonition to Baruch, "Seek them not." It is true, that the things which we ought to seek, are not named or even alluded to in the admonition, for it is negative rather than positive; and yet it would not have been sufficient for me to have warned you, in the name of God, not to seek great things had I not laid before you also what I believe your own conscience, if rightly instructed, will tell you are real things, and as such, deserve our diligent and earnest search. And I must add, with all faithfulness, that if you have no desire after these divine realities, and still more if you despise or think them trifling things, it shows how little you know of the kingdom of God set up in the heart, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

III.—But I pass on to my next point, which is God's *solemn denunciation*: "Behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh."

This is a very comprehensive declaration from the mouth of God. Taking it in its widest extent, it embraces many circumstances, in fact, well nigh every circumstance, which is not connected with the kingdom of God, and the graces of his Spirit. Let me explain myself. God was about to bring evil upon all flesh in the days of Baruch,—not moral evil, but evil in the way of wide and general distress, heavy national judgments, destruction of the city, and desolation of the whole land, with terrible slaughter of the inhabitants, and all those horrors which take place when a city is taken by storm. We cannot read the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, without seeing what denunciations they contain against all flesh, that is, not merely all who are in the flesh, as men and women, but against every thing carnal, earthly, and distinct from

what was of God. You will see this especially declared in chapters 2 and 3 of Isaiah, in which, after pronouncing that "the day of the Lord of hosts should be upon every high tower and upon every fenced wall," the prophet adds: "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground." (Isa. 3:25, 26.) Now when that evil was to be brought upon all flesh, what benefit would it have been to Baruch, if he could have got his great things? Say that he had risen very much in the world, had added house to house and field to field, and had become the wealthiest or most honoured man in Jerusalem—what would it benefit him when the Chaldeans rushed through the breach in the wall with wrath in their faces and swords in their hands? Or if richly endowed with, and highly esteemed for his prophetic gifts, what would those gifts have availed him unless proportionate grace had accompanied them to support his soul when his prophecies came to pass? What became of those false prophets who buoyed the people up with false hopes? They were slain by the sword of the Chaldeans, and they and their prophecies perished together.

But, leaving the case of Baruch, let us take the words in another sense and view them as having a spiritual bearing. There is no use looking back through the vista of years at Baruch and his troubles; it is better to look at home and see how far the words are applicable to ourselves. God means to bring evil upon all flesh, and if so, taking the words in their full extent, there is not a single fleshly thing upon which he will not bring evil.

Now he brings evil upon all flesh in two ways: first, by bringing down his heavy hand upon it in the way of judgment; and secondly, by manifesting unto us the evil that is in it. Have you found your airy dreams and cherished projects realized? Have your ambitious projects been crowned with success? Have you not had repeated disappointments, and have not others, who seemed inferior to you in ability or in promise, outstripped you in the race? Here was God bringing evil upon all flesh. Your fleshly projects, your carnal hopes, your airy castles, your dreams of

happiness, your romantic expectations of a little earthly paradise, have all been cruelly, as you have thought in the bitterness of your soul, disappointed; the buds dropped off just when they began to promise flower, and a blight fell upon your whole life, or at least, until you could recover from the blow. This was bringing evil upon your flesh so that you could not reap the harvest you had been indulging anticipations of. But take the words in the other sense which I named. God shews us sooner or later the evil of all flesh—the evil of a fleshly confidence, of fleshly faith, of fleshly hope, of fleshly love, in a word, of all religion that stands in the flesh. Now when we begin to see the evil that God thus brings upon all flesh, and upon our flesh in particular, so as to cut up root and branch all our fleshly confidence, fleshly hopes, fleshly religion, it makes us look out for something which is not flesh, which bears the stamp of God upon it; in other words, which is spirit and life. And we usually find, when we make the search, that that which is spiritual in us lies in a very small compass, and that which is fleshly takes a very wide circumference. Take away from you all the knowledge which stands in the flesh; take away all your faith, all your hope, all your love, which has not been wrought in your heart by a divine power; cut down into your religion and dissect it minutely, so as to get into its deepest inside; weigh and examine it in the light of God's countenance, so as to reduce it to its actual dimensions, and separate its constituent parts, putting on your right hand what is of the Spirit, and on your left what is of the flesh, how much real, living faith will you find in your soul? How much of a good hope through grace, and how much love of God's own shedding abroad? How much of your long profession is there which weighed in the balance of the sanctuary is found to be good weight? How much is there of your daily life and walk which has God's approbation, or even your own upon it, when you lie upon your bed at night and look through with searching eye the transactions of the day? Don't you marvel sometimes when you look at your religion to see how small and scanty it is—when you weigh your experience by the word of God and its daily practical effect upon you, to see how short it comes? When you compare your religion, your actions, your life and conduct with the Bible

standard, with what godly men have done and suffered of old, with books written by gracious men that are commended to your conscience—when you compare your poor, scanty religion with theirs, does it not make you tremble with fear and apprehension lest you have none at all?—lest you be a presumptuous hypocrite and not a real child of God?

Now do not think that this earnest and anxious spirit of inquiry is legal, full of hard and heavy bondage, contrary to the spirit of the gospel and the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. If you really possess the liberty of God's giving, and the love of his shedding abroad, such a searching of your heart will not damp or destroy them. But if you have not been exercised about your religion, and had it settled by the Lord himself in your favour, you may depend upon it, that sooner or later, you will be put into the furnace; for "the fire is to try every man's work of what sort it is." God hath "chosen Zion in the furnace of affliction," and you will find that he will put you into circumstances in which your fleshly faith and confidence will be burnt up. When, then, you get into the furnace and begin to look out for something that is of God, that he has done for you and in you by his Spirit and grace, you will find how scanty it seems to be, so that in the confusion and darkness into which you will fall you may scarcely be able to lay your hand upon anything which seems to be truly and really of God. This is the effect of the Lord bringing evil upon all flesh; that he may search you and try you, and by burning up everything which is not his own gift and work, strip you of all that vain confidence in which you may have so often sought to rest. O when the Lord searches Jerusalem as with candles, what hidden evils he brings to light; and as our sins are thus laid open to view, what little grace we may have seems as if buried and lost out of sight.

IV.—But now comes the *gracious promise!* "But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

The Lord had told Baruch that he was not to seek great things. He would not suffer him to go on in a path which would bring

destruction and death into his soul. He warned him that he would bring evil upon all flesh; that he would pluck up what he had planted, even the whole land. But he gives him a gracious promise, that amidst all this destruction he would give him his life for a prey.

Now this life might have been in Baruch's case, and most probably was, his natural life, and that he should not perish in the destruction of Jerusalem. But the life which most concerns us, taking the text in an experimental sense, is the spiritual life, the life of God in the soul. Where the Lord has begun a gracious work, he has deposited deep in the heart his own life. However surrounded, therefore, this life of God may be by the flesh; however it may seem at times buried in the dust and chaff of this wretched world and of this evil heart, there it is, in all its holy beauty, in all its heavenly nature, in all its blessed reality, in all its divine origin. And remember this, that it is a life not only spiritual, but eternal; a life that can never die. Our gracious Lord, therefore, said to the woman of Samaria, that the water which he gives is a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John the Baptist also testified that "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" not shall have, but "hath," that is, hath it now.

i. But this life is given in a very peculiar way; it is "given for a prey." But what is life given for a prey? It is, as it were, snatched out of the very paw of the bear and the lion; something which is rescued out of the hand of an enemy that would destroy it in a moment, and valued all the more as a precious gift of God, because taken out of the hand of the spoiler.

Now examine your religion and your experience, and the way you have been led by the light of this testimony. You have, you hope you have, the life of God in your soul; you have, you hope you have, a divine principle in your bosom. But now see how it is surrounded by every thing which has evil in it, and all ready to prey upon it. Here is the flesh surrounding it on every side. God then brings evil upon this flesh. He cuts to pieces by his keen strokes your fleshly confidence, fleshly faith, fleshly hope, fleshly

religion. By shining into the dark recesses of our mind, he shows us evil in all we say, think, and do. Then we find what little religion we have is God's special gift and work, that the little we possess is snatched out of the hand of the spoiler, and is kept in the soul only by the mighty power of God. Have you never seen with dismay a crowd of wild beasts, all hungering after this life of God, that they may tear it to pieces? Here is sin, the world, Satan, and what is worse than all, our own vile nature, all seeking to lay violent hands upon the life of God in the soul, like so many wild beasts at the Zoological Gardens at feeding time, roaring after the food to be given to them. Yet it is kept by the power of God in a miraculous way out of their mouths. The life he gives he maintains; the hope he imparts he encourages; and the love which he has shed abroad he never takes away, but now and then shines upon it and renews it.

ii. But observe, further, for I must be brief now, how this life is "given for a prey in all places whither thou goest." Baruch could never go out without wild beasts being after him. Yet the life of God remained firm in his soul, nor did he get into any place in which that life was not preserved. So you may sometimes get into dark places, dead places, rebellious places, unbelieving places, places of great affliction, desertion, desolation, trouble and sorrow; and yet if the Lord has put life into your soul, he has given that life for a prey in all places whither thou goest. You may change your station in life; you may change your house, your employment, your circumstances; but it will still be the same: life given for a prey in all places whither thou goest. "O," you may think, "it will be better with me by and by; I shall get a better religion, a better faith, or I shall be in a better state of soul, when I shall not be so much tried and exercised." You are mistaken: it will always be the same. Life is given for a prey. You may change your trial; you cannot change your heart. You may change your situation, but you cannot change your nature. Wherever you go, you will still find circumstances after you, the world after you, self after you, and all seeking to prey upon the life of God. Wherever you go it will always be the same life given for a prey. Thus you will have to carry your life in your hand to your dying day, and prove that nothing but the grace of God can save your soul. But,

amidst it all, you will find his faithfulness to endure to the end, his strength to be made perfect in your weakness, and his love to support and bear you up till it brings you to himself. What a mercy it is that though given for a prey, the life of God can never be destroyed. Don't expect, therefore, to have it on any other terms. It is for the express purpose that he may have the honour and the glory of securing it entirely for himself.

## **LIFE GIVEN FOR A PREY**

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, August 22nd, 1841, at Salem Chapel, Landport, Portsmouth.

"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" Jeremiah 45:5

These words were spoken by Jeremiah the prophet to Baruch the son of Neriah; and they were addressed to him under particular circumstances. It was at the time when the Lord was accomplishing His purpose of carrying His people Judah into captivity; when, according to His righteous judgments, the Levitical sacrifices were for a time to cease, the temple to be destroyed, and the people to be uprooted from their own city and country, and taken into the land of Babylon. These were times, doubtless, of great temporal affliction. The presence of the invading army must have carried with it all those desolations which that terrible scourge of God invariably brings; and the righteous as well as the wicked must have alike suffered in this general calamity. Sword, pestilence, and famine came alike upon all, upon him that swore, as upon him that feared an oath. (Eccl. 9:2.)

But in the case of "the remnant according to the election of grace," there were superadded to the weight of their temporal calamities the heavy burdens of spiritual affliction. The severe judgments of God upon the land were so many visible testimonies of His displeasure. And it seems as if the experience of God's people in that day was of a character similar to the general gloom. The dark lowering cloud that hung over Jerusalem cast its shadow over the souls of the living family.

We thus see a connection between Jeremiahs experience in the Lamentations and the temporal afflictions of Judah; and the same cause may account for the lamentation that Baruch poured out in

the words preceding the text, and of which the Lord takes this special notice: "Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch: 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."

"Grief added to sorrow"—spiritual trials added to temporal trials, soul affliction following upon natural affliction, wave calling to wave, and burden heaped upon burden; and both together so depressing his spirits, so weighing him down, that he "fainted in his sighing, and could find no rest."

The Lord doubtless saw in Baruch's heart that which Baruch did not see himself; he saw lurking there a secret craving after things which God has never promised to bestow upon His people. He discerned through the thick veil spread over his heart that there were immoderate desires working in his bosom, and that he was aiming at things quite inconsistent with the purposes of God, the character of the times, and what was really profitable for his own soul. Viewing, then, with His heart-searching eye what was thus secretly going on in "the chambers of imagery," the Lord addressed Himself to the very circumstances of the case: "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."

There seems to have been in Baruch's mind a secret hope that the Lord would not bring down upon Judah the judgments denounced; at any rate, he appears to have cherished a lurking expectation that he himself would not be involved in them. Amidst all his grief and sorrow, his fainting and sighing, **ambition**, was not dead within; and there was a restless aiming at things inconsistent with the afflictions to fall upon his country, and with his own character as a prophet of the Lord. Now who of us can plead, "Not guilty!" to a similar charge?

In considering, then, these words, I shall take them, as applicable to a child of God, and as describing some of the inward workings

of his heart; and I shall endeavour at the same time, with God's blessing, to trace out the Lord's method of dealing with His family as intimated in the text.

I. The evil, then, that lurked in Baruch's carnal mind lurks in ours. His heart resembled yours and mine, as being made from the same material, and derived from the same corrupt source.

1. Thus, led aside by the powerful workings of this corrupt nature, we are often seeking great things **temporally**. Riches, worldly comforts, respectability, to be honoured, admired, and esteemed by men, are the objects most passionately sought after by the world; and so far as the children of God are under the influence of a worldly principle, do they secretly desire similar things.

Nor does this ambition depend upon station in life. All are more or less deeply infected with it, till delivered by the grace of God. The poorest man in these towns has a secret desire in his soul after "great things," and a secret plotting in his mind how he may obtain them. But the Lord is determined that His people shall not have great things. He has purposed to pour contempt upon all the pride of man. He therefore nips all their hopes in the bud, crushes their flattering prospects, and makes them, for the most part, even in this world, poor, needy, and despised.

It may seem strange, but I know from experience it is true, that even those who profess truth, and are fully aware that such a profession draws down upon them hatred and contempt, yet feel at times the workings of a secret ambition to be esteemed even by those whom in their right mind, they know to be enemies of God and truth. But the Lord will never let His dear people be esteemed and admired by a world dead in sin, or dead in profession. "Ye shall be hated of all men for My names sake." And however consistently and uprightly he may act, however he may be enabled in all things to walk agreeably to the precepts of the gospel, yet everyone that contends for the power of vital godliness, and manifests that he has the mind of Christ, will find himself hated, despised, and slandered, not only by the ungodly

world, but by those who stand high in a profession of religion, while they inwardly deny the power thereof.

The express testimony of God Himself is that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12.) From persecution, therefore, none of Christ's true followers can be exempt. And even with respect to what are termed "prospects in life," in the case of God's children they are almost invariably broken to pieces. Whatever schemes or projects the Lord's people may devise that they may prosper and get on in the world, He rarely suffers their plans to thrive. He knows well to what consequences it would lead—that this ivy creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate and strangle the tree. The more that worldly goods increase the more the heart is fixed upon them, and the more the affections are set upon idols, the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord. He will not suffer His people to have their portion here below. He has in store for them a better city, that is a heavenly, and therefore will not suffer them to build and plant below the skies. I have often said that the same axe which laid the first blow to me spiritually, cut up all my earthly prospects naturally; and though the Lord has beyond my expectation taken care of me in providence, yet it has been in a way quite contrary to my former prospects and natural expectations.

2. But again: there is a seeking after great things **in religion** as well as in providence; and God's people, especially in early days, are often led astray by seeking great things religiously. I use the expression **religiously** in opposition to **spiritually**; for there is a great deal of religion current in which there is no spirituality. There are, for instance, **gifts**, which by no means prove the existence of grace in their possessor; and as these gifts often draw forth admiration, they are very pleasing to the carnal mind.

Many of God's people are seeking great things for themselves in this way, and are mortified and disappointed when they are withheld. Thus some private Christians are very anxious for a gift in prayer, others for a good memory, others for a talent in

conversation or writing. They are galled and mortified because in these things others outshine them. So ministers are often desirous of a greater gift in preaching, a readier utterance, a more abundant variety, a more striking delivery than they possess. And this, be it remarked, both in minister and people, not for the glory of God, but for the glory of the creature; not that praise may be given to the Author and Finisher of faith, but that pride, cursed pride, may be gratified; that they may be admired of men.

These gifts being for the edification of the Church, they are granted, comparatively speaking, to but few; and when God imparts them to His children, He usually takes good care that they shall not glory in them. If a minister has a gift for preaching, God sometimes so stops his mouth, so shuts him up in barrenness and darkness, brings such a veil over his eyes, and so hides the power and savour of truth from his soul, that he is obliged feelingly to confess that "he gropes for the wall like the blind, and gropes as if he had no eyes" (Isa. 59:10.)

If he is a private Christian, and has a gift in prayer, and is elated by it, the Lord will sometimes so shut him up before the people, and put such a temporary extinguisher upon his gift as shall abundantly convince him that even if he has a gift, the exercise of it is not at his own command, and that thoughts, feelings, and words must be communicated to him from time to time by the Father of lights. Or if the Lord does not often thus shut his mouth, yet he shall have such powerful temptations, such desponding feelings, shall be so assailed with the fiery darts of Satan, and sink so low in doubts and fears, shall find so little access to the Lord in private, and enjoy so little secret communion with Him, that his very gift shall be one of his greatest trials, and he shall perhaps often view himself as a wretched hypocrite, who will be one day be manifested as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. If he be a minister, he will have to bury his head in the pulpit cushion, after he has finished his sermon, with shame and confusion of face, as I have often done, and beg pardon of the Lord for the base hypocrisy and

presumption, that in spite of himself have so awfully mingled themselves with all that he has uttered in God's name.

3. Others again of God's people are desirous of a great **knowledge** of gospel mysteries; and the seeking after great things in this way is, perhaps, a temptation most powerfully felt in our early days. We are often then aspiring after a great knowledge of truth in the letter, instead of thirsting after the savour, power, and unction of truth in the soul. And thus by reading many books, hearing various ministers, and going into the company of the children of God, we often heap up imaginary riches, not knowing that the wind of the Lord is coming to blow upon them, and to make these fancied treasures like "the chaff of the summer threshing floors."

4. Others of God's ambitious ones are seeking to stand always in an **unwavering assurance faith**. They read in the Scriptures of "rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;" they see it written, that "the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace," and they hear the apostolic precept, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." But not having been humbled, nor brought low, not having been taught the depths of their fallen nature, and the fountains of the great deep not having been spiritually broken up in their heart, they receive these passages into their judgment without the unctuous experience of them, or their being divinely applied to their soul.

The sons of Kohath might bear the ark (Num. 3:31); but that was no reason why Uzzah should touch it. What was faith in them was presumption in him. Thus many touch with the hand of presumption what they see in the Scriptures, as Uzzah saw and touched the ark, without a divine warrant, and because joy and peace are spoken of in the Word of God, they lay claim to them without their being shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, as heavenly cordials for a fainting spirit.

5. Others again of God's people, without contending for unceasing joy, consider that it is a believers privilege to **walk always in**

**the liberty of the gospel.** The liberty of the gospel is a most blessed thing, but like all other spiritual blessings it must be first brought into the conscience, and then maintained there, by the power of God the Holy Ghost. All other liberty is licentiousness. The liberty of the gospel is often prated about by those who never knew the bondage of the law; and were they asked whence they derived their liberty, all they could do would be to point out some text of scripture, such as, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1.) And what seems more surprising still, I believe there are among God's quickened family those who, with little else but bondage in their own soul, are contending **doctrinally** for the liberty of the gospel, and would be very angry if they were told they were not in the enjoyment of it.

Such are some of the great things, **religiously**, that pride and ambition often lead the people of God to seek. Baruch, perhaps, was fired with ambition to possess Jeremiahs gifts, though, perhaps little reckoning to have with them Jeremiahs trials. The Lord then speaks to him, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not;" as if He had said to him, "Baruch, these things which thou callest great are not worth thy seeking; I see the deceitfulness of thy heart, and the ambition of thy carnal mind; thou art seeking great things; seek them not!" This was the counsel that God gave to Baruch; and this is the counsel that He now gives to His living family: "Seek ye great things? seek them not."

But some may say, "If we are not to seek great things, what are we to seek? Are we not commanded to covet earnestly the best gifts?" The great things that Baruch was seeking were little things in the sight of God; as those things which are great in the eyes of God are little in the eyes of professors. God and man have very different ideas on this subject, for "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways."

Does the Lord say, "Seek not **great** things?" What then? "Seek **real** things." Mark the difference. **Great** things may suit the

carnal mind, but **real** things will alone suit the spiritual mind. "O that Thou wouldst bless me **indeed!**" cried one whose inmost soul was panting for realities; and with his prayer do I, in my right mind, join heart and soul. Realities are what my soul, when the Lord is pleased to bedew me with His Spirit, is breathing after; not **great** things, but **real** things. By **real** things I mean those spiritual blessings that are dropped into the soul by the mouth of God—the solemn verities of the kingdom of God made known by the Holy Ghost—such as the smiles of God's countenance, the testimonies of His mercy, atoning blood sprinkled upon the conscience, Christ's righteousness imputed and revealed to the soul, visits from Jesus, soft whispers of His love, blessed intimations of His favour, communion with Him, a broken heart, a tender conscience, a contrite spirit, godly fear in exercise.

Now these are **real** things. They are not what dead professors desire. Such never want power, unction, savour, dew, to be felt in their souls. There is in them no sighing after the smiles of God's countenance, or the manifestations of His covenant love. The great bulk of what is called "the religious world" despise these things; they are not in their book, their Sunday school does not teach them; the gown and bands of their pulpits does not preach them. They would rather hunt after that will-o'-the-wisp called "decided piety," or self-righteousness new christened "holiness," or missionary zeal, or tract dispersing.

Having no faith to realize unseen things, they want something visible to sense, something intelligible to reason, something tangible, something within the grasp of the natural mind. But to be poor and needy, tempted and tried, with no hope but that which God gives, no faith but that which God communicates, no love but that which God sheds abroad, no peace but what He speaks, no religion but what He breathes into the soul, is as much beyond their understanding as their desire. Nor until a man has come to the end of all the religion of the creature, and been divinely initiated into the spiritual knowledge of the only true God, has he any understanding of, or appetite for, those real

things in which the very sum and substance of vital godliness, the very marrow and essence of true religion consists.

There is a desire in many to be religious, but they utterly mistake what true religion is. To live a good life, to abstain from sin, "to cultivate," as it is called, grace, to be holy, to do good to their fellow-creatures, to exert themselves for the conversion of others—in these and similar things do most consider religion to consist. But a man may do, and be all this in the flesh, "which profiteth nothing" (John 6:63) and thus come short of eternal life.

I solemnly assure you that these things will never speak peace to your souls—I mean "the peace of God which passeth all understanding"—in a dying hour. These things have been possessed by hundreds who have perished in their sins. They were, perhaps, highly esteemed professors in their day; were pointed out as examples to others, died in a false peace, and in funeral sermons were sent triumphantly to heaven; when, could their souls miserable flight have been followed, they would have been seen to sink into the lowest hell. These things, if God has touched your conscience with His finger, you know from experience are delusive and vain; and, therefore, what your soul is panting after in those secret moments when God's eye is looking into your heart, is to feel the savour, the power, the unction of heavenly things, and to have the blessed visitations of God's love, and the manifestations of His grace and mercy.

II. But the Lord graciously condescends to give Baruch a reason why he was not to seek great things. "For behold," He says, "I will bring evil upon all flesh; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

1. The "evil" which God threatens in the text, "to bring upon all flesh," is not **moral** evil. Some ungodly men have preached the awful doctrine that "God is the author of sin." Far from my soul be that horrid blasphemy! God is not the author of sin; that holy, pure, and spotless Being could not, cannot, create that which is evil. Far, far from my soul be such a horrid thought!

There is, indeed, a passage in Scripture in which God is said to "**create evil**" (Isai. 45:7) and another, in which we read, "Shall there be **evil** in a city, and **the Lord hath not done it?**" (Amos 3:6.) But in neither of these passages is **moral evil**, that is, sin, intended, but "calamity, trouble," as the context shows, and as the word in the original sometimes signifies, as (Gen. 19:19), "Lest some evil"—that is, calamity—"take me, and I die." "I make **peace**, and create **evil**." The one is the opposite of the other; but **moral evil** is not the opposite to "**peace**." "Trouble, distress, war," are the opposites of "peace;" but "moral evil" is the opposite of "**good**." So "the evil in a city, which the Lord doeth" **Am 3:6** is not sin; but God asks a question, whether such **calamities** as war, pestilence, or famine can take place without His bringing them upon it.

The evil spoken of in the text is of the same kind, and means trouble, distress, calamity. This evil the Lord brought literally upon all flesh, when He brought the armies of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem, when He gave up the holy city into the hands of the Chaldees, suffered the temple to be destroyed by profane hands, and the people to be carried into captivity. This "bringing of evil upon all flesh" (**that is, in this restricted sense, "upon all the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem"**) was indeed battering down all Baruch's carnal ambition. Seventy years captivity and desolation would effectually mar all his fond hopes of worldly advancement.

But viewing Baruch as a spiritual man, we may extend the meaning of the words, and take them in a spiritual acceptation as referring to God's work upon a man's heart. In this sense the Lord may be said to bring evil upon all flesh, as far as His saints are concerned; not, however, by introducing sin into their mind, or by infusing moral evil into their heart, but by bringing those troubles upon them which to the eye of the flesh appear evils, and yet often are productive of the greatest good.

For instance, a child of God may be secretly aiming at great things—such as respectability, bettering his condition in life, rising step by step in the scale of society. But the Lord will usually disappoint these plans, defeat these projects, wither these gourds, and blight these prospects. But in doing this, He brings no moral evil upon His afflicted child. He may reduce him to poverty, as He did Job; smite him with sickness, as He did Lazarus and Hezekiah; take away wife and children, as in the case of Ezekiel and Jacob; or He may bring trouble and distress into his mind by shooting an arrow out of His unerring bow into the conscience.

He has a certain purpose to effect by bringing this trouble, and that is to pull him down from "seeking great things." For what is the secret root of this ambition? Is it not the pride of the heart? When the Lord, then, would lay this ambition low, He makes a blow at the root. If great things **naturally** have been sought after, the blow falls **there**; if great things **religiously**, the blow is usually made in **that** direction. Thus when the Lord brings cutting convictions into the conscience; when He strips away fancied hopes, and breaks down rotten props, the great things (**so through ignorance esteemed**) in religion, sought for previously, and perhaps obtained, fall to pieces in this day of visitation.

Some here perhaps, myself among the number, may have fallen into the snare of which Hart speaks when he says, "he hasted to make himself a Christian by mere doctrine;" and in the day of visitation, when the Lord searched Jerusalem with candles, found how wretchedly we were deceived by seeking **great** things instead of **real**—aiming at gifts more than grace, and the glittering and the showy, rather than the solid and the substantial.

The Lord may be said spiritually to "bring evil upon all flesh," when He lays trouble and calamity upon the flesh, and upon all that the flesh loves. The blow falls upon the fruits of the flesh, when it cuts down fleshly religion, and roots up false hopes, vain

confidence, and self-dependence. The effect of these strokes is to lay the soul poor and needy at the footstool of mercy; and as the Holy Ghost enlightens the eyes to see, quickens the soul to feel, and raises up power to ask, there is now a seeking after real things—substance as opposed to shadows. Thus pardon, mercy, the testimony of God in the soul, the lifting up of the light of His countenance, the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus upon the conscience, with all the other spiritual blessings revealed in the gospel, are sought after, valued, and prized.

It is not enough now that they are heard from a minister, assented to in the judgment, or received on the testimony of others. They are only now so far enjoyed as they are tasted, felt, and handled in the depths of the heart. I believe I can say for myself, until evil came upon me in this way, chiefly through a long illness (**though if I have life now, I had it before that visitation**), yet until trouble came, and I was brought low in body and soul, I was never seeking as I have done since, the visitations and manifestations of the Lord's favour. Deceived by Satan and my own heart, I was seeking rather to make myself wise in the letter, than to feel the power of vital godliness in my soul.

But ever since then, amidst many discouragements, and with many alterations and changes, I have felt led, as I never knew before, or at least not from the same pressing sense of need, to seek after the visitations and manifestations of the Lord's favour—the dew of His Spirit, the application of His atoning blood, and the inward testimonies of His love and grace. Nor can I rest for salvation upon anything else. I am not, therefore, speaking at a peradventure. I know the ground, for I have travelled it; I have lined it with laborious footsteps; and therefore having tracked it out, I speak, in my measure, that which I know, and testify that which I feel.

When the Lord, then, thus brings evil upon our flesh, it is not to sweep away any **real** religion that we may possess. It is to sweep away our **false** religion. This winnowing fan is to fan away the

chaff, and leave the pure grain. This keen knife of the heavenly Anatomist is only to cut away the diseased excrescences, and unhealthy tumours, and leave the sound parts uninjured. When the Lord brings distress into the soul, it is not to destroy any one grace that has been communicated by the blessed Spirit, but to fulfil that word, "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." He puts "His vessels of gold and silver" (2 Tim. 2:20) into the furnace to take away their dross, that they may be "sanctified, and meet for the Masters use." For He has chosen His Zion in the furnace of affliction; and "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, that He may purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3.)

2. But we pass on to consider the promise of special preservation which the Lord gave Baruch in the midst of this calamity. "But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest." In its **literal** sense, it gave Baruch a promise of temporal preservation. In the midst of all the calamities that should befall Jerusalem, his life should be untouched.

But I believe the words contain a deeper sense, and admit of a **spiritual** and **experimental** interpretation.

There is a life given to the elect when the blessed Spirit quickens their souls—a life eternal, communicated to them out of the fulness of the Son of God. This life is a personal, individual life; and thus there seems to be a sweetness contained in the expression, "**thy** life." "**Thy** life will I give unto thee for a prey." This life which is treasured up in the fulness of Christ is breathed into the soul in the appointed time by the Holy Ghost, is kept alive there by His Almighty power, and will burn brighter and brighter in the realms of endless day.

This life was **given** unto Baruch; and it is the sovereign gift of God to all His elect. It is not earned by free will, nor merited by creature righteousness; it is not nature transmuted into grace, nor youthful piety which by due and diligent cultivation, through

some gradual and imperceptible process, has grown up into spirit. This divine and supernatural life cannot be infused into the blood from religious parents, cannot be obtained from the Sunday school, nor taught by tutors and governesses. The happy partakers of this divine life are not so "born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," but directly and immediately "of God" (John 1:13.) And that because they were chosen in Christ before the world began, and are personally interested in His blood and righteousness.

3. But we may observe, from the expression made use of in the text, that this life which is given to the child of God, is given to him in a peculiar way. "Thy life will I give unto thee **for a prey.**" Are you not, my friends, continually finding that this life is given in God's own channel of communication? If your experience resembles mine, you sit sometimes by your fireside, or you take your walk in the fields, sighing and panting after the manifestations of God's loving-kindness and tender mercy. But I want it to come in my way, not God's way. I want to have it poured, as it were, into my soul out of Christ's fulness, without its passing through the channel of griefs, trials, sorrows and difficulties. But God does not give His favours in this way. He says, "Thy life will I give"—a free, irreversible gift, but to come in a certain way (**I was going to say on a certain condition, but I hate the word "condition"**)—"for a prey."

Let us see if we can penetrate into the spiritual meaning of these words. The word "prey" points out that this life is an object of attack. We hear of "beasts of prey," and of "birds of prey," and the expression implies a carnivorous animal. Thus the words, "Thy life will I give unto thee **for a prey,**" imply that there are ravenous beasts that are continually seeking to devour this life—voracious enemies upon the watch, who are eager to prey upon this life which God the Holy Spirit has kindled in the soul. How accurately and how experimentally do these words describe the inward kingdom of God! Eternal life is given by God, and kept by Him when given; preserved by His power from being ever extinguished. And yet preserved by a perpetual miracle, like a

burning lamp set afloat upon the waves of the sea; or, to use a figure that I have somewhere seen, like a lighted taper carried over a heath in the midst of a gale of wind.

But the figure employed in the text points to ravenous beasts that are continually seeking to prey upon that hidden life, which is the gift of God. I do not mean to say that they have any appetite for it, but it is the object of their attack. For instance, there is **unbelief**, that yawning monster, ever opening his jaws to devour, if it were possible, all living faith in the soul. Do you not often find this "beast of the field" **Isa 56:9** coming forth out of his den to prey upon the faith of God in your heart?

And at other times, his fellow-ravener, **infidelity**, that other monster from the deep, that other voracious beast from the bottomless pit, will be spreading forth his talons to grasp, in our feelings, all that testifies to the Being, character, and presence of God in the conscience. Some here, perhaps, may never have been so tempted, may never have had these awful suggestions presented to their minds. But if not in this manner, you may have been assaulted with **blasphemous** and **rebellious** thoughts against God.

Or if these beasts of prey have not thus violently roared upon you, the more subtle and insidious inmates of the forest may have sought to make you their prey. **Worldliness, pride, and covetousness** may have made much havoc with your religion unseen. The base lusts and filthy appetites of our fallen nature may have desolated your soul, and left sad marks of their talons in your conscience. Or if spared the attacks of these grosser beasts of prey, **presumption** may have seized you in his grasp; or you may have fallen out of his clutches, as is commonly the case, almost into the jaws of **despair**, and may just have escaped, "as the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear" (Amos 3:12.)

We read, too, of Satan "as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour." Thus, what with the lion without, and the

ravenous beasts within, wherever we go, we are beset with ferocious animals that are seeking to prey upon our souls.

Thus, "our life is given us for a prey;" and the power, faithfulness, and wisdom of God are manifested in keeping this life unhurt amidst all its enemies—all its enemies. As Daniel was preserved in the den of lions, and as the three men were preserved in the burning fiery furnace, so the life of God is preserved in the soul, in the midst of lions, as David says, "my soul is among lions" (Ps. 57:4) and amidst the fires, "Glorify ye the Lord in the fires" (Isai. 24:15.) So that the life of the child of God is one continual conflict between faith and unbelief, between enmity and love, between the grace of God and the rebellion of the carnal mind, between the sinkings of the drooping spirit and the liftings up of the light of God's countenance.

4. "In all places whither thou goest." This was true of Baruch literally. Whether he remained with the remnant who were left in the land, under Gedaliah, (2 Kin. 25:22) or was carried captive to Babylon, or was taken down into Egypt, as proved to be the case with him and his brother Jeremiah (Jer. 43:6, 7), his life was to be secure; but in such a manner as to seem to be in constant jeopardy. His life was given him, freely given, but not for him to play with. His life was secured him by the terms of the promise, as was more clearly expressed in nearly similar words to Ebed-melech, "I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee" (Jer. 39:18) but so given as to "stand in jeopardy every hour" (1 Cor. 15:30) and to be "in deaths oft." Change of place and scene mattered not. These procured him neither release nor respite. Canaan, Babylon, Egypt, might present different enemies, but enemies were everywhere to be found.

So spiritually, in all places whither the living soul may come, in whatever state or stage of experience it may be, life is given unto it for a prey. Is the child of God sinking in doubts and fears, and well-nigh overwhelmed with despondency, fearing lest "of faith he make shipwreck," and go down into the billows of endless woe?

His life is given him for a prey. **Despair** is now seeking to prey upon it; but "it shall not be given as a prey to its teeth" (Ps. 124:6).

Or has the Lord lifted up upon him the light of his countenance? Even then his life is still given him for a prey. **Presumption** may attack the soul that has been thus favoured, or **pride** make its insidious assault; thus, in either state, an enemy is at hand. If in doubt and fear, despair may open its mouth; if blessed with confidence, presumption or pride may "war against his soul." Thus, in whatever state or stage a spiritual man may be, whether a new-born babe, a child, a youth, a man in Christ, or a father or mother in Israel, his life is still given him for a prey; and, in every stage, he has just so much grace given as is needful for him, and only just so much.

Thus, the deeper a mans religion is, the more powerful are the enemies that attack him. The babe has little grace and few enemies; the man in Christ and strong in the Lord has enemies proportionate to his strength; the greater the grace, the more the trials; the stronger the faith, the heavier the burdens; therefore, be his state or stage what it may, "**in all places** whither he shall come," be it the barren sand or the green pastures, the land of great drought, or fountains of living waters—moments of sweet communion, or of guilt and self-condemnation—sorrow after an absent Lord, or enjoyment of a present Jesus; in whatever state or stage of Christian experience he may be, it is still true, "life is given him for a prey."

This then, my friends, is a short epitome of vital godliness. In my right mind, in standing up in this pulpit, or in any other where the Lord's providence may call me, I have, in my right mind, but one object; not to make proselytes to my creed—not to draw together a congregation—not to work upon your natural feelings; but to contend for the power of vital godliness, so far as I am acquainted with it. So far as I am under divine teaching, my desire and aim is not to deceive souls by flattery—not to please any party—not to minister to any mans pride or any mans

presumption; but simply and sincerely, with an eye to God's glory, with His fear working in my heart, to speak to the edification of His people, to do the work of an evangelist, and "to commend myself to every mans conscience in the sight of God." And depend upon it, that a minister that stands up with any other motives in aiming at any other ends than the glory of God in the edification of His people, bears no scriptural marks that he has been sent into the vineyard by God Himself; nor will the Lord own his labours, or bless his testimony.

So far, then, as I have been taught the mysteries of vital godliness, this is the truth that I believe and preach—that spiritual life is the sovereign and free gift of God to His elect, a covenant blessing, given freely in the appointed season; and that this life is maintained by the invincible energy of God the Holy Ghost, as an irrevocable gift, and to shine throughout an endless day. And yet though so freely, so irrevocably given, and so inviolably preserved, yet "given for a prey"—with difficulty preserved, so to speak, in the midst of enemies. It thus agrees with those words, "If the righteous **scarcely** be saved," not "scarcely" as implying any deficiency in the power of God to save, nor any risk of fatal or final miscarriage; but "**scarcely**" on account of the temptations, snares, hindrances, and obstacles with which he is beset.

If the Lord, then, has been our teacher, He has taught us something of these lessons; we have learned the **sovereignty** of the gift by seeing so many passed by, and us, the most undeserving, visited therewith; its **freeness**, by knowing our thorough ruin and helplessness; its **preservation**, by its being kept alive unto this day; and **the manner of its preservation**, by feeling the fangs of so many cruel enemies, and, though cast down, not destroyed. And thus we may set to our seal, that though a rough and rugged, a strange and mysterious way, that yet it is a right way, and one that leads to "the city which hath foundations," where there are "pleasures at God's right hand for evermore."

## Light Affliction and Eternal Glory

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 1, 1857

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:17, 18

From the cradle to the coffin, affliction and sorrow are the appointed lot of man. He comes into the world with a wailing cry, and he often quits it with an agonizing groan. Well is this earth called "a vale of tears," for it is wet with them in infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. In every land, in every clime, scenes of misery and wretchedness everywhere meet the eye, besides those deeper griefs and heart-rending sorrows which lie concealed from all observation; so that we may well say of the life of man that, like Ezekiel's roll, it is "written within and without, and there is written therein lamentations, and mourning and woe." But this is not all. The scene does not end here. We see up to death, but we do not see beyond death. To see a man die without hope is like standing at a distance, and seeing a man fall from a lofty cliff: we see him fall, but we do not see the crash on the rocks below. So we see a man die, but when we gaze upon the lifeless corpse, in the case of him who dies without an interest in Christ, we do not see how his soul falls with a mighty crash upon the rock of God's eternal justice. After weeks or months of sickness and pain, the pale, cold face may lie in calm repose under the coffin lid, when the soul is only just entering upon an eternity of woe.

But is it all thus dark and gloomy both in life and death? Is heaven always hung with a canopy of black? Are there no beams of light, no rays of gladness, that shine through these dark clouds of affliction, misery, and woe that are spread over the human race? Yes; there is one point in this dark scene out of which beams of light and rays of glory shine. It is as if looking up in a dark and gloomy night, when the heavens gathered blackness, we saw all at once the clouds rent asunder, and the cross of Christ hung up in the sky, from every point of which beamed

forth rays of unspeakable glory. So it is with the saints of God as they journey through this vale of tears: they are afflicted like other men, their fellow sinners and fellow mortals, and often a larger portion of affliction falls to their lot than to those whose portion is in this life. By these sufferings and sorrows they are bowed down with grief and trouble, and all is dark and gloomy without and within; but a ray of light falls upon their soul; they look up, and they see a once suffering Jesus, now sitting at the right hand of the Father, and around his glorious throne they view a band of immortal spirits, who have come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Those are the great "cloud of witnesses" to the love and faithfulness of a covenant God, who seem to speak from heaven to earth and say—"Brother, suffer on! The cross before the crown; the cup of wormwood and gall, the baptism of suffering and blood, before the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore." They are thus encouraged "to run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of their faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The Apostle, in the words before us, would thus cheer us onward, and show unto us why we should, not only with all patience but all joy, endure the sufferings that God may think fit to lay upon us in this time state. He unravels this deep mystery of present suffering; he solves that dark enigma which has perplexed so many saints of God, which filled Job with confusion, set Asaph in slippery places, and made Jeremiah curse the day of his birth. He stands forth, as a heaven-taught interpreter, to explain the dealings of God; as a divinely-commissioned ambassador, he unfolds the counsels of the King of kings, and proclaims aloud to the suffering church of Christ, in words full of peace and blessedness—"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

In opening up, with God's blessing, the spiritual meaning of these words, I shall

I.—*First*, show how our affliction, in this time state, is but *light*, and endures, speaking comparatively, *but for a moment*.

II.—*Secondly*, what *the blessed fruit* of this light affliction is—that when sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God, it "*worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*."

III.—*Thirdly*, how it does this; viz., in two ways: first, by enabling us *to look not* at the things which are seen, that are temporal; and secondly, by enabling us to *look at the things which are not seen, which are eternal*.

I.—"*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment*." That little word "*light*" may not exactly express the present feelings of your heart. You may feel, on the contrary, that your afflictions are very far from being light. They press you down to the very ground; they are just now exceedingly heavy; and sometimes they bow down both body and soul into the dust. Nor does the other expression of the apostle seem to suit your case; for instead of your afflictions being "*but for a moment*," they have already been spread over many months or years; and it seems at times, from their peculiar character and nature, that they must continue to be spread over the remainder of your life. But neither our feelings nor our forebodings are to be taken as proofs of how the matter really stands. We must receive God's testimony, which is and ever must be infallibly true, and not take the testimony of our feelings or fears, which is necessarily fallible and usually false.

But let us cast our eye a little more closely upon the afflictions that God's saints are especially called to endure, for it is of believers that the apostle speaks. It is *their* afflictions which are light, and endure but for a moment; it is *their* griefs and sorrows which "*work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*." And these afflictions, by way of clearness, we may divide into two leading classes. There are, *first, temporal* afflictions—those trials and sorrows more peculiarly connected with a time state, which the children of God have in common with all mankind; and there are, *secondly, spiritual* afflictions, which, as connected with the work of grace, are necessarily confined to the family of Christ.

i. As men, fallen men, partakers of flesh and blood, heirs of that sad legacy of sin that Adam left to all his ruined race, and living

in a world of sorrow and woe, we must needs have our measure of those temporal afflictions that were entailed upon all the posterity of our first parent. Looking at those, then, in a broad and general light, we may distribute them into various classes: such as bodily afflictions, family sorrows, providential trials. In fact, every suffering of body or mind that the sons of men are subject to by reason of the fall, comes in its measure upon the heads of God's children. And as the Lord, for wise reasons, sees good to lay the heaviest weights where they are most needed, temporal afflictions, generally speaking, fall in larger measure upon them.

1. How many of the saints of God, and some of them dear friends of my own, are at this moment lying on *beds of affliction and languishing*. Nor do I know scarcely a Christian whose soul is really thriving before God, who has not some measure of bodily affliction. In fact, it seems almost needful that we should have a certain measure of it. I myself for many years have had a large experience of bodily affliction, which has been one of my heaviest crosses, and has cut the very sinews of all that worldly happiness and pleasure which healthy men seem to enjoy. I, therefore, not only well know its nature, but I trust also in some measure its necessity, and the profit it communicates to the soul when sanctified by the grace of God. We are such foolish, giddy creatures that we are hardly fit to be trusted with health. It is like putting an inexperienced rider upon a high tempered spirited horse: he is unable to control the animal which he bestrides, and a heavy fall that may cripple him for life may be the consequence of his getting upon its back. When we are in vigorous health and strength, the blood seems to bound through every artery and vein; we are full of high spirits, life, and animation. It seems as if there was abundance of happiness in the world all around us, in the sun and sky above us, in the fields and flowers beneath us, in the balmy breath of spring that blows upon us. To breathe, to live, to move, to walk, all are pleasurable for their own sake, when the body is in strong, vigorous health, the appetite good, the spirits buoyant, and air and exercise exhilarate and delight the animal frame. It is said of the pure air of Australia, that it is a delight even to breathe it. Thus we should delight in life for what life is and has, be content with breathing earthly air, and, left to ourselves, should make our Paradise below the skies. To overthrow this heathenish sensuality, this godless love of living;

to put a bitter into every natural sweet; to lay a daily cross upon the shoulder (for if health be the greatest temporal blessing, the want of it must needs be the greatest temporal misery); to drop gall and wormwood into the cup of life, the Lord sees fit in most cases—for we cannot lay down a rigid rule—to lay affliction upon his children, and in very many cases to give commission to illness and disease to invade their earthly tabernacle. By this they learn that the happiness of animal health, which after all, is but the happiness of a bird or a butterfly, is no more to be theirs; that this avenue of pleasure is for ever shut against them; and that a fallen body has for them its pains and sorrows as well as a fallen soul. Thus the world is marred to them, with all its pursuits and pleasures; they see nothing below the skies really worth living for, or capable of affording happiness; and when, under all the pain and languor of their afflicted tabernacle, they find the Lord near and dear to their heart, sanctified illness is proved to them far better than unsanctified health, and pain of body a far less evil than pain of conscience.

2. *Family afflictions* form another frequent source of grief and sorrow to those that love the Lord, and whom the Lord loves. Many of the most eminent saints of God have had to drink of this most bitter cup in a large measure. What afflictions of this nature befell David! How he, if possible, would have given his own life for that of his rebellious son Absalom—so deeply did he feel his death, and as Joab reproached him, would sooner have lost all his armed host than that one beloved idol. How arrow after arrow from the same quarter pierced also the tender heart of the patriarch Jacob! Every shaft that quivered in his bosom came tipped with some family sin, or some family sorrow. It needs must be so more or less with most. Our earthly happiness is much derived from our families. We love our wives, we love our children; they are dear and near to us, a part of ourselves; and these ties, so tender and so close, form a main part of the sweetness that is in any earthly lot. That we may not, then, set up these family idols as our household gods, nor cleave too closely in affection to them, it needs must be that gall and wormwood should be dropped into this cup, lest it prove too sweet; lest we love our wives, children, relations, and friends too dearly; lest they usurp the place of God, and by becoming idols, link and fetter us down too closely to earth. Entangled in these silken ties, we should grow more and more attached to life; and

in proportion as these fibres of sin and self entwined themselves more closely round our heart, would they eat out the life of God, and drain away all our spiritual strength and vital sap. As, then, to save the oak, the ivy is cut down, so the axe must fall to sever these too ensnaring, these too tender ties: and as they become cut or loosened, more room seems made for the things of eternity more room for the Lord Jesus Christ, and for those spiritual affections to expand and grow, which, as drawn up by the Sun of Righteousness, spread themselves upward to that heaven where he is, and whence they came down.

3. Many, again, of the Lord's people are heavily weighed down with *poverty*. God has chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, as knowing that "love of money is the root of all evil," and therefore mercifully cuts the root to prevent the evil. Poverty starves a good deal of self-indulgence by denying the means; and thus the poor are cut off from the gratification of many "foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" by the very want of means possessed by the rich to gratify them. Still, if poverty has its blessings, it has its miseries, and under them many who fear God deeply groan.

ii. But these temporal afflictions (though the Lord often makes them very heavy to his children, whose feelings are tender, and who often, through unbelief and fear, misread his mind in sending them) are all light compared with those of a *spiritual* nature, and which, as such, are of course peculiar to the saints of God. What is loss of health, of family, of friends, of property, to the hidings of God's face to guilt of conscience to distressing fears as to the reality of the work of grace upon the soul to anticipations of that tremendous wrath of God which is revealed in a broken law? What are all the temporal afflictions that may be heaped upon one's head compared with the frown of the Almighty, the arrows of his wrath, the touch of his weighty hand, or dismal forebodings of sinking for ever beneath his offended justice and most terrible displeasure? An arrow in the conscience, shot by the unerring bow of God, will make a man truly and deeply miserable until it be extracted by the same hand that inflicted it. The wound that God's Spirit gives can only be healed by the balm that God's Spirit applies. Spiritual griefs weigh heavy; heart sorrows sink deep; distress of mind and guilt of conscience penetrate into every recess of the soul. And they have this peculiar ingredient in

them which makes their stroke so bitter—that they all seem but foretastes of heavier and deeper woes to come, and that without hope or help, relief or end, through a miserable eternity. Let afflictions of a temporal kind be heaped upon your head: they cannot *always* last; they must sooner or later come to a close, and if not before, they must cease with the ceasing of natural life. But anticipations of God's terrible displeasure—fears lest you should die without hope and sink into everlasting despair: this is truly overwhelming when it falls upon the conscience as a dreaded or almost certain reality. What aggravates the feeling of all these dismal fears so much is the terrible conviction that when temporal trials come to a close, eternal sorrows only begin.

But besides this, there are many and various spiritual afflictions which are consistent with a good hope through grace; nay, with a sweet assurance of coming off more than conqueror; but these I cannot now enter into, as I have scarcely begun with my text. I therefore pass on to show how they are "light."

iii. But how can the apostle call them "light?" We do not feel them so. Does the man of God write here with the pen of the Holy Ghost, when he so contradicts our feeling and experience? Is he describing the sorrows and sufferings of the saints in their right colours when he says they are light? How can they be light if I feel them heavy? so reasons our heart. But the Holy Ghost, we may be well assured, makes no mistake here. He describes things as they really are—as they are in God's sight, which must be right—not as they are in our view or apprehension, which may be, and usually is, altogether wrong.

But let us see if, with God's help and blessing, we cannot cast some ray of gospel light upon this expression, and not merely assent to it upon the apostle's authority, but set to it also the seal of a living, gracious experience.

1. First, look, then, at *your deserts*. See what you have merited by your disobedience—how you have brought yourself under the curse of God's righteous law. Take a retrospect of your past life. Cast up the sins that you have committed from the time that early reason dawned—sins of infancy, of boyhood, of youth, of manhood; sins before the Lord was pleased to enlighten you by his Spirit and call you by his grace. Take a review, next, of your

slips and falls since you were called—think how you have sinned again and again against light and conscience, love and blood. What ingratitude, rebellion, pride, self-righteousness, carnality, and worldliness you have been guilty of! What lusts you have harboured—what feelings of envy, jealousy, and wrath you have indulged, even against the saints of God! Look at the poor returns you have made to the Lord for those temporal favours which he has bestowed so abundantly upon you, and the still poorer returns for the spiritual mercies which he has so kindly heaped upon your head. Put them into one scale and all your afflictions, both temporal and spiritual, into the other. Are your afflictions heavy *now*? Weigh your deserts against your afflictions: then examine the scale and see whether your afflictions are heavy or light. "No," say you; "I am satisfied now; if I had my afflictions doubled, trebled—aye, I might go on and say increased a hundred fold, all, all would be lighter than my deserts; all, all infinitely less than my sins committed against a holy God—merit at his hands!"

2. But again, look at the word "light" in this point of view: compare your sufferings and afflictions *with the torments of those who are lying for ever beneath God's terrible indignation*. Listen to the groans, the cries, the blasphemies of the damned in hell! Compare your afflictions with theirs. Have you a good hope through grace? Has the Lord Jesus Christ ever been made precious to your soul? Do you ever believe that you shall be with him in the realms of eternal bliss? Compare your afflictions, though they may be heavy in themselves, with what the lost are now enduring in the realms of eternal woe. Are your afflictions heavy now?

3. Again: compare your afflictions and sufferings *with those of the Lord Jesus*. Was *your* back ever mangled with stripes? Was *your* head ever crowned with thorns? Were nails ever driven through *your* feet and hands? Did *you* ever hang upon the cross amidst the taunts of jeering foes, the forsaking of disciples, the hiding of God's face, the withdrawing of the light of the sun, and the sins of millions charged upon your head with all the wrath of God due to them? Did *you* ever sweat great drops of blood? Was *your* soul ever bowed down within you, so that you were baptised as Jesus was with a bloody baptism, and drank the cup of suffering from him to the last dregs? Look at the suffering Jesus! Behold the Lamb of God in the garden and on the cross! Where

are your sufferings now? A little bodily pain; a little languishing in a morning; not quite so much money as you would like; a child afflicted; a husband, perhaps, more a trial than a comfort! Do you mean to compare these afflictions with the sufferings and sorrows of the God-Man? Viewing then, the matter in this light, can you now say that your afflictions are heavy? Well may the apostle say "our light affliction!" Yet his were not light. Read the catalogue (2 Cor. 6. and 11.)—the perils he endured by land and sea; the times he was shipwrecked, scourged, stoned, cast into prison, besides all his spiritual griefs and sorrows! Yet he could say, looking to them all, "our light affliction!"

iv. But were it ever so heavy, he stills says it is "*but for a moment.*" What is time compared to eternity? A drop compared to the ocean; a grain of dust compared to the world in which we dwell. These are insufficient comparisons. Time and eternity never can be compared together. Suppose that your afflictions were to last through life, and suppose that your life were prolonged to the utmost limit of human existence; nay, more—that all the afflictions that could be endured in body and soul were rained upon your head—every disease that could rack your body, every temptation that could distress your mind, and every agony ever endured by a saint of God—a matter which is not to say absolutely impossible, but at least exceedingly improbable. But say that all the afflictions of Job were yours—of Jeremiah, Jonah, David, Paul, the ancient martyrs, and those who yielded up their lives at the stake at Smithfield, or in the fires of the Inquisition: say that all these met upon your head. When death closed the scene and your happy soul was translated from the body into the realms of eternal bliss, what would that past scene be in your estimation as you looked down from the battlements of heaven upon the earth beneath which had been the scene of all those sorrows and afflictions? A moment. But it is not likely that you would have all these afflictions heaped upon your single head. The Lord will never lay upon any one of his children more than they can bear. "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." He is very tender, very compassionate, will never break a bruised reed, nor quench a smoking flax. It is but for a moment usually; that is, not merely as compared with eternity, but even with the duration of present life, that the Lord lays affliction on his children. You may have a severe illness, but health, or a measure of it, again returns; a loss in providence,

but it is in some way made up to you; a family bereavement, but time mitigates your grief, or a good hope of the departed relieves the acuteness of the sorrow; a very painful trial from a tender quarter, but some gracious support is communicated with it. Thus, though affliction, and sharp affliction too, comes, yet it is not all suffering either as regards duration or intensity. There is such a thing, when the Lord blesses it, as "glorying in tribulation," as "receiving the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost," and blessedly proving "as the sufferings of Christ abound, so consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Under the heaviest afflictions, the Lord usually grants the greatest support, and in the deepest sorrows gives the sweetest songs. Or, if not so, there is still a promise given, or a smile, or a word of comfort, or a look of love, or, a beam of his favour that comes glancing across the dark clouds and lights it up with heavenly glory. Though the path to heaven is a path of tribulation, it is not all suffering, nor is it always extended over a man's life, so that he has no respite or reprieve. There are intervals when the Lord suspends his afflicting hand, cheers the soul onward with his gracious smile, and giving us to see what the end of all his dealings is—the good of the soul, his own glory, and heaven at the end—enables us with Moses to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Thus viewed, well may we say with the apostle, "our light affliction;" and when we cast our eyes beyond the narrow precincts of time into the opening realms of eternity, we can fully agree with him in declaring that all the afflictions we can endure in this time-state are "but for a moment."

Now I hope, with God's blessing, I have cleared up the enigma, if ever it was an enigma to your mind—thrown it may be a little light on what might have puzzled you, when, filled with rebellion or self-pity, you were looking at your troubles and sorrows with the eyes of unbelief.

II.—But I pass on, as proposed, in the *second place*, to show what this light affliction *produces*—what, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, is its blessed fruit and effect. For let this truth be ever deeply impressed upon our mind, that there is not in affliction any power or tendency of itself to sanctify or save. It is at best but an instrument in the hands of the Lord, and can no more work by itself than any mechanical implement can execute any work

without the hand of the artificer. But viewed as such by the apostle, it is declared to *work* for us "*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" And if that be the case, well may it be called "light!"—well may it be declared to be "but for a moment!" But how does it work for us this far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Is there any merit in affliction and suffering? I have no doubt many think so. When I was a minister in the Church of England, I was usually very assiduous in visiting my parishioners, and especially the sick and afflicted amongst them, having for nearly seven years two parishes under my care. Being a fellow of a College at Oxford, I was not required to reside in either of them, nor did I do so for the first year, except for the long vacation; but as eternal things pressed with greater weight and power on my mind, I turned my back upon the University, and though much to my temporal disadvantage, went to reside in one of my parishes. The good of the people and the profit of my own soul were, I believe, my only two motives for this step. But when I went to reside in this country village, having a good deal of zeal and earnestness and a desire for the people's good, I was very assiduous in visiting them, and usually spent a portion of every day in going from house to house among the poor to converse with them as far as I could upon the weighty matters of eternity. And how often have my ears been pained with a speech like this (because I visited all who were sick, whether they professed religion or not):—"I hope I shall have all my sufferings in this life;" clearly meaning, if not expressed in so many words, that their hope was their sufferings in this life would be accepted as an atonement for their sins; that God was now punishing them for their offences and that thereby he gave them, as it were, some pledge that by afflicting them here, he would not afflict them hereafter. I name what I thus used to hear, not as if those who used such words were more ignorant or more benighted than others, but as a specimen of the view generally taken about afflictions; for such is the innate self-righteousness of man's heart, and so deep his ignorance of the ways of the Lord, that his bodily pains, and the very sickness that is to terminate in death, become invested with a certain merit in his eye. But do you think there can be any merit in affliction? in pain of body, distress of mind, loss of children, poverty and want, widowhood and old age, or in any amount whatever of bodily or mental suffering? Is that to be the price at which heaven is to be bought and glory won? Is there any fair exchange between the two? Will God, do you think,

barter heaven, an immortality of bliss and glory, for a toothache, a bad cough, an aching back, or a broken limb; for poverty, however distressing, of family afflictions, however grievous? Perish the thought! It is one which a spiritual mind can never entertain for a single moment, but at once rejects. No greater dishonour could be cast upon the blood and obedience of an incarnate God than to invest human affliction with any degree of merit, or put any amount of natural suffering upon a level with the sorrows and agonies of the Son of God. If, then, it work for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," it cannot do so, on the footing of merit, or by the possession of any intrinsic worth or value. How, then, can it work, if it do not work meritoriously? But is all work confined to merit? May it not work *effectually*, if all merits be discarded; work *instrumentally*, if it possess no innate power or tendency? Yes; surely there is no merit in the spade that turns up the soil, or in the sickle that reaps the corn. The merit is in the hand of him that wields them. Their efficacy lies in his strength and skill, not in their own. In this way, then, affliction works. It is an instrument in God's hand to cut down all our schemes of happiness and salvation, that the counsel of his heart and the work of his hands may stand for ever and ever. We cannot have both worldly happiness and spiritual bliss. We cannot have the heart given up to everything carnal, sensual, selfish, and ungodly, and at the same time filled up with every thing sacred, holy, and divine. Here we see how affliction works for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. By preparing our heart for it; by its being sanctified, through the grace of God, to produce in us that state of soul to which heavenly realities are so blessedly suited. You have lately had, say, a great deal of bodily affliction, or have passed through many and severe family trials, or are at this present moment steeped up to the lips in poverty. Now, if you are a partaker of grace and are able to weigh in the balance of the sanctuary the Lord's dealings with you, look at the effect of those trials and afflictions upon your soul, and what spiritual profit you have reaped from them. Have they brought you in any measure nearer to the Lord? Have they been in any measure sanctified to your soul's good? Can you find in them any of those fruits that the Scripture speaks of, such as this—"And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts

by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Can you say—"This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me;" or, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes?" Have your afflictions wrought in you rebellion, peevishness, fretfulness, self-pity, unbelief, and despair, or have they wrought prayer, supplication, confession, desires for the manifestation of Christ's love to your soul? Have they broken your spirit, laid you in the dust, weaned you from the world, made sin hateful and Christ precious, brought heaven before your eyes, and put earth under your feet?

But when we speak of afflictions being sanctified, and especially of working instrumentally an eternal weight of glory, it is not so much temporal as spiritual afflictions, that the Lord makes use of for that purpose. There is a certain preparation necessary for the manifestation of that grace to the soul which is the beginning and the pledge of eternal glory. For instance, guilt of conscience prepares the soul for the blood of sprinkling. The arrows of the Almighty, shot into the heart from his unerring bow, prepare it for the balm of Gilead; a taste of hell for a taste of heaven; the thunders of the law for the consolations of the gospel; views of self for views of Christ. Apprehensions of the wrath to come hunt the soul out of every false refuge, convince it of its need of an imputed righteousness, and preserve it from resting in a name to live. It is thus that the deepest trials usually issue in the greatest deliverances, the sorest distress in the sweetest consolation, and the pangs of hell in the joys of heaven. Our heart, too, is so full of the world that there is in it no room for Christ till he himself drives out the intruders, as he scourged the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Affliction in his hands, and especially spiritual affliction, convinces us of the sin and folly of loving the world, embitters it to us, and detaches our heart from it by loosening those strings that bind it so fast to time and sense. What power also sin exercises in our carnal mind, and what a need there is for chastisements to teach us the folly of our ways, and to convince us that none but Christ can save us from the wrath to come! Thus, in the mysterious wisdom of God, making all things to work together for good to those that love him, affliction itself is made to work an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But I must not pass by this beautiful expression. I must, with God's blessing, open a little of the force and beauty of this

remarkable language.

1. "The *weight* of glory." The Hebrew word "glory" literally signifies "weight;" and the apostle seems to have some allusion to that circumstance by connecting, as he does, the two words together. There is indeed a natural connection between what is weighty and what is solid and substantial. He would thus represent future glory as something solid, lasting, and durable, and therefore utterly distinct from the light, vain trifles of time, and even the passing afflictions of the day or hour. But he seems chiefly to be alluding to the exceeding greatness of that glory which is to be revealed as compared with our present faculties of body and mind and all our present conceptions. It is as though he should say—"In our present imperfect state, with our limited faculties of mind, and our weak, frail tabernacle, we could not bear the weight of that immortal glory which is prepared for the saints in the realms of bliss." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Heaven, with its opening bliss, would crush our present body and soul at once into the dust. "No man," said God to Moses, "can see me and live." When John in Patmos had a view of the glory of his risen Lord, though he had lain in his bosom at the last supper, yet he fell at his feet as dead. Therefore, we must have our soul purified from all stain of sin and expanded to the utmost of its immortal powers, and our body glorified and conformed to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, that soul and body may alike be able to bear the weight of eternal glory with which they are to be clothed. As the apostle speaks—"Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

2. But there is something in the word "*glory*" that I must not pass by. The Lord, in that touching chapter John 17., thus prays, or rather thus expresses his heavenly will—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." This is the "weight of glory" that the apostle speaks of—not merely freedom from sin and sorrow—not merely seeing Christ as he is, but beholding and enjoying that unutterable glory which the Father gave him, which is all the glory of Godhead as revealed in and shining through his human nature. The fulness and perfection of this glory is reserved for the saints of God to enjoy when they

shall see him as he is and know even also as they are known. We see a gleam of it when Christ is revealed to the soul; when the heavens are opened to faith; when his beauty and blessedness are manifested to our heart by the power of God. But the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" can never be fully comprehended in the present life.

3. How striking, too, are the words—"a far more exceeding"—and if I may be allowed to refer to the original, I may say that even they but feebly and imperfectly express the full and majestic meaning of the inspired apostle. It is literally, "by excess to excess," as if simple language were deficient, and the word must be repeated to give any idea of the exceeding vastness and immensity of that glory—that is beyond all hyperbole. But taking the words as they stand—and they are very beautifully translated—well may we say that this weight of glory as far exceeds all earthly cares and sorrows as eternity exceeds time, as Christ surpasses man, as heaven excels earth.

Now it is affliction, as sanctified by the Holy Spirit, which instrumentally works this "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" because through affliction grace is given, which grace is glory in the bud, as glory is grace in the flower. I believe I may say that I have never had any blessing which has not more or less come through affliction. The work began in affliction, is being carried on in affliction, and will doubtless be finished in affliction. In saying so, I speak the language of all God's suffering saints. In fact, without affliction, we are not fit for a blessing; there is no room in our heart for it. Affliction comes with stretched out hand and empties the soul of all earthly happiness, all perishing joys, and all carnal delights; and by sweeping out of it all these anti-Christ~~s~~—for anti-Christ~~s~~ they are—prepares it for Christ. He comes riding upon the storms of affliction; he appears amidst the dark night of sorrow; he beams in upon the heart when the heavens are hung in black and the soul is dressed in mourning. Then his visits are sweet, highly prized, dearly beloved; and most for this reason—because they come at a moment when they are made suitable by previous distress. It is in this way, and not by any meritorious efficacy that there is in suffering, that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Contrast the terms—see how the apostle puts them in a blessed antithesis: "light affliction," "weight of glory;" affliction "for a moment," glory "eternal." And thus he would cheer our desponding spirits, and would bid us look up and bear the cross, drink the cup, and endure the suffering, by setting before our eyes this blessed truth—that all these sufferings and sorrows are but for a moment, will cease with time, and issue in a glory without measure and without end.

III.—This leads me to our third and last point:—"*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"

The apostle speaks here of two separate things which sanctified affliction produces: the one thing is the taking of our eyes from off the things which are seen, which are temporal; and the other the fixing of our eyes upon the things which are not seen, which are eternal.

1. Our natural disposition is ever to be looking at "the things which are seen;" nor can we raise our eyes from them except grace enable us. Day by day we are ever looking to the things presented to our natural eyes, to the objects by which we are surrounded, and with which in our time state we have to do. Our daily business or employment, the station of life we occupy, our families and friends, the circle of hourly recurring duties,—all are saying, as with so many uplifted voices—'Look to me! think of me! I want you and must have you; whatever you neglect you must not neglect me. Give me all your heart.' And we are prone, too prone, to hear their voice. As Abraham incautiously and unwisely listened to Sarah when she gave him that carnal advice to take Agar for his wife, bringing thereby bondage and confusion into his house; so are we ever listening to the voice of the flesh, bidding us fix our eyes on the things which are seen. The things which are seen include everything upon which the natural eye of man can rest, the natural ear of man hear, the natural heart of man conceive, or the tongue of man utter; in a word, the expression embraces all the things by which we are daily surrounded, and in the employment or enjoyment of which our natural life consists. Now in proportion as we look at the things which are seen—the occupations, the amusements, the cares, the anxieties, or even

the daily duties of this passing scene, the more do they engross our thoughts, occupy our hearts, entangle our affections, and drag us from heaven to earth. It is not the being surrounded by them, or the being occupied in them as our lawful calling that is to be condemned, but the being so much taken up by them as to exclude the things of God and steal away our heart. So that it is to be feared that some who we dare not say are not the children of God, may pass pretty well the whole day without a spiritual thought: yes, shame be to them, without a spiritual cry or sigh after God. I must repeat the expression—shame be to them, so drowned and swallowed up are they in the poor perishing things of time and sense as not to have room for a spiritual desire after the Lord Jesus. Now the Lord will not suffer this. It may be that for a time he permits the soul to drag on this poor, cold, dying life; but he will not always suffer it to live at such a distance from him, and be so buried alive in this tomb of death and corruption. He has a rod in Zion that he in due time brings forth; he has an affliction in his treasure-house that he commissions as a messenger; and as he said of old, "Sword, go through the land," so he says—"Affliction, go to that house! Illness, seize that man! Family trial, fall upon that woman! They are forgetting me. Their hearts are in the world. Their business and their families are engrossing all their thoughts. Go into that house. Arouse and awake those sleepy ones out of their slumber." At his command the commissioned messenger comes; the rod descends upon the back; the stripes fall hard and fast, and the trials and sorrows, like Job's messengers, rush in, each worse than the other. Now the man begins to awake. "What," he says, "have I been doing and where have I been all this time? My shop, my farm, my business, my family, my occupation have been engrossing all my thoughts. I have not been living to the Lord. He has had little or no place in my affections. The Lord forgive me this thing. The Lord heal these base backslidings, and deliver my soul from the darkness and bondage which they have brought upon me." He prays and begs of the Lord to forgive him for having been so earthly and sensual, so carnally minded, for neglecting his best, his only Friend, and to make him spiritually minded, for he feels that this alone is "life and peace." If the Lord hear his prayer this is the fruit: he begins to look away from the things which are seen, which are temporal, and to look at those things which are not seen, which are eternal; and as sanctified affliction purifies his eyes, and makes the scales drop from them, eternal things

come with solemn weight and power into his conscience, and present themselves to his view as such vast realities that everything else falls into the shade before them. If blessed with faith and hope, he looks up and what does he see? Jesus at the right hand of the Father; the glorified spirits in heaven; the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And he sees that compared with these eternal realities, the things of time are not worth a serious thought; at any rate, that they are not worth a living affection. As, then, sanctified affliction is made in the hands of the Spirit a means of opening his eyes to see the power and blessedness of eternal things, the affections of his heart flow heavenward; Jesus makes himself precious; the "weight of glory" is seen in the dim distance; and under affliction's sharp discipline, he begins to press forward towards heaven and glory. Thus he looks away from "the things which are seen," which are merely temporal, all passing away, and he looks at "the things which are not seen," which are eternal. These will never come to a close, but stretch into ages of ever revolving ages, until, lost in the thought, he says "The Lord forgive me that ever my mind should have been drawn away from heaven to earth! The Lord pardon my sin that I ever should have been so drowned in these poor, perishing things of sense and time, and have forgotten those blessed realities that once were the whole joy of my soul!" Now he begins to see the effect of affliction—the sanctifying effect it produces; and he blessed God that ever he was kind enough to lay his rod upon him, subscribing with heart and soul to the testimony of David—"Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."

## Likeness to Jesus in Death and Resurrection

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Jan. 3, 1864

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Romans 6:5

With what noble conclusions, as full of truth and power as they are of beauty and eloquence, does the great apostle of the Gentiles often gather up his forcible arguments, and put as it were upon them a crowning glory. As an illustration of my meaning I will mention two or three examples. That noble chapter Rom. 8 will afford us at least two of them. Thus, after the apostle had been speaking of the high and special privileges of the saints of God in being predestinated, called, justified, and glorified, he crowns the whole with this grand and forcible conclusion: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?" We have another instance in the close of that glorious chapter, where, having challenged all creation to separate us from the love of Christ, he sums up the whole argument in those glowing words, full of the deepest truth and the sublimest eloquence: "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." Another instance you will find in 1 Cor. 3, at the close of the chapter: "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come;" (what an enumeration!) "all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." With what majesty and power, with what a rapid yet extensive glance over all things in heaven and earth, does he sum up the glorious conclusion that "all things" are the inheritance of the saints of God. We have another instance at the

end of the 15th chapter of the same epistle, that noble and glorious chapter which has carried consolation into thousands of mourning hearts, where having shown that "this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality, he adds, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory: O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." How these grand conclusions which I have thus quoted sum up the argument; how they put upon it a heavenly crown, carrying us far beyond the changing scenes of this weary life, and illuminating the very grave with a blaze of eternal glory. The words fall upon our mind like a noble stream terminating in a majestic waterfall; or as a grand piece of music, such as Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," closing with a crash of harmony, which crowns as with swelling beauty the melodious strains which have already ravished the ears. We have another of these beautiful conclusions, and if not so sublimely eloquent yet not less full of truth and beauty than those which I have already quoted, at the end of Romans 5: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." In these grand and glorious words the apostle sums up the whole of the preceding chapters. They are the crowning conclusion of those powerful arguments whereby he has shown the utter ruin of man in the Adam fall, and his recovery and justification by the bloodshedding and obedience of the Son of God.

But immediately that he had thus summed up the whole of his argument in that grand and glorious conclusion, that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound," a possible, and if it could be sustained, a most powerful objection to the truth of his conclusion at once strikes the mind. And as he was a warrior armed at all points, he comes forward immediately and without delay to meet that objection face to face; for it was an objection so formidable in its strength, that, could it once be established on a firm basis, it would be fatal to every argument which he had advanced and every word which he had uttered in favour of

sovereign, superabounding grace. What is this objection? Let us look at it fairly in the face; let us see this Goliath rearing itself up in all its stature and gigantic strength. We find it fully and fairly stated in the opening verse of the 6th chapter; for we must bear in mind that this division into chapters is a mere arbitrary separation, made for convenience of reading and reference, and often seriously interferes with the course of the argument, which, in this epistle especially, is very close and sustained. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Under the form of an interrogation, he here starts a most formidable objection to the conclusion at which he had arrived, and one which I think you will fully admit must be fatal to its truth if it could be fully established. This, then, is the objection, as put into the mouth of an enemy. "Well, if what you say is true, Paul; if where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, what is the necessary, legitimate consequence? What is the conclusion we must draw from your argument? Why, simply this: that the more we sin, the more we shall glorify the grace of God; for if grace is to superabound over the abounding of sin; if the tide of God's favour is to rise in proportion to the tide of our transgression, then of course the more we sin the more we shall glorify God, and the better we shall please him; for by the increasing magnitude of our iniquities the more will his mercy and goodness be magnified in justifying us freely from them." Now if that doctrine could be established as a fair and legitimate conclusion from the superabounding of grace over the abounding of sin, it would be a fatal objection to salvation by grace; for it is evident that that teaching, even were it that of an apostle, must be wrong which saps the very foundations of morality; that doctrine must be a lie that overturns the very foundations of the throne of God itself, which are based on righteousness and judgment. The apostle, therefore, felt himself bound to meet the objection fairly and fully, and either beat it down, or himself be beaten down by it. How then does he meet it? First, he wards off the hostile blow by a solemn rejection, as though he would shake it off with the same abhorrence as he shook off the viper which fastened on his hand when he had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire (Acts 28:3): "God forbid!" Then when he

has warded the blow by the solemn rejection of the accusation with all the abhorrence of his spiritual mind, he deals a stroke with his keen Damascus blade that lays the objection dead at his feet: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" That is the way in which he answers the objection—an answer, too, of most triumphant power and truth.

But his argument may not be obvious to your mind perhaps at this moment in all its force and power. Let me then endeavour in a few words and by a few simple figures to point it out to you more clearly. This you will observe is the foundation of the argument, that if a person be dead to a thing, he can no longer live in that thing; for death has altogether deprived him of the power to do so. Take a few examples. Look at that officer urging on his troops to battle, like Col. Gardiner at the battle of Preston Pans, when, to save a regiment of infantry from being cut to pieces, though he was in the cavalry, he dismounted and took the lead; or, like Hedley Vicars in the Crimea, when he rushed forth cheering on the soldiers to take the Redan. He draws his sword, he rushes forward, but at that moment he is cut down by the scythe of a Highlander, or a bullet strikes his heart. Where is all his fighting now? He was living in it; for it was then his life. But can he live in it now? No, for down he drops dead on the plain. Take another instance: a man suddenly or gradually loses his sight, and eventually becomes stone blind. His previous life might have been a life of seeing sights—travelling from place to place to see the wonders of other climes and the beauties of nature and art. But where is his sight-seeing now? where is the life that he led in roaming about to feast his eyes with beauty? It is dead. His sight-seeing ended with the death of his eyes. Take another case: here is a man swallowed up, as many are, some of them I have personally known, in the love and practice of music. He eats music, he drinks music; with music he sleeps, and with music he wakes. But through the advance of years, or what is called accident, he became deaf. Where is his music now? his Handel, his Mozart, his concerts, his operas? The sweetest sounds or the most discordant cries are now one and the same to him. He is dead to sound, and sound is dead to him. He once lived in it, but

death has seized both it and him. Take another case, that of an artist, a man who lives by his pencil, his painting brush, or his chisel. He becomes old, blind, paralysed: where is his brush or his chisel now? Dropped from his withered fingers. Where is now his life as an artist, as an exhibitor? Dead. This, then, is the argument of the apostle, and, though very simple, yet a most forcible argument it is; that if a man is dead to a thing he cannot live in it. But how does he apply it? He first assumes that a Christian is dead to sin, a subject which he more fully opens up in this chapter, and in which, with God's blessing, I shall follow him this morning; and then from that assumption he draws the conclusion that if he be dead to sin, he cannot live in it; and if he cannot live in it, then he cannot commit evil that sin might abound, and so grace superabound. That is the argument whereby he meets the objection; and nearly the whole drift of the chapter before us is to expand it and trace it out in a fuller and clearer development. But this will become more evident to you if I am enabled to open up the text in which, in a very short compass, he has embodied the whole arguments.

You will observe that in it the death and resurrection of Christ form its two leading features. I shall, therefore, divide my subject into two leading branches corresponding with those two features. But in order to present it before you with more striking contrast, I shall subdivide each branch in a similar manner, so as to make their comparison more plain and evident.

I.—My *first* leading branch, then, will be the *death* of Christ, the *likeness* of that death, and the being *planted together* in that likeness; corresponding with the words, "For if we have been planted in the likeness of his death."

II.—My *second* will be the *resurrection* of Christ, the *likeness* of that resurrection, and our being *planted* in the likeness of that resurrection; corresponding with the second clause of our text: "We shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

And as all preaching to be profitable must be practical as well as

experimental, I shall, if the Lord enable,

III.—*Thirdly*, draw some *practical conclusions* from our union with Christ in his death and resurrection, such as the apostle deduces when he urges that we are to "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I.—The death and resurrection of Christ are not only two grand gospel doctrines, but are two grand, indubitable gospel facts. They are no so much truths revealed from heaven—doctrines which we have to believe upon the testimony of God, as they are solid facts, actual circumstances which took place before the eyes of many witnesses, upon whose credible testimony we believe them. We may, therefore, call them the pillars of our most holy faith, the Jachin and the Boaz of the temple of mercy. Be it ever borne in mind that our holy religion is built not upon suppositions, but upon facts which were cognisable by the human senses; and that no two facts could be more clearly established than that Christ died upon the cross, and that he rose again from the dead. If, then, these two pillars of our most holy faith, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, could be removed, or shaken, as Samson shook the pillars of the house of Dagon, the noble fabric of the Christian religion would fall into ruin; and its dust and rubbish might be swept into the kennel as easily as you might sweep into the street the sprinkling of snow which has fallen this morning. But as long as Christ's death and Christ's resurrection stand upon their basis as gospel facts, you may as well attempt to push the Alps away from their base with a broom as to move Christianity from its place.

i. I shall first, then, direct your thoughts to the *death* of the Lord Jesus Christ, and show you that not only Christ's death was a most blessed and indubitable gospel fact, but that as we penetrate into its causes, it is a truth pregnant with most heavenly fruits. *Why* then did Christ die? There must have been a reason for his dying. There must have been a strong necessity either in the nature of things, or according to the will of God, that his dear Son should suffer, bleed, and die. What was that reason? What was that necessity? In order to see this point more clearly,

we must take a view of the *covenant of grace*. Man, we know, had forfeited by sin the favour of God; had incurred the penalty of his transgression, natural and spiritual death. Now if he were to be restored to the favour of the Almighty; if the sentence of death were to be repealed; if his sins were to be pardoned, and the image of God in which he had been created renewed, it could only be by the unmerited favour of him against and before whom he had sinned. Herein, then, lies the foundation of that covenant of grace, which is sometimes called "the new covenant," as distinct from the old. But of this new covenant it was necessary there should be a Mediator, that is, an intervening Person between God and man, with whom it should be made, and in whom it should be valid. Jesus, the Son of God is this Mediator, as the apostle says: "Ye are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant." (Heb. 12:14.) Now that the new covenant of which he was thus the Mediator required the death of its Surety; for Jesus, as the Mediator, "was made a Surety of a better testament," or covenant. (Heb. 7:22.) But we know that it is an established principle in law that the surety or bondsman should endure the same penalty or punishment as the person for whom he is bound, if that person cannot endure it himself. If a man were sentenced to death and the law allowed a substitute, as I believe is the case in China, and was sometimes permitted of old, it would not be sufficient if that substitute were imprisoned. Unless he actually died as the criminal had been adjudged to die, the majesty and dignity of the law could not be satisfied, nor would justice have its full claim. But take it on lower ground. If you are a bondsman for £1,000 to oblige a friend, and your friend unhappily becomes a bankrupt, his creditor will not let you off by your paying only £50. No, they will exact the utmost sum of the bond with the severest rigour, and rather sell you up stick and stone than not have the full amount. If it were not so, of what value would any bond be? It may seem hard upon the bondsman, and so it is individually, but in no other way can there be satisfactory security. Now take this argument with you into the domain of grace. Man by sin had come under the penalty of death, and brought himself under the execution of that forewarned threat, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt

surely die." Unless, therefore, the Surety had in the eternal covenant engaged to die in the sinner's place, he could not and would not have been an available surety; the penalty adjudged to man would not have been submitted to by him. His mediation, therefore, would have fallen short of what was demanded. If you offer yourself as a surety for a friend, and the bond is drawn up for £1,000, and you can only offer £500, your offer will not be accepted. It must be all or none. Upon these simple principles, therefore, if our blessed Lord was the Surety of the new covenant, it was needful for him to die, for everything short of actual death would have fallen short of the required penalty. We must bear in mind that our gracious Lord, as the Surety of the new covenant, undertook to suffer death that he might accomplish three purposes; first, that by laying down his precious life, and particularly by shedding his blood, he might redeem the Church by a *price*. We, therefore, read, "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20); and again, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." (1 Pet. 1:18, 19.) The second thing for which he died was to *offer a sacrifice*, and thus put away sin; and thirdly, to endure the *punishment* which was due to us. We therefore read, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isai. 53:5.) The *price* we have considered; now view the *sacrifice*.

2. If, then, our Lord could only put away sin by the once offering of himself, it was needful for him to die, in order *to complete the sacrifice*. The very essence of a sacrifice consists in the death of the victim, and that by a violent and bloody death inflicted upon it by the sacrificer. We may easily see this by casting a glance at the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which we know were instituted as types and figures of the sacrifice of Christ. Supposing that, through the casual or wilful mistake of the priest, the lamb, or the bullock, or the goat had not been actually slain, or had escaped by flight from the hand of the sacrificer, the sacrifice would not have been complete; indeed it would not have been a sacrifice at all. So unless our gracious Lord had actually

died upon the cross, the sacrifice would not have been complete, nor would the sins of the Church have been put away. It is a primary, a foundation principle, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) Thus, unless our blessed Lord had actually shed his precious blood and laid down his life for us, not a single sin could have been pardoned.

3. But again, as I have just hinted, the Lord Jesus Christ by his death endured the *punishment* which was due to us. He "was made a curse for us." The wrath of the Almighty, which was due to us, fell in all its crushing weight upon his sacred head when "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree," for "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."

4. But there is another reason still why the blessed Lord must needs die. Not only is the new covenant a covenant in the strict sense of the word, that is, a compact or agreement, but is also, as the Greek word signifies, a *will* or *testament*. Now we know that a will, as the apostle argues, "is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." "Where then a testament is there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." This is a principle not only of law but of common sense. The book which we hold in our hands is called the "New Testament," as being the will of Jesus to the Church. But to make that will valid the testator must die.

5. But again, unless our gracious Lord had died, there could have been *no resurrection*. But his ascension to the right hand of God to be the enthroned King of Zion was as needful as his death, and as important a part of the new covenant; for it was a part of "the joy set before him for which he endured the cross, despising the shame." But where would have been his resurrection and his ascension unless he had died and been laid in the silent tomb?

6. Nor, again, would he have been our *forerunner and blessed example* in dying, unless he had meekly bowed his head in death. We have to die, and he died to teach us how to die, that his blood sprinkled upon our conscience may take away the fear of death, and that we, supported by his rod and staff, may not fear to pass

through the dark valley of the shadow of death. For these and other reasons, which I cannot now stop to name, there was a necessity that our Lord should die.

ii. But now let us, having cleared the ground a little, show *how* our Lord died; that is, take a view of the *circumstances* under which he died, because we have to be planted in the likeness of his death, and in some if not all of these circumstances we are to resemble him.

1. Our gracious Lord, then, first died under the curse of *the law*. Death, and nothing less than death, was the penalty of the law as prescribed and adjudged in Paradise, and as repeated on Sinai's blazing top. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is the very voice of God, and is re-echoed in every living conscience. Unless, therefore, our gracious Lord had died under the law, he could not have redeemed us from the curse of the law. But by his being made a curse for us, for "cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree," the curse was removed off our head as being transferred to his. Bear this in mind, then, that our Lord, in a mystical and spiritual sense, died under the curse of the law.

2. But again, our Lord died under the *weight of imputed sin*. "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." All our sins were made to meet, as it reads in the margin of Isaiah 53:6, upon his sacred head. Under the weight, then, of our sins, so to speak, he sank and died. We must not suppose that the blessed Lord merely bore the weight or sin as if he supported it with all the majesty and power of Godhead. O no; he most deeply felt it. The sorrows of his bruised soul, the pangs and grief of his broken heart and agonising spirit, were beyond the conception of men and angels; so that, mystically speaking, he sank away and died beneath them. In this suffering death was much of the virtue and validity of the sacrifice.

3. But again, our gracious Lord, in a mystical and spiritual sense, *died under the anger of God*; for the wrath of the Almighty due to

us as transgressors was transferred to him; and as he stood fully and thoroughly in our place and stead, enduring the anger that we must have endured, and bearing the curse which must have otherwise rested upon us to all eternity, the wrath of God was poured out upon him, and under that wrath he sank and died.

But here I must explain myself lest I lead you into error. When I say that our gracious Lord died under the law, under the weight of sin, and under the wrath of the Almighty, I should greatly deceive you if I led you to think he died actually under the weight of these terrible realities. Bear in mind that he was still the Son of God, notwithstanding his state of humiliation and death; that there was no wrath against him as God's dear Son, for he voluntarily put himself under it for our sakes; so that there never was any separation between his Father and him. On the contrary this very act of his suffering obedience was but a pledge and a proof of the love of God to him and of his love to his Father. Men have said very vaguely, very erroneously, that Christ died in the dark—that he died under the wrath of God. Now you might think from the language that I made use of in describing the nature of the death of Christ, that I hold the same erroneous notions. God forbid. Though our Lord died mystically and visibly under the law, under sin, under the wrath of God, he did not die actually under the wrath of God, any more than he died a felon, because he died a felon's death, or was a transgressor, because he was numbered with the transgressors. When, then, he had endured all that it was needful for him to endure of the wrath of God due to us; when he could say, "It is finished," the cloud cleared away: he could say to the dying thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" and with his last breath exclaim, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." He did not then die in the dark, but under the shining in of the Lord's countenance. He did not die forsaken of God, under his eternal displeasure, as a reprobate dies, and as the Jews believed that he died. Thus, though in a mystical and spiritual sense, as visible to the eye of men, he died under the divine displeasure, yet it was not really so, for though his God forsook him for a while, he restored to him the light of his countenance before his holy soul ascended into Paradise.

iii. Now our Lord, in dying *under* these things—and this is the point to which I would next draw your attention—died *to* them. The force of the apostle's argument, as I have already explained, lies in this, that if a man is dead *under* a thing, he is dead *to* a thing. Is not this the case in the instance of the officer stopped by a bullet as he is rushing on at the head of his men? He is not only dead *under* the bullet, but he is dead *to* the battle in which he was fighting. So when our gracious Lord died *under* the law, he died *to* the law. The law could do no more. It had cursed him, condemned him, and spent its wrath upon him. What more could it do? It is so in human laws. A man commits a murder: he is tried, condemned, and executed. The law can do no more to him; it has done its worst. As he hangs upon the gallows he is dead to the law, and the law is dead to him. So when our Lord died under the law, the law had done its duty, and died in doing it. Like a bee or a wasp, it killed itself in stinging him to death. So with sin *imputed*; when our Lord died under imputed sin, he died unto it; sin was no more charged against him or imputed to him. Similarly, when he died *under the wrath of God*, there was no more wrath: it had spent itself. So when he died under the law, he died unto the law; when he died under sin, he died unto sin; when he died under the wrath of God, he died unto the wrath of God. As the apostle says, "Death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." Our gracious Lord died also under the power of death, for death had dominion over him; but he died unto death by dying under it also.

iv. Now, having thus showed you the nature and circumstances of the death of Christ, I now pass on to show you the *likeness* of that death. For you will bear in mind that the chief force of our text consists in this: that "we are *planted in the likeness* of that death." We cannot die *actually* as Christ died, even were we literally crucified as he was; for even in that case we should only die for ourselves, but he died for the Church. If, therefore, we are to be crucified with Christ, we are crucified, not actually and literally in our bodies, but in the likeness of that death in our

souls. Let me explain this a little more plainly and fully, and you will then see how, if we are to be planted in the likeness of Christ's death, we must die under the same things under which Christ died, or else there will be no likeness.

1. First, then, we are to die *under the law*, or else in that point there is no likeness to Christ's death. But when do you die under the law? When you feel its solemn curse in your conscience; when you are condemned by it, and brought in guilty before God; when by its killing sentence in your heart you are cut off from all hope, and sunk almost into despair under a sense of what the law requires and your inability to perform it. Now if you have never died under the curse and condemnation of the law, you have never been planted in the likeness of Christ's death, which we have seen was under the curse.

2. Again, Christ died *under sin* charged upon his sacred head when he was made sin for us. Now you must die in the same way, or else you are not planted in the likeness of his death. Some of you perhaps may see this dying under the weight of your sins more clearly than the point I have just handled in dying under the law. I fully believe that many of the children of God can trace in their experience more plainly what they have felt of the weight of sin crushing and slaying them as to all legal hope, than the strict curse and condemnation of the law as I have pointed out. Crucifixion, we know, was a lingering death. So many die a lingering death under the burden of sin who do not die, at least in their own feelings, a rapid death under the curse of the law. Now has sin ever lain upon your conscience as a very heavy burden? Were you ever brought in guilty before God? Were your sins ever mountain high and oceans deep in your estimation? Were you ever cut off by a sense of your awful sins from all hope of being saved in yourselves? Then you have died under them charged upon you, and by this dying you have been planted in the likeness of Christ's death.

3. Again, you must die *under a sense of God's wrath* due to your sins, feel the displeasure of the Almighty in your conscience, and

die under it, so as to have no hope of salvation by putting away that wrath by anything you can do; or else there is no likeness of Christ's death. We are to be planted in that likeness. But if there is no such dying as I have described under the law, nor under the weight of sin, nor under the anger of God, where is the likeness? A person brings me a photograph of a friend to look at. "Who is that?" I ask: "I don't think I have ever seen him." "O yes, you have; it is so and so." "O no; it cannot be. It must be a mistake: there is no likeness." He brings me another to look at. "O yes," I exclaim, "I see in a moment who it is. What a wonderful, what a striking likeness." Now apply the figure. If you have never been planted in the likeness of Christ's death, by dying under the law, under the weight of sin, and under the anger of the Almighty, you bring me your experience: I look at it; but where is the likeness? I can't see Christ there; there is not in it one feature of his suffering image. But if you have experienced a dying under the law, under the weight of sin, and under the anger of the Almighty, there is a likeness: there is Christ in his suffering image reflected in your soul.

v. But now apply this to the argument of the apostle as being dead to sin. In the same way, then, as when Christ died *under* these things, he died *unto* them, so that neither law, nor imputed sin, nor the anger of God, nor death itself had any more dominion over him, there is a likeness also in this point in Christian experience. We never die *to* the law until we die *under* the law. "I through the law," says the apostle, "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." (Gal. 2:19.) "Through the law" means being killed by it. So when the law has killed you, it has done its worst; and when you die under the law, the law died unto you. It goes after another then to kill him. The soldier in battle, when he has killed his man leaves the corpse on the ground and goes after another. So when the law has killed the child of God, it leaves him and goes after another victim to bury its sword in his heart. Again, if you die *under* the weight of sin, you die *to* sin. This is the apostle's argument: "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2.) If you have felt the crushing weight of sin upon your soul, can you go the next moment and do

those very things which your conscience is bleeding under, and from which you have obtained deliverance through the blood of the Lamb? "He that suffereth in the flesh," says the apostle, "hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Where the burden of sin is felt, and where there is a union with Jesus as bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, there is a death *unto* sin, both by a feeling of misery and a sense of mercy.

So with dying under the anger of God. By dying *under* it, you die *unto* it. If you feel the anger of God in your bosom and die under it, pining away in your iniquities, and obtain deliverance by union with Christ crucified, you will die unto the wrath of God, and be able to say, "Though thou was angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isai. 12:1.) This, then, is the "likeness of Christ's death."

vi. But there is *a being planted* in that likeness. What is this planting, and how is it effected? It is by virtue of baptism, as the apostle declares: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death." But what baptism? Water baptism or spiritual baptism? Here there has been a great controversy. Some have said "water baptism has no place here." Others have almost said "spiritual baptism has no place here." And thus, like angry combatants, they have torn the text to pieces. I believe in my own judgment that spiritual baptism is the chief thing intended, but that water baptism is used as a representation of it. So I take both interpretations, and endeavour, as far as I can, to put each into its right place. Nothing is more evident to me than this, that water baptism, be it by immersion or be it by sprinkling, cannot plant us into the likeness of Christ's death. It may be a representation of it; but is no more the thing itself than a picture is a man, or a likeness of a thing the very thing itself. The instance of Simon Magus is sufficient of itself to prove this; and no doubt thousands have been baptised in water who were never baptised by the Holy Ghost. A mere immersion of the body in water, though a gospel ordinance, cannot give spiritual

regeneration. But spiritual baptism, which is the work of God upon the soul, does plant us in the likeness of Christ's death. The very language also of the apostle would seem to indicate that he drew a distinction betwixt the two baptisms. "Know ye not," he says, "that *so many of us* as were baptised into Jesus Christ." Observe the expression, "so many of us," as if he would imply that there might be those amongst them who had been baptised in water, but had not been baptised into Jesus Christ. It is true, that of this spiritual baptism, water baptism is selected by him as a type and representation, for it visibly and manifestly represents burial with Christ and resurrection with Christ; for as the candidate is buried in the water, so are we buried with him by virtue of a spiritual baptism into his death. But the only value of the ordinance of baptism consists in its being a representation; and it would indeed be a sad mistake to elevate what is but a figure into the place of the especial work of the Holy Ghost upon the soul.

But now let us more closely observe the word "*planted*." The idea is either that of a tree planted in a soil, or else of a bud or scion grafted into a stock. Take either, or take both, for they are alike scriptural figures; and take first the idea of a young tree planted in the ground as most agreeing with the expression. By regenerating grace, the soul is made alive unto God; and by being made alive unto God, it is taken out of the rank, coarse soil of nature, and transplanted into the rich, fertile ground of grace. There it finds a suitable soil in which to thrive and grow. It is thus planted in the likeness of Christ's death by virtue of a spiritual baptism; for it is the Holy Ghost who gives it this living union with the Son of God, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The Holy Spirit, therefore, takes the soul and plants it into the mystical body of Christ, as in baptism the body is immersed into water. Thus the very first work of grace upon the heart is to separate the heart and affections from the world, to pluck and root up the soul from that soil of sin and death in which it was naturally planted, as springing out of the Adam stock. But by this implantation into Christ, it is implanted into the likeness of Christ's death. What this likeness is I have shown you before. I have now to show you how the Holy Spirit implants and roots the

soul into that likeness. This likeness consisted in dying under the law, under sin, under the anger of God. It is, then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the curse of the law, the condemnation of sin, and a feeling sense of the wrath of God are spiritually applied and made known to the conscience. By this work of grace, then, upon the heart, there is a rooting up, and a tearing out of the soul from the old, corrupt, worldly, self-righteous ground in which it grew, and a transplanting of it into the garden of gospel grace. This is a rough and painful work: but there is no other way by which the soul can be conformed to the likeness of the death of Christ. Did he die easily, without pain or suffering? If you then die, that is, spiritually, without pain or suffering, where is the likeness to his death? I do not mean to say but that when the work first begins upon a sinner's conscience, the soul may be as weak and as feeble as a young tree taken out of the nursery. But there is life in it: it is not a dead tree; and there being life in it, it takes root downward and grows upward, in proportion to the goodness of the soil and the strength of the plant.

Or take the figure of grafting. When God the Spirit takes you and buds you into the likeness of Christ's death by making you feel the condemnation of the law, the weight of your sins, and the wrath of the Almighty, it is a planting you in the likeness of Christ's death. And as in nature the scion, as it gets stronger, is more incorporated into the very body of the stock, coalesces with it more closely, and draws more sap and virtue out of it, so this implantation gives you more and more, through affliction and trial, of a resemblance to a crucified Jesus; to be more and more crucified with him, and thus to bear about in the body more continually the dying of the Lord Jesus.

II.—But we must now pass on to consider what we proposed as the second leading branch of our subject, the *resurrection* of Christ, the *likeness* of that resurrection, and the being *planted* in that likeness.

You will remember my pointing out to you just now, that the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are the two grand

gospel facts, and that as such they are held up by the Holy Spirit in the word of his grace as the objects of faith. The resurrection, especially, of our gracious Lord is that standing miracle which will ever be a pillar of truth to the Church of God, effectually resisting every attempt to remove it from its base. But as we proposed to examine the nature and circumstances of the resurrection of our gracious Lord, we may now ask what instruction and consolation does it hold forth to believing hearts.

1. First, then, the resurrection of our blessed Lord from the grave is the grand standing *attestation to the truth of his mission*. I speak it with all reverence, for I would not drop a word to speak with the slightest shade of disparagement to that most blessed name; but I would say this, if our gracious Lord had not risen from the dead, he would have been plainly manifested as an impostor, and the Jews would have been fully justified in crucifying him as a blasphemer in declaring he was the Son of God. But the resurrection of our gracious Lord from the dead put God's own attesting stamp upon the truth of his mission. But you may say, "What evidence have we that he did rise again? Might there not have been some mistake or some deception?" How could this be? How could the disciples to whom he repeatedly showed himself after the resurrection have been deceived in that solemn fact? Could eleven men, who had walked with him in the closest intimacy for three years, be deceived in his features, in his voice, in his general appearance, in that meek dignity and holy majesty, in that heavenly grace and divine glory, which were so familiar to them? Even upon lower ground, could you, could I, associate day after day with an individual, and not know, after three days, whether it was the same person or not with whom we had so intimately lived? Now our gracious Lord showed himself on several occasions to the eleven disciples after the resurrection, ate and drank with them, showed them his hands and feet and side, and thus convinced them, "by many infallible proofs," that it was he, even he himself. Nay, did they not visibly see him ascend on high when he was taken up, and "a cloud received him out of their sight?" They could, therefore, not have been deceived, and we may feel equally confident that they would not have deceived

us. By his resurrection, therefore, he was declared to be the Son of God with power. He said he was the Son of God; he was crucified because he said it. When, then, he was raised from the dead, it was God's own attestation that he was his dear Son.

2. But connected with the resurrection and ascension of our gracious Lord, there are certain *benefits* and *blessings* which we must not pass by. If he had not risen from the dead and gone up on high, where would have been the Head of the Church? The Church would have been without its Head—a dead and lifeless corpse. Where, too, would have been the completion of the work of the High Priest, who, on the day of atonement, took the blood within the veil? How could our gracious Lord be interceding for us unless he had gone within the veil into the immediate presence of God? Again, if our gracious Lord had not risen, where would have been his universal government? How could he have been the enthroned King of Zion? How, too, could he have received gifts for the rebellious, or sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of his people? How could he stand as the Mediator between God and men, or been our advocate with the Father, or been able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him? Thus we see that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is as blessed, as important, as influential a doctrine to the Christian as his death upon the cross.

ii. But now look at the resurrection of Christ as bearing more immediately upon our subject. We have seen *how* he died; now let us see *how* he rose again.

1. When our gracious Lord rose from the dead, he rose *from under the law*. The law had no more charges against him. He rose justified from all law charges, for he had completely fulfilled all its demands: its voice, therefore, was hushed and silenced. It could not stop the resurrection, or keep shut the stone rolled against the tomb, for he was no longer its prisoner, having borne its curse and taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. He was therefore "justified in the Spirit." (1 Tim. 3:16.)

2. So also when our Lord rose from the dead, he rose *from under the weight of sin* in which mystically he had sunk. Sin was rolled off his head, for it was put away, blotted out, and removed in one day.

3. So also when he rose from the dead, he rose from under the *wrath of God*. There was no more wrath for there was no more law, no more sin, no more vengeance due to sin.

iii. Now the *likeness* of this resurrection is to be made ours; for as we are planted in the likeness of his death, so we are to be planted in the likeness of his resurrection. What, then, is this likeness, the spiritual likeness of this resurrection? Analogous to and resembling the likeness of his death. Did I not show you how he died under the law, and by dying under the law, died unto the law, and that this was being planted in the likeness of Christ's death? Now we have to *rise from under the law*, free from law charges and its curse and condemnation. And how is this? By being planted in the likeness of Christ's resurrection; by the Holy Ghost, the spiritual baptiser, revealing Christ to our souls in the power of his resurrection, and thus raising up a living faith in our hearts, whereby he is received into our bosom as the Christ, the Son of God. When, then, we rise from under the curse and condemnation of the law by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we rise free from all law charges, as he rose free from them. So again we have to *rise from under the weight and burden of sin* upon our conscience—a load sufficient to crush us into dust. And how? By being planted in the likeness of Christ's resurrection, so as to receive the benefits and blessings of that resurrection into our soul; and this we do by the blessed Spirit giving us some manifestation of the love and mercy of God in his dear Son, and thus raising up a spiritual faith in a risen Christ. Then again, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have to rise from *under the wrath* of God into the enjoyment of the mercy, love, and favour of the Most High. And lastly, by being planted in the likeness of his resurrection, we have to rise also unto a knowledge of our sonship; for as the gracious Lord was manifested to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, so we have to

rise with Christ into a spiritual apprehension of our own sonship by adoption. Thus by rising from under the condemnation of the law, the weight of sin, and the wrath of the Almighty, and by being brought out into a knowledge of our sonship, there is the likeness of Christ's resurrection as well as the likeness of Christ's death.

iv. But we have to be *planted* in this likeness. We cannot do this ourselves. The Holy Spirit must take us, so to speak, just as we are, and, by the power of a spiritual baptism, plant us into the likeness of that resurrection. This he does by giving us faith in Christ; by manifesting him with power to the soul; by applying the blood of the covenant to the conscience; and shedding the love of God abroad in the heart. This is the likeness of Christ's resurrection, because as Christ rose we rise; as Christ was not left under the curse of the law, the sentence of sin, and the wrath of the Almighty, so by faith in Christ we rise from under this weight of guilt and condemnation, and become manifestly sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

But many of the dear children of God can go with the former part of this discourse who cannot go so easily with the latter. They know what it is to have the likeness of Christ's death in the condemnation of the law, the weight of their sins, the displeasure of the Almighty, and the fear of death; but they cannot rise up to a sensible apprehension of a risen Christ so as to rise from under the condemning law, an accusing conscience, and the felt displeasure of God. But they will do so in due time, for the same Spirit who baptised into the likeness of the one, will baptise them into the likeness of the other; and as they mystically die with Christ and are buried with him in baptism, so they will mystically rise with Christ in the apprehension of the benefits and blessings of his resurrection.

III.—But now let us look at some of the *practical effects* which this implantation into Christ produces in the heart and in the life. On a late occasion (see No. 71 of the "Gospel Pulpit.") I dwelt upon the bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,

and I intimated I might take an occasion of considering more fully that part of the subject. This, then, I have in some measure done in bringing before you how we are planted in the likeness of Christ's death. Now all through the course of our spiritual life we must be more or less in the experience of these two gospel facts, these two pillars of all gospel truth. The apostle therefore says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." As crucified with Christ, he was planted in the likeness of Christ's death; as living with Christ, he was planted in the likeness of Christ's resurrection. Bear then in mind, that every pang of a guilty conscience; every distressing sense of the displeasure of the Almighty; every sensible dying to our own strength, our own goodness, our own wisdom, our own righteousness, is a being planted in the likeness of Christ's death. This is the crucifixion of the world and of the flesh with its affections and lusts. Remember also that every rising hope, every sweet prospect, every kind intimation, and every act of faith, hope, and love wherewith your soul is indulged, is a being planted in the likeness of Christ's resurrection. This, then, is the experience of the Christian: "As dying and behold we live." He is ever dying and yet ever living; he is ever being crucified in a conformity to Christ's death, and yet ever living by the power of Christ's resurrection.

But now observe how by these divine truths, the objection is fully answered to which I drew your attention in the beginning of this discourse. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised unto his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." You see how the apostle shows here the crucifixion of the old man; that henceforth we should not serve sin, but walk in newness of life. Thus, Christ's death and

resurrection gives power and motive. It crucifies sin and revives grace; mortifies the flesh, and gives life to the spirit. And you will find that just in proportion to your death will be your life; that the lower you sink, the higher you will rise; that the more you enter into Christ's death, the more you will enter into Christ's resurrection. Is not the objective fully, nobly, gloriously answered? What! shall we continue in sin, when sin is made a daily grief and burden? Shall we continue in sin, when sin crucified our Lord and Master, and we are spiritually planted in the likeness of that death so as to resemble him? But again, am I risen with Christ? Am I planted in the likeness of his resurrection? Then let my affections be set above where he sits at the right hand of God. Am I risen with Christ? Then let me live a life of faith upon him. Am I risen with Christ? Let me walk in all manner of godliness and holiness as becomes the gospel. Did Christ bleed and die for me that I might crucify him afresh? Did Christ suffer untold agonies that I should trample his blood under foot? These are motives to crucify the old man. Again, did Christ rise for me? Am I risen with him? Then I am "a new creature; then old things are passed away and all things become new." I must not live as before; I must live agreeably to the gospel, adorn the doctrine, walk as becometh holiness, glorify Christ, and make it manifest I am a living member of a living Head, one with him in death, one with him in resurrection.

Can you find a more prevailing argument not to continue in sin? The apostle appeals to the experience of God's people, and tells them that they carry in their own bosom a practical solution of the oft-repeated objection, a standing denial of the standing libel. Are not we, then, in our day and generation bound to make it equally manifest in our life and conversation? The objection is not dead. Many still say that we hold licentious doctrines, pernicious to society and dangerous to the foundations of morality. Disprove it by your life, walk, and conversation: they will speak if you are silent. Men can see our lives who cannot see our hearts; understand our walk who cannot understand our doctrine. But if we allow ourselves to do things or live in practices that draw upon us the world's just censure, can we wonder if the objection is still

revived? Are we not bound, then, by every motive to disprove the libel by our godly conversation; and to make it manifest that the doctrines of grace are the doctrines of godliness? Christ and conformity to Christ is the whole breathing of the gospel: in this channel run all its precepts, to this end tend all its promises, and out of this precious root grow all true gospel fruits.