

A

SERMON

PREACHED

AT

LIBERTY SPRING CHURCH.

BY

REV. J. S. WILLBANKS.

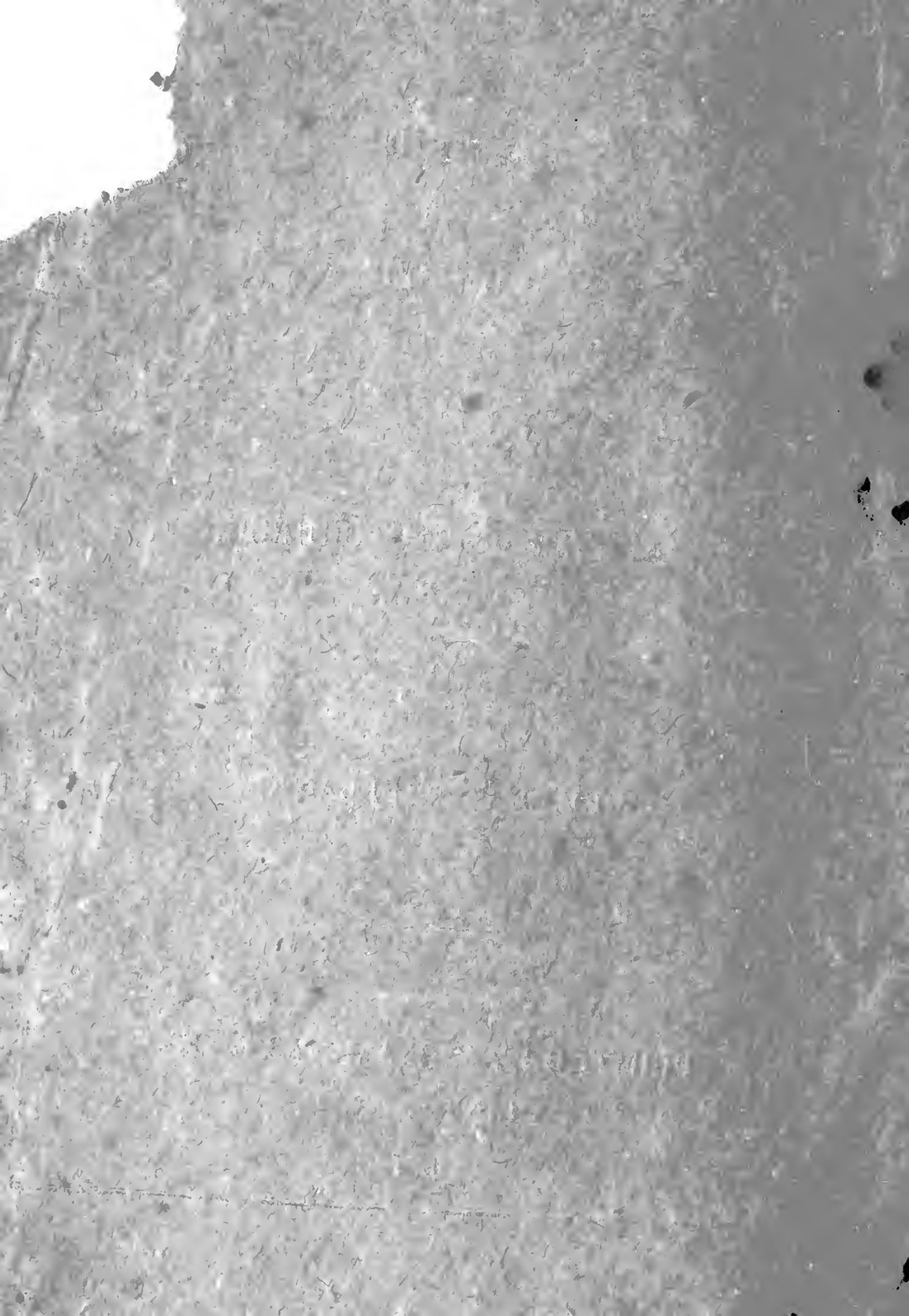
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CLINTON, S. C.

1867.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

REV. J. S. WILLBANKS,

Dear Sir ;

The undersigned were no less impressed, than they believe, the large congregation, which with marked attention listened to your sermon preached at Liberty Springs yesterday, from I. Samuel xxx. 6. "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

We are persuaded that very many would be pleased to know that the sermon was published in pamphlet form. Will you consent to furnish the undersigned with a copy for the press?

Fraternally yours,

E. G. SIMPSON

EDWIN PASLEY

JAMES LEAMAN

R. C. AUSTIN

M. L. BULLOCK

Cross Hill,

Feb. 18th, 1867.

GENTLEMEN :

I accede to your request so kindly made. And so soon as I can prepare a manuscript for the press, you shall have it.

Hoping that God may bless his own truth to all his children,

I remain yours Fraternaly,

J. S. WILLBANKS.

1870

1870

1870

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the office of the Secretary of the Board of Education since the last meeting of the Board. The names are given in alphabetical order.

W. A. ...
J. B. ...
C. D. ...
E. F. ...
G. H. ...

1870

1870

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the office of the Secretary of the Board of Education since the last meeting of the Board. The names are given in alphabetical order.

I. Samuel XXX. 6. BUT DAVID ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD,

The experience of every nation, is that religion is of great importance. Hence all great nations have looked to their religion. Among the Romans, religious institutions formed an essential part of their civil government. Every public act, whether of legislation or election, was connected with certain determined religious forms, and thereby received as they supposed, the sanction of a higher power. And the Holy Scriptures clearly teach the importance of religion. Jesus, its author, says, it is "the one thing needful." And when we consider what was necessary for the establishing of true religion among us, we are constrained to come to the same conclusion. God, the Father, had to give up "his only begotten and well beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased"—delivered him up to an ignominious death. And the Son had to forsake his throne in heaven—the glory he had with the Father—all for a life in this sin-cursed world—a life of sorrow and suffering—a life ended on the accursed tree. And the Holy Spirit, after Jesus had ascended to heaven "leading captivity captive," had to come to earth to take of the things of Christ and apply them to us—to regenerate, comfort, and sanctify us.

Now would the Triune God have done and suffered all this, and more, to give us a religion of but little importance? We are forced to conclude that it is "the one thing needful"—a good thing; since it makes us new creatures—frees us from condemnation—renders us acceptable to God—enables us to bear "fruit meet for repentance."

But our experience seems to be against this conclusion. When we look at ourselves—all professors—we cannot see the great effects of our religion. We see but little difference between the professor and the non-professor—between

the one who possesses this religion and the one who does not possess it. This is especially the case in times of prosperity, when streams of pleasure and happiness are filled to overflowing on every hand—times when politics succeed, commerce flourishes, armies conquer; when families and individuals prosper, when there is no disquietude; but when everything is perfect and happy; when “nature wears an eternal bloom, when the skies are always blue, and the wind always balmy: when children are always virtuous, friends are never faithless, and fortune is never fickle; when the eye knows no tear, and the heart no pang.” But such times are not suitable for the manifesting of the importance of religion. This requires times of adversity—times when these streams of happiness and pleasure by which all are surrounded, are dried up—when every thing does not seem to work for our good; but when all things seem to be against us. Then the ungodly—those destitute of religion—are miserable. They know not where to turn, or what to do; all is void and dark. But not so with the godly—those possessing true religion. For when all their streams of happiness and pleasure are dried up, they still have the **H e a d - f o u n t a i n**, whither they go and drink large draughts of **l i v i n g w a t e r s**.

The text sets forth this important truth, and the history connected with it beautifully illustrates it.

David had been forced to flee from his native land and seek refuge among the Philistines, Israel's deadly enemies. Having fled to Gath, he found favor in the sight of king Achish, who gave to him and his six hundred faithful followers the city of Ziklag. War, soon breaking out between the Philistines and the Israelites, David is requested to accompany the king. But this caused discontent among the bards of the Philistines, who remembered his former exploits, and the songs of the Israelitish women, sung in his praises. Consequently **David is suspected and sent away as one unworthy of their con-**

fidenee. Doubtless it was with a sad countenance and a heavy heart that he made his way back to Ziklag, where his sorrows were greatly multiplied. For the Amalekites had been there and burned the city, and carried off their wives, children, and substance. There stands David and his six hundred soldiers filled with sorrow and astonishment, having nothing left them but their bleeding hearts. But soon David's calamities are increased. These hitherto faithful followers now turn against him. First complaints and then terrible threats are made and about to be put into execution. He is about to be stoned to death by his only remaining earthly friends, "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

I. WHAT REASON HAD DAVID FOR ACTING THUS ?

If David acted thus from impulse, or by mere accident, we are not bound to pattern after his example. But if he had good reasons, then the case is different. Let us examine some of his reasons.

1st He acted thus from his knowledge of the divine perfections. Doubtless David was prepared to take up the language of Zaphar the Naamathite, and exclaim, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea;" still he remembered what God had said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." He knew the Lord to be "a God at hand," and that he is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works"—That he was "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." He knew much of God's perfections not only from God's own declarations, but from what he had actu-

ally done for his nation, the Israelites—How he had called Abraham to leave his native land, and to sojourn in a strange land—How he had protected and provided for him there among strangers and enemies—How the same protecting and providing Providence had been over Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—How Israel had been preserved in Egypt and brought forth from that land of bondage with a high hand—How, when Israel was, to human eyes, in that deplorable condition at the Red Sea, “beside Pihahiroth before Baal-zephon”—the sea before them, high impassible mountains on the right and on the left, and the enraged Pharaoh with his war chariots and armies of Egypt in their rear ready to fall upon them and either put them to the sword or carry them back to bondage—how, then, Israel’s God appeared and by the mouth of his servant Moses said, “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day ye shall see them again no more forever.” Yes, when David remembered how the Lord had given Israel bread from heaven, and water from the rock for forty years in the wilderness; and how he had firmly established them in that land “flowing with milk and honey,” he knew that there was no cause for despondency—that there was nothing too hard for Jehovah to effect; or too great for him to give.

2nd. He acted thus from the experience which he himself had had of God.

Doubtless his mind ran back to the time when he was a shepherd boy keeping watch over his father’s flock, and there came a “lion and took a lamb out of the flock,” and he, inspired with courage from the Lord, delivered the lamb out of his mouth; and when he arose against him, he “caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.” And, as the Lord was his shepherd; he knew that he should not want—that he would not be forsaken by Israel’s God; but that he would rise up for him and work mightily for his deliverance—

That the same God who had delivered the lion, the bear, and "Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span," into his hand, would now deliver him out of the hands of his enemies, and possibly restore to him what he had lost—That the same God, who had shielded him from the murderous rage of Saul, would now shield him from the anger of his enraged soldiers. When David called to mind his own experience, he had abundant proofs of God's superintending providence. Though he was forced to cry out, "as with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;" still he called upon his soul saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me," but I will "remember thee," "for thou art the God of my strength." Though "deep calleth unto deep," and "all thy waves and thy billows" seem to be going over me, yet I know that "the Lord will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." So David wisely judged that, with such a tried friend on his side, he had no cause for fear; but should "encourage himself in the Lord his God."

3rd. David would also call to mind that covenant which God had made with him. How the prophet Samuel had anointed him to be king over Israel, God pointing him out as the chosen of the Lord—chosen to occupy the throne of Israel; and as he had never occupied that throne, he knew that he would be spared till this promise was fulfilled. He was familiar with that important truth, which was afterwards so forcibly declared by his son Solomon, that there was "a time" for all things—"a time to be born, and a time to die"—and that his "time to die" had not come, as his work, given him by God, had not been performed. Though circumstances seemed to be against him,

yet he was persuaded that the same God reigned, who protected him "in the wilderness of Engedi," when Saul with his "three thousand chosen men" sought him; but God delivered his enemy into his hands, though he spared his life, only "cut off the skirt of Saul's robe." Or when he was concealed "in the wilderness of Ziph," and Saul with his "three thousand chosen men" "pitched in the hill of Hachilah," and accompanied by Abishai, he came into their camp and found Saul lying "sleeping within the trenches, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster," but he only "took the spear and the cruise of water" and departed "for a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them." Yes, when David called these circumstances to mind, he knew that he had cause to "encourage himself in the Lord his God." So he called Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod that he might enquire of the Lord as to whether he should pursue after the Amalekites or not. And God did not only hear his prayer, but answered him, saying, "Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all."

Now while we admire the conduct of David in this particular, let us not stop by admiring, but consider,

II. WHAT REASONS WE HAVE TO DO LIKEWISE.

Had David any reason for encouraging "himself in the Lord his God" that does not equally hold with us? We ought to know more of the perfections of God than David did. God has given us a much fuller revelation of the divine perfections than he gave to any under the Old Testament dispensation. We know that the great I AM is still the same almighty and gracious Being--That he is immutable, "the same yesterday, today, and forever,"--That he has said, 'I am the Lord, I change not'—That he is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—That he is Jehovah, "in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all

things after the council of his own will." Yes, we know him to be the "only Potentate, and King of kings, and Lord of lords,—who is over all, God blessed forever." We know that Jehovah's arm is not shortened; for he still "measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, and metes out heaven with the span and comprehends the dust of the earth in a ballance." "None can stay his hand," while he is doing "according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth." And we know that he is a "very present help in trouble;" and that there is no escape from his presence; for "if we ascend up into heaven, he is there: if we make our bed in hell, behold, he is there. If we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall his hand lead us, and his right hand shall hold us." Nor is his ear heavy with respect to us. He says to us, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Our Lord will hear us when we call upon him; and will supply all our wants out of his fulness.

And when we look at our own experience, we see that God has been much more gracious to us than he was to David. We have not been pursued from place to place by some deadly enemy. We have not been forced to become exiles in a foreign land. Our wives, our children, and a portion of our substance have been spared to us. Yet are we encouraging ourselves "in the Lord our God?" Still his dealings with us have been of such a nature as to lead us thus to do. Many of the streams of pleasure once around us are dried up, but are we ready to go to the fountain head?

God has also covenanted with us that "he will never leave

us, nor forsake us"—That if we will "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," then he will add to us all other good things. So there will be no need of saying, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewith shall we be clothed?"—That if we are called to pass through deep waters he will be with us, and through the rivers they shall not overflow us—And that if we pass through the fire, it shall not kindle upon us. Nor shall one jot or tittle of his word ever fail. Such explicit and gracious promises had never been made to David.

But this is not all; we have seen more stupendous displays of God's power than was ever David's lot to see. God's wonders wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness are not to be compared to the victories gained over all the passions and prejudices of the world by the gospel of Christ. Only think of the passions and prejudices of the Jews—those who cried, "Crucify him, crucify him; let his blood be upon us and our children"—how they were wedded to their religion, rights, and customs; yet thousands were brought to glory by the cross of the despised "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs," whom, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," the Jews took and crucified: but "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." So that it has "come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Remember what was accomplished in the sixteenth century by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Darkness then covered the nations, and gross darkness the people; but the light of the gospel dispelled that darkness.

The history of the Jews records many instances of God's love towards them. Did Jehovah, in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, lead Israel as a flock? Did he give to them the land of the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites,

Gergashites, Hivites, and Jebusites? When Israel was held in captivity by the Babylonians—that mighty nation whose king was Belshazzar, and whose power was concentrated in that “golden city,” the glory of kingdoms,” Babylon—whose walls were sixty miles in circumference, three hundred and fifty feet high, and eighty-seven feet thick; thus being impregnable—did God send the “fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace,” these terrible words, “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN;” and then opened before Cyrus the gates of brass, in order that Israel might be delivered from captivity and permitted to return to their native land? True, this was a remarkable manifestation of God’s love to Israel; but it is not to be compared to God’s love as manifested towards us. When we had been led into captivity by Satan—placed under the sentence of condemnation—when there was no human eye to pity, or arm to bring deliverance; then the eye of God pitied, and the arm of Jehovah brought deliverance. The Prince of peace, the meek and lowly Jesus, left the bosom on which he had been pillowed from eternity, and bore our sorrows in Gethsemane. Our great High Priest, being God and man, sacrificed his humanity as a victim upon the altar of his Divinity; kindling the sacrifice with the fire of divine love. His soul was exceeding sorrowful—he agonized—he cried, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”—this cup made bitter by sin. But ‘if it may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.’ For I left heaven to drink it—I assumed humanity to drink it—I came here to Gethsemane to drink it—I am willing to drink it—willing to make my ‘soul an offering for sin’—Willing to be betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter; yea, forsaken by all—Willing to be bound to the Roman whipping-post, scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, condemned, and crucified. I left my throne in heaven for the love I had for souls—I was striped of my robes of royal

ty—deprived of my crown of glory—reduced to the condition of a poor subject—having not a place to lay my head—all for the love of souls—guilty, condemned souls. I, ‘the Lord of glory,’ ‘the chiefest among ten thousand,’ ‘the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,’ have submitted to great indignities. I was ‘born in a manger,’ brought up in a work-shop at Nazareth; my companions have been illiterate fishermen, publicans, and sinners. Every page of my history has been blotted with tears, darkened with sorrows, or crimsoned with blood. Let me continue to bear the penalty of the law—Let me suffer for the sinner—Let his stripes fall upon me—As blood must be shed. Let my blood be shed—Let them lead me to the cross—suspend me between earth and heaven. My love will cause me to die for them. O Father, if thou canst not smile upon them and me, then frown on me—withdraw the light of thy countenance; and if I must cry, ‘Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani; My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ I will cry ‘It is finished’—God’s wrath is appeased—peace is made between heaven and earth—a way of escape is opened for condemned sinners! I will become ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ for them. I will become the way in my death, as a Priest; I will become the truth in my word, as a Prophet; and I will become the life in my Spirit, as a King. This will be ‘all, and in all’ to them; for man’s salvation must be completed, to that end am I come to this hour.”

Yes, brethren, the Lord Jesus, David’s God, is our “all, and in all.” Nature, without him, is a nonentity; for “by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions; or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist, and he is the head of the church.” But it is here in redemption, that Jesus

shines preeminently as our "all, and in all." Its purpose was in him—Its arrangement was the result of his infinite wisdom—It was his eye that saw—his bowels that yearned—his heart that moved—and his arm that brought salvation. Go, trace the stream of mercy which is pouring upon us from day to day, and you will find it rising in the infinite depths of the compassion of Jesus. Go, trace our ray of hope, and you will find it emanating from the "Sun of Righteousness." It is true that angels may have been spectators, and that cherubim and seraphim may have heard the announcement made; but Christ was the "Alpha and the Omega." He had no co-sharers—no compeers; but was alone and "all." Then brethren, look to Gethsemane, to Calvary—behold the Lord Jesus, "the Lamb of God;" and if you cannot understand the inward bitterness of his soul; you may at least imagine his outward sufferings, the sufferings of his humanity. By faith, see the arrows of the Almighty piercing him, as well as the soldier's spear—See him drinking the cup of the wrath of Jehovah to the very dregs, as well as tasting the cup of vinegar. And while you see him bearing his cross to Calvary, sinking under its weight; remember that the sins of the world bear heavily upon him—that the curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world—that it sunk legions of angels, who excell in strength from the heaven of heavens to the bottomless pit. And when, in that dreadful struggle, you see his body brought as low as the grave; remember that in falling he conquered, and completed the conquest in rising again. And when you look at his mangled and bleeding hands and feet; if you cannot understand how the blessed Saviour grasped, in the one hand a multitude of human souls just ready to sink into ruin, and in the other hand an everlasting inheritance to give them; receive it by faith—look through the veil, which conceals the eternal world, and there, there in

heaven---around the throne of God, see thousands of millions of happy beings, wearing their crowns of glory--already entered upon their reward---received their inheritance; and know that they were brought home to their Father's house by the blood of Jesus. When we look into eternity, and see the Church, the Lamb's Bride, encircling the throne of her Redeemer, casting her honors at his feet, while all heaven is ringing with hosannas for redeeming love; we can only understand these things by calling to mind the tears, the groans, the streaming blood, and dying agonies of the great Redeemer, Jehovah's Equal, God's Eternal Son. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Love unutterable! Love unspeakable! "God so loved the world"---We can get no farther in the solution of this wondrous problem. Eternity itself will form a ladder---the saints climbing step by step in its ascending glories--but, as the prospect widens, and widens, each new altitude will elicit the same confession, "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

But, christian friends, why talk about what God has done for our encouragement? What has he not done? He who "spake as never man spake," hath declared that he hath done all, literally all that could have been done. Those holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, have declared the same. But what do our actions declare? Not enough! Go to the sea shore and number the grains of sand, or the drops of water in the mighty ocean, and you will find them innumerable; but God could have increased their number many thousand times. God's universe is astonishingly great; but Jehovah could have made it much greater. Yonder sun in the heavens is exceedingly bright, so bright that our powers of vision are

not capable of viewing it; yet the Lord God could have made it brighter. But there is nothing more that the Almighty God could have done for our encouragement. So to speak, he has put forth all his power—exercised his wisdom infinitely—yet it is not enough for us. Oh, what will be the doom of us all, who refuse to encourage ourselves “in the Lord our God.” Not enough! Yes, all heaven and earth, would not be enough! If it was enough to satisfy the demons in the bottomless pit—we are not satisfied—we are waiting for more—and I suppose many of us will wait till we get to hell. When is there to be a change? How many of us are prepared to act as David did? How many Davids have we? Oh, ye, officers in God’s house; ye, fathers and mothers; one and all, come, let us encourage ourselves in the Lord our God—lean upon his all-powerful arm—trust his promises—have faith in all he says. If we look to the heavens above us, they encourage us—to the earth beneath us, it encourages us—to the right or to the left, we see nothing but encouragement. The mighty universe, with its myriads of worlds, which God spake into existence—the heavens which declare his glory; and the earth, which showeth forth his handiwork—these, in all their varied beauties, in all their wide and boundless magnificence, proclaim God’s wisdom, power, and grandeur; but in the work of redemption we have something “which outshines the wonders of the skies”—the person and the work of the blessed Jesus. All power in heaven and on earth was and is committed to the Lord “our righteousness.” He had and has in his hands the reigns of universal empire. Yes, to “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” was intrusted the seven-sealed roll of Providence. He has a heart tender enough to love—a hand strong enough to save; then, why not encourage ourselves in him?

See also the love of God as manifested in the work of the

Holy Spirit. He, some ten days after Christ's ascension to heaven, came suddenly with a sound "as of a rushing, mighty wind," and did not only fill "all the house where" the followers of Jesus "were sitting;" but "sat upon each of them" in the form of "cloven tongues" of fire, giving them power "to speak with other tongues." And he now stands and knocks at the door of the sinner's heart, to gain admission--- to renew, to comfort, and to sanctify.

And, brethren, if it had not been for this love of God manifested towards us, what would have been our condition—the condition of the whole land? If God had not given us the gospel---if God had not established his church among us—if he had not given us a ministry—if he had given us no one to break the bread of life---to preach glad tidings—to bind up the the brokenhearted—to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to those that be bound—to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Yes, if we had no Saviour, no Advocate with God, no Comforter, no sanctuary, no shepherds, and no pastors, miserable, miserable indeed, would have been our condition. So much then for the love of God! Is it not enough? Should we not encourage ourselves "in the Lord our God?"

It is true, that God manifested great faithfulness to the Jews—that every one of his promises to them were fulfilled, not one of them failed. So that Joshua could say, "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; ALL CAME TO PASS." But only look

at the many promises made and fulfilled to the church—to us. Time will not permit me to dwell on this part of the subject; but suffice it to say that, if any know of a single instance in which any of God's promises has failed to you, to your fathers, to any one: let him make it known—let him call Jehovah to account. But if you are unable to do this, why continue to act as if God was unfaithful? Are not your actions giving God the lie? And if these actions are not forsaken and repented of will they not drag you down to the pit from whence there is no return?

Let us then secure this loving and faithful God, in whom “David encouraged himself,” as our God. Let us make him our friend; our father; and “our eternal great reward.”

We may secure the Lord as our God by humiliation and prayer. We must “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.” We must do as Mordecai did when the wicked Haman plotted his destruction. He rent his clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes; and went out and cried with a loud and bitter cry.” And the Lord appeared—appeared in his majesty and glory—making bare his arm in the defence of his servants. He robed queen Esther in her royal apparel, and sent her to king Ahasuerus; and gave her favor in his sight. “Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.” And that night God would not permit the king to sleep, but caused him to have the “book of records” to be read to him. “And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, who sought to lay hands on king Ahasuerus. And the king said, what honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him. There is nothing done for him. And

the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house to, speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man, whom the king delighteth to honor? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered into the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor." "And the king took off his ring; which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther;" and all was well; because God was there, and on

their side. Now, brethren, who knows but that God has thus brought us low in order that we might be forced to humble ourselves before him, and encourage ourselves in him, that he may in his good time and way exalt us?

We must imitate the inhabitants of Nineveh, when Jonah, by the command of God, entered "a day's journey" into the city, and "cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Then the king "caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto our God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way," and spared them. Then let God see our works, our humility, and our trust in him, that he may spare us.

But humility alone is not sufficient. Prayer is also necessary—the prayer of faith, effectual prayer. Such prayer as Jacob offered on that memorable night when he "passed over the ford Jabbok" and there wrestled with the angel of the covenant and prevailed. Or such as David offered after his sin in numbering the people, when he prayed saying, "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that that they should be plagued." Or such as Daniel offered when he prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem, saying, "O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and

for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." We should pray as the Church prayed, when the bands fell from Peter—when the prison opened, and Peter was led forth by the angel of the Lord, to the very place where the church was assembled, even before the prayer-meeting closed.

Yes, christian friends, if we would humble ourselves and be instant in prayer, thus encouraging ourselves in the Lord our God; it will be with us in our present afflictions, as it was with the three Hebrew children, when they found the fiery furnace as cool and as pleasant as the morning dew; one "like the Son of God" would appear to us, and cause us not only to see but to feel that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." For "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

