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Dickson

PLANTATION SERMONS,

OR

PLAIN AND FAMILIAR DISCOURSES

FOR THE

INSTRUCTION OF THE UNLEARNED.

BY THE

REV. A. F. DICKSON,

OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA.

(Presbyterian.)

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INTRODUCTION

BY THE REV. J. L. KIRKPATRICK, D.D

A VERY solemn responsibility rests upon Christians residing in the Southern and South-western States of the Union, in relation to the large number of coloured persons, mostly slaves, who are amongst us, as a portion of our population and yet forming a distinct class of our society. Their condition is such, that if they shall receive instruction in the truths of the gospel, and have access to its privileges, it must be through our agency. Failing to carry the gospel to them is, in effect, to exclude them from it.

It is a matter of thankfulness, and a ground of encouragement, that Christians, in this extensive region of country, are not unmindful of their peculiar obligations. Efforts have been made, and, year by year, they are prosecuted with increasing vigour, to place the ordinances of religion within the reach of the bond as well as the free; and we have the most gratifying testimony that such exertions enjoy

the favour of Him who wills that all classes of men should be brought to the knowledge of the truth. Still, it is not to be denied, that too many Christians seem to suppose that they have fulfilled their duties, with respect to the spiritual welfare of the slave in their charge, when they impose upon him no needless or improper restrictions in the enjoyment of his religious privileges, and especially, if they have afforded him reasonable opportunities for attending the preaching of the word. Without any wish to disparage the value to our servants of the liberty accorded to them throughout our country, to unite with the whites in the services of the sanctuary, and without overlooking the trouble and expense to which many masters have subjected themselves, in making *special* provision for supplying their servants with preaching and other means of grace, we would still ask, Is there nothing more to be done for them? The parent is not regarded as discharging his duty to his children, when he has secured seats for them in the house of God, nor even although he advise, urge, and command them to embrace the privilege thus secured. The enlightened consciences and the general practice of pious parents concur with the Scriptures, in recognizing the necessity of additional and more direct appliances, such as personal instruction, reading the word, exhortation and prayer, *considered as a part of the domestic training*. Attention to these duties is felt to be indispensable, if our children are to

derive the full benefits of the public and more formal privileges of the sanctuary. If indispensable to our children, are they not so to our servants who, for the most part, are but "children in understanding?"

We should remember that the position which our slaves occupy, debars them, in a great measure, from the means and incentives to mental improvement which are open to other classes of society. As the natural consequence, their minds are slow in comprehending the truth on all subjects requiring investigation and thought. Frequent repetitions of the lesson to be inculcated are necessary, in order that any salutary and permanent impressions may be made upon minds thus vacant and inert. Hence, the importance of securing in the work of their religious tuition, the agency of those who have daily access to them, that is, of the *members of the families with which they are connected*. When once the attention has been gained, and an interest awakened in the soul respecting its condition and prospects, we know that without a constant recourse to the appliances which are within the reach of the family alone, there is always great danger lest the seed that has been sown be "caught away" before it can take root in a soil at once so sterile and so hard. Here, it seems to us, the inquiry and the injunction of olden time apply in all their force: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast.

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Isa. xxviii. 9, 10.

Nor have we surmounted all the special obstacles to the spiritual welfare of our servants, when we have secured their attention and interest on behalf of their souls. The ardour and impetuosity of their emotions, and their great love of excitement, are matters of common observation. These, united with their scanty knowledge, and their slight powers of self-control, expose them, in a peculiar degree, to the excesses of superstition and fanaticism—excesses, which are too often encouraged rather than checked by the numbers in which they sometimes throng the places of public worship, by the character and style of the preaching they there listen to, and by the manner in which other exercises are conducted, whether it be under the leadership of one of their own class, or that of a white man, as it often happens, scarcely better instructed or less fanatically inclined than themselves. This is an evil, a great and prevalent evil, to be corrected; and by what means shall it be done? We are persuaded there is no remedy so easy of application, and so effective, as faithful, painstaking instruction as *a family duty*, and that constant watchfulness over the tendencies of awakened religious emotions among them, which the members of the *family alone*, have no opportunity to exercise. Let them be provided with the privileges of the

sanctuary, for which there is no substitute; let the pastor or the missionary catechize them as frequently as he may be able, in the church, on the plantation, and in private; all this does not supersede the necessity of *home* instruction by pious masters, mistresses, and other members of the household. The co-operation of the latter is essential to the full success of the labours performed by the former. The position of the slave precludes the pastor and the missionary from doing many things for his spiritual guidance which his ignorance and varied temptations render necessary: this "lack of service" should be supplied at *home*.

In view of these facts, we hail with peculiar satisfaction every judicious effort which is made to assist Christians having servants under their control, in carrying out a system of household instruction. This little volume has been prepared, and it is now published, for such purpose. The discourses contained in it first appeared as a monthly series in the *Southern Presbyterian* (Charleston, S. C.) and having been strongly commended by ministers and intelligent laymen of our communion, it has been thought advisable to give them a wide circulation in a form adapted to a more convenient and permanent use. The author, at the time of writing them, was the pastor of a church which embraced over four hundred "coloured communicants." Mingling much with them in the discharge of his pastoral duties, he became acquainted in no ordinary degree,

with the peculiarities of their mental structure and habits — their modes of thinking, and their susceptibility of impressions, both good and bad — and with their wants in common with other sinners and partially sanctified Christians. The knowledge thus derived has suggested the propriety of those features which will strike the reader as characteristic of the discourses, such as, the simplicity and directness of the language; the free use of figures of speech and varied illustrations; the rapid transitions from one course of thought to another, &c. If any apology for the abbreviations of familiar words and other colloquialisms be necessary, it is sufficient to say that the author's theory as to the best mode of addressing the blacks is, that the preacher must put himself in sympathy with them, by using language in some such form as they are accustomed to hear it from day to day. Not that he must descend to the use of coarse, offensive terms, or of forms of expression that are grammatically inaccurate, for nothing of this kind will be found in these "Plantation Sermons;" but his style must be free, familiar, animated, stirring, as opposed to the formal and stately, the distant and the heavy. We have had an opportunity of knowing that the features here referred to, have been found upon actual trial, to adapt the discourses most happily to the capacities and tastes of the class for whom they are designed.

Of the importance of the subjects treated of in the volume and the sound, Scriptural views of truth

presented, we need say nothing, as a glance over the table of contents will satisfy the reader on the first point, and the *imprimatur* of our Board is a sufficient voucher for the second.

Private Christians, engaged in labours for the religious improvement of the blacks, often feel the need of something to read to them which, whilst it imparts solid instruction in a style adapted to the grade of their intellects, shall engage their attention by its vivacity, and quicken their emotions by the warmth of its tone. To such we commend these discourses. The very form in which they are presented — that of the *sermon* — will give them a dignity and favour in the view of the blacks that belong to no other address. They love the *sermon*; they love to recall and talk over the *text* of the sermon. Those who are accustomed from week to week to call together the servants of the field or of the house, to read, converse, and pray with them, or to instruct them from the catechism, will find a valuable auxiliary in this volume. Some who are deterred from attempting to hold meetings of this character, through a distrust of their own capacity to render them profitable, with these discourses in their hands need not fear to undertake the work. If the *master* of the family should refuse to go forward in a duty that obviously devolves primarily upon him, let the *mistress* assume the responsibility, as she has often to assume it in respect to the religious instruction of the children; and in default of the

proper services of the master and mistress, let the pious son or daughter be their substitute. It is a blessed work,—instructing the ignorant, teaching the truth as it is in Jesus, guiding souls to the knowledge of salvation—and, surely, none who have learned the value of their own souls, or the preciousness of the Saviour's love, will esteem it otherwise than a delightful work.

Charleston, S. C., March, 1856

PLANTATION SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE HARD WAY.

“The way of transgressors is hard.”—PROV. xiii. 15.

THIS world is a sorrowful place; not one of us ever saw the man yet, that had no sorrow—that had no sickness, no hard, painful work; no danger; nobody to trouble him; no conscience finding fault with him, and making him feel ashamed and afraid, because he had done wrong. Wherever we go, we find sickness, and tears, and death. Everywhere people are tired of living, and afraid to die—everywhere they are disappointed in their plans; they get weary when they expected to be merry; they change about from one thing to another, but they find trouble everywhere. I know there’s a great deal of difference among people—some are sick all their lives, and some are well and strong. Some see their children and their friends all die, one after another, and others, again, have them all alive and well,—or if they die, they hardly miss them. Some are always getting dis-

appointed and put out, and some get along easily. But in spite of that, *everybody has his trouble*: if your children all live, maybe some of them behave so badly that they have to be sent away, or they keep you afraid something dreadful will happen to them—or maybe they are so sickly, and they suffer so much, that you'd almost rather see them die. If you are strong and healthy, something else goes wrong. You never can say, "Now I'm happy," unless you're a Christian.

And what makes it worse is, that things do not get better as life goes on. We don't begin without trouble; and when we are little children we don't keep on getting over it as we grow up, and so get quite happy when we are old. Oh, no! The old man is the worst off of all, unless he is a Christian; his eyes, that used to be so bright and keen, are almost blind—his old ears can hardly hear the cock crow in the morning—his hand, that was so strong and steady a little while ago, shakes now, like a leaf when the wind blows. In the night he can't sleep sound, and in the day he leans on his stick. And so he pines away; he can't work, and he can't rest—and oh, if he isn't ready to die, all this trouble is only the beginning of sorrow for him! Before long, he'll be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing his teeth, because God is angry with him for ever!

Now we know there's always sin where

there s trouble. Just as certain as there is fire where you see smoke, just so sure there is sin where you see people suffer, and weep and die. And what a terrible thing this sin must be, if it brings all this sorrow—if it makes the body sicken and die, and the mother's heart almost break because her child's dead—if it makes men hate one another, and rob and murder—makes them groan and perish, and takes them to that awful place when they die. Oh, what a dreadful thing sin must be!—And this is what I want to talk about to-day—the mischief that sin does—“the way of transgressors is hard.

I. *It don't always begin hard.* It feels quite pleasant, for a minute or two, to have your own way.

A man started, one pleasant afternoon, to take a sail. All was still; the ebb tide floated him down, and the soft breeze bore him along. He went on and on, over the bar, out to sea; the blue water was smooth and still; he thought he was quite safe, and he lay down and slept. But presently a black cloud rose over the land; the breeze fell away, and the little sail flapped on the mast, as the boat rocked. Pretty soon the thunder began to boom out; then the lightning flashed brighter and brighter, as the black cloud crept on nearer and faster, almost over his head. Then came the roaring wind, to stir

up the waves, and beat him down in the sea; the thunder cracked like a thousand rifles, and woke the poor fellow from his dangerous sleep; and as he pulled away at the oars, and tried to work back under the lee once more, he saw how foolish he had been. Higher and higher the waves tossed up and dashed against his little boat, and drove him out to sea. All he could do would 'nt save him.—There he was in the wide ocean; night came on; not a friend to help him, and the raging wind roaring over his head! But God was in the storm, and just as he was ready to give up and die, the wind fell, and the waves grew still by degrees, and the light-house shone out clear and bright to guide him home.—So he toiled away at the oars, and just at day-break he was safe again; but he found, after all the smooth time he had at first, that “the way of transgressors is hard.” And just so it is in sinning.

It begins so easily. Perhaps it is a cool, pleasant Sunday morning; and as you look at your corn, and see how much it needs working, and wonder if you'll ever have such a chance again, you think it will be very easy and pleasant to get it all in order. You feel strong and ready for it; you count up how much the corn will be worth when it's ripe, and how much more you'll have if you work it now, than if you wait awhile; you are quite

sure nobody will see you that's going to blame you; you don't care much about going to church; the more you think about it, the more you feel like it, and the more certain you are that it can't be such a bad thing, or such a dangerous thing, as people say. And so, maybe at last you get your hoe and go to work; the sun don't beat down on you; the thunder don't roll over your head to frighten you; nobody finds fault with you; your conscience don't trouble you much. And so you begin to think it was all very well done, and that it's all over now. Ah, that's a dreadful mistake! *God* says, "the way of the transgressor is *hard*," whatever you think about it, and *he's sure to make you think so, too*, before he's done with you.

II. The sinner's way is a hard way, *because he has a hard master*, or rather, because he has a hard *set* of masters. A man's master is the one he works for, and the one he minds the most. Not *God*; for he don't mind *God's* word at all. Not the Lord *Jesus*, for he does 'nt do *his* work at all. Who are the sinner's masters?

One of them is *Satan*. They please him oftener, and do more of his work than anybody's else! As *Paul* says, "they walk according to the prince of the power of the air." You know what that means? It means that you do exactly what he wants done! Isn't that a strange and dreadful thing? You have a cunning and a cruel ene-

my; he hates you because God made you, and because God loves you.

When Adam and Eve were pure and happy, he never rested till he had ruined them, and robbed God of them, as he thought. Then, when they were grieving and leaving their Heavenly Father; when the angry angels were driving them away; when the beautiful home in Eden was gone for ever; when their hearts were full of bitterness, and sin, and woe; then Satan was pleased, and clapped his hands for joy. They were walking according to the "prince of this world." You see, then, how cunning, and cruel, and wicked he is; how he tries to disappoint, and rob, and vex the great God; how he loves to ruin men, and take their souls to hell. — Don't you think he must be a hard master? and Paul says he is the sinner's master. But maybe you'll say, "How can he be my master? I don't like him, and I don't do anything because I think he wants me to." I tell you, that makes very little difference; he's so anxious to have God displeased, and mischief done, and souls lost and sent to hell, that he doesn't care whether you wanted to do it or not. — Besides, you let him tempt you whenever he likes; he can put wicked thoughts in your minds, and you won't drive them away; he can rouse all your bad passions, and you won't pray to God to cure them; he can make a wrong

thing look pleasant and good to you, and you won't shut your eyes and turn away, and say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And so, if you try ever so hard not to believe it, you see Satan is your master; you do what he likes, and you let him persuade you to sin.

Another of the sinner's masters is *his own wicked heart*. Maybe you'll wonder at that, and say, "Why, my heart's a part of me; how can it be my master?" Let me ask you a question, now—How can the rudder turn the boat, when it's a piece of the boat itself? I suppose you'll tell me, which ever way the rudder turns, the boat turns. Well, that's exactly the way your heart is your master; whichever way your heart turns, *you* turn. That's just what Solomon said—"Out of the heart are the issues of life." That means, your life will be what your heart makes it. Now, if your heart can make you live any way it pleases, then your heart is your master. Let's see if it doesn't.

Suppose a man has a *dishonest* heart; he wants to have what belongs to somebody else, even if he has to steal it. Why, then, of course, he does steal it when he gets a chance, unless he's too much afraid of being found out. Or suppose he has a *cowardly* heart; he isn't willing to run a little risk when he ought to. Why, then, he runs away instead of standing up

like a man. And so, if you have a *wicked* heart, a heart that doesn't love God, or his ways, or his dear Son, you're certain to live as if you didn't love him, and so your *life* will be wicked, as well as your heart. Now, I say, a wicked and selfish heart is a *very bad master*. It doesn't give you time to find out whether you hadn't better serve the Lord, and love your neighbour, and be good. No! it *hurries you right off into sin*. No matter if the Bible warns you, and God forbids and threatens you, and your own conscience begs you to stop; the wicked heart will have its own way, and it makes you God's enemy.

III. The sinner's way is a hard way, because he has *hard wages and a dreadful end*.

What are the wages? That is, what does he get by sinning? First: he gets *bad habits*. A first sin of any sort is like the first drop of water that leaks through a bank; the water carries away a little grain of sand, and makes the leak larger—then two drops can creep through instead of one, and carry away three times as much sand, and make room for four or five drops, and so, before anybody expects it, the whole bank falls in, and the whole flood is let loose. Just so with sinning: the first wicked thing of any kind that you do, swearing, or Sabbath-breaking, or any other, may be a very little one, but it carries away a little of your

conscience and self-respect, and makes way for a greater sin, and that for a worse one, and so on, till they wear a regular channel in you, where the sin pours steadily on you. You may forget it, or be ashamed of it, or deny it, or try to stop it; but *there it is*, and now it is so much easier to do the wrong thing than to keep from it, that you are sadly discouraged and ready to leave it so. That's *a bad habit*. Now a sinner is a bundle of bad habits; he has habits of not doing what he ought to do, and of doing what he ought not to do. He has a habit of not minding what he hears in Church—a habit of not praying when he gets up in the morning, or when he goes to bed at night—a habit of not regarding God or Christ, or heaven, or hell, but forgetting them as if there were no such things. He has a habit of pleasing himself and seeking his own interest—a habit of thinking about his own little affairs in the world, instead of the things that are to last for ever. Then he may have other habits—a habit of swearing, or Sabbath-breaking, or foolish talking; he may be dishonest, or drunken, or passionate, or cruel; but they all spring out of this one thing—*being a sinner*; and if he gets right there, he'll get right all the way through. What a sad sight it is, to see a man who might be so manly and so brave against sin and Satan, tied down by bad habits—ashamed

of the way he lives and the things he does, and yet he can't spring up and break away from them, though he knows they'll ruin his soul. Those bad habits are some of the wages of sin.

Another thing you get by sinning is a *hard heart*. The most beautiful thing in a little child is its tender heart, ready to love anybody that will be a little kind; it will love its nurse, or its mother, or its brothers and sisters, or almost anybody that it sees often. You can make it smile by looking bright at it; often you can make it cry by frowning, and if you train it right, that little heart will keep tender a long while; and, as I said, it's the most beautiful thing in the little child. When you and I were children, we had just such hearts; our mother's arms were a shelter and a joy to us — we loved everybody that we knew, that loved us; when their faces were dark, our hearts were heavy, and when they were glad, we were happy. But now, how different we are! We know God loves us, but we don't love him; we know he frowns on our sins, but we don't weep or tremble. That's one of our *excuses* for not being Christians, that we can't feel. And it's partly true, too; we can't feel about God and the Lord Jesus, and sin, and heaven as we ought. If an angel could take your place and find himself a sinner, he would die with shame and sorrow; but you don't die of grief because you have grieved God; you are

light-hearted, maybe, and cheerful, and wonder at Christians because they sometimes weep and mourn about their sins. The Bible tells us how the saints in heaven shout for joy when a sinner's saved; how they cast their golden crowns at the Saviour's feet, and sing and praise him for ever—how they are as happy as the angels because they have Jesus for their shepherd and their friend: but if you were there with that same heart, you wouldn't feel like them; such joy and love as they feel couldn't get into your heart at all, *because it's so hard*. How is it now? Do you weep for joy, and sing and praise, when you hear that a sinner is converted? Does it make you as happy as an angel to love and serve the Lord? Ah, no! that's not the way you enjoy yourself—your heart's too hard!

Now, I say, to get a hard heart by sinning is very hard wages indeed. The heart's the place for happiness, and peace, and love, not for pride or hardness; and just so sure as a land where no rain falls will be a hot and thirsty desert, with not a stream of cooling water, or a flower, or a shady tree, just so sure a heart that is hardened in sin will be bitter and uneasy and heavy. What makes the difference between an angel and a devil? The devil has a heart as hard as rock, while the angel is always loving and always rejoicing.

Another thing we get by sinning is *a troubled conscience*. There's a something in us that writes down all we do, whether it's good or evil; and that stings us with shame and pain when we do wrong. Sometimes it stings us right off, as soon as we sin; sometimes it lays it up against us, to make us suffer hereafter; but if it does lay it up for another time, it keeps us uneasy and troubled now. When you took God's holy day for working, or fishing, or pleasure, conscience didn't strike so hard, or speak so loud, as to make you give it up; but just hard enough and loud enough to spoil it all. Very likely you wondered what the matter was, and why you couldn't enjoy yourself; and many times since then, you have thought, "what is this that spoils my pleasure, and disappoints and troubles me? What makes my heart so heavy and sad?" *It's that evil conscience* laying up your sins, and getting ready to sting you with them. Every time you swear, or speak an angry word, or break the Sabbath; every time you are proud, or cruel, or passionate, or selfish; every time you harden your heart against your kind Saviour and the great God; every wrong thing you do, and every right thing you won't do, conscience writes it down, and gets her terrible chains and troubles ready to frighten you when you're sick, and to make you tremble and mourn when you come to die. Such a conscience is hard wages to get for sinning!

Once more, the sinner comes to a *dreadful end*; "the wages of sin is *death*;" not this first death, when the sick and perishing body is laid in the grave. Oh, no! it's the *second* death, the woe and anguish that comes on the soul for ever—that's the fearful thing! You know very well that no man can *describe* it: it's so horrible that no words can tell it all; we can only put you in mind of it and of what the Bible says. It tells you how you'll feel there; you'll weep, and wail, and gnash your teeth. It tells you who will be with you there, the devils and lost sinners—all who have been too wicked to go anywhere else, will be sent to hell, and there you must dwell with them for ever. It's a bottomless pit, and the smoke rises up from it continually; it's a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and the lost are there in chains and darkness for ever. There they lift up their eyes, being in torment, and see the holy, happy saints in heaven, always safe and always glorious; and they beg for one drop of water to cool their tongues, but it never comes; they are shut up there for ever! Oh, how they groan and perish there! They cry, "Oh, if I could only get one Sunday again! if the Lord Jesus would only call me once more! if I only had one chance to repent and be saved! But now it's too late, too late!"

Tell me, now, if the Bible wasn't right, when

it said, "the way of the transgressors is hard." They are cheated into going on in sin, because it begins easily; and so they give themselves up to those hard masters, Satan and their wicked hearts; and they get those hard wages, bad habits, hard hearts, and troubled consciences; and they come to this awful end! Oh, why should *you* go on in sin? Why should any man, with a head and a heart, keep on grieving God, and laying up trouble, and getting ready for hell? The Lord doesn't shut you up in sin and woe. The Bible hasn't given up telling you of a Saviour, and a Holy Spirit, and a way to heaven. The great Spirit of God hasn't spread his wings, and left this stubborn and wicked world. The judgment day hasn't come yet, to burn up the Gospel, and chain us down in the flames. The Judge hasn't told us yet, to "depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" Oh, why *will* we die? Let us remember the dear Lord Jesus now, and believe on him. Let us pray to God to take away our stony hearts, and forgive our sins. Let us say, "Farewell, wicked and sorrowful world! I'm tired of shame and sin; I take the Lord for my portion; I look to Jesus to save me.—Farewell, hard heart! Farewell, death! My Redeemer is mine, and I am his!"

SERMON II.

NONE RIGHTEOUS.

“For there is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not.”—ECCLES. vii. 20.

THE Bible tells us a great many sad and terrible things; and every day we see and feel pain, and hear the groans of the sick and the sorrowful; but nothing is more dreadful than what the text tells us. Nothing else is so shameful and sad as this—*all men are sinners.*

Think of it! Here is a world full of people: travel as far as you can—go through the woods and the deserts—sail away over the sea to the farthest islands—go north, or south, or east, or west, and you find men everywhere, and every man of them is a sinner.—Some are comfortable, and some miserable; some are savage, and some civilized; some live in fine houses, and some burrow in the ground; some are wise, and many are foolish—but every one is a sinner! You will find a great many strange and curious things among them; a great many stronger, wiser, more beautiful, more happy, than you ever dreamed of; but the strangest thing of all, the thing the whole wide world can't show you, is “a just

man that sinneth not." Not one that God can smile on, and say, "This man is like the holy angels; this woman is fit to dwell with me in heaven." Not one that can take any credit to himself before God, for anything he has done; not one whose conscience don't accuse him and condemn him! Not one living man that hasn't been converted, can close his eyes in peace, when his time comes to die, and say, All is well! The whole world lieth in wickedness; it is full of shame and trouble; it is under God's curse. It is so vile a world, that it will have to be burnt up to get rid of it, like a small-pox hospital. As soon as the sick man dies or gets well, you know, we set fire to the house and destroy it; it is too vile for anybody to live in. Just so with this world: it is a hospital for sinners. God will cure some and take them to heaven; others will die in sin and be lost for ever; and then God will send fire on this ruined world and burn it up. Sin has poisoned it so that it will never be fit to live in again.

I. Think what a world of misery it is. The little child just born begins its life by crying, and I suppose everybody feels that it is just the way such a life as this ought to begin. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly up: it is just as natural for him to suffer as for the sparks to shoot up out of the fire. Not one mother can save her child from pain, even

while it's a baby in her arms, much less after it grows larger. Our teeth ache; the wind chills us; the sun makes us faint with weakness and distress. Fever finds us out; parches us with thirsty days and weary nights; we toss on our beds and pine away, in spite of all that our friends can do for us. What thousands of accidents are happening! A tree falls on one man and crushes his limbs; another man is thrown from his horse, or dragged under the wheel and mangled horribly. Fire, wind, waves, lightning — *all things* — hurt and slay us. Look at the wars that rage all over the earth; men hating and wounding and killing one another, till fields are soaked with blood!

How many passionate and cruel fathers there are: yes, and mothers, too. How many children are beaten terribly when they've only done a little wrong; or perhaps they haven't done wrong at all. How many *drunken* fathers and mothers, that fight and abuse each other, and their children besides! How many neglect their children — leave them to suffer with cold and hunger; nothing to eat, and no fire, while they go away and amuse themselves. How many men quarrel, and do each other all the harm they can; rob, steal, slander, murder, because their hearts are full of malice and revenge. So suffering grows and spreads over the whole world. And we mustn't forget what a world of *toil* it

is. Every honest man lives by hard work; and the thief really works the hardest of all. If we don't work the fields, nothing grows there but weeds and briars; if we don't take care of the cattle, nothing will be left but wild beasts; if we don't watch over our children, and work for them, they will perish. We have to get all our comforts by hard work; if we are idle, we are sure to be miserable. And yet what a sad sight it is—a whole world worn out with work! When we want to sit down in peace and enjoy ourselves, behold, there is something or other that must be done, and we must deny ourselves, and go and do it. This is just what the Bible says: "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it."

Now, how comes the world to be so full of sorrow and toil? Who is it that sends pain and trouble? Who is mighty enough to command the winds and waves, and to hold the storms in his hand? Who can take away the strength of the strong man; lay him on a bed of pain, and keep him there? Who can let loose consumption, and fever, and cholera on us, and take away a whole family or a whole nation? Only God. God is good; he declares to us that he "doth not willingly afflict the children of men." He sends us more blessings than we can count; and yet he racks our bodies with pain, and tears our hearts with sorrow!

He owns it! He says: "I kill and make alive: I wound and I heal." "For he maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth and his hand maketh whole." "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet." So it must be because we *deserve* it all, that our great Father in heaven afflicts us. As I said just now, we are under God's curse for sin; that awful curse brought down sickness and death, and slew us. That is what the Bible says: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and death passed on all men, because all have sinned." And now the world is just like a piece of woods: sometimes we send and cut down a tree here and there, as we want it; and sometimes we clear a whole field — cut down and destroy the whole. Every day men die; one here and another somewhere else; sometimes death sweeps them away by hundreds together. We are *all* condemned to die, and sooner or later we *know* we must go; and the reason that all are condemned is, that all are sinners.

But I can prove it in another way. I can show you that all men in their hearts believe it. I know they talk against it often, but their actions speak louder than their words. Show me a man that trusts everybody. The little child believes every thing you tell it, for a while. It doesn't know the wickedness of the world, and it thinks what any-

body says must be true, But how soon all that is gone! It begins to watch and try everybody, to see if they can be trusted: it comes to expect that men will say what isn't true, and do what isn't right, when it suits them. And before we are grown up, *we know that everybody does wrong sometimes*. Now we learn that *by experience*; we begin with trusting, and we end with suspecting, all over the world. Isn't it so? Don't we put locks on our chests, and locks on our doors, and bar our windows on the inside? We all make it a rule to be cautious with strangers, because it is far more likely that they will do us harm than that they'll do us good. And this you see, shows what the whole world's experience is—that all men are sinners. Presently I will show you that the Bible says so too.

II. But how came it so? How did the world come to be wicked? Surely God didn't make sinners! That's one question nobody can answer without going to the Bible. There it's all made plain: it's a sad and terrible story.

God made this great world. Before that, there was nothing here—neither trees, nor land, nor sea—not so much as a cloud or a blue sky! Nothing was here but God. He is everywhere. He called it out of nothing with one word: there it stood at his command; “He hath made the round world so sure that it

cannot be moved." Then he brought light to shine on it—poured off the waters from the land and gathered them into the sea. Soon he commanded the sun to beam out bright and warm, while he spread the grass and flowers and fruit trees and woods all over the land, and created the beasts and birds, and every other living thing, from the wild beast to the worm on the ground. All was busy and happy: the rivers were running down to the sea—the sun and moon walked in brightness along the sky—the cattle lay down in peace in the shadow of tall trees, and the birds were singing in the branches. That was the time, in the pleasant afternoon, while everything was fresh and still and happy, that the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became *a living soul*. Ah, if they only could have known what man would do, what sorrow and terror would have been there! The birds would have drooped and pined and flown away; the very cattle would have sprung up and escaped for their lives, far from such a dreadful enemy, such a curse to the whole creation, as man is. But there was no sign of all this misery then: nothing was frightened or troubled when God came down in the cool evening and put man in his garden of Eden, and set his wife beside him for a help and a joy for ever.

What a beautiful home that was! The breeze blew soft and sweet over the flowers; all the strange and wonderful creatures that God had made, came near them and stood still—not one was afraid of Adam then! Eve was by his side: the great God his Father was close by, loving and blessing them. So the sun went down, they slept in peace, and awoke; for God was with them, and made them dwell in safety.

That was the first Sabbath day. How kind God was to begin Adam's life with a Sabbath—a day to worship and praise him! No doubt Adam's heart was in tune that once, and full of joy and love to the great God who was so good to him. No doubt he knelt down on the green grass, and clasped his hands, and raised his eyes to see his Father's face; and he wondered, while he thanked the Lord, that He should take such care for him. No doubt he promised to love and serve God for ever; how could he help it? Yes, he gave himself away to the Lord God, to be his obedient and happy son always.

So the Lord tried him. He showed him one tree in all the garden that he called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and he commanded Adam not to touch it or to eat of the fruit. He even warned him what would happen if he should break his promise—"in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Very likely Adam was shocked to hear, that perhaps

he would disobey the Lord God: *he* never thought it could be so. Oh, if he only had taken warning! But he didn't; he went on as if he was safe, and that ruined him.

The devil—that cruel and terrible being that goes about even now like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour—the devil crept into God's garden, looking like a serpent, and went to this same tree, and waited there till he saw Eve. And he said to Eve, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" She told him, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." And the serpent said, "Ye shall *not* surely die! For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And when Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired because it would make her wise, she took of the fruit and ate, and gave Adam, and he ate. Then Satan's work was done! It was God's own garden, and they were God's own children, and yet he robbed God of them—filled their pure and holy minds with pride and sin, and cast them down before God's angry eye, to wither and perish in shame and woe for ever. They heard the voice of the Lord God

as he walked in the garden in the evening— just the same time when they were first made— but oh, how changed everything was! Then their souls were full of praise, and wonder, and delight; they could listen to his voice then, and it was the sweetest sound to them in the whole garden. Why not? He was their Father then, and they were his dear and blessed children. But now! *They were afraid!*—hid themselves among the trees! That tells you the whole story; their conscience was loaded with sin; they had come to be disobedient, and selfish, and miserable in that little while!

That was the way sin came into the world; the very two people that God made, though he made them so pure and good at first, those very ones broke his holy law and disobeyed him in his own garden, so that he had to drive them away. And their children were just like them. Cain was their first son, and he was a murderer. That's just the way men have gone on ever since; every man is a sinner, and every man's children are just like him. After a while the world got so wicked, God could'nt bear it any longer. In his wrath he tore up the fountains of the great deep, and broke open the windows of heaven, and poured such a flood on the earth, that everybody was drowned, except Noah in the ark, and those that were put there with him. But as soon as the flood was over, Noah

and his children began again; wherever they went, sin and sorrow went, and spread out like the flood, and covered the whole world, just as it is this day; sin everywhere — swearing, lying, Sabbath-breaking, wicked passions, rage, murder, and sorrow everywhere — pain and fear, sickness and wounds, shame and remorse — *and death*. Ah, if that was all, we might try and bear it; but the worst is to come — after death *the judgment*, and after the judgment the lake of fire and brimstone, and the worm that never dies!

III. But people sometimes think there must be a mistake about this; they know a great many are wicked, but they are sure that some are good. Of course, everybody has *faults*, they don't deny that; but they think some have only such little faults, and are so good in other ways, that they oughtn't to be counted among sinners.

Now the first thing I want to say about it is this: *when people talk so they contradict the Bible*. Look at that verse I began with — “There is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not.” That was what king Solomon said, the wisest man that ever lived. And his father, good king David said, “There is none that doeth good — no, not one.” And Paul says, “God hath shut all up together under sin” — that is, God calls us all sinners. And John the Apostle, though he was such a kind-hearted man, says the same thing: “If we say we have no sin, we

deceive ourselves, and *we make God a liar.*" Who will dare to deny his sins after that?

The next thing is, that *the best people in the world are the very ones that call themselves sinners!* Isn't it so? Look round now among all your friends, and pick out the most blameless and holy one of all—the one you never saw in a passion, or doing anything wrong—and ask him if he is "a just man that sinneth not." And just as surely as he's good, he'll tell you he's a sinner. But surely you don't expect to find anybody better than David, and he cried in his prayer, "have mercy upon me, O God, and pardon mine iniquity, for it is great," Or can you find a better man than Paul? And yet he called himself "the chief of sinners."

No; the reason why people think they are not sinners when they are, is this—*they don't know what sin is.* They think it is doing wrong to men or disgracing ourselves; but in truth it is disobeying and forgetting God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself;" *that's* God's law, and every man that ever lived has broken it, and every man alive now is breaking it. That made David say, "If, thou, Lord, wert strict to mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" Now, when we think how good God is, how holy and how gracious, always

loving and blessing and pitying us, isn't it terrible to remember that the whole world forgets him—everybody turns his back on him, breaks his law, rejects his gospel, and grieves his dear Son? That bad treatment of God is sin; and unless he changes our hearts, we are all ungrateful, and all unbelieving—and so we all are sinners.

Three more things I must tell you, and then I will be done.

1. If all men are guilty alike and condemned alike, then *no man can help you out of your trouble*. Which of the prisoners in a jail can pardon the rest? No more can any man save you from God's anger. You must go for mercy to God himself. He can save you, and he alone.

2. You must *begin by confessing your sin*. That was where the publican began that the Lord Jesus told about; he stood low down in the temple, and didn't so much as lift up his eyes from the ground, but struck his hand on his heart and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner;" and the Lord says he went down to his house *justified*—that is, he was pardoned, and the proud Pharisee was condemned. That was where Mary Magdalene began; she came and kneeled down behind him, and wept so that the tears ran down upon his feet, and then she wiped them away with her hair. At

last he said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" go in peace.

3. You must *believe in the Saviour God has sent*. God is wise and we are foolish. He is good, and we are wicked. He is the Lord our Father, and we are poor lost sinners, kneeling at his feet. Now, if he looks down on us and says, "I have provided a Saviour for you, and he will do the whole work and set you free," surely we ought to say right off, "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?" And when he points to the Lord Jesus, bleeding, dying on the cross, and rising again out of the grave, we ought to drive away our grief and shame, and rejoice. We ought to run right to the Saviour, and put ourselves in his hands; we needn't be anxious or sorrowful any more, for he is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

I wonder if there is anybody here to-day with a troubled conscience and a heavy heart; anybody tired of sin and afraid to die as he is. Poor sinner, come to the Lord Jesus, and beg him to save you. See how patiently he's waiting for you, how kindly he smiles on you! If you will only come and try him, he will say, "Thy faith hath saved thee—go in peace!"

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

SERMON III.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—

1 TIM. i. 15.

MANY years ago, three missionaries sailed away over the ocean, far from their homes and from every friend but God, to a little island they had heard of, where no man had ever preached the gospel. It was almost as beautiful to look at as the garden of Eden; it was covered with green trees that bore delightful fruits—bright little rivers ran down from the mountains a few miles, and poured into the smooth clear water of the sea. There was no winter there; hardly ever a storm of thunder and mighty wind tore up the people's trees, or wrecked their little boats. All looked safe and joyful, and lovely: but the whole island was full of sin, and wickedness, and death. They worshipped idols, and even killed one another, to offer up the dead bodies to stones and huge blocks of wood! Often they murdered their children; they fought with each other with the most hor

rible clubs and spears you can think of. There was nothing so cruel, or so shameless, or so wicked, that these people wouldn't do it. So these missionaries, when they heard about it, took pity on them, and went to tell them what a Saviour God has given us, and to persuade them to flee from the wrath to come.

For a long while, nobody minded what they said: if the people listened a few minutes, presently they began to mock the missionaries, or even to throw stones at them. At last one day, they read this verse to them out of the Bible, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." An old man got up and said, "Stop! read that again!" So they read it again, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." "Are you sure of that?" he said; "*God so loved the world!*" And he wept out loud, and went away to think about it, and to wonder over it, and then came back again and again, to beg them to read to him that "God loved the world." Soon he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his life long he kept those words in his heart. Now, he is gone to see that dear Saviour that God gave, and to live for ever with him.

And I wonder, every day, that when people hear those words, or this verse that I read just

now, they don't stop me and ask me to read it again. "*Did* Jesus Christ come to save sinners? Are you sure he did? Oh, what good news!" I wonder they don't listen, and weep, and rejoice even while they are weeping, to hear of a Saviour from heaven. But, alas! that isn't the way men treat God's good news. They know it's true—they can't deny it; but they care nothing about it. They go on, after we have told them, in the same old way, just as if it was an idle dream! Oh, that God would make us all hear and remember, and believe it to-day!

I. Let me put you in mind, now, that *you are a poor lost sinner*, and this news is *for you*.

Perhaps you are a *thoughtless* sinner. A great many people never think about God and religion, and a Saviour, at all. Their hearts are full of this world; they have a thousand little plans and pleasures of their own. They live for what they can see and taste, and their hands can handle. To-day's work and to-day's dinner—the people they meet and talk to—the little accidents that happen, pleasant and unpleasant—the scraps of news they hear and tell; such things as these take up all their thoughts. Of course they hear people talk about religion; they go to church sometimes, or perhaps all the time, and listen a little, here and there, to the sermon, but nothing sinks down into their hearts. They don't come away from the house of God looking grave

and solemn, as if what they heard was of any consequence. No! You'll see them talk, and joke, and laugh, right there in the church door, or on the steps, or under the trees, just as if nothing was the matter; just as if there was no such thing as a wicked heart, or an angry God, or a crucified Saviour, or a burning world of woe!

Then they go home and sleep away the blessed Sunday afternoon, or talk it away, or dance it away, never remembering nor caring that it is God's holy day. Monday morning finds them just the same people, or rather worse. They are older and more careless: they are more guilty, and they are in greater danger than ever before. But they never think of that; they are too busy with this life to think of that which is to come. And yet that other life will come, whether they think about it or not. Silent and steady it comes nearer and nearer. Death comes like an eagle, that never flaps his wing or gives a scream, but fixes his fierce eye on some poor little thing, and sweeps out of the sky, and fastens his cruel claws in it, and is gone out of sight!

How foolish it is, then, not to think about our souls in time! What would you think, if you saw an old wreck drifting about on the sea, and the people on it singing, and dancing, and drinking, while it was sinking? Suppose you and I saw it going lower and lower every wave--

the water creeping up—up—up—the side, inch by inch, covering one seam after another, pouring into every crack, and weighing it down; it mounts up faster and faster still, but they keep on shouting, and dancing, and reeling about the deck! What would you say? Wouldn't you cry aloud—"Look out there! you are sinking! clear your boat and launch away before it is too late!" Just so does God look at us, living so careless on the borders of eternal woe; and he calls us loudly—again and again he calls—"What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God!" But just as these poor drunkards on the wreck might never heed us or mind our warning, but keep right on with the dance till, all at once, you hear them scream out with a bubbling cry, as the wreck whirls half round and sinks down under the waves—so, often, all God's warnings are wasted on thoughtless sinners; and they forget them in loving this vile world, till the day of wrath comes and they are swallowed up for ever. *Then*, oh what wouldn't they give to get back into this world where sinners can be saved! But it's too late!

Now, if you are a thoughtless sinner, you are just like one of those poor foolish, ruined fellows on the wreck; and that makes me call to you, to tell you what a danger you're in

and to put you in mind that you are a poor lost sinner.

Or you may be an *anxious* sinner: something has set you to thinking about your soul. May be you have been sick; day after day has found you full of pain and fever; your strength wasted away, and your hands grew thin and weak and aching; you could hardly raise your head to drink the cool water you wanted so much. The doctor looked so gloomy, and your wife sat down and wept with grief and weariness—everybody seemed to pity you so, that you thought you were going to die. Oh what a terrible thought that was! Die! leave this world of mercy? Go and stand before Almighty God with all your sins on you? You had had Sundays, but you wasted them; you had heard the gospel, but you didn't heed it; the Lord Jesus wanted to save you, but you forgot him. Now, you won't dare to look in his face; you will feel so ashamed and guilty, if you die as you are, you will be struck dumb before God's bar. Oh if you only had one Sunday back! You try to think about religion—try to pray and repent; but you are so weak, so full of pain, your head feels so giddy and confused, that it's no use. Then you begin to beg for mercy—beg God to spare your life, and you promise him, if he will only let you get well, that you will never rest till you're a Christian. And God in his wonderful

mercy pitied you, brought back your health and strength, and gave you a chance to keep your promise.

Now that you are well again, it makes you shudder to look back and think what a risk you ran. You feel how much better God was to you than you deserved; and you have made up your mind to seek religion busily till you find it. You go to prayer-meetings; you come to church and try to listen to what the minister says; you kneel down and pray, night and morning, and you try to keep thinking about God, and the Bible, and the Saviour. All this time your heart is heavy, and sad, and guilty; you feel discouraged and helpless; sometimes you think it is all useless trying to be a Christian, for God will never hear you. Mind! you mustn't believe that—God *will* hear you if you seek him with all your heart. It is the devil and your wicked heart trying to deceive you. God says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Keep on then—never give it up! What does the hymn say?

"I can but perish, if I go:
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I shall for ever die."

If you are an anxious sinner, still you are a sinner, and if Christ doesn't save you, you will be a *lost* sinner.

Or perhaps it wasn't sickness that set you thinking; maybe it was the death of somebody that you loved. Perhaps it was your child that grew sick, or met with some accident, and was brought home bleeding and dying. Oh, how you watched over it—grieved about its suffering almost as much as about its dying—you tried everything you could think of; you begged for advice and for help. When you lay awake at night, and heard the dear little child moaning and crying—tossing on its bed and begging for water—your heart broke with trouble. You couldn't give up your child to God: you *could not* say, Thy will be done! And at last, when the poor little breast stopped heaving, and the little eye that loved you could'nt shine, or look again; when they took it, cold and heavy—dead—from your arms, to lay it in the grave, you wanted to die and follow it. You could'nt pray; your heart was too stormy with sorrow and anger to look up to God's throne. How lonely you felt—and how guilty!

When the first agony of it was over, so you could think again, you thought what an awful, what a terrible being, God must be. When he saw it was right to take your child away, nothing could turn him; all your crying and grieving could not bring one more breath into its body. His plan went on, and his will was done, just as quick and certain as if you had

wanted it. And you remembered that it *always will be so*; if all heaven and earth, and hell, should join together against him, they could'n't keep back his plan, or cross his will, one minute! Then you thought, "This God is angry with me—I am a sinner! if I die so, I shall be lost! What must I do to be saved?" And then you tried to seek God, but you did'n't find him. You have been trying ever since to be a Christian, but peace and pardon are hid out of your sight. Now you wonder if you ever will be saved; you can't give it up, but you are afraid there is very little chance for such a poor sinner as you. You are an anxious sinner; but remember, Jesus Christ came to save sinners; if you get discouraged, and turn back to the world, you will be a lost sinner.

Or it maybe that while everything was going on smoothly—no sickness or sorrow to frighten you, or call you away from this world, God's Holy Spirit came down and woke up your conscience, and made you feel ashamed and afraid because of sin. How many sins you remember! things that you had forgotten for years before start up all at once, and condemn you; you try to shake them off and forget them again, but they stick fast, and come back in crowds, and frighten you, looking so evil and terrible. Then you try to think up the old excuses that used to ease your mind, but they look poor and

foolish enough now; they don't help you at all. You go out among your friends, and talk and laugh as hard as you can, hoping to forget these thoughts; but all the while conscience is knocking at your heart, and saying, Guilty! guilty! guilty! You turn away, feeling heavier than ever; you don't want to repent and seek God, and yet you can't forget him. What shall you do? As you stand and think about it, maybe in the dark night, you look up, and remember that tremendous God! He made you—he commanded you to believe on his Son—he offered you mercy—he waited on you a long time—he is looking at you now, and you are sure he is angry with you. You think it will be only a little while longer, and then he will stoop down with his sword in his hand, and cut you off. No wonder you tremble and mourn.

But after you have resisted the Holy Spirit as long as you can, you begin to think you never shall have peace again, except in religion, and you resolve to be a Christian. But now you find it isn't so easy coming to God. You resolve to pray, but your thoughts fly off; your heart feels as hard as a rock. Just now, you thought God was angry with you; now, you think he doesn't hear you. You find you are a poor, helpless creature, unworthy of God's pity, and sure to be lost unless he pities you. So you weep, and pray, and give it up, and try

again; and yet you are an anxious, unpardoned sinner.

Once more. Perhaps, instead of being a thoughtless or an anxious sinner, you are a *hardened* sinner.

“God’s Spirit will not always strive
With hardened, self-destroying man.”

Your anxious days are past and gone. Your conscience warned you, but you made excuses, and put off thinking about salvation for another time. The Lord Jesus invited you, but you loved sin too well to mind him. God called you, but you turned away to spend a little more time with this sinful world. The Holy Spirit touched you, but you hardened your heart and went on in sin. Now, all those solemn feelings are gone; your heart isn’t light and careless as it once was, but it has no feeling. You can hear the most solemn sermons, or even verses out of the Bible, and mind it no more than the idle wind. When you are sick, you feel rather serious about it, but not frightened, not prayerful, as you were before. Even when friends come and talk to you plainly about your soul, you can laugh it off, and live right on with that same hard, unfeeling heart. You are not happy, though; oh no! There is a dull pain in your spirit that nothing will cure. If you get money, it don’t comfort you; if your

home is ever so pleasant, you can't enjoy it; your sleep isn't sweet, and your days are weary. What is the matter? What spoils your peace? It is the voice of your conscience, that you buried in folly and sin, crying out from the ground, accusing you, and telling you, *Prepare to meet thy God!*

But you don't understand that; you haven't found out what troubles you so. Nobody else thinks you *are* in trouble; nobody sees into your case but God: he knows that you are hardening your heart, and preparing to be lost. Soon, if you go on so—soon God will grow weary of your hardness and impenitent heart, and take you away in his wrath. But yet there is time, if you would only hear his voice, and not harden your heart. If you *will not* take warning, you are a lost sinner.

Now, let all listen! Let me tell you this "faithful saying" once again—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. All kinds of sinners—thoughtless, anxious, hardened—that dear Saviour came to save *all*. Hear what he says: "Whosoever will, let him come;" "and him that cometh I will *in no wise* cast out." "*In no wise*," that is, *not at all*—for no reason, nor for any sin, nor on any account whatever. Not one poor sinner ever went to him and was driven away!

Have you been careless all your days, merry-

hearted, impenitent, in spite of all God's warnings? Death has come, right by your side, struck down your friends, and frightened you for a day or so; but you have gone back to the old heedless ways again. And you think, may be, that you can't be such a great sinner, for you never meant any harm.

I had a dear friend once, who was taken very sick; we watched him, and prayed for him, day after day; oh, how anxious and sorrowful we were! But the most pitiful thing of all was, that he would never own he was sick. While we pitied him, and tried to help him, he contradicted us and tried to hinder us. Do you think that cured him? Did it make him any better to deny that he was sick? Day after day he sunk down until he died. Just so it will be with careless sinners; their thinking that they are in no danger won't help them. God says, "the soul that sinneth, *it shall die*; and the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations *that forget God*." That's just what the careless sinners do—they forget God. And oh, if they forget their Saviour, too, what good will it do them, if he did come "to save sinners?"

But remember, you needn't wait to be an anxious sinner, before you seek the Lord. It isn't being frightened that helps a man, it's

being in earnest. What a shame and a folly it is for men to waste all their care on such a world as this, and plunge into the grave with all their sins on them! Listen, poor sinners! Death and judgment are coming, as sure as to-day's sun will set. Repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; for he came to save sinners.

But above all, the Lord Jesus pities them that feel their sin; he begs the weary and heavy laden, the hungry and thirsty—all that are heartsick and miserable, he begs them to come to him. Many a sinner feels so lonely and helpless with his sins, that religion would be like cool water to a man dying with thirst; so the Lord offers him "living water." What a pity men should weep and mourn, grieve and tremble, right at the Saviour's feet, just as if he wasn't ready to help us! Suppose one of those blind men that lived when Jesus Christ was here in the world, instead of crying out, as they did, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," had thrown himself down in the road, weeping and groaning, "Oh, I'm blind, I'm blind! I never shall see!" till the Lord was gone; how foolish and wicked he would have been! But that's just the way sinners do; instead of kneeling at the Saviour's feet and praying, "Lord, thou didst come to save sinners, oh save me!" they weep,

and suffer, and fear, without believing, and without praying, till it's too late. Try him; lift up your hands and cry aloud, "Lord, save, or I perish!" and he will answer, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

"Mercy, O thou son of David!"
 Thus the blind Bartimeus prayed,
 "Others by thy word are saved,
 Now to me afford thine aid."

Many for his crying chid him,
 But he called the louder still;
 Till the gracious Saviour bid him,
 "Come, and ask me what you will."

Money was not what he wanted,
 Tho' by begging used to live;
 But he asked, and Jesus granted
 Alms which none but he could give.

"Lord, remove this grievous blindness,
 Let my eyes behold the day!"
 Straight he saw, and won by kindness,
 Followed Jesus in the way.

Oh! methinks, I hear him praising,
 Publishing to all around:
 "Friends, is not my case amazing?
 What a Saviour I have found!"

"Oh! that all the blind but knew him,
 And would be advised by me!
 Surely they would hasten to him:
 He would cause them all to see."

SERMON IV.

WHO IS JESUS?

"Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"—JOHN ix. 36.

How I wish every poor sinner would ask that question with all his heart, as that man did! He was a blind man, born blind. As the Lord Jesus was passing by, he saw him and cured him of his blindness. Such a thing never was heard of before, that a man who was born blind should be cured; but nothing was too hard for the Lord. Then, because this poor fellow was so thankful for being cured, and wouldn't call that great Saviour a sinner—wouldn't despise and hate him as the cruel Jews did—they hated him, too, and cast him out of their company, and out of the church. Lonely and troubled enough he was that day!

But there was something he minded more than all the neglect of the Jews, that was, *his sins*. No doubt, God's goodness in curing his blindness, brought him to feel ashamed and sorry for his sins; and then he longed for a Saviour more than for earthly friends and comforts.

So, when the Lord Jesus came back and asked

him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" that was the very word he wanted to hear; and he cried out, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" And as soon as the Lord answered, "It is he who talketh with thee," he said, "Lord, I believe," and worshipped him.

Now, I want to tell you who the Saviour is, that you may believe on him, and be saved. I want every poor sinner to listen with all his heart, and see if Jesus Christ isn't the very Friend he needs—just such a kind, and holy, and mighty Saviour, as we want.

I. Who was Christ at the very first? In the beginning he was *God*. When this world was made, he was there. He spake those wonderful words, "Let there be light"—and there was light. He was the Creator: "All things were made by him." When you see the sun, or the beautiful moon: when the gentle breezes blow, or the solemn thunder rolls over your head: when the flowers are springing up, or the leaves falling off the trees, or the rivers are shining, or the clouds flying in the blue sky: whatever you see or hear, remember, "My Saviour made them all!"

He watched over the Jews in ancient time, and saved them from the cruel king that wanted to kill them. He opened a path for them right through the sea; piled up the water like stone on the right hand and on the left, and brought

them through in safety. Then, when their enemies tried to follow them, he poured back the mighty waters, and drowned them in the sea. Forty years he went with them and took care of them in the wilderness: wherever they went, and however wicked they were, there was that pillar of cloud every day—tall, and dark, and still; every night, there was the pillar of fire! When they were ready to die because they couldn't find water to drink, he made it spring out of the rock like a river; and because they had nothing to eat, he rained down bread from heaven every morning, enough for everybody—not a little child was left hungry!

And yet the Jews were wicked and disobedient continually. They found fault with him, and wouldn't believe his word, or bear with his will. They despised the bread that came down from heaven; they quarrelled with Moses; they broke the law. But the Lord never forsook them for that. Sometimes he had to punish them, they were so wicked; but as soon as they repented, he forgave them freely. So he showed them, even then, that though he hated their sins, he loved poor sinners.

And so things went on for hundreds of years. He brought the Jews into their own country, and took care of them—punished them when they sinned, but watched over them all the time, and saved them wonderfully, as soon as they

repented. All this time, too, he was taking care of the whole world. Every star in the sky, every wind that blows, every drop of rain, every soul of man, belongs to him; and he is so mighty, and so wise, and so good, that he never forgets one. He is never weary of saving, and blessing, and loving. In the beginning, our Saviour was God.

II. What was he next? A little child! In the night when he was born, the angels broke out of the darkness, singing songs of joy: "Glory to God in the highest! on earth peace, good will toward men!" Now, he is called the Son of God; he had no father but God. And yet he didn't come into the world like a king, though it is his own world, that he made. His mother was poor, and he had no place to lay his head, but in a manger. The shepherds that heard the angels sing, and the wise men that saw his star, followed it, and brought presents for him, and found him there, close by the horses and cattle. But when they brought him into the temple, according to the law, behold, old Simeon the prophet took him in his arms, and rejoiced over him; he was ready to die now, for he had seen the Saviour, though as yet he was but a little child.

Then the cruel king of the Jews got jealous and afraid of the little child—afraid he would come to be king some day, and drive him out,

and he determined to kill him. He sent his soldiers to murder every little baby in Bethlehem, that was under two years old. He did 'nt spare one of them!—But God took care of his Son. Long before the terrible soldiers got there, the Lord Jesus and his mother were safe in another country.

And I think this is a very wonderful and beautiful thing about our Saviour, that though he was the mighty God, yet he became a real little child. So he knows by experience just how little children feel. He knows just how a boy feels when he minds his mother, or when he is a good brother, or when he bears disappointments or pain. As he grew up, he was humble and poor, and worked hard, but he never sinned. Though there were so many that hated him afterwards, they never could find any wicked thing to accuse him of, out of all those long years. Spotless and pure, gentle and kind, and obedient, he lived as quietly in Nazareth as if he was only a man, until he was thirty years old.

III. And what next? John the Baptist came back from the desert where he was hid, and began to preach to the Jews, "Repent." And when they repented and confessed their sins, he baptized them in the river. Great crowds came there, and he warned and rebuked them all. But behold, while he was busy with the

sinner, the Lord Jesus came to him, that never sinned! John felt ashamed to baptize the Saviour, who was so much greater than he was; but the Lord commanded him to do it, and he obeyed. Then, as they came up from the water, the Holy Spirit came down and rested on the Lord's head, and God spake out of heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And so the Saviour went on, living the life of a kind and holy man, and doing the wonders of a mighty God. He was tempted by the devil, but he never sinned. He was mocked and slandered, and persecuted by the fierce and wicked Jews, and he paid them back with wise teaching, and blessings, and love. He healed them when they were sick. Even the vile and horrible lepers that were forbidden to come near anybody, for fear of giving them the leprosy, even they came and kneeled down and begged him to cure them, and he did it. Worse than that, the vilest sinners, that everybody despised, and drove away, tasted his love; if they only came to him, he would talk so graciously, and bless them so freely, that their hard hearts were melted, and their sins were forgiven, and they were saved.

All this while he was so brave and noble, that no matter how strong and fierce the people were that came to him, he would tell them all

their wickedness, and command them to repent. If they grew sorry and gave up their sins, then he blessed them, and loved them like a good shepherd taking care of his lambs. If they got ever so foolish and unfaithful after that, he never grew weary of them; he forgave them, and helped them all his life. But if they refused and disobeyed him, and tried to lead the poor people into sin, then he exposed them, and taught the people not to mind them, but to do right and fear God, and he would save them. Oh, how he encouraged them, and cheered them on to be brave and good! He said: "Fear not them who kill the body, and have no more that they can do: fear Him, who can cast both soul and body into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him!"

And he did just as he said; though they tried to kill him, and took up stones to stone him, he never took back a word, or feared the face of man. And he never got bitter and passionate like them; he could turn round, after facing all their rage, and stretch out his hand to some poor sinner, and forgive and heal him.

But the more glorious he was, the more the rulers and great men hated him. If the poor people hadn't loved and admired him so, they would have torn him in pieces. But what could they do? If they followed him by hundreds and thousands into the desert, without bread to eat he took some little loaves and fishes, and

fed them all. If they listened to him, he taught them so wisely and beautifully that they couldn't find fault, even though they didn't believe what he said. He gave back eyes to the blind, and made the lame walk, and raised the very dead out of their graves! Wicked as they were, they had to wonder at him, and to confess that "He did all things well." When he calmed the raging sea, and stopped the mighty winds, and drove the devils out of men, *with a word*, no wonder they trembled and were afraid!

But they grew more and more mad with rage against him; they envied him, because, though he was a poor man, he was so famous, and the poor and troubled loved him so well. "Don't you see," they said to one another, "don't you see the whole world is gone after him?" They couldn't forgive him for being so good, and they banded together to take his life.

IV. And now his last days were coming very near. He had preached all over the country, and chosen his disciples, and given all the Jews a chance to believe on him. Now it was all over, and he was ready to lay down his life for his people, and for the sins of the whole world.

He called the Apostles together and taught them to eat the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him, so that the broken bread and the wine poured out, would put them in mind how his body was broken on the cross, and his blood shed, for us.

Then he took the three that he trusted the most—Peter, James and John—and went into a garden where he loved to pray. He left them in the outer part of the garden, and went in among the trees, to pray once more before he died; and oh, what an agony came on him! Some terrible thing he was afraid of, though he wasn't afraid to die: and he prayed, over and over again, that his Father would take away that cup from him, if it was possible. He plead so hard, that great drops of blood came on his forehead and fell on the ground; and yet he said, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." At last, the angels of God came down and strengthened him.

Then came Judas, one of his twelve chosen friends, with a crowd of Jews and soldiers, to seize on him and carry him away. They dragged him first to one judge and then to another and another: and though the last judge tried a little to save his life, it was all in vain. The people were crazy with passion; they shouted, "Crucify him! crucify him!" until they got him condemned. Then they bound our dear Saviour and beat him; they mocked him with a rich dress and a crown of thorns; they spit on him, all bleeding and weary as he was; and when they were tired of their cruel sport, they put the heavy beams of timber on his shoulder that were to be his own cross, and they made him carry them till he fell down fainting under the load.

What a sight that was! Far off down the street the Apostles were looking on, afraid to stand by their Lord or help him. Close by were the women that loved him so faithfully—Mary his mother, Mary the mother of James and Joses; Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Salome. They were weeping and sobbing—their hearts were breaking with sorrow to see him treated so. Then the Lord Jesus, that bore all the cruelty without one word, patient as a lamb, spoke to them, and told them not to weep for him. Even then he was thinking about their troubles that were coming, and not about his own. At last the soldiers found a man named Simon, and they made him carry the cross to Calvary.

There they nailed his hands and his feet to the cross; they could wring his heart with agony, but they couldn't stop his pity. He only said—"Father, forgive them! They know not what they are doing." In the hot sun, dying with thirst, and fever, and pain, he said not one unkind word. He was dying for sinners; that was his comfort. He gave his mother to John the Apostle to take care of. Then he said, "I thirst," and they gave him vinegar to drink, while the Jews mocked him again and again.

But oh, the worst was to come—he was to die like a sinner, though he was so perfectly holy; and God, his Father, hid his face from him. Then his strong heart broke at last, and

he cried aloud, "My God! my God! why hast *thou* forsaken me?" Three hours that awful agony went on, and then he cried out again, "It is finished," and he died. The sun was hid, and the rocks burst open, and the dead came out of their graves.

To make sure that he was dead, a soldier took his spear and ran it into the Lord's side, and the blood and water poured out. So his body was broken and his blood shed, just as he said. He who had loved us all his life, died that cruel death *for us*. What a horrible thing must sin be, when God's own Son had to die, before he could save us! But now he has died, he can forgive sin: "his blood cleanseth from all sin." Will you trust him? If he wants to save you, will you let him do it? Say, poor sinner, "dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

Isn't he the very Saviour we need? Isn't he mighty enough? He is God. And meek enough? He was a little child. And his love great enough? He refused not to die for us. And his ransom rich enough? The blood of the Son of God! Oh believe on him and be saved!

SERMON V.

A RISEN SAVIOUR.

For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose the third day, according to the Scriptures.—1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God.—Mark xvi. 19.

TO-DAY I must tell you the story of the resurrection; that is, I must tell you how the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. He always said he would rise again after he was crucified; the disciples used to wonder what that "rising from the dead" could mean; and they never understood it till it was done.

Then they remembered the words he had spoken about it, and believed on him, that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Dying for us wasn't enough to save us; he had to take away the sting of death, and break through the grave, and go up to heaven; and then his work of atonement was finished.

But you must remember that he was *really* dead.

He was worn out with pain and persecution before they nailed his hands and feet to the cross: and then he was kept there in agony for six long hours, till he died. And to make sure work with him, they pierced his side with a spear, and those that stood by saw the water and the blood pour out, which showed that he was dead indeed. There was no chance for any mistake, or for anybody to deceive the rest. If anything is plain, and certain, and true, it is that the Lord Jesus Christ *died* for our sins, according to the Scriptures

Now the Lord Jesus had a rich friend named Joseph; and Joseph had a garden close by Calvary, where the cross was; and in this garden he had dug a large tomb out of the solid rock; large enough for himself and all his family. Though Joseph had never been very bold to follow the Lord and confess him before men, while he was alive, yet now he was gone, he went right to Pilate the governor, and begged for the dead body of Jesus. Pilate wondered to hear he was dead so soon, for often people lived a day or two on the cross: he didn't know yet about their piercing him with the spear; but he sent and asked the captain if he was already dead. And when he found it was so, he gave Joseph the Saviour's body.

Then those faithful friends that had stayed by him to the last when almost everybody was frightened away, climbed up and loosened those poor, torn hands and feet from the spikes, and

took down the "broken body" gently from the cross. They wrapped a linen cloth round it, and wound up spices with it, and put another cloth round his head: that was the Jews' way of burying; and then they laid it in the tomb that Joseph had made for himself. Nobody had ever been put there before; the Lord's grave received him, and they rolled a great stone to the door, so that it would be safe till after the Sabbath.

But though his friends didn't think about his rising from the grave, his enemies remembered it. They put Pilate in mind, and warned him that his disciples might come and steal the body, and say he had risen: so he gave them a guard of soldiers, and let them seal up the stone, so that if it was moved at all, they would know it. Then the foolish, wicked Jews thought they were safe; they had tried him, and killed him, and fastened up his tomb! But God says the wrath of man shall praise him, and so it did very soon.

All this I have been telling you happened on Friday; then came Saturday, the Jews' Sabbath; all was quiet that day. Sunday morning, as soon as the day began to break, those same women who had been true to him when his chosen followers forsook him and fled, Mary the mother of Joses, Mary Magdalene, and Salome, came out to the tomb to put stronger and sweeter spices round the body, that it mightn't

decay; for they hadn't time to finish it on Friday. As they were going along, all at once they remembered that great stone at the door; how could they get it rolled away? They didn't like to turn back to call the disciples; I suppose they were afraid the Jews would notice it, and stop them; so they went on, hoping, perhaps, that the soldiers would help them: for these poor heathen soldiers didn't hate the Lord Jesus as his own people did.

At any rate, they went on; and behold, there were no soldiers there, and no stone at the door! As soon as Mary Magdalene saw that, she turned and ran back to where John lived in his own house, and Peter with him, saying, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him!" She never thought of anything but that his enemies had done some new wickedness and cruelty. They ran out to the sepulchre—John ran first, then Peter, then Mary. But before they got there, the other women stooped and looked into the tomb, but the body wasn't there. Suddenly they saw the two angels that had been sitting there all the time, one in the tomb, and one on the great stone that was rolled away from the door. The angels said: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is not here; HE IS RISEN, AS HE TOLD YOU."

As they ran back to tell this wonderful news

to the disciples, in the room where they used to meet, behold Jesus himself met them, and said, "All hail!" If their hearts were full of "fear and great joy" before, how they must have rejoiced and trembled now! No wonder they fell down at his feet and worshipped him! Then he sent them with a message to his disciples; and what do you think he called them, those unworthy and fearful men, who forsook him in trouble, and left him to his enemies? Brethren! "Go, tell *my brethren* that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Some were to see him before then; but all were to meet him on a certain mountain there.

The women went and carried his message, but nobody believed them yet. While they were gone, John and Peter, and Mary, came to the tomb. John got there first; and when he saw the door open, he stood still, amazed and wondering. So Peter ran by him and went in, and John followed him. There were the clothes, not torn off and thrown down, as if there was any confusion or hurry, but carefully folded up—the large ones by themselves, and the napkin, which was round his head, by itself. Peter only wondered at it all; but John began to guess the truth, and to believe that Christ was risen from the dead. So they went back home, full of their own thoughts, and never remembering poor Mary that was weeping by the grave.

Ah, they might forget her, but the dear Lord didn't forget! He let them go back in their wonder and unbelief, and he came to comfort Mary in her sorrow. Just like him! To pity the broken in heart and bind up their wounds, is his own work. First, the angels showed themselves to her, and asked, "Why weepest thou?" She was too much grieved to be frightened; she answered: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Before she could speak again, she heard some one walking behind her; she turned round and looked, but she didn't see who it was.—Even when he asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" she didn't know him—she thought it was the gardener! "Sir," she said, "if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."—Once more he spoke:—"Mary!" Ah, she knows him now. "My master!" And in her fear that he would vanish again, and she should lose him, she ran to fold his feet in her arms. But he told her she need not be afraid: his time to go up into heaven wasn't come. "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God."—That was to encourage them; to let them see that he didn't despise and disown them, for all their unfaithfulness.

So Mary Magdalene went back, carrying the same message with the other women; and "they told these things to the Apostles. But their words seemed unto them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

Two of the disciples went out that same day to a place some seven or eight miles off, called Emmaus. He joined them on the road, and they didn't know him at first; but when they sat down at supper, and he blessed it for them, just as he always did before he died, they knew him; but he vanished away out of their sight. They started up and went back to Jerusalem on foot as they came; but before they got there he showed himself to Simon. While they were talking about it, he stood there, right among them, and said: "Peace be with you!" And when they believed not yet for joy, that it was really the Lord Jesus, he did eat and drink, and let them take his hands in their hands, and make sure that it was no spirit, but their own dear Lord.

All the Apostles were there, this time, except Thomas, and he would not believe on their word; he must see for himself. He said: "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." But the next Sunday night Christ appeared again, and said to Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."

When Thomas saw how the Lord knew every word he said, he didn't wait to feel the print of the nails; he cried out: "My Lord and my God!"

Then the Apostles went away to Galilee, as he told them; and no doubt they carried his message to all the believers in that country, to meet him at a certain mountain such a day. One night, while they were waiting for him, they went fishing in the lake, just as they used to before they ever saw him—just as they were doing when he first called Peter and Andrew, James and John. All that night they worked with their nets and caught nothing—just like the other time. In the morning he was on the shore—but they didn't know who he was—and told them again: "Cast on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." They did so, and then they couldn't draw up the net for the multitude of the fishes! That was enough for John and Peter; John cried out: "It is the Lord!" and Peter plunged into the sea and swam to his Master's feet.

Now the reason for the Lord's coming there that morning, was to put Peter back among the Apostles. You know that he was the man who denied his Lord three times—cursed, and swore he didn't know him! Of course, if the thing had been left so, whenever trouble rose among the Apostles, they might have turned on poor, guilty Peter, and said: "You have no business here; you denied the Lord." So the Lord Jesus said to him: "Simon,

son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" He answered: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus said: "Feed my lambs." This he did three times, just as Peter denied him three times; and then he said: "Follow me." That was to be Peter's business all his life. And he did follow him, and died on a cross at last just as his Lord and Master did.

Then they went to this mountain in Galilee, where more than five hundred people were gathered together, waiting to see him. Nearly all of them believed on him, but some were too hard-hearted and unbelieving; they wouldn't acknowledge him even when they saw him! And he gave the Apostles their charge before all the people—told them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and he would be with them to the end. So then all the believers saw that these eleven Apostles were to be their teachers and rulers in the church, and that all were to honour and help them. Then he told the Apostles to go back to Jerusalem, and he rose up and vanished out of their sight again.

Once more he met them in Jerusalem. He led them out of the city, over the same ground where they had gone together so often. There was the garden of Gethsemane, where he prayed, and sweat great drops of blood—where Judas kissed him and betrayed him—where the soldiers seized him, and bound him, and led him away to die. There was

the Mount of Olives, where he wept over the lost and wicked city, and where he told them the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world. No doubt they remembered it all; now it was all over, and they should never see him in this world again! He led them out as far as Bethany, where Mary and Martha lived, and Lazarus, that he raised from the dead. There he stretched out his hand and blessed them; and he rose up from among them, and a bright cloud swept down from heaven and received him out of their sight. And while their dear Friend and Master was soaring away from them, and they stood looking up after him, two angels stood by them and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." That was the end of his strange and hard and painful life in this world. He was born, was a child—a boy—a man; preached the gospel, cast out devils, raised the dead; was despised of men—was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day he rose again, and after forty days he ascended to his Father, and our Father, to his God and our God.

Now I have three very short and simple things to say about it, and then I will be done.

1. You see, *the Lord Jesus Christ is not dead now.* "He *was* dead, and is alive again." No coffin or grave holds him; "he *ever liveth.*" We

can pray to him, and trust him, and go to him, as a living friend. He sees and hears and loves us, just as he did before he died on the cross.

2. *He hasn't left us and broken off with us, by ascending into heaven.* "He ever liveth to make intercession for us;" that means, to pray for us. When we sin against God, and repent, and ask him to forgive us, our Saviour takes it up; shows his wounded side and says, "Father, forgive them!" And the Bible tells us that the Father heareth him always; when he prays for us, God forgives us.

3. He is coming back to this world, but not to be a Saviour again; that is all done and finished, for ever. Not to be a Saviour again; *to be our judge.* Every eye shall see him, even they that pierced him; and the people of this world shall mourn because of him. All the dead shall be raised, and the Lord will come in terrible glory and might, and all the holy angels with him. The evil world shall take fire and burn up; the heavens shall roll away with a great noise. The wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment," but the righteous into life eternal." Oh dying sinners, prepare—prepare to meet your God!

SERMON VI.

BELIEVE AND BE SAVED.

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.—Acts xvi. 31.

You know, now, who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and what he has done for us. He is the Mighty God, living and reigning for ever; he was a weak and dying man, who went about doing good and preaching the gospel, and at last laid down his life for us; now he is risen from the dead and gone to heaven, to his Father's right hand; there he hears poor sinners when they cry, and saves all who come unto him. That was the Lord's work, and he did it so well, and he was such a glorious Saviour himself, that if you didn't know anything about it, only what he was and what he did, you would surely say: "All the world must be saved. How *can* anybody be lost, with such a kind and mighty Redeemer?"

But, alas, we know better; we know a great many sinners harden their hearts against the great God and his Son Jesus Christ; they live in sin, and they die in despair. They know, and we know, that they are gone to meet a just and angry

judge; that their wickedness has turned the very Lord that loved them into a terrible enemy, and that he will drive them out into darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! Many sinners perish so, but not all. We see some try to serve the Lord while they live, and die in peace when they come to die. They are *glad* to die! They feel that heaven is their home, and they long to be there. They can sing as they die:

“ I’m fettered and chained up in clay,

I struggle and pant to be free,

I long to be soaring away,

My God and my Saviour to see!

“ I want to put on my attire,

Washed white in the blood of the Lamb;

I want to be one of your choir,

And tune my sweet harp to his name.

“ I want, oh, I want to be there,

Where sorrow and sin bid adieu;

Your joy and your friendship to share;

To wonder and worship with you!”

Now, what makes the difference between those that are saved and those that are lost? Why does the Lord save some sinners, and leave some to perish? Just this: *some believe on him, and some won't*. He invites us all; the text says: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, *and thou shalt be saved.*” And he keeps his word; all who trust him are safe, and all who are too proud and too ungrateful to trust him, are lost.

And to-day I want to talk to you about this

faith; this believing on a Saviour. I want to tell you what it is, and persuade you all to take him for your Saviour.

I. First of all, let us see *what the Lord Jesus has offered to do for you.*

The text says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be *saved.*" What does he mean by being "saved?" Let me put you in mind, now, that sinners are lost in two ways: they are lost, because they are condemned and punished; and they are lost, because they are so wicked and miserable. — Every sinner, you know, has broken God's holy law, and God says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." He has prepared a world of everlasting fire, for those who hate him; and he will drive every wicked man and woman into that awful place. He *must* punish the wicked; if he didn't hate sin, who could call him just and holy? Where would be his glory? Just as long as God is good and holy himself, he must love his glorious law, and punish all that break it.

Now, the Lord Jesus, being God as well as man, came into the world to take our place: he "bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" *i. e.*, the cross. So as he took our punishment on himself, God could forgive us without giving up his law, his glory, or his holiness. When one of us who believes on Jesus dies and goes to God's bar to be judged, and his sins

are read out against him, his Saviour says: "I took his place: I bore his punishment; he is mine, and I forgive all his sins." Then the door of hell is barred up again, and the gate of heaven flies open to let him in, and he dwells with his Lord for ever. That is one way he saves us.

But that would do us very little good, if that was all. The sinner's greatest misery is *being a sinner*; having a hard, unthankful, evil heart; being full of low and wicked passions; being ready for any temptation, and having no care about anything good. In the course of this life he does so many wicked things, and has so many bad feelings that his whole heart is filthy, selfish, miserable. How would a poor, ragged prisoner, just out of the jail, feel, if he was brought into a room full of happy girls and boys? And a thousand times worse would the sinner feel, if he could go into heaven, among the pure angels, with his vile and sinful heart. Ah, there would be no heaven for him *any where!* An evil conscience, and greedy passions, wicked habits, and an angry God, would torment him, if God never raised a hand against him, or tried to punish him. Just leaving him in his sins, would be leaving him in endless woe!

And that's the reason why our blessed Saviour promised us the Holy Spirit; so that vile hearts might be changed, and love and goodness might

be there instead of sins. He offers to make us "new creatures," so that what the sinner loves now and sins about, shall never be loved again; and what he forgets now—his God and Saviour—he shall love with his whole soul. He offers to take away our pride, to cure us of evil passions, to fill our hearts with every lovely and happy feeling. He offers us pardon for our sins, joy instead of shame and grief, goodness instead of wickedness, endless life instead of everlasting fire.

II. The only trouble about explaining faith to you, is that men will think that it is some strange, great, and impossible thing; as if believing on the Lord Jesus wasn't like believing in your friends, or your father or mother. Now, you must try to put that foolish notion out of your minds, and learn how to believe on your Saviour, by thinking how you trust everybody that is kind, and wise, and holy. *Remember, you are a lost sinner, and Christ offers to save you if you will just believe on him.* What does he mean by that?

Suppose you were taken sick with one of those terrible diseases that often carry people to their graves in a few hours; you are very much frightened; the agony of your mind is more dreadful than the pain of your body. You wring your hands, and cry, "Mercy! mercy! help! help! Oh, I shall die! I know I'll die!" You

won't listen to anybody, or follow anybody's advice; you are wearing yourself out with fright and horror, as much as with sickness. Now suppose a kind and skilful doctor comes to you; he feels your pulse, and then he speaks to you. If you trust him at all, you will stop those cries and listen to every word he says, as if your life depended on it. Presently he says, "I can cure you: I am certain of it; but then you must do just as I tell you. Will you promise me that?" Here again, if you believe in his skill at all, you will promise him at once; if you don't trust him, you will go back to your terror, crying, "Oh, it's too late! I'll die, I'll die!" But suppose you trust him, and promise to do as he tells you. Then he says: "The first thing for you to do, is to trust me with the whole matter; you must keep perfectly calm and quiet; don't get frightened; don't begin to cry out again; just rely on me, and I will save you." Now, if you do really trust him, you *commit the whole case to him*; if your fears begin to rise again, you *look at him*, and you say to yourself: "He is able to save me, and he promises to do it." That is faith.

Or suppose the ship in which you were sailing was lost at sea, and you were left alone in a little boat, far out of sight and hope of land. The clouds gather in the sky, and the wind blows in those short fierce gusts that come before

a gale; the waves begin to toss all around you, and your poor little boat takes in water. You give yourself up for lost; you only keep on toiling in rowing, because you can't bear to sit still and die! But behold, here comes a swift and mighty ship; they see you, and bear down to you; they throw you a rope, and tell you, "Never mind your boat! Come aboard, and we'll take care of you." And suppose that when they saw you couldn't manage it yourself, the captain should spring into your boat, risking his life to save yours, wouldn't you trust it all to him; do just as he told you, however dangerous it looked, and feel sure that he would save you? That, again, would be faith.

And on the other hand, how foolish it would be in you, to go on pulling desperately at your oars, paying no attention at all to the ship, or to the captain's call, or even the rope they threw over your boat; just working madly and blindly to save yourself, you didn't know how! That would be *unbelief*; it would be destroying yourself just because you wouldn't rely on those who ought to be trusted.

Now, the sinner is just like the sick man, or the man in the boat; and the Saviour is like the good doctor or the captain of the ship. The only difference is this: that he can't possibly fail or be mistaken. The doctor's medicine might disappoint him; the captain's ship might be wrecked itself;

but the Lord Jesus always saves those that come to him. He tells you plainly that he has power on earth to forgive sins, and to send the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, to give you a new heart; that is, he is ready *to undertake the whole case*; to save you from hell, and to cure you of wickedness, if you will only leave it to him. Will you? Will you trust the Lord who is mighty to save? Just follow his counsel, and trust in his promise, and give yourself to him as you are! If you do, that will be faith.

A great many sinners, when they begin to think about their sins and their danger, just get frightened, and stay so. They say to themselves: "I'm a lost sinner! I'm too wicked to be saved! I must die in my sins!" If you talk to them about the Lord Jesus, they answer: "Oh yes, I know he's a great Saviour; but I'm too wicked to be saved." They are like the sick man, raving with fright instead of listening to the doctor. That is unbelief.

Other sinners go to work to get better; they are too wicked to be saved now, but if they stop swearing and drinking, and pray every day, and go to church steadily, and have a great many religious thoughts; then, maybe, the Lord can save them. Just as if Christ wasn't mighty enough to save them, unless they helped him! So, instead of taking his advice, and "coming to him" *right off*, they work away, trying to make themselves good

first, that he may save them *afterwards*. They are just like that poor fellow in the boat—rowing so hard, when rowing can't help him, instead of dropping his oars and catching the rope. That is unbelief, too.

The only wise way is this: listen to what the Lord says. He understands the whole matter, and what he says is true. If he says: "I am able to save to the uttermost all who come to me," you must answer: "Yes, Lord! thou canst save even me, and I come to thee according to thy word." When he says: "It is I, be not afraid;" you must cry, like Thomas: "My Lord and my God! I commit my soul to thee; wash me from my sins in thy blood, and make me a new creature!" And you must *take it for certain* that he hears you and helps you, *just because he said he would*. Like the sick man, driving away his fears by looking at the doctor, before he feels that he is cured; so you must "look unto Jesus," and calm your mind with his word of promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." That is faith. You don't hope and rejoice because you are so good, or because you can do so much for yourself, or because you feel so badly about your sins, but just *because an almighty Saviour has promised to save all those who put their trust in him*. Isn't that plain?

Now, I know what you will answer to this: You will say: "I *can't* drive away my fears whenever I

please; I *can't* believe on the Lord, and be calm and happy." Oh what a wicked, suspicious, ungrateful heart you must have! a heart that can't trust THE SON OF GOD!

But your Saviour has provided even for that; he promises the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, on purpose to give them faith; and the more helpless and unbelieving and wicked you feel, so much the louder and more earnestly you ought to cry to God to send the Holy Spirit and take away the stony heart out of you, and give you a tender, pure, believing heart.

What excuse can you make now for not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? If you say you are too great a sinner to be saved, he tells you: "All manner of sins shall be forgiven to men." And Paul declares that the Lord had mercy on him for a "pattern of long suffering;" that is, to show how much patience and love he has for us—*enough to save the chief of sinners*. If you say you must be better before you can dare to come, the Bible answers: "*Not* by works of righteousness which we have done, but *according to his mercy* hath he saved us;" and "his mercy is everlasting." If you say you can't believe on him, he puts you in mind: "How much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

When you see yourself so miserable and guilty, and helpless, and the Lord so patient, and gracious, and mighty, how *can* you stay away? How

can you refuse him your heart—forget him, or be suspicious of him? Look at him! His forehead is marked with the thorns; his hands are torn with the nails; his side is pierced with the spear—he died for you! He sits on a throne of glory, ready to plead for you! Now is the day of salvation: harden not your heart! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, **AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED.**

SERMON VII.

BEING BORN AGAIN

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”—JOHN iii. 3.

GOD earnestly invites sinners to come and be saved, in the Bible. He says, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn and live.” “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” All through the Bible he pleads with us not to die in our sins and be lost for ever, but to let him save us as he wants to. But then, he tells us plainly that *he knows we won't mind him*; that if he only asks us and commands us to be saved, we will surely be lost. We will go on hardening our hearts and forgetting our God, until he has to cut us off and cast us down into the pit. “My people *will not consider*,” he says. “There is none that doeth good, no, not one: destruction and misery are in their ways.” “I go my way,

and ye shall seek me, and die in your sins." —
"There is none that seeketh after God."

The God who knows all things, and who sees as plainly the thoughts of our heart, as he sees the stars in the sky, knows that men never seek him of their own accord. And so, when he invites us to repent and believe, he puts us in mind that there is *something to be done that we can't do*. "No man can come unto me except my Father draw him." More than that; he says it is something great that has to be done: something so wonderful and mighty that nobody can do it but God. Only he who gives us our lives, and raises dead men out of their graves—only he can change a sinner's heart. "Except a man be born of water *and of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Ye must be born again."

Now there is something very terrible about this. God condemns us for our sins, and our own hearts condemn us, too. God provides a great salvation for us, and invites us to take it; and yet poor, wicked man can't take it! He can look at it, and wish he was safe, and tremble and mourn because of his danger; but he can't stretch out his hand and be saved! And I think we had better try and understand the case, and see if it is really so, and find out how we can be saved.

I. What does the Bible mean by "being born again?"

It means, first, that *sinner*s, with their natural hearts, are just as unfit to serve God, as the child, before it is born, is fit to toil and suffer among men. I don't mean to say that sinners feel that, or even believe it; but I say it is so, whether they believe it or not. And if any man wants to deny it, let him try to serve God as he ought to; the harder he tries, the sooner he will find out that without the Lord's help he can do nothing.

It means that these hearts of ours are not the right kind of hearts for that kind of work. They are very well suited to some things, such as hating, envying, loving money, and pleasure, and our own way; they are excellent places to store away bad thoughts and wicked feelings; ready enough to indulge bad passions, or to learn bad habits, or to love bad company. If anybody wants a proud heart or a selfish heart; an impure or a revengeful heart; a sullen, a cunning, or an obstinate heart, here is the world for him! Everything that is foolish, ungrateful, disobedient, and unbelieving, grows up in our hearts like weeds in rich ground.

But if he wants a heart that can love and trust the Almighty Lord; a heart to praise him and serve the Lord Jesus Christ; a heart set free from sin; a heart to believe the Bible, and repent, and pray; a heart to hope for heaven and be tired of an evil world; he will have to pray for the Holy Spirit. We never have those hearts till God gives them to us. What a difference it makes in a man

when he gets such a heart as this! What he used to hate he loves now; what he cared about he gives up now; what he was afraid of once, can't frighten him now. Sin don't tempt him as it used to; the name of the Lord Jesus is very sweet to him; heaven is his home; the grave has no more victory, and death has lost his sting. He is so different from what he was, that we call him a "new creature;" something is altered in him, that *changes his whole life*. This is the second great thing that the Bible means, when it says that we must be born again. The first, you know, is, that *our natural hearts are entirely unfit to serve God*; the second is, that *God can give us the right kind of hearts*.

No doubt it means a great deal more besides this. It means that Christians *begin young*; even though they grew old before they were converted, they can't carry any wisdom into religion; they have to learn it all after they begin. At first they are weak and ignorant; they are easily tempted, and they make a great many mistakes; but they grow stronger and wiser as they go on. So, when we are converted, we become as little children. But the two things I mentioned just now are the great things. They are what I want to talk about at this time.

II. Can we see anything to prove this doctrine, ourselves?

I think we can. I think if the Bible didn't say anything about it, we should have to believe that

*sinner*s are not fit for religion, and that *Christians* have had help from somewhere. Just look at the difference between them.

Wouldn't it look very strange to you if impenitent people generally should begin to hold prayer meetings, to praise and worship God, and tell about the Saviour? If they were to come together, and form a church, and sit down at the Lord's table? If they were to carry Bibles in their pockets, and slip off from business and pleasure to read them? If they were to come and see you on purpose to talk about your soul and pray with you?

And wouldn't it be just as strange if Christians were to *give up* these things, and look to dances, and horse-races, and cock-fights instead? Suppose the church members, where you live, were to resolve, some Sunday morning, that it wasn't worth while to worship God any longer, or to respect the Sabbath; and that they had better sell their church for a store; wouldn't you be astonished? And yet no doubt you have heard some of the wicked say these very things!

Now look and see what the world of sinners is doing, and what the church of Christ is doing, and notice the difference again. The world is making war, drinking, persecuting, imposing on the weak and the poor, cheating, frolicking, hating, blaspheming, Sabbath-breaking. The church is praising God, studying his word, praying for poor sinners, preaching the gospel, teaching Sunday

schools, holding meetings, sending missionaries to the heathen, scattering Bibles and good books all over the earth, baptizing the children, eating the Lord's supper.

Mind, I don't say the world never does anything pleasant or good. God is so kind and so mighty that he brings good out of evil, often. And I don't say church members never do anything wrong; there is some sin left in all of them. But this is the thing: you and I know that the drunkards and the blasphemers are men with *natural* hearts, and those that praise God and teach men religion are men with *new* hearts. And we see the difference there is between the church and the world.

Try it another way, now; look at the difference between a sinner and a Christian. The sinner has to think about God sometimes; he can't help himself. If he could forget him, he would. Whenever he can, he thinks about something else. And what kind of thoughts are they? Why, he hardly remembers Him till he's frightened into it; scared into wishing God wasn't such a jealous and terrible judge! If he's in danger of dying, then he thinks — "Well, I'm going to lose this world, any way, and if I die as I am, I shall be lost. If I could only live for ever in this world, how glad I would be! But God is angry with me, and he can destroy me; how can I escape from him?"

And what are the Christian's thoughts of God?

Instead of trying to get away from thinking about him, he prays to him; calls him his Father! He looks out on the green fields, the great sea, the blue sky with its canopy of stars, and rejoices because God made them. When he is sick; when sorrow falls on him; when friends forsake him, he takes comfort in thinking of God, and hearing his will. What does David say about God? "I will go unto God, *my exceeding joy!*" The believer tells the Lord all that is in his heart; what he couldn't tell to any man, he pours out before God. You can see by that what he thinks of God. The Lord as his Friend, his Father, and his Saviour.

Or if you notice how they feel about death, you will see the difference between the new heart and the old one. I know some sinners die stupidly; they sleep through their last minutes, and die asleep. Some are too proud to look frightened, or to beg God for mercy then, after refusing him so long. Even that isn't dying happily! But oh what agonies men feel, that are dying in their sins! One cries: "Millions of money for an inch of time!" Another says: "Now I know there is a hell; for I feel it already." Others beg for mercy—mercy—mercy, in their despair, till they die.

But the Christian—he may be ever so fearful beforehand, but when his day comes to die, God gives him strength enough to die in Christ. He can leave wife, children and home with a smiling face, because he is going to his Father's house.

One lifts up his dying eyes and rejoices; he says: "God, I am saved!" Another answers: "Oh, no, I don't doubt; I'm not afraid to die while my Redeemer lives." Each one in his own way is *ready*, and he *goes in peace*.

I will prove it another way. Some sinners grow anxious about their souls, but God doesn't change their hearts. Now, if you notice how *they* treat religion, you will see how unfit the old heart is to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Some just contrive one false excuse for themselves, and that's enough to ease their consciences! They haven't time now, or they don't feel guilty and frightened enough to repent. Their excuses look foolish and vain, you see, and yet they are strong enough to cheat sinners into putting off religion.

Some sinners try to make themselves good first, though that's the very thing God offers to do for them—to make them good. But they forget him, and try to cure themselves—*and fail*.

Some *imitate* religion; they notice how Christians talk, and look, and feel; and they come as near it as they can, and then persuade themselves that they are Christians. How foolish it would seem for a sick man to try and behave like a well man, instead of taking medicine and getting well! So the men that only try to act like Christians, grieve away the Holy Spirit, and are lost.

Some just harden their hearts, and drive God out

of their thoughts, and he goes away, grieved and angry, and they are cut down in their sins.

But those that God saves, though they may behave in this same way at first, yet they get more and more in earnest somehow. They see how vain their excuses are; they feel that their souls are worth more than their business; they find out that all their "righteousness is filthy rags." Their hearts grow tender, and God leads them on, and gives them a new heart — *and they are safe.*

I hope you see, now, what a terrible difference there is between the old heart and the new heart. You see there isn't the slightest hope for a man, while he tries to make his own heart new; and the only way for anybody to get a new heart, is to *go to God for it.*

III. Now let us hear what God says about it. He "knows what is in man," and if he says we can't be saved except by the Holy Spirit, that settles it.

And first, he tells us that *even his teaching won't make men wise.* Is. xxviii. 12, God said: "This is the rest, wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; yet they would not hear." Though God himself points out the way to heaven for sinners, they won't mind Him, nor walk in His ways. And often, when they ask the way, they won't walk in it. When the people came and asked the prophet what they should do, and he told them, what did they do? Jer. xlv. 16, "As for the word thou hast spoken

in the name of the Lord, *we will not hearken unto thee.*"

Even afflictions and trials, He says, won't bring men unto Him. Jer. v. 3, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." What a true picture of sinners! How often we see all these things tried on them! Ministers preach to them; they read the Bible; they get sick, and they get well; they lose friends and children in the grave; but they don't repent. They have made their faces harder than a rock.

Then, again, he tells us plainly that sinners *can't* please him. Rom. viii. 8, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." John vi. 44, "No man can come unto me except the Father draw him." John iii. 6, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." He can't make any change in his own heart without God's help; and unless his heart is changed, he can't please God.

And besides all this, to show us how helpless we are, he calls our salvation by two different names; being born again, and being raised from the dead. The text says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And a little further on the Lord Jesus says again: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." So, in another

place, 1 John v. 1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." How plain it is, here, that man can't save himself! Now try the other name God gives it—being raised from the dead. Eph. ii. 1, "And you, who were *dead in trespasses and sins*, hath God quickened," that is, "raised from the dead," 2 Cor. v. 14, "If one died for all, then were all dead." "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Being a sinner is like being dead; and being converted is like being raised from the dead.

So it is; whichever way you look at it, men are both guilty and helpless. The sick man might just as well try to cure himself without medicine, or the starving man to feed himself without bread, as the sinner hope to repent and believe without grace. What, then, must we do to be saved?

"Let him take hold of my strength and make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." We are weak, but God is mighty. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous;" and "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" You see, God made it plain that we can't be saved our own way; and then he shows us just as plainly how we can be saved. Seek him! Go to him in earnest prayer; plead with him for his dear Son's sake; confess

your sins ; put him in mind of his own promises and calls ; ask him to create in you a clean heart and to put a right spirit within you. Don't get discouraged ; be like that poor woman the Lord tried so long, taking no notice of her, and then saying such hard things to her. But she *knew he was the Saviour*, and she kept on. Presently he said, " Oh woman, great is thy faith ! Be it unto thee as thou wilt !"

Think of that world of woe where sinners and devils dwell ; think of the shamefulness of sin ; remember how gracious God is—how ready to forgive. The Holy Spirit is waiting to be gracious, and the Lord Jesus is longing to save. That's what he died for ! Come, all ye weary, heavy-laden, and he will give you rest. Or shall he say to you at last, " Ye would not come unto me, that you might have life ?"

SERMON VIII.

THE NEW CREATURE

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away—behold, all things are become new.
—2 Cor. v. 17.

WERE you ever very sick? Sick with a long and dangerous fever, so that it took away your senses, and kept you on the very edge of the grave? You got weaker and weaker; medicine didn't seem to do you any good; you lay very still; they could hardly find your pulse or feel your heart beat or see you breathe; but just as almost everybody thought you were gone, you began to revive a little. Your reason came back; your fever left; the doctor said: "He will get well." The pains of death had got hold upon you, but the Lord brought you back from the borders of the pit.

Now, can you remember how you felt the first day you could creep out into the fresh air, with a stick to help you? So weak, so tired if you only raised your hand or spoke to anybody; your knees would tremble, and your voice was so thin and faint, it sounded strange even to you. But oh how sweet and bright everything looked! It didn't

seem like the same world you lived in before ; and the fresh breeze was so cool and gentle ; everybody looked so cheerful and kind ; the very trees and the birds seemed to be so glad, that the pleasant tears would come into your eyes, and your heart swelled with happiness. And I hope you thanked God, with all your soul, for sparing you when you were about to die, and promised to serve him, as the hymn says :

“ My life, which thou hast made thy care,
Lord, I devote to thee.”

That's the way people often feel, when they have just been converted. At first, when they begin to think about religion, they are frightened and distressed ; often they can hardly sleep or eat, they are in such trouble ; that angry God looks so terrible, and they find they can't save themselves or escape from him. And then, when they are in despair about themselves, and feel that they are lost, the Lord smiles on them, loves them, gives them a new heart, and forgives all their sins. And just as beautiful as the world looks to you when you begin to get well of sickness, just so calm and happy is everything to the man whose sins are all washed away, and his wickedness and sorrow is cured by the Holy Spirit.

But often God does his great work in sinners' hearts so quietly and gently, that nobody can tell just when it was done ; they often doubt about themselves ; they wonder whether there can be the new

heart; they're afraid they have made some mistake. Especially when some young Christians show such a great sudden change it makes the others say: "If *that* is the way we have to be converted, I can't be a Christian." Now, I want to clear up that trouble for you; I want to show you *what a young Christian really is; how he feels and acts*; so that you can find out about yourself whether you are a sinner yet, or if God has saved you.

I. And I will tell you, first of all, something about the young Christian's *feelings*.

Often the change in his feelings is just as quiet as the sun's going over our head at 12 o'clock; it makes no noise at all, but the shadows begin to fall the other way; where it was dark before it is light now, and it grows brighter and brighter till sundown.

See what a difference in his feelings *about God*. Once, God was very terrible to him; he couldn't stop thinking about him, but he only remembered the Lord's most fearful names; the jealous God, the dreadful God, the angry God. If he could only forget him, how glad he would have been. But he couldn't; day and night he said to himself: "Our God is a consuming fire;" "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Many a man has got so frightened and angry, thinking about his danger and God's wrath, that if he could tear Jehovah from his throne, he would do it.

But now! "The Lord is my Shepherd — I shall

not want: He leadeth me; yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Instead of being afraid of God, as he used to be, it is thinking about God that keeps him from being afraid. Just like the little child that wakes up in the night and throws out its hand to its mother, and feels safe because she is there; so God's child, that would be frightened because of sin, and death, and hell, rests in peace, because the Lord is near. Hear what David said, when his cruel son Absalom and a whole army were gathered round him to take his life: "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me! I lay me down in peace, and sleep; I awake, for the Lord sustains me. I cry unto the Lord with my voice, and he hears me out of his holy hill."

And one thing is very wonderful and very beautiful; the young Christian loves to remember that *God is holy*. That was the very thing that made the sinner afraid. God being so pure and spotless; hating sin so deeply; being so "angry with the sinner every day;" that was the most awful thought to him. But now, though he knows there is sin in him still, he rejoices because God is holy. He cries out, "Let me praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy." When he thinks about his own transgressions, and gets sad and discouraged, then he looks up and takes comfort, because God is good and pure, and because God promises that at last we shall be like him."

See, now, what he thinks of *Christ*:

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
In a believer’s ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.”

At the very name of the dear saviour his voice trembles, and his heart swells, and the tears fill his eyes. Like Mary Magdalene, when she met him just risen from the tomb, he can’t say much, but he can kneel and cry — “My Master!” Oh, if he can only do something to please the Lord, and to make men honour him, how glad he will be! The Lord don’t need him — he knows that very well; but his own heart and hands can’t keep still. He understands now what John says about the saints in heaven — “they rest not, day nor night, praising God and the Lamb.” The Lord is *his friend*; in every trouble, in every joy, he goes to his Saviour’s feet, and pours out his heart there. He wants everybody to come and trust in Jesus Christ; and he can promise them, if they will only try him, they will say: “Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

But it is trembling joy that is in his heart. He feels so unworthy; so ashamed of that wickedness he lived in; so afraid that he won’t keep his own promises, and that he will dishonour his Saviour in some way, that he can hardly trust himself to

rejoice. Then he wonders at the change in himself; he looks up to the Saviour, and wonders that such a great and holy God should care for a poor sinner like him; he can't understand it. But he can praise him! Oh, yes; he can sing the song of heaven already: "Salvation unto our God, that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever!"

As I told you just now, *he remembers his sins*; but he don't think about them as he used to. Once, he was only sorry for his sins, because they brought him into danger. If he could only think God would 'nt punish him for them, he would never give them up; and if he thought he could go on safely in sin for ten years, or fifty, and then be saved, he'd give every minute to sin and Satan. But because he was afraid of dying and being lost, he began to seek religion.

But now he feels very differently about sin—it grieves his dear Father, and he hates it for that. If there wasn't any hell, he would hate sin, just because it offends Jesus Christ, who is our Master and our chief delight. Our very hearts cry out as David's did:—"Oh Lord, how I love thy law!" We see that the law is right, and we know that he is good; and we can't bear to break it, or to displease him.

The young Christian *loves all Christians*. He looks up to God's old servants with love and hope. He loves them for being the Lord's own children;

for loving the same heavenly Father that he loves. He thinks how many thousands of prayers they have prayed; how they used to feel just as he does now; how much wiser and better they have grown. And he thinks: "By the Holy Spirit's help, I shall be like them. I will serve my God all my days. I am only the little blade of corn now, just come up out of the ground, but the Lord will bless me, and I will grow up to be the full corn in the ear. Then, when the angels come to gather the grain into his barn, they will take me to heaven too!"

But oh, how tenderly he loves young Christians, like himself! When he sees them weeping for joy because their sins are forgiven; when he hears them pray for a blessing on their minister, their friends, and poor sinners; when they sing God's praise, his whole heart answers to it. They are "one," as the Saviour promised. He almost trembles, when he is with them, for fear he may say or do something to discourage or trouble them, or tempt them away from their God. How earnestly he prays that God will bless them, keep them from sin, make them useful, happy, holy!

Notice, now, how *he loves the Bible*. It is a very puzzling book to sinners; it says a great many things they don't understand; some few, I know, that hardly anybody understands; but *a great many* of God's words are "hard sayings" to sinners. Hating sin, loving God whom nobody ever saw, rejoicing in affliction and sorrow, being

strong in God when we are weak in ourselves—these are things that we can't understand *till we feel them*. That makes the difference. Every little while the young Christian finds a verse that used to be dark to him, that is all plain and easy now. He says: "That's the very way I feel; I know that's true now, though I didn't use to think so." Presently you hear him again; "How true that is! I never thought so before, but now I feel it."

Then, very often, he has a feeling of some kind that he can't express at all. He tries to find some words for it, but they don't come; till at last he reads or hears some sweet word out of the Bible that suits him exactly. But the great thing is, that now he *believes God's word*.

The promises *belong* to him; whatever God says, he believes; he takes it into his heart and "comforts himself with these words." Then it teaches him so much that he wants to know; he gets acquainted with his Saviour and his God there; he learns about heaven; he grows wise about what's right and wrong. In fact, whenever he gets weak and weary, the Scriptures make him strong; when he gets downhearted, they cheer him; when he gets cold and careless, they stir him up; when he feels ignorant, they teach him; when he sins, they rebuke him; while he lives they guide him; when he dies they make him triumph in his God! No wonder he loves them dearly; they come from his

Father and his Redeemer, and they lead him up to Him. He says: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee; thy law is my delight. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! It is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Once more. See what he thinks *about the worlds to come*—the world of woe, and the world of joy. He looks back on hell, as a man might look at a burning house he had just been dragged out of, or on a raging sea he has just escaped from—with mingled horror and joy. "If I had been left to go on in sin a little longer, that would have been my portion! Perhaps, if I had grieved God's Holy Spirit *once more*, he would have left me there! Now I'm safe; the Lord is my keeper; the gates of hell shall not prevail against me. Glory, glory, to Jesus Christ my Redeemer

"He burst the iron gates of death
And tore the bars away!"

Ah, how sweet are his thoughts of heaven! If a pleasant breeze blows; if the day is cool and bright; if the clouds grow splendid at sunrise or sun set, he thinks: "My home is better yet." If the night grows dark and gloomy, he remembers, "there is no night there." If he hears Christians singing songs of praise, he joins them with all his heart, for he knows he will yet sing the "song of Moses and the Lamb." When sin shames him and casts him down, and he weeps about it before the

Lord, his comfort is, that he will soon go where they never sin; just as you sing it in your own song:

“Free—oh free, my Lord;
Free from every sin.”

Sickness and death, war and shame and woe, never come there. He feels it; and often he stands and looks up to heaven, and his heart yearns to be there. *Heaven is his home.*

II. But it isn't only new feelings the young Christian has; he has *new principles*, too.

Mind, I don't say “new resolutions.” Sinners make all the resolutions, just like the Christian; but the trouble is, *there is nothing in his heart to make him keep them.* Often the young Christian is almost afraid to make any more good resolutions, he feels so weak and wicked; he isn't near as bold as he was; but *something in his heart*, that God put there, *keeps him from sinning, and makes him do right.* That something is what I call his *principles.*

And the first one is, *always to try and please God.* That was one of the Lord Jesus Christ's principles—“I do always the things that please my Father.” Not as if God was hard to please, and it took a great deal of trying to satisfy him—oh, no. He leaves such foolish thoughts for the unbelievers; but he loves God so for his goodness, his holiness, and his mercy, that he must do something to show his love. Like a little child, that

loves to run across the floor, and bring its mother's spool or thimble, just to see her smile and look bright; so God's child is happy when he feels he is doing his Father's will.

The next one is, *to take his Saviour for his King*. He knows the Lord Jesus is his Saviour; but he isn't satisfied with just being delivered from hell. He prays with his whole soul, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." So he tries to keep all the Lord's laws himself; he wants everybody to own and obey their Redeemer; and he does all he can to build up the church. It grieves him to see the Sabbath day broken; to hear the name of the Lord Jesus taken in vain by the wicked; to think how many great nations there are that do not know him and serve idols.

Another principle is, *to be a good and true brother to his brethren and sisters in the church*. You can always tell him by his keeping the peace. Old Christians sometimes get cold hearted and quarrelsome; but if a man who thinks he has just been converted is quarrelsome, hard to please, can't forget a cross word or an injury, tell him *he is mistaken*; if he had just begun to love God, he couldn't bear malice against God's children. He prays for his minister constantly; begs God to remember him, and give him grace and wisdom. He thinks about the church, and tries to find out what he can do for the Lord's people. He says, "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."

The next one is, *to do all the good he can.* The divine commandment, you know, is this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And he begins to keep that law, and every law of God, as soon as he finds it. He pities poor sinners about to die in their sins, and be lost for ever. He prays for them; he watches his chance to speak a good word to them; if they have any friend that can do it better than he can, he asks him to be faithful too. He is kind to the poor and sick, to the wicked and miserable. Like his Saviour, who wept over Jerusalem when the Jews rejected him and were going to kill him, he weeps for dying men, and longs to save them.

I can only speak of one more principle now—*to make haste, and get rid of sin.* He is tired of this wicked world; he was "weary and heavy laden" before he found peace in Christ, and now, when he looks into his heart, and finds unruly passions and selfish feelings there, it grieves and darkens his mind. He repents of every sin as soon as he finds it out; he pleads with the Lord every day, to keep him from temptation, and deliver him from evil; he is glad to deny himself, and give up even what seems right, if it is likely to lead on to something else that's wrong. He abhors what is evil, and tries to get rid of it; and he tries to live by the Lord's command, "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

But remember, though he is a "new creature,"

he is young yet. As David says, his "soul is even as a weaned child;" weak, unable to take care of itself, needing to be looked after all the time. So the young Christian don't get discouraged when he finds some evil in himself; he knows that he has a great deal to learn, and that he will have to *work hard and get strong*, and then he will be holy and happy. "They that have clean hands will grow stronger and stronger.'

SERMON IX.

JOINING THE CHURCH.

With the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—ROM. x. 10.

THE LORD Jesus, our good Shepherd, has provided a fold for his flock—a place where he can keep them together, and watch over them. It is called *his church*; the church of Christ; the house of the living God. All who belong to him, whom he bought with his precious blood, have a right to dwell there, and be numbered among his "sheep." He promised that there should be "one fold and one shepherd;" that is, that all his people should be one people, whatever place they lived in, and whatever name they were called by; and that he himself would be the Saviour of all; not taking care of some himself, and leaving the rest to somebody else, but counting all together, and caring for all—being every Christian's own dear Redeemer.

Now that he has brought his people together and made them into a church, he invites everybody that believes in him and repents of sin, to join it. It's the place, not for sinners that want to be saved

and wish they were Christians, but for those who think that they *are* Christians already. Your house is the place for your children, and not for other children that wish they were yours; and so the church is for God's family, and nobody else. And I want to tell you to-day what a sweet and happy place it is, that the Lord has built for his dear friends. I want to invite every one of you, that repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, to join the church. You see what that text says: "With the mouth confession is made *unto salvation*;" that is, the way to be saved is, to profess the Lord before men.

Nobody must expect to be saved by hiding a little religion in their hearts where it will never be heard of. The only way is, *to believe with all your heart and come out from the world, and confess the Lord as your Saviour publicly.* That's the way to be saved, and the Bible don't tell us any other way.

I. But, first of all, we must *have something to profess.*

How foolish it would be to think that God was pleased with a falsehood! And yet, every year, a great many people join the church, that know they are not God's children; they think if they can only get in there, they are safe. It is very wicked, as well as foolish and dangerous.

Joining the church is just saying to everybody who sees you do it: "I was a sinner, lost and

ruined, hardened and helpless, but now I take the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour; I believe that I have repented of all my sins, and that he has pardoned me, and that my name is now written in the book of life. I give up the world; I'm tired of sin; I'm going to serve God all my days." Now, suppose I say all that when I don't feel it, just because I think getting into the church will save me, haven't I told a falsehood? Isn't it wicked to say what isn't true to men? And how much more dreadful is it to say it to God!

But the sinner is the very man who don't care about God *in his heart*; he may be frightened about his sins; he may wish he was safe; he may take some comfort in going to church and prayer meetings; because he thinks he can escape from hell that way; but as soon as his fright is gone, his religion is gone too. What pleasure can God take in seeing such a man called his servant, and counted among his people? How angry the Lord Jesus must be, when he sees a sinner and an unbeliever sit down at the communion and *make believe* there!—pretend to honour the Lord's broken body, when he don't trust him at all!

The Lord Jesus said some terrible things about false professors of religion. Let me tell you some of his sayings: "Ye hypocrites! well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me

with their lips, but their heart is far from me.'” And again he says: “Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.” And if I was to tell you what God says about those who worshipped him falsely in old times, you would tremble, for fear you should fall into the same condemnation.

In truth, the sinner’s heart is vile in God’s sight, for God is holy; and he cannot bear to count anybody among his friends that isn’t ashamed of sin, and praying for the Holy Spirit to cure him of wickedness. God is the God of truth, and he hates every false way, and therefore, as the hymn says, he

“Abhors the sacrifice
Where not the heart is found.”

And this makes it plain that nobody ought to profess religion, till he has some religion to profess. It is foolish and wicked to try it before then; it is cheating ourselves and mocking God.

II. But if a man is a Christian, then, as I told you just now, the church is the very place for him; the safest and happiest place for every child of God. God *invites* them to come in; promises them blessings if they confess the Lord, and threatens woe, if they are ashamed of him. “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoso-

ever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." And again: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Sometimes God gives us a positive *command* about it: "Come out from among them, (*i. e.* from among the sinners,) O my people, and be ye separate; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

That ought to be enough for anybody that loves God, or believes on the Lord Jesus. To have the Saviour own him before our Father in heaven, and to have God call him his son—isn't that a precious promise? If it was something hard and dangerous and fearful, every true Christian would rejoice to own his God and Redeemer; but the Lord has filled his church with blessings for his people.

First of all, you know the world is full of temptations; inside and outside, everything persuades us to sin against God. And we are just so blind and foolish, that anything can lead us into sin, and so into trouble and darkness. Everything that helps us to resist temptation is a blessing; it helps us just where we need help the most. But what can a man do that will help him so much as making a

public promise? You stand up before all the Christians, and before ever so many sinners too—old friends and strangers both—before the great God and our Saviour, and you make a solemn public promise to live a pure and pious life; to pray for the Holy Spirit's help, and to serve the Lord with all your might; to set a good example, and to do good as you have opportunity. And surely if anything a man can do will make him firm and faithful, such a solemn vow as that will do it.

The next thing is this—joining the church *puts the Christian among Christians*; it makes him “come out from among” the sinners, and be separate, and it joins him to those who believe on the same Lord Jesus Christ, and love the same God, and make the same promise.

Now we know how feelings run from one heart to another; if one member of a family is good-tempered and pleasant and happy, the others' faces begin to brighten too. And we know how easy it is to do right, if all the company do the same thing. How many people work hard, just because everybody about is industrious! So, when the young Christian leaves the company of sinners, and joins himself to those who love heaven and their Father there—those that are patiently trying to do right and to please God and to get rid of sin—those who love one another and are kind—it is a great deal easier for him to do right; it keeps his heart

warmer and brighter to have so much love and happiness all around.

Then, again, when the young Christian joins the church, he feels that all those precious privileges they have there, *belong to him*. It is the house of *his* God where they worship; it is *his* Saviour they praise. *His* minister preaches, and he preaches to *him*. When prayer is made for the church, he knows that means him too. He is not a stranger there: he's at home.

But most of all, he feels that at the Lord's table, any body can hear the preaching, and join in the singing; but only those that come out from the world can take the communion. When the minister repeats the Lord's words, "This is my body, broken for you," his heart answers: "Yes, my master, it was broken for me! That blood was shed for me! As often as I do this, I remember thee. I promise to show forth thy death till thou come!"

And then, he knows that every officer in the church has promised to watch over him, and help him. If they see him going astray, it is their place to warn him kindly; to instruct him; to encourage him; to strengthen him, whenever he tries to do right. If his heart gets heavy and dark, he can go to his pastor, the elders, or the leaders, and tell them about it, and get their advice; they will feel for him, and pray for him, and study his case, to see what the matter is. If he finds out that he has been sinning, he can go and confess it to them, and

have the help of their prayers, and their watching over him, to hold him up when he tries to do better. In truth, they are bound to help him every way they can; that's exactly what the Lord put them there for; and no church member ought to feel afraid to go to his minister and talk to him about anything that concerns his soul. The Bible says: "They watch for our souls, as they that must give account."

But the greatest of all is this — *the Lord our God has promised to bless his church*; and of course, whoever really belongs to the church, will get his share of God's blessing. "Yea, God loved the people; he will keep the feet of his saints. For the Lord forsaketh not his saints; he preserveth their soul; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and *of the household of God.*"

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." "God shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus." "For the Lord will not forsake his people, because it hath pleased him to make you his people." "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before me."

He promises to deliver us out of affliction. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, and he that formed thee, O Israel—Fear not! for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

He promises to make the church holy: "He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The Lord Jesus "gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy." And he shows us how he will bless the church in heaven at last: "After this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb! These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they

before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lord, which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

These are some of God's promises and kind words to his church. I might show you a great many more, for the Lord dearly loves his church, but these are enough, surely. Every true-hearted church-member has a share in them, and God will bless him according to his promise.

III. But God hasn't only promised to bless and reward the Christian himself. He doesn't mean us to look just at the good we can get out of it and nothing else. Joining the church is the way to *do good*, as well as to get good.

First of all, it *encourages the Christians*, when men leave the world and join them and confess the Lord. They say: "Our God is saving sinners again! Here's another poor sinner repenting! One more of his enemies, that he has brought to be his friend!" Then they thank God and take courage; they can praise and pray; they can serve God and do good, with new spirit, when they see that he is calling men "out of darkness into his marvellous light."

It warns sinners, too; it makes them feel how great God's mercy is, and how others are entering the kingdom of heaven while they stay out. They remember that every one of these new Christians will rise up against them in the judgment, because they had the same blessings and didn't repent. It puts them in mind of that "great gulf" that lies between heaven and hell, when they see how we begin to part from one another here — the husband belonging to the church, perhaps, and the wife belonging to the world, the sister loving God, and the brother loving sin; the father praying, and the son swearing.

In a great many other ways, joining the church does good. It brings religion into a man's family; it makes him set a good example wherever he is — in the field or in the house; it sets him to praying for people; and more than all, it *honours God*. It says: "O God, thou art my God! early will I seek thee, for in thee the friendless and fatherless findeth mercy. Thou forgivest all my sins; thou renewest my heart; thou leadest me in the way of life. I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being! Thou keepest my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. The Lord hath washed me from my sins in his own blood: he is my Redeemer, and I am his servant. I give up every other hope, and every idol, and every sin; the Lord is my portion and my joy. I bear witness that Jesus Christ is a perfect Sa-

viour, and the Lord my God is an everlasting Father." So we honour God and do good; and God smiles on us and saves us. Isn't it a good thing to profess Christ? and oughtn't every believer to speak out and own his Lord? "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

SERMON X.

GOSPEL CONDUCT.

Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ.
—PHIL. i. 27.

I SUPPOSE you have all heard of Paul, the great Apostle; the man who wrote the verse that I'm taking for my text. His first name was Saul. He was a Jew; fond of his religion and his goodness; knowing nothing about his own heart, or the real meaning of God's word. While he thought he was so good, he was full of wicked and bitter passions; he was proud, self-righteous, uncharitable. So, when the Lord Jesus came and died for us, Paul was ready to hate him and all his people; and when the first Christians came out of their hiding places, and began to tell the good news of a Saviour, Paul—young man as he was—was ready to persecute and kill them. When that good man, Stephen, was beaten to death with stones, Paul stood by and took care of their clothes for those who were murdering him. And when the Christians began to flee away and hide again, because of the persecution, he was the fiercest of all in hunting for them. beating them, putting them in

jail, or anything else the cruel Jews wanted to do with them.

He hated the Christians so bitterly, that when he couldn't find any more to persecute in Jerusalem, he begged the rulers and chief men to let him go to Damascus and oppress them there: "both men and women," the Bible says! No pity in his heart for any poor sinner that believed in Jesus Christ!

But while he was hurrying on there, fierce and cruel; thirsting for their blood as any tiger, all at once a bright and terrible light shone out of heaven on him—brighter than the very sun itself—so bright that he fell down, blind and sick, on the ground! It was the Lord Jesus Christ, in his glorious body, looking down from heaven on this wicked man, persecuting his people. The Lord said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He answered: "Who art thou, Lord?" Christ said: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." In an instant Paul saw what he was doing; he was hating and grieving his own Saviour! the Lord that died for him! Oh, how frightened and ashamed he was! every proud and bitter thought melted out of his mind, and he began to love the very cause, and the very people that he had been hating. And his first word then was: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" That was the uppermost thing in his heart, all the rest of his life. "I must

do something for my Lord. What wilt thou have me to do?"

Christ didn't tell him, right off, what he was to do; he kept him three days blind and idle in Damascus, to give him time to think, and to make up his mind perfectly. Then he sent Ananias to him, to open his eyes, and to tell him that his work was this: "preach the gospel to the Gentiles." And from that day to the day his head was cut off, he never gave it up: wherever he was, he warned and taught the people, and told them of the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Now, every true Christian, in his first days, is like Paul in this, that he wants to know how he ought to live, and what the Lord would have him to do. It would make him very unhappy if the Lord should forbid him to work for him and serve him; but often he feels puzzled — he don't know just what the rule of his life ought to be. And this is what Paul tells us in the text, "Only let your conduct be as becomes the gospel of Christ;" fit your life to that good news, and you will be *just right*. You know what that good news is: the gospel puts us in mind that we are sinners, and then tells us how the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and died on the cross to save us; that God will save his people, and give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; that he takes care of us here, and makes us dwell in heaven when we die.

What kind of life, then, will match that glorious gospel? What must the Christian's conduct be?

That's the question I want to answer for you to-day, so that you can know what the Lord will have you to do.

I. Our conduct must be *humble*.

If a man makes a great and strange mistake, we always think that after he find it out, he ought to have a poorer opinion of himself, and more respect for other people's judgment. If he makes so many mistakes as to show that he is ignorant and foolish, we think he ought to be very cautious how he trusts his own judgment again, and be very careful to follow good advice always. But if he has been a drunkard, or a liar, or a thief, all his life, we wonder how he can ever hold up his head, and look and talk proudly any more.

Now, we know what *we* used to be. If we wanted to forget it, the Bible keeps putting us in mind. We were "dead in trespasses and sins; by nature the children of wrath;" "wherefore *remember*," Paul says, "remember that ye were without God, having no hope." God was angry with us; we were full of sin; ungrateful, selfish, disobedient; despising his goodness, and rejecting Jesus Christ. We must remember this; and remembering it ought to humble us. It will make us feel how wicked we are by ourselves, and how certain we are to go back to sin, if the same mighty God that turned us, doesn't keep us all the time. It will keep us from despis-

ing sinners, and from forgetting that we were just like them. It will make us afraid to run into temptation; make us know that we are never safe except when we are near the Lord.

All that we say and do; even the way we look, ought to show that we never forget what poor sinners we are: how guilty, and vile, and ready to perish. Everything proud and haughty is foolish in us, and hateful to God.

II. Our conduct must be *holy*.

Now that we see how guilty and vile sin makes us; vexes the great God who wants to be our friend; turns away his love; fills our hearts with evil passions; makes our consciences sore and sad; hardens us; destroys our peace; prepares us for hell; we must fear and hate sin with all our might. We must search into our hearts to see what wickedness is left there; to confess it, and repent of it, and beg God to cure it for us. We must pray David's prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Then, you know, if we are Christians, we will love the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will try to honour him in the eyes of men. And we know that nothing could dishonour him, or keep men from respecting him, more than being selfish and passionate, worldly and proud, and prayerless, when we are called by his name. We know that if we love

his law, and keep ourselves spotless and unblamable; if everybody sees how tender-hearted and loving and good we are, they will think better of him. They will say: "It is worth something to be saved by Jesus Christ; see how pure, and brave, and kind his people are!"

But not only for that; not only to honour our Lord, *but because we love him so ourselves*, we must long to be like him: that must be our great ambition. Just as every good soldier loves to see his general brave, and then tries to be just as brave himself; just as every good child is ashamed and disappointed when it does anything that its father or mother wouldn't do; so the true believer is never satisfied, when he isn't like Christ. When he is passionate, or proud, and finds it out, he says, "Ah, my Lord never would do that. I'm not like my Saviour yet! Help me, O my God, and cure me of sin!"

He longs to get away from this evil world, where everything tempts him, and leads him away from the Lord Jesus, and go where he shall ever "be with the Lord."

"There we shall see his face,
And never, never sin."

That's what makes heaven so beautiful and so happy; and those who want to dwell in heaven must be holy.

III. We must be *prayerful*.

Anybody that wants to be good and holy, and knows how weak, and sinful, and foolish we are, will be sure to pray. Anybody that believes that God is kind and mighty, will have something to ask him. Anybody that knows God is our king, and that loves to serve him, will want to confess every sin to him, and be pardoned. And whoever doesn't pray, we know he is proud, and wicked, and unbelieving, and disobedient.

What does the Bible say? "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." But if we want to be righteous so much, we will feel how helpless we are, and we will be pouring out our hearts before God every day — telling him how ashamed and sorry we are, to be so evil, and praying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me!"

Then all our sorrows and joys we will carry to our dear Saviour. We will "trust in him at all times:"

"To him in every trouble flee,
Our best, our only Friend!"

When pain and sickness come; when death is near; when our dear ones are taken away, we will tell him about it, submit to him, and pray for strength to grow better, and bear it well. We will ask him for everything we want; we will pray for a blessing on our families, our church, our friends; we will beseech him to save

poor sinners, and the whole wicked, miserable world.

IV. We must be *patient*.

Vexation, disappointment, and sorrow come upon everybody. Death and tears fill the world, because of sin; and if we are God's children, we won't be angry and discontented when we suffer; we won't give up religion, and say, "What use is it to serve God, if he doesn't save us from sorrow?" We musn't sit down in despair, as if there never was any better time coming. We must believe that God is good and faithful. We must know that he is trying to cure us of sin and pride, and to take away our idols, that keep us from loving him.

We must confess to him that we deserve all that we suffer, and more; we deserve to die and be cut off for ever; but we are not afraid of that now. The gospel tells us that "Whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out;" so we trust him, and "rejoice in tribulation." We leave all our affairs in his hands, and we are sure that all he does is kind, and right, and wise. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."—And whoever believes in the Lord will believe that, and be patient.

V. The true believer must be *busy*.

Our days are few and evil; time is short, and eternity is long; and yet whatever we do now, is done for eternity. Soon we must go where there are no tears to wipe away, no sorrows to relieve, no

sinners to save. As the Lord Jesus said: "The night cometh, when no man can work." Whatever we are going to do, we must do it quickly. If we are going to conquer sin, to help our friends, to teach our children, to serve the Lord among men, to spread the good news of the gospel, now is the time! A few days more, and we shall be in another world.

And you know the Bible says, "There remaineth *a rest* for the people of God." We are expected to work hard and wear out here. God puts our rest on the other side of the grave to show us that "this is not our rest." And when he tells us about heaven, in the gospel, the next thing he says is: "Wherefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Whoever believes this will be busy, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

VI. Our conduct must be *spiritual*.

The gospel makes a great difference between those who are worldly minded and those who are spiritually minded; and people often wonder what it means by those names. Let me tell you about them.

The worldly minded man is the man whose thoughts, and cares, and business, are *all in this world*. His treasure is here, and his heart also. He lives and feels just as if this world was going to last for ever, and he was going to live here

always. Money is worth more to him than God's grace and a new heart. He cares more about man's respecting him, than about God's forgiving him. He is more anxious to have his own way in this life, than to make heaven his home. Instead of loving God, his heart is full of idols.

But we must not be so — we that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the very sin we confessed and gave up, when we first came to God. "No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon" — that is, God and this world. So we took God for our portion, and gave up this world. We professed that it was better to have God forgive and love us, than to be rich or honourable; than to have pleasure, and health, and ease in this life. We took heaven for our home; and we owned that this world is so wicked, and miserable, and lasts such a little while, that we were foolish for loving and caring about it. And now, whatever comes: sorrow, trouble, reproach, death, we have promised "to take up the cross and follow Jesus."

Now, what I say is, *we must live according to our profession, and our promise.* We mustn't go back now, and live as if we minded the opinions and words of men, more than the will and the favour of God. We mustn't care more for money than we do for holiness. We mustn't try harder to have an easy time and our own way, than we do to get to heaven. We mustn't be discontented and rebellious because of sorrow and toil in this life. No; heaven

is our home! Christ is our all! God is our exceeding joy! We live for them, and not for this vain world. So, when Paul is telling about his trials and persecutions, he says: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, that I might finish my course with joy." And in another place he says, "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment (though they lasted all his life) work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Paul was spiritually minded; and if our conduct is such as becomes the gospel of Christ, we shall be spiritual, too.

VII. Last of all we must be *joyful*. "Rejoice in the Lord," says the Bible, "and again I say rejoice." We have no business to go mourning all our days. We are the children of God; we have the spirit that cries to him, "Father." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." You know what that means? Every thing that God has belongs to the Lord Jesus and us. Our sins are pardoned already; nothing can do us any real harm but sin, and if we resist temptation, God will help us and hold us up. All our sorrows are coming to an end; we are going to dwell in joy and peace for ever. We shall be holy and like him whom we love best

No more lonely days; no more shame for our

wickedness; no more hard battles with our evil hearts; no more disappointment in our friends, in our plans, in our love. Everybody in heaven will love us; and Christ and God will love us best of all.

How can we mourn and be troubled, then, except with unbelief? And unbelief is *sin*. When your heart is heavy you must return to the Lord, pray to him to comfort you, to take away your sin, and to make you rejoice. For it dishonours him when we are downcast and sad. We must do as becomes the gospel, and "*be joyful.*"

Now, when you think of all this I have been telling you—being humble and holy, prayerful and busy, patient and spiritual and joyful—does it seem too much for such poor, weak, sinful creatures as we are? It is too much, if we try by ourselves; but God is our strength; and he says: "Fear not, for I am with thee; *be not dismayed, for I am thy God*; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee, saith the Lord, even thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Trust him, all ye his people, and toil on; for there is rest in heaven.

SERMON XI.

THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD.

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.—PSA. xxiii. 1, 2.

DAVID, though he was a king and a prophet in the last part of his life, was a shepherd at first, and took care of his father's sheep. He used to lead them about from one hill to another, and from one pleasant little stream of water to another, just as they needed to go—always looking for the best pasture and the still clear water for his flock. When the lion and the bear came down where he was, to kill the sheep, David fought and killed them, though he was hardly grown up; and God took care of him and saved him from all danger and from all his enemies, and brought him to be one of the greatest and wisest of men.

But David never forgot those early days; he knew who it was that watched over him, just as he watched over the sheep. For though his life was full of dangers, and he had such fierce and terrible enemies—though he himself was a man full of evil passions, yet God was mightier than all, and so kind to him as to bring him through all these

things, so that he lived to be an old and honoured man, and died quietly in his palace, with his children and friends all round him.

Now David knew, as I said, who took such gracious care of him; he loved to look back and see how God had led him, and to praise that heavenly Father for his great goodness. And he wrote this beautiful Psalm not only to praise God, but to show what perfect trust he had in the Lord's faithfulness and love. And when he was thinking how he could tell of God's goodness, he remembered how he spent his young days watching the lambs and caring for them; and he said, "The Lord is my shepherd."

That's just the feeling that the Christian has. The poor sinner feels as if God was a stranger, and thought nothing about him, unless it was to be angry with him when he did wrong. It don't seem natural to him that men should go to the Almighty Lord with all their little affairs, and tell him all about them, just as if he was a near and faithful friend. But the Christian knows better, he knows God loves him. And while he remembers that God cares for all, and is kind to all, he remembers that though he is so mighty, he has a special care for him. If we have faith, we will not only say, The Lord is *a* Shepherd, we will say, The Lord is *our* Shepherd.

I. The Lord is our *faithful* Shepherd. David begins, you see, by looking at God; that's the way

to be happy and to feel safe — to look away from our poor selves, wicked and helpless, to the mighty God. He is faithful. “I am the Lord,” he says; “I change not.” He has proved that well. Long, long before the world was, he had it all planned; and in his good time he spoke the wonderful word, and the world was made. Then as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, he promised them a Saviour; and though so many hundreds of years had to roll away — though men were so wicked and rebellious — though the Lord saw just how they would treat his dear and holy Son, yet he kept his promise. He sent that Son into the world, full of grace and truth, and let him die for sinners. Then he promised the Holy Spirit, and kept that promise — made men repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, pardoned their sins, changed their hearts, and fitted them for heaven.

And how many promises he made men! yet not not one of them ever failed. Who ever could rise up before God, and say, “I did this and this, according to thy word, and the promise wasn’t fulfilled?” Not one! He said that they who sought him early should find him, if they searched for him with all their hearts; and so it is until this day. He said he would take care of his people even down to old age; and he does it. When flesh and heart fail them, he is the strength of their heart and their portion for ever. Who ever came

to him and was cast out? Who ever trusted in him and wasn't delivered?

And we know he will be the same true and watchful Friend to us also. "He abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." Sickness and sorrow and storm will come, but our Deliverer will come also. He will bring us blessings as we need them. He will bring chastenings and afflictions, too, when we need them. He will keep every promise, and answer all our prayers, and love us, as he loved his disciples, "unto the end."

The Lord is our *mighty* Shepherd. Our enemies are strong, our sorrows are great, and our wickedness is terrible; and we need a mighty helper. That's just what the Lord is. "He stretched out the heavens like a curtain; he makes the clouds his chariot; he walks on the wings of the wind; he laid the foundations of the earth; he brought the waters of the flood higher than the mountains, and drove them away again with a word; he waters the hills with rain, and makes the grass and corn and trees to grow. He appoints the sun and moon their times to shine; he makes darkness, and it is night. The earth is full of his riches, and so is the great, wide sea which he has made. He looks on the earth and it trembles! He touches the hills and they smoke! His glory and his might shall endure for ever.—(Ps. civ.)

"This awful God is ours"—our Father and our Shepherd. We are the work of his hands, and our

new hearts are his also. When Christ died for us God raised him again from the dead. When the disciples gathered together and prayed in fear and sorrow, with the doors shut for fear of the Jews, God sent the Holy Spirit, like a rushing mighty wind, to fill their hearts with courage and their mouths with wisdom. And though kings and nations hated the gospel, and tried to destroy the church, they never could do it; for God had promised that even the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

So he brings us always just as much help as we need. If daily blessings are enough, he sends them; if our dangers and troubles grow great, then he sends a great deliverance. Not one of his people ever was lost. He will conquer death and hell for us, and bring us safe into the promised land.

God is our *gracious and tender* Shepherd. What miserable creatures we should be, if God didn't pity and love us! We are so blind and foolish—we make so many mistakes, and live so carelessly, that we are always getting into trouble. We sin so terribly, that earthly friends hardly ever have patience with us. Only the Lord our Shepherd bears with us! He is never weary of helping us! He forgiveth *all* our sins; he healeth all our infirmities; he saves our life from destruction. Oh how many poor sinners have gone to him for mercy, and every one was pardoned!

He is "the God of all comfort." Very sorrowful

is this world; full of wickedness, and full of tears. Every heart aches, and fears, and mourns. Everybody has sickness, and trouble, and death in the house; trouble, too, that no man can comfort—only God can pity and cure. So, if God wasn't "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great goodness," we should be friendless and helpless just when we need help and comfort the most. That's what the hymn says:

O thou who driest the mourner's tear,
 How dark this world would be,
 If, when by sorrow wounded here,
 We could not fly to thee!

But we can fly to him. Oh how often, when our hearts are ready to break with grief, we go to his mercy-seat and tell him all our trials; and while we pray he sends comfort! We feel stronger—we grow calm—ready to suffer all his righteous will; for our thoughts are on our heavenly home, and rejoicing in God's glory. And though our sins are so mixed up with our sorrows, that we almost feel ashamed to carry them to anybody, yet we know he is able to save "*to the uttermost.*" "Oh that great, sweet word uttermost!" God can follow us with his great love into all our wickedness, and foolishness, and grief, and heal us there, just as he stopped the mouths of the lions against Daniel, and just as the Lord Jesus called dead Lazarus out of the deep cave where he was buried. He heals the

broken in heart, and binds up their wounds, and he saves the chief of sinners.

II. "The Lord is my Shepherd—*I shall not want.*" Or, as David says in another place, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any *good* thing." If we have foolish and wicked wants, God doesn't promise to satisfy them. But his sheep shall not want anything that the Good Shepherd can give them. And how foolish we should be, if we *would* have what we like, whether our wise and gracious God saw that it was good for us or not!

David knew very well that he could'nt have everything he *liked*. There are some pleasant things that can't go together, and if a man has one of them, he must do without the other. No man can work and rest at once; he may want the pleasure of both, but one must wait. So that wasn't what David meant; what did he mean?

Why, he knew what a thirsty, starving, miserable world this is—full of war and violence, discontent and envy, and wicked passions—men striving against each other bitterly for things that can't do them good, and wasting all their chance to get real good. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God:" and yet peace is the only thing worth having. Strength, money, comforts, these are all very well to fill out with, but they can't make a man happy. Who ever sees a rich man that is happy? And how many poor and lowly people are happy! You go to the bedside of some sick

old man, and pity him—and behold, he doesn't want any pity! He says, "I'm leaving this sad and wretched world—my Lord is here with me in the dark valley—his word is sweet to me, and his promises are all true; pity poor careless sinners, that are going down laughing and singing to hell in the dark!" He don't want anything—his cup is full.

Now you see what David meant—the Lord will give me *every thing I need*; "no good thing will he keep back from them that walk uprightly." He saw trouble and sorrow were coming—they always come! but he wasn't afraid. They never *hurt* God's people, they *help* them. He put himself in the hands of his God. There he knew he was safe. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." It shows what care a good shepherd takes of his sheep, if he finds green pastures of tender grass for them—so plenty, too, that when they have eaten enough, they can still *lie down* in the midst of the grass. It shows they have enough, and it shows they feel safe. They can sleep, and he watches over them.

What is the pasture of the Lord's flock? *Religious blessings*. If he didn't feed them with that food, they would die; if they have that, their souls shall live for ever. See, now, how abundantly he provides for them.

First of all is the *Sabbath-day*. Ever since he made the world, he has saved one day out of every week for religion. He taught men to honour it and keep it holy, and to come together in little companies and worship him, and learn his will. Worldly and wicked people have always grudged the Lord that day, and tried to take it away from him, to spend it for themselves. But God was too good to let it be wasted so; he hallowed it, and made men respect it, and punished Sabbath-breakers so often, that all kinds of people are learning at last to give God the day that belongs to him. But it is the Christian's day after all. Then he can leave this poor world out of sight, and spend the time with the Lord Jesus. What a green and precious pasture for God's flock Sunday is!

Then, again, there is the *Bible*—God's book, we call it, and so it is. He taught the old prophets and apostles what to say and how to say it. He made them tell the story of Jesus Christ, and all his wonderful and dying love. He wrote down these "exceeding great and precious promises," that comfort us in all tribulation and give us courage to wait on the Lord. He put all that wisdom there that his people have been studying, and rejoicing about, all this long time. And what if some of you can't read it? I wish you could, every one of you, and I wish you had your own Bible, too. But if you can't read it, that don't keep the Bible from teaching you, and making many of you

wise unto salvation. All that you hear about your Saviour—all God's precious words of comfort that men repeat—all you know about religion—all that your friends and your minister can teach you—came right from the Bible. This is another part of the Lord's "green pastures."

And there is the *preaching*, too. How many thousands of good men our Father has taken away from their worldly plans and hopes—from trying to get pleasant homes and live in comfort and wealth—to make them preach the gospel. Made them work hard, and weep and suffer, striving against sin, and opposing those that tempt men—made them deny themselves, and take up the cross, and go about doing good, following Jesus, their great Captain. And their reward is, to save poor sinners; to know that those who were perishing in sin have come to be the children of God. They are happy—the Lord takes care of that. He makes them a blessing to men, and that brings them joy. They preach about the Lord Jesus, and sinners' hearts melt, and repent, and trust him. They tell of God's faithfulness, and the sorrowing Christian is comforted. They warn men of sin, and the backslider is ashamed and confesses and repents. They are the under shepherds; and they lead the Lord's flock into "green pastures."

"He maketh me to *lie down* in green pastures." How safe we are, when we stay in his pasture! Those that wander off, and try to take care of them-

selves, they are in danger and trouble all the time. But if we abide with him, we shall be satisfied with food, and lie down contented, and our rest shall be sweet. He invites us there — he opens his arms to us, and carries the weary ones in his bosom. Oh, who shall not love and trust this great Shepherd, and live near to him! Keep us in thy fold, dear Saviour, and let us go out no more for ever!

SERMON XII.

THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD.

“He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.”—PSA. xxiii. 2, 3, 4.

DAVID told us, in the first part of this Psalm, who was his Shepherd, and how safe he felt in God’s hands, and how kindly he provides for his flock, making them to “lie down in green pastures.” Now he goes on, telling of other blessings the Lord sends, and the care he takes of us all, even to the end.

I. “He leadeth me beside the still waters.” If David had only said, “beside the waters,” you couldn’t tell certainly what he meant. It might be a dangerous and rapid river, or the wild and bitter sea. But he says, “the still waters”—some clear and pleasant stream where the sheep can drink safely, and drink as often and as much as they need. That’s the very image of *peace with God*.

Sinners are in a *strife* with God. He wants them to live one way, and they will live any other way

but that. He threatens, but they won't listen. He "entreats," but they stop their ears. He is angry, but they forget him. He is grieved, but they harden their hearts. All they do, dishonours God; every word and action, and even their thoughts, break his law. If everybody was to follow their example, God would 'nt have a friend, a servant, or a son, in the whole wide world. His thoughts and his ways are not like theirs; and when God's will crosses their will, then they rebel, and their hearts blaspheme against him, even if their tongues don't dare to do it. God wants to make the world good, and they want to keep their wicked pleasures; *so they are working right against God's plans all the time.*

That makes sinners afraid of God. In their hearts they know they are resisting and grieving him; they know he is mighty, and they dare not go to him as they are. They're afraid of God! Afraid of our Shepherd and Friend—our dear Father! We know him; we can trust all his promises. We can go into our closets, and talk to him. We don't have to wait till some trouble happens to us, or till we are in terrible need of some blessing, and then creep into his presence, trembling for fear he will remember our sins, and slay us. Oh, no! we "enter into his courts *with joy*; it is a *good and pleasant thing* to give thanks unto the Lord, and to call on the name of the Most High." We can pour out our hearts before him; we can "tell him

all our trials;” and if we haven’t any trials, we can kneel before him, and praise him, and call him our Father. “We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

And when the Christian is weary of this miserable world—wary of seeing its sin and sorrow, and striving against temptations, and keeping down his passions, and doing his duties here, oh, how much like pleasant waters to a thirsty man it is, to be alone with God! The Sabbath morning comes, that God “blessed and hallowed”—or we find some quiet little time in the week—when we can put away all worldly thoughts and cares, and meditate on God’s sweet word. We lift up our heavy and tired hearts to him, and he lays a gentle hand on them, and they rest. We can almost see him look down on us, so gracious and loving, and whisper the precious Bible promise that comforts us. He leadeth us beside the still and holy waters, and quenches all our thirst.

II. “He restoreth my soul.” How strange alas, it is, that though God is so good, and religion makes men so happy, yet they will wander from him; leave the green pastures and still waters that our Shepherd provides, and stray in the wilderness of the world! But so it is; when God first takes us to be his children, we promise that we will never leave him, and we feel very sure that nothing will ever tempt us away from our Saviour. We sing and rejoice, and then grow careless and unwatchful;

and it don't take long for these weak and foolish hearts to get cold and hard, and to feel as if they didn't need any help against sin and Satan. Then down they come! The same way we loved the world before, money, or pleasure, or whatever it was, we begin to love it again without noticing it. Somehow, our prayers get shorter and less pleasant; we can't keep our thoughts from wandering. God seems far off—not so awful or so beautiful as he did once. At last, some sin that we fall into is so shocking, that it makes us think—and behold, our promises are all broken, and our peace is gone!

But now, instead of coming straight back to God as poor sinners, begging to be pardoned again for Christ's sake, as we did at first, we go stumbling on in dark and wicked ways. Sometimes it's because we love our sins too well; sometimes, because we are too proud to own our wickedness; sometimes, because we haven't faith enough to believe God will pardon us; we go on sinning and mourning, and grieving God; and then at last he takes pity on us, and leads us back. "He restoreth our soul." We would never find our way into peace again, if he didn't bring us there.

Sometimes God restores us by *taking away our idol*. How many Christians have had that experience! They loved something too much, but they didn't know it—they *wouldn't believe it*, even when their friends saw it, and told them so. They didn't want to believe it, because if they did they would

have to repent of the sin, and give up the idol. So they cover up their iniquity before the Lord, and sin against their own souls. But when his time comes, the money is lost, or the house burns down, or the child dies, and is buried out of sight. Then, while we are mourning over our affliction, it flashes on us that God has done it; this was our idol, and he took it away. And now we repent and return unto the Lord, and he has mercy on us, and pardons us abundantly.

Sometimes God restores us by *waking our consciences*. For a long time, we cheat ourselves into thinking that we are doing right, while in truth we are living in sin. It is wonderful how we can deceive ourselves, and hold up our heads, and look honest, while we are breaking God's law, and our own solemn promises! But when the Holy Spirit comes to us, we *can't help* seeing our sin, and being ashamed of it, too. "Mine eye seeth thee," Job says: "therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Sometimes God restores us by *making us long for peace again with him*. — We never have peace when we wander from God — not true peace. We may be careless and thoughtless, and call it peace, but we're not happy. And though for a while we may amuse ourselves and drive away our heaviness by worldly pleasures; yet just as soon as God touches our hearts, we find out how poor and lonely we are. Our heart and our flesh cry out for God — for the

living God. Every thing in the world looks mean and worthless without his blessing. Then we call to him: "My Father! my Father!" we throw down our vanities and sins, and run to his feet. And oh, what joy and peace it is to see him smile again, and call us his own dear children.

III. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." When we have been falling into sin, wandering from God, and getting lost in the crooked ways of the world, we begin to find out at last how weak we are — certain to go wrong, if God don't keep us right. Then what a comfort it is to remember God's promise to lead us, and to have the Christian's experience that God does lead him!

That's one special part of a shepherd's work, to lead the sheep. He knows where the green meadows are, and the streams that never dry, and he calls them away from the barren land, to the place he provides for them. For the Lord's flock, the only safe and pleasant paths are "the paths of righteousness;" they always run through green pastures and beside still waters. Those ways are ways of pleasantness, and those paths are paths of peace.

But alas, we know very well we can't trust ourselves to find those paths, and walk in them. Our hearts are too deceitful and wicked; we are so ignorant and blind, that if we go alone, we will surely get lost. Somebody must lead us, and keep us there; and the Lord our Shepherd will do it. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous."

He leads us by making *our conscience tender and honest*. Many consciences keep still when men are going wrong, don't cry out and scare them from wicked ways: so they go on easily in sin. But when God blesses us, and undertakes to lead us, he wakes up our consciences, so they have to tell the truth. When we are going to break the Sabbath, or give way to evil tempers, or do anything that's unrighteous, conscience says, No!—and raises such an alarm that we turn back into the “strait and narrow way” again.

He leads us by *teaching us how the Lord Jesus walked*. He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” Often, when we can't study out our way for ourselves, and every thing looks dark and doubtful to us, we remember that the Lord was in just such a strait once, and we know what he did and said. He had enemies; and he loved them, and gave himself for them. He was reproached; but he bore it meekly, and “reviled not again.” He was tempted, and resisted the devil. He was surrounded with sinners, but he lived and died pure and spotless: he pitied them, blessed them as long as he lived, and then laid down his life for them. Thinking of these things, we see what spirit we ought to have, and what we ought to do. So the Lord “leadeth us in paths of righteousness.”

But most of all he leads us by *giving us the Holy Spirit*. We know not even “what we should pray

for as we ought," but "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us." He makes us grow in grace — causes us to understand our hearts and find out our sins — gives us repentance, and faith, and love; so we grow strong, and we walk straight and free in God's way.

But why should the Lord do all this for us? Why should he care for poor sinners, and lead them patiently and carefully in the paths of righteousness? How do we know that he will go on with us the same way, all our days? David tells us: "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness *for his name's sake.*" *The glory God loves most, is the glory of goodness.* He loves to be praised for his grace. When he came down and passed before Moses, and showed him his glory, what did he call himself? "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." And the song they sing to him in heaven is "Hallelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honour be unto our God!" And many, many times he made the prophets call him our Redeemer, our Shepherd, and our Father.

So we know he will take care of us; he loves us, and he cares for his own glory. As long as the world lasts, he will glorify his great name by watching over his flock, and leading them in the paths of righteousness.

IV. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of

the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me." People often speak of this, as if David only meant that he wouldn't be afraid when he came to die — as if death was the most dreadful thing that could happen to a Christian. It means, "in the valley of the deadly shadow" — when any terrible fear or sorrow comes on us. When a shepherd is trying to drive his sheep, and they come to a dark or dangerous place, or anything comes in the way that frightens them, they crowd back, and refuse to go on. Then, if they know their keeper well, and he goes before them, they "hear his voice and follow him!" they fear no evil, for he is with them.

And so, when the Christian is going on, doing his work, and serving his Lord, he comes sometimes to a dark and threatening place. Danger and trouble are waiting for him — the path is rough and lonely; he feels weak and helpless, and his heart trembles. He looks this way and that way, to see if he can't get round it; but no, his way is hedged up; he must either go on and do his duty, and bear the terrible evils that seem to be waiting for him, or he must turn back and deny his Lord. Or may be, the way looked pleasant and easy enough before, but now storms and sorrows begin to come down, and the sky grows dark. It was all light and hopeful before, but now there's a deep and deadly shadow on it. Perhaps his good name is taken away, or some of those he loves are fallen into

sin, and about to perish; or he is sick, and about to die.

His heart faints in him—where shall he fly? how can he escape? If he was an enemy of God, he would fall into despair! But he isn't an enemy—he is one of the Lord's flock. As he thinks of that, his terror all passes away. He fears no evil, because his Shepherd is with him. The Lord Jesus has been through all this trouble; right there, under the shadow, he is waiting for us! And he will put his arms of love around us, and bear us safely through:

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes:
That soul though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

Sinners may think this is all talk; but we know it is truth. Men have suffered the loss of all things: given their body to the flames; been tortured, not accepting deliverance; and in the deep dungeon, like Paul and Silas, they have sung praises to God. They have called their children and friends to their death-bed to show them with what peace a Christian can die. It is the sinner's unbelief that makes him think so: that same unbelief that God is angry with. "He that believeth not *shall be damned.*" While we that were perishing are trusting in our Saviour, and being saved by his precious blood, those that reject him shall be cut off, and that for ever. Turn then, poor sinner, before it is too late! Seek the

Lord while he may be found! Call upon him while he is near! "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud—yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts. But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings."

SERMON XIII.

THE GOSPEL FEAST.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”
—PSA. xxiii. 5, 6.

DAVID has told us already how the Lord led him into pleasant pastures, and took care of all his sheep—feeding and resting them. But this isn't enough for him; he wants to praise the Lord's bounties more yet; so now he tells us that the Lord makes a great feast for him. In David's country, the kings and great men often made feasts for their friends—gave them beautiful clothes to wear, and put rich and sweet perfumes on their heads, and their clothes; then the king made his soldiers guard the place, and keep them safe. And often they gathered so many friends to the feast, that they couldn't spread the table in the house, but went out in the open air, where every body could see them.

I. That's what David means here. God “loves

the saints ; he knows them well." He gathers them into his house, and makes them happy there. Once they were hungry and thirsty, wicked and miserable, full of evil passions and fears ; now he gives them rest and peace, and feeds them with heavenly food. As the Lord Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you — *my peace* I give unto you." What peace our pure and loving Saviour must have had, in spite of all his sorrows and enemies ! He knew he loved God, and poor sinners, too ; he knew he was opening a way to save them, and glorify his Father. He knew he came from God, and was going right back to heaven again ; and he knew he was to carry a great company after him, "redeemed out of every kindred, and people, and tongue," into eternal glory. He knew God loved him ; for he says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." So he knew that he had no enemies but the wicked, and he was trying to bless them ; and his heart was perfectly at rest—as the prophet Isaiah says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

And now, when the Lord says, "My peace I give unto you," you see what a feast he makes for his people. The world never understands our joy. Often the sinner tries to find out *what makes Christians happy*. It isn't riches, or honour, or pleasure here ; it isn't even comfort, or health, or long life, or success in his plans and toils. God's child can lose all these things, and be happy still.

His face may have a holy brightness, and his voice may be sweet, and gentle, and calm, when all the good things of this life are taken away, and he is drawing near to the cold and awful grave. His eyes are raised to heaven, and he is whispering praises to his God — glory to his Saviour to the last. As the hymn says :

“I’ll praise my Maker with my breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers.”

“It shall come to pass that at the evening time it shall be light.” — While the world’s darkness is growing deep and dreadful round the Lord’s flock, light from heaven shines in their hearts; and sorrow and mourning flee away.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” You remember, I told you just now that often kings and great men spread out their feasts in the open air, and perhaps the king’s enemies might be hid among the rocks, and on the hills, looking on, and watching to see if the guard was strong and good, or whether they could attack the people at the feast. And it shows how strong the king is, and how well his friends can trust him, if they can sit down, and eat and drink, and be merry, in the very presence of their enemies.

Now that’s just the way with the Christian; he can enjoy all God’s blessings, and feast on God’s goodness, though he knows his enemies are all round him. There is Satan, going about like a roaring

lion, seeking whom he may devour. There are the devils lying in wait for him, ready to tempt him and destroy him if they can. There are all the wicked, God's enemies, and the enemies of religion, watching God's people just as the old Pharisees watched the Lord Jesus, "seeking how they might accuse him." And never mind how pleasant the world may look; sinners may bow to us and flatter us, and look ever so friendly—you and I know how many would rub their hands, and laugh, and rejoice, if we fell into sin. Our enemies are all around us.

And it shows how good the Lord is, how strong and faithful, what a sure defence on every side, that we can enjoy religion in despite of our enemies. We don't have to wait till we die before we can look bright and praise God for saving us. Oh, no! We can sing out, loud and clear, as David sung, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God!" We sit down at the Lord's table, or we commune with him in secret, and our hearts are full of peace. We remember our enemies, but we don't fear them. Our trust is in the Lord, who made heaven and earth. We may be amazed and troubled when we first see them; we may cry out as David did once, "Lord, how they are increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise

up against me. Many say of my soul—There is no help for him in God!” But our next word will be, “But thou, Lord, art a shield for me”—my heart shall not fear.

“Thou anointest my head with oil.” In those old days, when the people came to the king’s feast, he provided beautiful clothes for them all, fit to feast in. They took off the dusty clothes they travelled in, and put on these fine robes; then the servants perfumed their heads with sweet and pleasant oil; that was the last part of their dressing; when that was done, they were all ready for the feast

And I suppose that’s what David means in the Psalm. The Lord first prepares the feast for his people, and then he prepares his people for the feast. He takes off our sin and shame, gives us new hearts, and puts Christ’s goodness on us. You remember the parable Jesus told, about the king sending his servants into the highways and hedges, and bringing the poor, ragged, lame beggars to his splendid supper. That’s just what our God does: “our righteousness is filthy rags;” all we do is vile, and our hearts are black with sin; but God doesn’t give us up for that. He sends his Holy Spirit to bring us into his kingdom—to take away all our wickedness—to touch our hearts with sweet and holy feelings—to fit us to enjoy religion, and to feast at our Lord’s table.

“My cup runneth over.” Oh, how generous our King is! Who doesn’t have more blessings than he

knows how to use? Who saves all his Sunday time for religion? Who feeds on God's holy word as much as he can? Our cup runs over; God pours out mercy on us "exceeding abundantly, above all we can ask or think." Did you ever try to count up God's gifts? First of all, count all the minutes in your life—then relations and friends—comforts, deliverances out of danger—kind things done for you—good words out of the Bible, sermons, solemn thoughts, dealings of the Holy Spirit; can you count them all? And if you could, what thousands of blessings you have besides these! So you would have to say, "O Lord my God, great are the wondrous works which thou hast done. If I should declare them, and, speak of them, they are more than I am able to express."

II. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." David comes back now to the same thing he said at first. The first verse says, "I shall not want;" and the last verse says, "goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." What a happy confidence in God! Our great Shepherd goes with his sheep, wherever they have to go. If duty calls them into places of temptation, he is there; if their path lies through dark and terrible sorrows, he is there. When everything smiles and looks pleasant, the good Shepherd, that gave his life for the sheep, is by our side; when "the wolf cometh," and dangers are thick all round us, the hired shepherd would hide himself; but our

Lord shed his precious blood to save us. So where our Shepherd goes, goodness and mercy go too.

Now see what David says about God in another place: "Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and *laid thine hand* upon me." He lays his hand upon us! As if he was so watchful of us—so busy keeping us from danger and evil, that he keeps us within his arm's length, so that he has only to reach out his hand and cover us! "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." Just as bright as the sunny day is, when you can hardly bear the dazzling light, just so bright is the deep midnight to God, that he may take care of his people. "*The night shineth as the day.*"

What a pity Christians couldn't keep on owning God's goodness and mercy all the days of their lives! They are ready enough to talk about it beforehand; but when trouble comes, then they forget God. God looks angry to them, because their faith is weak, not because he is changed any. He is our faithful Friend; and when things look dark-

est and saddest to us — when our bodies are racked with pain, or our hearts with grief; when darkness falls on our spirits, and his peace is hid from us; his goodness and mercy are following us still. They never fail. The sun will grow weary, at last, of rising and setting; winter and summer, and day and night, will come to an end; but God will be good for ever. He will never be weary of blessing his people, or saving them that put their trust in him.

That's what David says next, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." God's people dwell *in his* house in this world, in a certain way; they are always near their great Father, and under his continual care. He feeds them, and clothes and comforts them, and makes them happy. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; *they will be still praising thee.*" And if religion didn't do any thing else for us but that, wouldn't it be well worth having? If it made us hopeful when every body else was discouraged; if it made us patient and meek when all the world was rebellious and discontented; if it gives us an Almighty Friend in this dark and lonely world — a Father's house to live in, while sinners are orphans, and a pillow for our aching heads when they are left in the storm; well might we praise the Lord our Shepherd, and his great mercy!

But God has a better house than this, and when this poor world is pulled down, and burnt up, he will take us there. "I will dwell in the house of

the Lord *for ever.*” We couldn’t do that here; for these bodies must perish, and this world shall be destroyed. But “we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” A building of God! what a fair house must that be which God builds! We see something of his workmanship here; we see the green fields and flowers, the shining rivers, and the glorious sea; we look up, and behold the sky with all its wonders; the sun shining in his strength; the moon and stars which he has ordained: the clouds, the mountains, and the morning light. Then look on these bodies where we dwell; the strong and skilful hands, the soft skin, the eyes so bright and beautiful; and yet these are not our homes! This world is only a kind of tavern where we spend a few days; these bodies God calls a tabernacle — a tent that he has pitched for us to live in a little while. But that heavenly world is a home — God’s home, and our home. What a noble palace it must be! John the Apostle tries to describe it for us, but it is too glorious to be described; he only gives you a confused picture of splendid things; clear as glass, pure as gold, gleaming like fire. But it is the house of the Lord, and it lasts for ever. We know that, and that’s enough.

We know, too, that our dear friends will be there. Jesus will be there. God will be there. Sin and sorrow will never be remembered again.

All will be free, and pure, and happy, and there shall be no more storms, nor night. We will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

I. We see what a wretched state poor sinners are in. The Lord is not their Shepherd, and so they're always in want. Religious blessings are not as pleasant and dear to them as green pastures to the sheep; they have no peace with God like still sweet water in their hearts. Their souls wander in darkness; they won't let God restore them; their feet don't love the paths of righteousness. And oh, when they come to walk in death's dark shade, and bitter sorrows compass them about, what fear and wo fill their hearts! God is not with them; he turns a deaf ear to their cries.

Their souls starve in sin and unbelief; God has spread a great feast, and invited all men to it, but they will not hearken or come to him. And when at last they want to come, just as they are dying, perhaps, their enemies are too mighty: death and hell stare them in the face, and scare away every thought of repenting and believing. Goodness and mercy did follow them all the days of their lives, but they are cast out of the house of the Lord for ever.

How blind and foolish all their pride looks now! What use are riches and honour to a man, when he is drowning in the sea, or dying in his burning house? And what comfort can men take in hell, in those things they toil and sin for here? "Thou fool!" says the Bible — "thou fool, this night shall

thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

2. But the Christian ought to rejoice and sing for joy, at all times. He ought to *treat the Lord as his Shepherd*; that is, he ought to follow him, and trust him, and obey his word. Then nothing can hurt him, or pluck him out of his Father's hand. The eternal arms of love are round him, and the King of Kings is his Friend.

Let us be done, then, with bitterness, and discontent, and fear. Brighten those mourning faces! Lift up that sad heart with faith! Though our enemies—pain, disappointment sorrow, and death, are all around us, goodness and mercy are nearer to us, and change every trouble to a blessing. Only be faithful, and follow hard after your Lord, and he will light up your darkness with his smile, and still your heart in danger, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever*.

THE END.

