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Spurgeon, C. H. 1834-1892.
Sermons of the Rev. C.H.
Spurgeon of London

SERMONS

PREACHED IN 1857



BY
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OF LONDON

Volume XVII.

NEW YORK
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LONDON AND TORONTO

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THE BEST BREAD.

January 16, 1887.

“I am that bread of life.”—JOHN vi. 48.

You will observe that our Lord here speaks concerning himself. He speaks not of his words merely, nor of his offices, nor of his work, but of himself. “I am that bread of life.” And herein he teaches us all to fix our eye mainly upon his blessed person, and to think of himself first and foremost. He is the centre and soul of all. There is a tendency about us all to get away from Jesus, and to look rather to the streams than to the Fountain-head. Why are we more taken up with bits of glass that sparkle in the light than with the sun himself? That tree of life, in the midst of the Paradise of God—we forget to eat of that; and we wander to the borders of the garden, to pluck the fruit of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I wish that our ministry—that mine especially—might be tied and tethered to the cross. I would have no other subject to set before you but Jesus only. Moses and Elias are well enough in their places; but when they disappear, and Jesus is the better seen, we are gainers by their loss. If I might dig for copper, silver, and gold, I should think it no deprivation to be obliged to find gold only. It is no loss to lose all but Jesus. You may wander from Dan to Beersheba, and you may not

sin, for it is all holy ground between the two places; but he is wisest who does not ramble even there, but keeps to Calvary, and is content to speak only of Jesus crucified.

“God forbid,” said one who was a great and a wise man—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul would have considered it a terrible calamity if he had become fascinated, or even influenced, by the speculations of the cultured men of his period: he felt that the atoning sacrifice deserved all his admiration, and he had none to spare for anything else.

You know how he fell among certain wise people who were fond of philosophical disquisitions; and to them he said, “I determined not to know anything *among you* save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” He did not endeavor to please his audience by agreeing with them, but the further they went in one direction, the further he went in the other, the more surely to counteract their error. Because they were so broad he would narrow himself to the one theme of the cross. In these times, when the world has run mad upon its idols of human thought, it may be wise to be more strict than ever, and to stand steadfast in Paul’s determination—“I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

It was *himself*, my brethren, that our Lord set before his hearers as the bread of life; he did not mention anything of doctrine, or of precept, or of ordinance, but himself. He says, “I am that bread of life.” Of him, therefore, let us think.

It is of the utmost importance to those of you who have spiritual life that you should feed upon the Lord Jesus. It is well to know everything that is revealed,

for every word of God is good, and has its uses, and all Scripture is profitable; but the daily household bread, the substantial meat on which we must be nourished if we would grow strong for God and holiness, is Christ himself. "I am that bread of life." We do not get bread anywhere else save in Jesus our Lord. We may find certain minor things apart from him: flavorings, ornaments, and furniture of the table we may get from some other hand; but the bread, the real solid meat, the essence of the festival, is Christ himself. So let us begin with him in our discourse, and continue with him till we close our meditation.

But now, when I have to preach upon a subject like this, I find it necessary to begin a little way from the text. "I am that bread of life." Bread, brethren—bread is for living men and women, but bread is of no use in the tomb. Bread—shall we bring it to a sepulchre? Shall we roll away the stone? Shall we draw out the bodies swathed in linen? Shall we set them upright in ghastly posture, and shall we put bread upon the table before them? To what purpose would it be? It would be a ghastly mockery. If you leave the bread there, and visit again that loathsome banqueting chamber in twelve months' time, the bread will remain untouched; for until there is life, there is no use for bread. And so, at the opening of my discourse, some of you might say, "Bread is intended for living persons; it is for men and women who are quickened. How can we feed upon Christ, for we are dead in trespasses and sins?" You speak most truly; but yet I have a marvel to relate which meets the case. Harken! That would be a strange kind of bread, would it not, which being put into a dead

man's mouth, would make him live? Yet such is the bread that came down from heaven, whereof if a man eat he shall live for ever.

The Lord Jesus Christ is living bread. Bread such as we get from the baker is in itself dead; and if you put it to dead lips, there are two dead things together, and nothing can come of the contact. But our Lord Jesus Christ is living bread; and when he touches the dead lip of an unregenerate sinner, life comes into it. He brings life even to those who are dead in sin. He says, "Young man, arise," and he sits up upon the bier. He takes a little girl by her hand, and says, "Talitha cumi—Maid, arise," and she sits up in her bed. He calls to Lazarus, who by this time stinketh, and he says, "Lazarus, come forth," and he comes forth, wearing his grave-clothes. He has shuffled down from the niche in the cave, and he has made his way out of the damp of the cold sepulchre. Oh, what a wonderful Christ this is, who is not only bread for the living, but life for the dead! Pray, you who can pray, that he would come here just now, and be life to those who are in the darkness of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, that they may live. When they live, then how gladsome will my text be to them, for life needs bread whereby it may be sustained! The first thing that we want, if we have life, is something for that life to feed upon; and here comes in the text—"I am that bread of life." Your newly-discovered necessities Jesus can meet. Your newly-begotten wants Jesus can supply. Your hunger and your thirst can all be met, not by fifty things, but by one thing, by Jesus Christ himself, in whom there dwells in fulness all that the spiritual life can possibly require.

I. With that to start with, I now make the first

observation upon the text itself, which is this—JESUS CHRIST EXACTLY MEETS ALL THE WANTS OF THE NEW LIFE. When a man is born again to God, and gets a new life, he has new wants, new desires, new pains, new longings. He enters upon a novel condition, full of new needs and cravings; the Lord Jesus Christ exactly meets the new case. As the key fits the wards of the lock, so does Christ fit the new heart and the right spirit. He knows how to touch the secrets of our soul, and supply our most mysterious necessities.

According to the text, *the Lord Jesus Christ is the ideal bread*—the ideal supply of man's soul-hunger. Grateful Israelites truthfully judged that there never was such bread in all the world, as that which fell in the wilderness in the form of manna. It was very wonderful bread, was it not? Men did eat angels' food, and found it good for them. They went out in the morning and they gathered manna, and they found it most marvellous meat to sustain them. It was the ideal meat for persons travelling through the great and terrible wilderness. There are different theories of what we ought to eat. One person tells us that, if anybody suffers from rheumatism, he must eat so many pounds of meat in a day. Other doctors have vehemently said, "You must not touch meat. It will heat you if you do. You must keep to a strictly vegetable diet." I believe that these learned persons know one as much as the other about it; and probably the whole of them put together know so little that a very small round nought might encompass all their certain knowledge as to health and disease. But there is one thing we do know, that the bread which the Israelites ate in the wilderness, the manna, was the best sort of food. It was God's own inven-

tion ; and he who created man best knew what nutriment his life would require. It was not aerated bread, but it was celestial bread which had never been soured with earthly leaven, but had dropped immediately from the sky : the best food that men could eat if they would be healthy, active, and able to endure a hard and toilsome life.

Well now, what that manna was to their bodies--the ideal food of man, which had nothing in it injurious--that our Lord Jesus is to the soul. In him is life for men, and no disease or death. In the manna there was no adulteration, *it was a perfectly pure food* : such food is the Lord Jesus Christ to the spiritual life. He is the bread that came down from heaven, he is the true meat. If our souls live upon Christ, and nothing else but Christ, he will breed no disease within the heart ; he will not distort the judgment ; he will not inflame the imagination ; he will not excite the passions. He would be a perfect man who lived on nothing but this perfect bread. Brethren, if you aspire after holiness of the highest type and order, remember that a man is made by that which he feeds upon, and for the best manhood you need the best food. As certain silk-worms have their silk colored by the leaves on which they feed, so if we were to feed on Christ, and nothing else but Christ, we should become pure, holy, lowly, meek, gentle, humble ; in a word, we should be perfect even as he is. What wonderful meat this must be ! O my brethren, if you have ever tried the flesh and blood of Jesus as your souls' diet, you will know that I am not speaking vain words ! There is no such sustenance for faith, love, patience, joy, as living daily upon Jesus, our Saviour. You who have never tasted of this heavenly

bread, had better listen to the word, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the ideal bread, but *he is in himself a sufficient bread*. That manna which the Israelites ate in the wilderness was all that they really wanted. They began a-lusting, and they cried after flesh, and they sighed for the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions, which had charmed their degenerate palates when they dwelt among the Egyptians. Wretched was their taste. They must have been of a coarse mould to grow weary of the food of angels, and sigh for something more rank, more tasty, more heavy. Something injurious they wanted; yet had they been wise and right, they would have known that within the manna there was everything that was sufficient and suitable for them; for the God that made man, made manna, and he knew exactly what man wanted. Out of the ovens of heaven he sent man down bread, fresh and hot, each morning, that he might eat to the full, and yet never be surfeited, nor filled with evil humors. They called the manna "light bread"; but what should the food be for those who were always on the march but light, and easy of digestion? Our Lord Jesus is simple in doctrine; but what else do we wish for, even we who are wayfaring men, and all too apt to err?

My brethren, if we do but get a hold of Jesus Christ, and feed on him, he is sufficient for us—sufficient for gigantic labors, sufficient for anguish, and grief, and sorrow; sufficient for the weakest of the babes, for he is the unadulterated milk; sufficient for the full-grown men among us, for he is the strong meat of the kingdom. His flesh is meat indeed. For your spiritual manhood there is bone, gristle,

muscle, brain, everything that you want, in Christ. If you feed on him, he will build you up, not in one direction only, but in all ways ; for ye are complete in him—thoroughly furnished unto all necessities. Christ Jesus meets all the wants of all his people with a divine sufficiency.

And then there is in Christ what there is in manna—a *sweetness all its own*. I cannot tell you exactly how the manna tasted. Some of them said that it tasted like wafers made with honey. The Jewish notion is that it tasted according to every man's own taste ; so that, if he preferred this flavor or that, the manna had that flavor to him, and thus it was to each one a personal and peculiar delicacy. This I know—that there is a sweetness about my Lord which is precisely that which delights *me*. I cannot communicate it to you, for you must each one taste for himself. I believe that our Lord has a flavor to me different from that which he could have to you, because our circumstances and desires somewhat differ. Though there is in the great church of God, a sweet community of delight in the Lord, yet each believer has his own special delight. All Israel could claim all Canaan, and yet every Israelite had a little plot of land that was his own ; and so all believers can claim all Christ, and yet each believer has a special portion which is altogether his own. Oh, the sweetness that there is in the bread that came down from heaven ! Do you not know it ? I trust you do, and if so, you do not need me to say more. If you love Jesus, you wish for nothing new. Modern gospels are forthcoming on all sides. You have heard about them, I dare say ; but the preachers of them cannot have the delight in preaching their new gospels that I have in preaching the

old one. "Oh," I say to myself, "they may preach better than I can ; they may be a world more clever ; but they have not such a subject to preach of as I have." When I get preaching up Christ, and his precious blood, and eternal love, and covenant securities, there I beat them all. With such a theme I can compete with the most renowned of the world's orators. When I speak on these themes, my lips drop pearls and diamonds. Brethren, when we declare unto you the Lord Jesus we sail upon a sea of sweetness. The novelties of "modern thought" are a Dead Sea, but our gospel is an ocean of living water. He that has Christ to preach has such a subject that angels might envy him, and cry one to another, "Let us go down below, and tell mankind of Jesus and his love." Brethren, to me the pulpit is a throne, and when I am in full swing, with the Lord Jesus Christ as my subject, I would not change places with the seraphim. It is a celestial joy to tell our fellow-men of such a Saviour as Jesus ; for all sorts of joys are wrapped up in his thrice-blessed name. When Jesus said, "I am that bread of life," he meant, "I am that choice bread, that satisfying bread, that delicious bread, the like of which was never found elsewhere."

Furthermore, it was bread *suitable for the wilderness*. When they were in the wilderness, it was much better for the tribes to eat what they called "light bread" than for them to be filled with the meat that they had in Egypt, or even the old corn which they enjoyed when they came into Canaan. Manna was suitable food for the climate, and for their condition ; and the Lord knew it. So the most suitable meat for us in this vale of tears is Christ Jesus. I believe that there is no meat like it in heaven ; but for this world,

with its work and its weeping, with its toils and its troubles, its cares and its changes, its wars and its woes, its fears and its frets, there is nothing so suitable as the Lord Jesus.

“Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts!
 Thou Fount of life! Thou Light of men!
 From the best bliss that earth imparts
 We turn unfill'd to thee again.

We taste thee, O thou living Bread,
 And long to feast upon thee still!
 We drink of thee, the Fountain-head,
 And thirst our souls from thee to fill.”

Jesus is all the bread that you need while you are on your way to heaven and God.

What I have to say on this point further is—Try it, dear friends. I would be very practical on this point, and say earnestly, *taste and test*. If you wish to know this bread that came down from heaven, and how satisfying, how suitable, how sweet it is—try it.

Let me hand you out a portion of it. The Lord Jesus, the Everlasting Son of God, is also man—man, like ourselves. “In all our affliction he was afflicted.” He his own self bare our infirmities, and he is at this moment “a Brother born for adversity.” Is not this a loaf of nourishing bread for a soul to feed on? I am a man, tired, troubled, burdened, and so is my Redeemer; so is he who sits upon the throne of God. I have to bow in prayer, and agonize in supplication: so did he. I have to endure slander and rebuke: so did he—“He endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.” Brothers, sisters, you cannot be in any plight wherein he has never been; you cannot suffer any want so severe, but he also suffered the like. Even if you have not a home, or a

lodging, or a bed for the night—"The Son of man had not where to lay his head." He is a partaker with us of the bitter cup of affliction. Now, is not this choice nourishment?

"Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from his Word!
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.

"How bitter that cup no heart can conceive,
Which he drank quite up, that sinners might live!
His way was much rougher, and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

The sympathy of Jesus, our Brother, is living bread for sorrowing men.

Now for another slice from the same loaf. He died: he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. It was for sin and sinners that he died. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." He has put away our sin by making full atonement to divine justice. Sin has ceased to be so far as those are concerned who believe in him, for he was punished in our stead, and so ended our debt. God will not punish those for whom Christ was punished. He cannot exact the same debt twice, first of the Surety, and then of the sinner. That cannot be. Substitutionary sacrifice is the finest of the wheat. A real atonement is the most satisfactory food for the soul. I know it is so of a truth.

Poor sinner, if you can eat this bread you will not be hungry any more! Feeding upon the glorious doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ you will find that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

I might continue thus to set forth my Lord as bread for you in his resurrection, in his glorious ascension, in his session at the right hand of God even the Father, where he maketh intercession for transgressors, and in the glory of his Second Advent; but time would fail me. I might cut a slice from this loaf, and speak to you upon our communion with him, upon our acceptance in the Beloved, upon the glory which he wears as our Representative, and wears for us; but I will not: it is enough for me to introduce the text, and let Jesus say for himself, "I am that bread of life." Certainly there never was such a fruitful and satisfying subject as this of Jesus, our Lord. Oh, that all ministers were shut up to this! Why leave this bread of heaven for the unsatisfying husks afforded by other topics?

Very well: that is the first truth we are to remember, namely, that Jesus Christ fully meets all the wants of the new life.

II. But, secondly, IN ORDER THAT JESUS MAY MEET ALL OUR SOUL'S WANTS WE MUST RECEIVE HIM. Bread cannot possibly sustain the body unless it be eaten. You know, dear friends, you might be hungry to-night, and hear about bread, and then be doomed to wait till to-morrow evening without having any of it to eat: that would be a tantalizing business, would it not? I might then preach again, and tell you about bread, and you might go without all through Saturday, and come here on Sunday, and hear two more sermons about bread, and yet all the while have none of it to eat. It would be trying work. None would like it, unless it were those people who are attempting to fast for forty days, and are likely to die in the process. What good would it do you to keep on hearing

of the bread, and never eat of it? I cannot see any result. Unless it tended to increase your hunger, I do not know what would come of the wisest discourse on bread if you did not eat. Suppose that you should go to a baker's window, and stand there for an hour, and stare at the bread, I do not think that the sight would fill you much. No, you must eat, or else there might be tons of bread within reach, and yet you would die of famine. You might be buried in a grave of bread, and it would be of no use to you. Even manna would not nourish you unless you ate it. You must receive food into yourself, or it is not food to you. The Saviour himself, if you do not receive him by faith, will be no Saviour to you. Mark that.

Here is a brother who never eats bread, but instead of eating, he studies the theory of nutrition, and he is ready to discuss with any one the whole system of digestion and assimilation. He has a theory that bread should always be baked in a certain way, and he feels bound to discuss, and discuss, and discuss, till all is mouldy. My dear friend, you may discuss if you like, but I want to eat; and I think that, if you intend to live, and not drop down dead in your discussion, you had better eat a bit yourself, and not put discussion into the place of eating. Some of you have been hearing the gospel for years, and you have never fed upon Christ yet; but you have a great liking for religious controversy. Why, perhaps, this very afternoon you have been discussing this "ism" and that "ism." Wherefore all this chopping of logic? Why do you not eat, friend? Why do you not eat? What is the use of talking about bread, when your fainting body pines for a substantial meal? You are at this time ready to fight anybody about the

shape that the portions of bread ought to take when they are cut up for a feast. No, no, I am not going to accept your challenge! I am hungry, and want food, and to me the form of it does not matter much. Bread is nothing to anybody till he eats it; and even our Lord Jesus is nothing to any man until he believes in him, until he receives him, until he takes him into himself. That is the one thing that is wanted; and the Lord Jesus Christ silently hints as much when he says, "I am the bread of life." When he calls himself bread, he does in effect say, "Partake of me; eat me; feed upon me."

Here comes in the inquiry—How do we receive Christ into us as we take bread into our bodies?

First, by *believing everything that is revealed about him*. The Father's witness, and the Holy Ghost's witness, and his own witness concerning himself—we have all these in God's most Holy Word. Take the Book, and read it. Augustine, after years of tossing to and fro, found peace with God, by hearing a little child say, "Take, and read." I suppose that the child was singing to itself, and hardly knew what it was saying, as it repeated to itself the two words—"Tolle, lege; tolle, lege; tolle, lege." "Take up, and read." That voice struck the ear of the perplexed thinker as though it were the voice of God, and he took the Scripture, and read the Scripture, and no sooner had he read it than he found Christ. I would entreat each one of you to do this, in order that you may find rest for your soul. Believe what is revealed in Holy Scripture. Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ; but ye will do well if ye go to Christ himself, and find life. To believe in him,

think of him. As the look of faith which saves is *to* Jesus, so is it *from* Jesus. By looking, we learn to look. As we know of him, we believe in him. Believe what is spoken about Christ, and so feed on him.

Then, next, *trust him for yourself*. That is *the* point—the hinge of the whole business. He is a Saviour. I believe *that*: but I go further, and resolve—he shall be *my* Saviour. May I say that? Yes, for I am permitted to do so, inasmuch as he says, “He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Scripture says that he is exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. Therefore, I look to him to give me repentance and remission of sins. I trust to him in that respect, and he is mine. He has said, “It is finished.” The atonement is finished, and I believe that it is finished for me. A prominent point about the offering under the old law was that the person who came with the sacrifice laid his hands on it, and said, “This is mine.” You must do the same with Jesus. Lay your hands on him, and say, “This is mine. This sacrificial death is for me.” “Oh, but,” says one, “suppose he is not mine? What if I were to take him to myself without warrant?” Suppose such a thing for one moment; yet he would be yours. If I was hungry, and I ate a bit of bread, and after I had eaten it, somebody said, “It is not yours,” I should reply, “Perhaps not, but how will you take it from me? It has nourished me, and refreshed me; it is mine, and none can deprive me of it.” There is the point, you see: if you take Christ Jesus into yourself, the devil himself may say you had no right to him, but he cannot take away that which you have eaten. Jesus himself will not

quarrel with you, nor blame you for taking him, for he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You may summon a poor man before the magistrate, and say, "He is a thief, for he stole bread from my counter." You may put him in prison for the theft, though I hope you would not if hunger drove him to the act; but you cannot get your bread away from him if he has eaten it. So, if you come to Christ, and take him into yourself, he is yours, and you shall live by him. Jesus says, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Nor death, nor hell, nor time, nor eternity, can take Jesus away when once you have him within you. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Swallow, then, the divine truth. Let it go down quickly, for fear anybody should come before it has fully entered into your soul. Once there, it is yours! They say that possession is nine points of the law; and I should think in the case of eating that it is the whole ten points, or any other number of points, for there is no getting re-possession of that which a man has actually eaten. Get Christ, and Christ is yours—yours by a kind of possession, which will never be disputed before the courts of heaven.

This, then, is to feed upon Christ—to believe that which is revealed about him, and then to appropriate him to yourself by personal faith.

Furthermore, to feed upon Christ means to meditate much upon him—to think much of him. Brothers, there are many sweet doctrines in the Bible which I delight to make my own by reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting them; for they are parts of the great circle of truth which is revealed of God. But I find that I am never so comforted.

strengthened, and sustained, as by deliberately considering Jesus Christ's precious death and atoning sacrifice. His sacrifice is the centre of the circle, the focus of the light. There is a charm, a divine fascination, about his wounds.

O sacred head, once wounded! O dear eyes, so red with weeping! O cheeks, with spittle all bestained! I could forever gaze, admire, and adore! There is no beauty in all the world like that which is seen in the countenance "more marred than that of any man." This one vision is enough for all eyes for all time. There is no sustenance to the heart like the sustenance that comes of his flesh and his blood, given up in anguish and in death to work out our redemption. Beloved, this is the bread of heaven. "Take, eat," says he, "this is my body, which is broken for you." What food is this! What life ought that to be which is nourished by such bread!

But time flies so quickly that I cannot dwell upon these points as they deserve to be dwelt upon. Oh, live near the cross! Build your house on Calvary! Frequent Gethsemane! Listen to the groans of your pleading Lord! Be much with a dying Christ! Be much with a risen Christ. Be much with a reigning Christ. Be much in anticipation of a coming Christ. For the more you are with him, the more will your soul be filled with satisfaction, and influenced to sanctification. He shall satiate your soul as with marrow and with fatness, and your mouth shall praise him with joyful lips, for he can say, and none other, "I am that bread of life." Receive him, then, and you shall find it so.

III. Now thirdly—and this shall be but a word or two—notice this solemn fact: NOT TO FEED UPON CHRIST

IS THE SURE MARK OF DEATH. Terrible fact. The Lord Jesus Christ has said it—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." A great preacher, but he does not feed on Christ! You have no life in you. A forward professor, but he does not feed on Christ! You have no life in you. A very knowing theologian, and a clever controversialist; but he does not feed upon the incarnate God! There is no life in you. A daring speculator in modern thought, but he does not care, he says, for the blood of Christ: he even sneers at the mention of it! You have no life in you. Hard words! Hard words! Hard words, if they be true, are better than soft words if they be false. But this is the sure test: "What think ye of Christ?" If he is not bread to your souls, you have no life in you. If anybody were to say to me, "I have a man at home who stands in my hall, and has stood there for years, but he has never eaten a mouthful of bread all the time nor cost me a penny for food," I should say to myself, "Oh, yes, that is a bronze man, I know, or a plaster cast of a man. He has no life in him, I am sure; for if he had life in him, he would have needed bread." If we could live without eating, it would be a cheap method of existence, but I have never found out the secret, and I do not mean to make experiments. If you are trying it, and have succeeded in it so far that you can live without Christ, the bread of life, I fear your life is not that of God's people, for they all hunger and thirst after Jesus, the bread of heaven. O my dear hearer, once a professor, once a church-member, if you have given up Christ, and you get on well without him, you have no life in you! The dead can do without bread, but the living cannot.

Jesus tells us, "I am that bread of life," and if you are doing without him you are doing without the bread of life, and the reason is that you are without life itself.

IV. Next, and the fourth head, shall be with equal brevity—THOSE WHO FEED UPON CHRIST ARE SUPREMELY BLESSED. They shall never hunger. They shall hunger after more of Jesus, but not after anything else besides Jesus. I was greatly pleased some time ago to hear a gentleman say, who had tried to preach another doctrine, that a certain neighborhood which he spoke of was so impregnated with what was called "the gospel" that he could not succeed with his speculations. He said that if men once drank this gospel doctrine it made them so bigoted in their love for it that the most clever person could not get them out of it. I thought to myself, "This witness is true." An enemy declared it, and it was therefore all the more striking. The subtlest deceivers may try as long as they please, but when we have once fed upon Christ they cannot get us off from him. They call us away from him; they proffer us all manner of novelties; but in vain: "Try our thought! Try our science! Try our purgatory! Try our larger hope!" But we hear the pails rattle, and we hear the swine clamoring, and we are not anxious to taste the mixture, or unite in the festival. We are not so selfish as to steal this new wash from those whom it delights. Let those have it who can feed on it; but as for ourselves, we mean to feed on the bread of heaven. The gospel is to us such satisfying bread that all the rest is draff.

"Should all the forms that men devise
 Assault my soul with treacherous art;
 I'd call them vanity and lies,
 And bind the gospel to my heart."

Every true child of God is so far a bigot that he prefers the bread of his Father's house to the husks of the far country. He cannot give up the gospel, and he will not, for it satisfies his whole being. What more does he want? Why should he make a change?

Moreover, he has in Christ food that can never exhaust. He may feed, and feed, and yet he shall never find that he lacks for meat. I have many an old book in my library in which there have been book-worms, and I have sometimes amused myself with tracing a worm. I do not know how he gets to the volume originally, but being there he eats his way into it. He bores a hole in a direct line, and sometimes I find that he dies before he gets half-way through the tome. Now and then a worm has eaten his way right through from one wooden cover to another; yes, and through the cover also. This was a most successful book-worm. Few of us can eat our way quite so far. I am one of the book-worms that have not got half-way into my Bible yet; but I am eating my way as fast as I can. This one thing I have proved to myself beyond all question: I shall never, never exhaust this precious Book; much less shall I exhaust the wondrous person of my divinely-blessed Lord. He is that bread which came down from heaven. He is utterly inexhaustible.

Brethren, feeding upon Jesus we have an immortal blessedness; we shall never die. If we have fed on Christ, we shall fall asleep, but it will be in Jesus. Some whom we love have lately fallen asleep: they will awake with him in the morning. But we shall never die. We shall only pass into a higher stage of life: for that food on which we feed shall be in us the

pledge of an immortality equal to the immortality of the Christ who has become our bread.

V. I had much more to say to you, but the time has gone. All that I will say further is this. If any of you desire to have Christ, you may depend upon it that you may have him, because bread is meant to be eaten: **JESUS IS PROVIDED TO BE RECEIVED.** What is the use of bread if it is never eaten? If you go to the Orphanage, you will see a large batch of bread there kept upon the shelves. It must not be eaten the first day, you know, it would go too fast, and would not be very wholesome for the youngsters. It must get rather staler by being kept a little while. Now suppose that I were to go down there, and say to the baker, "Lock that door: I want to keep that bread. I am going away to Mentone, and I shall take the key with me. that I may save that bread." Suppose I were to do so, and come back in a couple of months' time. Should I say to myself, "I have saved that batch of bread?" I am afraid that it would turn out to be very bad economy. Let us go and look at the loaves which we have kept from use! Come away at once! The sight is not pleasant. Decay and corruption have fallen upon what we have hoarded. It would be a poor matter for the bread. Why, it is the very end of bread, the object of bread, the portion of bread, to be eaten. It is honored in being eaten: it would be degraded by being left to grow stale and mouldy. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is never so famous a Christ as when sinners come and feed upon him. This precious bread must be eaten, or it has not answered its design. What say you to a doctor who has no patients? What say you to a Saviour who never saves anybody? The honor of a physician lies

in the persons that he heals ; and the honor of a Saviour lies in the persons that he saves. Christ has become the bread of heaven on purpose for you to have him, and for me to have him. He came into the world to save sinners, and if he does not save sinners, he has come for nothing. It is his business to save sinners. Now, if a man sets up in business, and never does any business, his undertaking is a failure. "Poor man!" you say, "he has made a great mistake."

I know a brother here who wanted to take a certain shop in a wide street, but his wiser friend said, "Do not take that shop for a baker's. It is not a good eating locality. You must open a shop in one of the streets where there are plenty of poor people, who will buy the bread every morning. Make it good and cheap, and it will not stop long on the shelves." I noticed in the newspaper that a certain drink-shop was "in a good drinking locality." I am sorry that there are such localities. But, assuredly, a good eating locality must be the very place for vending bread. I think that this Tabernacle stands in a good eating locality. Many are here now who are hungry after Christ, and it is a blessed fact that they may have him, and feed upon him without stint. And what is the price? The price? The difficulty with all other traders is to get you up to their price; but my difficulty is to get you down to mine—for the bread of heaven is *without price*. Even if you offer a farthing, I cannot take your bid. You may have all for nothing, and have it at once; but not a penny can be accepted from you. The gospel provides a full Christ for empty sinners, pardon on earth and bliss in heaven, and all for nothing. Take it as a free gift,

and it is yours. What would you pay? What could you pay? Did Israel pay for the manna? It would have been an insult to God to imagine it. Go your way, and bless the name of the Lord, for this is the gospel—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

II.

SHAVEN AND SHORN, BUT NOT BEYOND HOPE.

January 9, 1887.

“Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.”—*Judges xvi. 22.*

LET me introduce the text to you. Samson was set apart from his birth to be the champion of Israel, to break the power of the Philistines who lorded over God's people. Everything in his bringing up had reference to his peculiar calling as a hero of Israel, the hammer of Philistia. He was to be a Nazarite from his birth. Amongst other things which concerned the Nazarite he never touched wine, nay, nor grapes, nor husks of grapes, nor anything that came of the vine: which goes to show that the greatest physical strength is attainable without the use of wine or strong drink. Whatever else overcame Samson, he was never overcome with drunkenness; and yet he greatly sinned, which goes to show that total abstinence is not of itself enough to form a character. A Nazarite, in addition to abstinence from wine, also abstained from wearing the common appearance of men. He was not to have his hair at any time shaven, or cut away: so that when Samson was grown up to manhood, he was covered with a shaggy mass of hair. He must have looked like the lion that he was. Those locks of his were the token of his consecration to God, the outward marks of his being set apart to be the servant of the

God of Israel. Can you not see him with the terrible glory of his hair upon him?

Poor Samson was as weak morally as he was strong; physically, and he fell a prey first to one evil woman, and then to another. Perhaps the extraordinary strength of his physical frame placed him under stronger temptation than is common to man: at any rate, he was peculiarly constituted, and seemed more like a wanton boy than a judge in Israel. Through this peculiar sin of his, the Philistines found opportunity to assail him. They tempted Delilah, whom he loved, to extract from him the secret of his great strength. He was so strong that he rent a lion as though it had been a kid; so strong that he carried away the gates of the city in which they had shut him up; so strong that he smote an army of Philistines, "hip and thigh, with a great slaughter." The mercenary woman, upon whom he foolishly doted, by degrees extracted from him the secret of his strength; and while he lay asleep upon her lap, the Philistine lords caused a barber to cut away the locks of his head. He awoke from his sleep shaven. Then he went out, and thought to fight the Philistines as before: but to his surprise he found that his strength was gone. The locks of his dedication had been shorn; he was no longer the acknowledged servant of the Lord, and he was weak as other men. Then the Philistine lords took him captive, bored out his eyes—for such is the expression in the margin of our old Bibles—gouged out his eyes, bound him to the mill, and made him work like a slave or an ass. In that pitiable plight our text finds him: but it comes with a key of deliverance to set free the captive.

My text runs thus—it is in the twenty-second verse of the sixteenth chapter of Judges—"Howbeit the

hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."

Poor Samson! I roughly sketched his story as with a crayon just now. I cannot stay to attempt a more accurate portrait. Poor Samson, the champion of Israel, now the scoff of his enemies! Poor Samson, the hero of so many fights, now at last conquered by his own foolishness! They have taken him, they have bound him, they have gouged out his eyes, and there he stands, sightless, in the midst of his adversaries, who bind him to the mill, and lash him as he grinds for them. To humiliate him they put him to do woman's work, made hard so as to be the work of beasts. See what sin will do. See how the man who had fought God's battles suffers great loss, great pain, great disfigurement, great dishonor, and comes into a cruel and abhorred bondage through his sin. That shaven man made a slave is the picture of very many who once were the avowed servants of God, and were valiant for the truth. They have given up their secrets, they have told the world that which none should know but themselves, they have lost the locks of their dedication, and they are led captive by the devil at his will. They cannot see as they used to see, darkness shuts out all joy: they do not work for God as they used to work, for they are slaving for men, for poor, passing, earthborn objects. They have come into an awful bondage, and they have, at the same time, brought great dishonor and weakness upon the church to which they belong. How are the mighty fallen! Children of God, whatever God may do for you, take heed that you always remember that you can never gain anything by sin! It is loss, and utter loss, in every sense, to yield ourselves servants to sin. Again I cry: How

are the mighty fallen! How is the champion become a slave at a mill! In the midst of our churches how often are those who were excellent and useful brought to nought and made to be a derision! How often do our boldest warriors bring the cross of Christ into contempt by their sin! The Lord keep us from thus falling! May we rather die than dishonor our Lord!

I begin thus upon the mournful key, because I want to speak of God's great goodness to backsliders, and of how he restores them; but I want to warn them, at the very outset, that sin does not pay; that whatever may come of it through God's mercy, yet it is an evil thing and a bitter thing to wander from the Lord. Though Samson's hair grew again, and his strength came back, and he died gloriously fighting against the Philistines, yet he never recovered his eyes, or his liberty, or his living power in Israel! Short and effective was his last stroke against the adversary, but it cost him his life. He could not again rise to be the man he had been before; and though God did give him a great victory over the Philistine people, yet it was but as the flicker of an expiring candle; he was never again a lamp of hope to Israel. His usefulness was abated, and even brought to an end, through his folly. Whatever the grace of God may do for us, it cannot make sin a right thing, or a safe thing, or a permissible thing. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. O children of God, be not enslaved by fleshly lusts! O Nazarites unto God, guard your locks, lest they be cut away by sin while you are sleeping in the lap of pleasure! O servants of Jehovah, serve the Lord with heart and soul by his grace even to the end, and keep yourselves unshorn by the world!

With that as a preface we come again to the text :
 “Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again
 after he was shaven.”

First, let us see *what this growing of the hair pictures* ;
 secondly, *what it specifically symbolizes* ; and thirdly,
what it prophesies.

I. First, WHAT THIS GROWING OF THE HAIR PICTURES. I think that this pictures the gradual restoration of certain among us who have backslidden from God. The hair was there upon Samson’s head, though it had been cut short. Though the hair was shaved off, yet the adversary could not take the roots away. It was a living thing, and it would grow again. So is it with those who are the people of God. The devil can shave them very closely, and clip off their beauty, their strength, and their consecration ; but a living something is still there that will grow again. If there has been a real regenerating work of God the Holy Ghost upon their hearts, it will show itself again. Though the fruit and holy outcome of this living principle may for a while be removed—sadly removed to their bitter loss and damage—yet I say the living roots of grace are still in the soul, and ere long we shall have to say, “Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again.” Wells may for a while be stopped, but the living water will break out, and come to the surface again. The tree may lose every leaf which once adorned it, but its substance is in it ; and when the spring smiles again, it will once more begin to bud. Eternal life may sleep, may faint ; but it cannot utterly die ; else how were it eternal life ? The hair, though closely shaved, will grow again.

I will show you this hair, in the process of growing. A man was once a member of a Christian church,

godly and gracious. Satan has shaved him of all that was distinctive and religious. He has gone into the world ; he has been put away by his brethren. His conduct was too inconsistent to allow of a continuance of his profession. But there had really been a change of heart, there had been a radical work of grace in his soul ; and, therefore, after a while, he begins to be very miserable and uneasy. It is impossible for him to be happy among the Philistines, who have captured him. His gay comrades, who flattered themselves that they had got him fast this time, cannot make him out. He has fits of melancholy. Occasionally, he falls into a deep despondency, and he utters strange words which they do not like to hear, partly denunciations of himself, and partly prophecies of evil to those around him. He is evidently terribly uneasy in the ways of sin. Now he gets alone, and sighs—

“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”

There is something in his heart which troubles him both by night and by day. His soul is saying, “I will go and return to my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now.” Howbeit his hair begins to grow again. It has been shaved very cleverly, but the roots have not been extracted, and you can see that he will soon be a hairy man again. He cannot rest in his sin ; no true-born child of God ever can. Giant Slay-good may pick up a pilgrim on the road when he is faint and weary, but he can never pick the bones of a true believer. He will come out of the den of the giant somehow or other. What a pity that he should ever go into it!

Well, now notice that the man begins to drop in to hear a sermon. It is a long time since he was familiar with the house of prayer; but he finds himself here to-night after a long absence. He remembers when he used to be always here, and he almost waters the floor with his tears as he thinks of the happy days which he used to enjoy in the midst of God's people, when he welcomed the light of the Sabbath morning, and the way was never too long for him to come up to the place of his love. In those days the word of the Lord was sweet to him. He has not been for some time, but somehow he felt to-day that he must come again. How welcome he is! How glad I am to see him, though he looks so rough and grisly, and half-shaved!

I have heard—I am not sure of it, but I think it is very likely—that he has been reading his Bible again. That poor Book has been left to be covered with dust, but he has had it down, and he has looked at a psalm that once used to charm his heart, and he has wept over the passage which once revealed Christ to him. He even groaned to think that he should have forgotten the voice of the living God which used to speak to him through that holy Book. He read a sermon to-day, too. He has not often done *that*. He took a tract from some one in the street, and he looked at it with eagerness: this also was a hopeful sign.

A little while ago, when he first forsook his Lord, he could blaspheme: he could say hard things against Christ and his word; but he does not do so now. It would be impossible for him now to ridicule religion; he is too tender for that. He has a strong desire to hear again the message of free grace and dying love; he longs to listen once more to the ringing of those

silver bells that once were music to his ears. I think it must be true that the Lord is bringing him back. Surely my text is being fulfilled—"Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again." The devil could shave away those flowing locks which once adorned him, but he could not cut out the roots, which are deeper than he can reach. Do you not think that our shorn Samson may yet be himself again? Surely his hair has begun to grow anew, and to-night I trust that it will grow very quickly while he is in this house of prayer hearing the glad tidings of free forgiveness.

I am most of all encouraged with the fact that he begins to feel in his soul, an anguish, and a bitterness, and an aching, and a craving, and a longing. I have great hopes of him now that his old feelings are returning. Methinks I hear him say, "I cannot live like this." He sighs: "I have tried the way of transgressors, and it is hard. I have tested the life of sinful pleasure, and there is nothing in it. The cups of the world are all froth. The devil's bread is all bran. It chokes me; it poisons me. I cannot endure it any longer. Oh, that I could get back to God! Oh, that I could be truly converted, if I never was converted! If I am indeed a child of God, oh, that he would once more manifest his pardoning love to me, and show my sins forgiven, for I cannot rest as I am!" O my dear brother, I was so sorry when you went astray: your backsliding has caused me many a pang of heart; but I begin to rejoice now as I hear you talk in that way, for I think that the text is coming true: "Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again"!

And now, stop till our uneasy friend gets home to-

night. Nay, perhaps it will come to pass before he quits this assembly. He begins to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He does not say that aloud, for he would be afraid that somebody would hear him. He almost wonders now that he is not put out of the place of worship, considering what kind of sinner he has been. He has sneaked in to-night, but he is in, and he trembles to find it is so; he scarcely dares to lift his eye upward. He hardly dares to hope. His desire is to get back to God, and to be forgiven; and so, with trembling hope and quivering fear, he has begun to pray. You notice that Samson began to pray when his hair began to grow; and when they took him into that temple, where they wanted him to make sport for them, he breathed an earnest prayer to God that he might be strengthened but that once to do service to his people and his God. How earnestly do I invite you that have gone back from God and his ways to pray to-night that the Lord will return to you in mercy, fill you to the full once more with his Holy Spirit, and make the bones which he has broken to rejoice! If you begin to pray I shall begin to praise: when you plead with tears, I begin to bless the Lord with exaltation. For you it is coming true—"Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."

And if that prayer should go farther still, and you should say, "I will break off every connection that holds me to the paths of sin," this would be better still. If you were to cry, "I know what drew me aside, I will have no more to do with the evil which destroyed me," it would be a hopeful sign indeed. Oh, if to-night there shall be a severance of yourself from the swine, and from all the husks that they

do eat, because you are determined to go to your Father, it shall be well with you. From our church-fellowship we sometimes find one drawn aside by one motive, and another by another: alas, the ways downward are as plenteous as the gates of death! How many are tempted with unholy loves! How many are seduced by the fatal cup! Ah! how many go aside through false doctrine, heresy, and the delusions of the day! How many are foolishly tempted by their own prosperity! They grow rich, and cannot afford to worship where once they did. On the other hand, how many are led aside by their poverty! They do not think that their clothes are good enough to come in—a piece of pride from which I pray that we may be delivered. Or, because they have come down in the world, and cannot spend as they once did, they forsake their brethren and their Lord. For different reasons men go aside from truth and holiness; but it is a happy circumstance when they cry, “If I have been led away from Christ by anything sinful, I will give it up. I will part with my eye, or my arm, or my foot, so that I may enter into the kingdom; for it were better for me to enter into life blind, or halt, or maimed, than that, keeping these dear things, I should be cast into hell fire.” When the Lord of grace leads men to this resolve we see the text fulfilled again—“Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again.”

When the backslider comes to that pass, you will soon see other signs. The man who went so far astray now seeks the Lord afresh, and begins again to run in his ways. When a Nazarite lost his consecration, all the years of his consecration before did not count: he had to begin again. So some of you must begin

again. Beginning again is sweet! Beginning again is safe! Even though I trust that I have not wandered from God, either in act or in heart, yet I often begin again. I delight to renew the love of my espousals, and rehearse the vows of my youth before the Lord my God. If the devil says to me, "Your religion is a pretence: your experience is a mistake;" I do not attempt to argue with him upon those lines, but I reply, "I will not cavil about the past, but I will begin again." I am a sinner; I know that, and the devil himself has not the impudence to tell me that I am not. Then, Jesus Christ died for sinners, and therefore I return to the sinners' Saviour, and trust him even as if I had never trusted him before. This I find to be the direct road to peace. To breathe again one's native air is a prescription most helpful to those who would regain their health and strength. Can you not return again to the starting-point, you that have wandered? If so, we shall all thank God for you, and look upon you as a Samson whose hair begins to grow again, after he has been shaven.

If the matter goes on rightly, I know what will happen:—the forlorn backslider will begin to entertain a feeble hope. "O," he says, "I trust that I may be restored! I shall be a miracle of divine grace if I am; but I think that I shall be." Further on he even cries, "I hope that I am restored, and once more put among the children." He gets a bit of bread from the children's table, and though he feels that he is not much better than a dog, yet he makes bold to enjoy it. "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table;" and this poor man is aware of that gracious fact, and dares to take full advantage of it. Sometimes, while he is eating a crumb

of promise, it tastes so sweet that he whispers to himself, "I do not think that I can be a dog after all. I think that I must be a child, for I have the taste that a child has. This is children's meat, and I do so enjoy it that, mayhap, I am, after all, a child of God."

Ah! and let me tell you that sometimes, when it is sunshine - weather, this poor seeker feels greatly encouraged and cheered. Though he will go limping to heaven by reason of his past sin, yet, on bright days, he half forgets his lameness. He has played the prodigal, and almost doubted his sonship, but with his face toward the Father's house he now cries, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon me, that I should be called a child of God!" In his happiest times he feels ready to burst out with rapture, because he enjoys a sense of divine love. He even makes bold to declare—"Yes, I am forgiven. Jesus smiles, and loves me still." When he is quite alone, and nobody can hear it, he even ventures to speak of himself as, after all, one of those that the Father has loved with an everlasting love, that Christ has redeemed with precious blood, that the Spirit has renewed, and that the Lord will never cast away. What a pleasure to see his faith thus coming back to him! "Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again." We shall have him back again, and we shall see him and know him again to be the same Samson that once we knew in his first days, before he had played the fool, and brought himself into bondage. Soon we shall say, "Come in, and welcome, dear brother; for the Lord has recovered you from the disfigurement which your sin brought upon you! You are again a Nazarite, and your head and beard are covered with the tokens of your dedication.

Come and take your place among those who are consecrated to the Lord." How much I desire that it may be so with all who formerly turned away from the right path, but are now casting a longing glance towards it!

I think that is the picture which our text paints for us.

II. Now I am going to turn a little way round, still keeping the shorn champion well before us. In the second place, we have to see in our text WHAT IT SPECIFICALLY SYMBOLIZES, that is to say, this text is a distinct type of some one thing. You see that Samson's strength lay in his consecration. His hair was the token of his dedication to God. When he lost his locks, he did, as it were, lose his consecration; and when he lost his consecration, he lost his strength. On the other hand, the only way by which he could regain his strength was to reestablish his consecration; and of this the growing again of his hair was the type and token.

Well, now, I know some *churches* which performed a great work a hundred years ago, or fifty years ago, or less. Their former days were heroic. Their palmy times were beautified with great prosperity. These churches knew how to suffer and to serve, they were faithful to the truth, and earnest in holy labor, and the Lord made them to be exceedingly useful; but now they have grown respectable, and useless. They do nothing outrageous now. the question is—Are they doing anything? Their minister is an extremely learned man, and as polished as a looking-glass. Of course he never addresses himself to the vulgar, neither does he oppose the views of his cultured hearers. The church itself is highly respectable;

no one ever questions its high respectability, or speaks of it without due deference to its prominent position. Yet it has ceased to be a power for good: it has no influence over the mass of sinners around it. Of course its usefulness is a secondary consideration, for it must not be forgotten that it has a superior ministry, and a superior reputation: its deacons are superior, and so are most of the members! Besides, they have a celebrated choir, and a most delightful organ! A great deal of money has been spent over that organ; and if that will not save souls, and glorify God, what will? What are we to do with our respectability if we do not proclaim it by buying the most expensive organ in the market? But do not forget the choir. I think they wear surplices; but whether they do or not the singing is fine, the building is architectural, the pulpit is unique, and the whole thing is done in a model manner. It is true that nobody is saved; there are no additions to the church; they have not used the baptistery for a long time, but then they are wonderfully respectable! What would you have more?

In the opinion of some persons Samson looked much improved when his matted hair was gone. He was more presentable; more fit for good society. And so in the case of churches, the notion is that they are all the better for getting rid of their peculiarities. You who are in the secret know better, and you will follow me while I sorrowfully seek a remedy for the unhappy weakness which has fallen upon many communities which once were strong in the Lord. How is this church, all shaven and shorn, this poor, enslaved, miserable concern, to be brought back to its old state? How is this Samson, that once

was strong, to get its strength back again? Why, only by letting its hair grow again. It must be consecrated to God again. This church must go back to the old gospel; it must say once more, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." It must again become insatiable for the conversion of men. Prayer must again become the delight of the whole church, and its trust must be in the Spirit of the Lord. The glory of God must take possession of the church instead of its desire to be fashionable and respectable; and when its locks grow again, its strength will come back. When it is consecrated to God, it will resume its former force, bear its testimony as in better days, and once again shake the world with its power.

Now the same truth applies to every *preacher*. There are some preachers who are splendid men, and yet they are practical failures. You see in them wide knowledge, eloquent language, and yet nothing. They can speak so properly that a senate might sit with admiration at their feet; but when they have done, nobody is pricked in the heart, nobody is convinced of sin, nobody is led to behold the beauties of Christ. Yet in their youth these men were soul-winners, and were looked upon as champions for Christ. O Samson, how are we to make thee strong again? That preacher must begin again to serve God with all his heart. He must give up the idea of being a great man, or a learned man, or an eloquent man. He must give up the idea of charming the *élite*, and bringing together the fashionable, and must give himself up to glorify God by the winning of souls. When his hair grows again in that respect, we shall see what Samson can do. He will yet lay hold on the pillars of the

Philistine temple, and bring them down about the heads of the lords. Give me a man perfectly consecrated, and I do not care much what he is. He may be rough, unpolished, and even illiterate; but if he be consecrated, the people will feel his power. He may be educated so that he may understand all knowledge, and he may speak as eloquently as Cicero; but if he is a consecrated man, his power will be none the less, but perhaps all the greater, because of his education. But this one thing is essential—there must be consecration to God, and downright earnestness in consequence, or else he will be a shaven Samson. May God give full consecration to each one of us who stand before the people to speak in his name, for in that consecration lies the power of the Holy Spirit to bless us! He cannot and will not bless unconsecrated men. If we do not live to God's glory, God will not use us.

This same is true of every Christian *worker*. I have seen this demonstrated over and over again in daily life. I have seen a Christian woman most useful in a class, bringing to the Saviour many of the girls whom she has taught; but on a sudden a change has come, there have been no conversions, and for years the class has dwindled away, and nothing has come of it. If enquiry were to be made, it would be found that the consecration of the teacher had declined. She no longer spoke with tearful eye and earnest heart, seeking to lead those girls to Christ; and because her consecration was gone, her strength was gone. It is just the same, whether you preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or whatever you do: if you are wholly consecrated to God, you will be strong. I do not say that you will by sincere devotion alone gain

all the talents, and all the mental forces you might desire; but, believe me, force does not lie in these: these are like sword and spear, but the strength with which they are to be wielded lies elsewhere. You do not absolutely require great abilities; but you must have perfect consecration. Be thankful if you have javelin and shield, but go on without them if you have not been armed with them; for, to a devoted man, even a castaway bone will be a sufficient weapon. Samson did not wait till he found a falchion worthy of his heroic hand; but he used such instruments as he found on the spot. It is in consecration that your strength will lie. Let but the arrow be winged by a mighty pull of the bow, and it will go straight forward in proportion to the force that has impelled it. Let but God fit you to his bow, and send you forward with divine energy: what need you more? The impulse that comes from on high is your strength, and that impulse is found in your consecration to your Lord.

Perhaps I am addressing some Christian person who is not altogether a worker, but partly *a sufferer*. He is only a private Christian, bearing up as he may under the trials of life. You have grown rather dull of late, dear friend. You do not enjoy things as you once did. You have not the vivacity and the enjoyment which you once had in the things of God. See to it. Has there not been a razor at work upon you somewhere? Oh, yes, I knew a brother who, when he had a little money, rejoiced to have it, because he gave it to the cause of God abundantly! I believe that he is worth a hundred times as much as he was then, and he gives a hundredth part of what he used to when he was poorer. In proportion as his pocket

has grown golden his heart has grown bronzy. He has gone down in himself in proportion as he has gone up in his poverty, and now he does not enjoy things as he used to do. He is a poor creature to what he once was; even in his own esteem he is not the happy man he once was! How much I wish that this good man's hair would grow so that he would again be living for his Lord, whom I trust he still loves!

I know Christian people who used to spend an hour a day in prayer. The hour has dwindled into five minutes. They used to be constant at week-night services. They very seldom gladden us with their presence now; and they are not as happy as they once were. I can read this riddle. If a man were to reduce his meals to eating once a week, we could not warrant his health. I would not guarantee that, if a man never ate except on Sundays, he would grow strong. So I do not think that people who neglect the means of grace, and give up their consecration, can expect to be lively, happy, or vigorous. When the razor gets to work, and the hair of conscious, resolute devotion to God begins to fall on the floor, lock after lock, the strength is departing: and only as that hair begins to grow again, and spiritual consecration returns, can these people expect to be useful, influential, and strong in the Lord.

I must say no more on this point; but it is most important, and I pray the Holy Spirit to stir up your pure minds concerning it.

III. I will close with this further consideration. We are now to remember WHAT IS PROPHESED when Samson's hair began to grow again. I wonder why these Philistines did not take care to keep his hair from growing to any length. If cutting his hair

once had proved so effectual, I wonder that they did not send in the barber every morning, to make sure that not a hair grew upon his scalp or chin. But wicked men are not in all matters wise men: indeed, they so conspicuously fail in one point or another that Scripture calls them fools. The devil himself is a fool, after all. He thinks that he is wonderfully cunning, but there is always a place where he breaks down. These servants of Satan, these boastful Philistines, said confidently, "We have done for him now, once for all. We have put out his eyes, and what can a blind man do?" They do not go on cutting off his hair because they fancy that, once lost, the good man's strength is lost for ever. Perhaps they said, "Now have we lashed him to the mill: the stronger he gets the more he can grind; therefore let his hair grow, and so he will be the more useful to us." Great was the foolishness of their wisdom: they were fostering their own destruction. Satan, also, is very cunning in getting hold of backsliders, but he generally manages to let them slip by his over-confidence in their wilfulness. Many a man have I seen come back to the dear Saviour on account of the oppression which he has endured from his old master, the prince of darkness! If he had been treated well, he might never have returned to Christ any more; but it is not possible for the citizens of the far country to treat prodigals well; sooner or later they starve them and oppress them, so that they run away home.

When Samson's hair began to grow, what did it prophesy? Well, first it prophesied *hope for Samson*. I will be bound to say that he put his hand to his head, and felt that it was getting bristly, and then he put his hand to his beard, and found it rough. Yes,

yes, yes, it was coming, and he thought within himself, "It will be all right soon. I shall not get my eyes back. *They* will not grow again. I am an awful loser by my sin, but I shall get my strength back again, for my hair is growing. I shall be able to strike a blow for my people and for my God yet." So round the mill he went, grinding away, grinding away, but every now and then putting his hand to his head, and thinking, "My hair is growing; oh, it is growing again! My strength is returning to me." The mill went round merrily to the tune of hope, for he felt that he would get his old strength back again. When they loaded it, and tightened it to make the work heavier, yet his hair was growing; and so he found the burden lighter than it had been before, and his heart began to dance within him, in prospect of being his former self again. Now, if any of you have signs of restoring grace in your hearts, and you are coming back to your God and Saviour, be glad, be thankful. Do not hesitate to let your renewed devotion to God be seen by those round about you. Come along, brother, come along; your brethren wait to receive you! Come along, my wandering sister, come along; all the people of God will welcome you! If the grace of God is moving you at all, be hopeful and quicken your steps, and come to Jesus. Come to him just now even as you came at first. Yea, and if you never did come before, come now, and throw yourselves at the cross-foot, and look up to those five precious wounds. Look and live; for there is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment even for the chief of sinners.

What did this prophesy? Joy for Samson but also, *hope for Israel*. Oh, if any of the Israelites did get

in to see him in prison, how they must have been cheered by the sight of his returning hair! Some ancient Israelite would say to his brother, "I have been to see poor Samson. You remember him. We had to put him out of the church, you know. Sad case. I have been to see him." "How did he look?" "Well, he would say, "there was much to grieve me, but somewhat also to comfort me. He does not look as he did on the day when the Philistines shaved him. He looks quite hairy again." "Oh!" the other would say, "then he will get strong again, and when he is strong, he will use his mighty arms against the oppressors of his people. I know he will fight for his country again. When he gets strong again, he will lift that brawny arm of his that smote the Philistines, and he will let them know that he is an Israelite yet. I know he will; for his heart will return to the love of God and his chosen. Philistia shall not always triumph over us. There is hope for us." So, my dear brothers and sisters, when we see in you some little signs of grace, and you are coming back, you do not know how cheerily we talk to one another. Why, at the elders' meeting, one of them said, "Our poor brother Jones was at the Tabernacle the other night. You remember him." "Yes, we do remember him, indeed." "Well, he was listening to our pastor; I was so pleased to see him." Another brother also said, "I am glad to tell you that Mrs. So-and-so, the sister that went so sadly astray, was outside the chapel; and when I pressed her to come in, she wept, and said she wished she had never gone away. There is a good work going on there." We rejoice together, and we say, "Thank God, they are coming back again!" Oh, you do not know the joy that you backsliders will give to the hearts of God's

people if you do but return! There is joy not only with the Great Shepherd, but with his friends and his neighbors when the lost sheep is restored to the fold. Do you not know that the Chief Shepherd calls his brethren together, and says, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost?"

Lastly, what did it prophesy? Well, it prophesied *mischief for the Philistines*. They did not know it, but if they could have read the writing in Samson's heart, they would have understood that he meant to shave their nation quite as closely as they had shaven him. There was a storm brewing for Philistia. He that rent the lion as though it had been a kid was getting back his strength. He that seized the jaw-bone of an ass, and said, "Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men," will soon be scattering death among the oppressors of his people. Woe to you, lords of Philistia! Woe to you, princes of Gaza!

When a sinner who has gone astray is restored again, it means mischief to the kingdom of Satan. Oh, how he will serve his God! How he will try to bring back his fellow-sinners! Having had much forgiven, this man will love much, and will serve Jesus much. He will be one of your earnest Christian men, depend upon it. He will be much in prayer; he will be careful in his walk; he will be holy in his speech; he will contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace; he will be a leader amongst the host of God, even as he has been a ringleader in sin. He will invade the dark places, and lead the chief of sinners captive to the cross. Woe to thee, Philistia, when Samson's hair grows again! Woe to the hosts of evil, when the blackslider is restored.

There, I have put it all before you. I have tried to put the matter interestingly; but all the while my heart has been yearning over you that have gone aside. I am pining for the restoration of those who have turned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. I long for your restoration, or your true conversion. I want to see a different nature in you, that you may neither be dogs nor swine, but may become the real children of our God and Father; and then you will not return to your former ways. If you have defiled yourself, may you at once be washed! If you have wandered, may you at once be restored to Jesus and his church, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved! Amen,

III.

THE BREAKER AND THE FLOCK.

March 20, 1887.

“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold; they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.”—*Micah* ii. 12, 13.

You will remember, dear friends, from our reading last Sabbath morning, in the second chapter of the Book of Micah, that the prophet was delivering reproofs and rebukes against a sinful people, a people who tried to straiten the Spirit and silence the voice of prophecy, and refused to listen to the messengers of God. He threatened them with condign punishment from the Most High. To our surprise, in the very midst of the threatening he delivers a prediction brimming with mercy. Not only is not the Spirit of the Lord straitened, but even the people of the Lord are not to be straitened; for one has come forth who will be to them both liberator and leader. Judgment is God's strange work, and he rejoices even in the midst of threatening to turn aside and utter gracious words to obedient souls. Surely the brightest and most silvery drops of love that have ever distilled upon man have fallen in close connection with storms of divine justice. The

acceptable year of the Lord is hard by the day of vengeance of our God. The blackness of the tempest of his wrath acts as a foil to set forth more brightly the glory of his grace. In this case the thunder-bolts stay their course in mid-volley : when the prophet is hurling destruction upon sin and sinners he pauses to interpose a passage of promise most rich and gracious—a passage which I wish to open up to you at this time, as the Spirit of God shall enable me.

Certain wilful persons were proudly confident that no enemy could reach them behind the walls of their cities, though the Lord declared that he would make Samaria a heap, and would strip Jerusalem. They coveted fields and took them by violence, and went on with their oppressions as if there had been no Judge of all the earth. The Lord warned them again and again, and assured them that they must not expect to be preserved from chastisement because they were the Lord's people. They boasted that God would protect them, yea, they leaned upon the Lord, and said, "Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." He told them that Zion should be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem should become heaps. They were by no means to escape the rod ; rather might they look for grace after they had been severely chastened. They would be carried away into captivity, but yet there would come a day in which they should be gathered out of the places wherein they had been scattered, and brought back to their own land. The prophet cried to the daughter of Zion, "Thou shalt go even to Babylon ; there shalt thou be delivered ; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies."

Truly, the Lord forgets not to devise means to bring

again his banished ones. The words of Micah in the passage before us agree with many others which fell from the lips of prophets; for it is the way of the Lord to restore his chosen in the day of their repentance. Did he not say by his servant Amos, "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." He will preserve the chosen race even in their scattering, and then in his own appointed time he will seek them out, according to his own word, "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock." These gathered ones were to be led back to their land under the guidance of a great Shepherd, whose business it should be to break down all obstacles and clear the road for them, so that they might safely reach their resting-place.

I have no doubt that the first fulfilment of this prophecy was given when Cyrus conquered Babylon and gave permission for Israel to return to their own land. Cyrus may be regarded as "the Breaker;" for the prophet Isaiah wrote concerning him: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." Then the willing-hearted of Israel gathered together to rebuild the house of the Lord, and to this centre multitudes hastened, the Lord being with them and sending them prosperity. It was of these favored ones that we find a striking fulfilment of our text as to the noise made

by the concourse of men. Ezra tells us that "the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." Then was this promise in a measure fulfilled.

But, brethren, the promises of the Lord are perennial springs for ever overflowing with new fulfilments. In the latter days, the God of Israel, in abundant grace, will remember his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and will gather together his ancient nation, who are at this time a people scattered and peeled. These shall be converted to the Christ of God, and then shall be accomplished the word of the prophet: "I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them." The Son of David, whom their fathers slew, not knowing what they did, shall be made known to them as the promised seed, and then they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him. May this day soon come! Then shall the veil be taken away from their hearts, and the cloud shall no longer hang over Israel's head, but the Lord shall restore them, and they shall rejoice in him. The day cometh when the Breaker shall go up before them, and the King at the head of them, and they shall be brought again unto the inheritance of their fathers.

Even this will not exhaust the prophecy. I regard this passage as setting forth a vision of spiritual things in which Micah dimly saw the gathering together, and the heavenward march of the true Israel, namely, the elect of God, whom he hath given to his Son Jesus, and whom the Lord Jesus has undertaken to save. "He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart." (Rom. ii. 29.) As Paul, by the Spirit of God, interpreteth the whole

story of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is clear that we, brethren, the children of the promise, are the true seed, even those who are born by divine power and as believers are the *spiritual* family of believing Abraham. If we have the faith of Abraham, we are the children of Abraham, and with us is the covenant made; for the seed of Abraham is not reckoned according to descent by the flesh, else would the covenant blessing have fallen to Ishmael and not to Isaac, to Esau and not to Jacob. The covenant is to a spiritual seed, born according to divine promise through divine power. The line in which the Lord has determined that the covenant blessing should run was ordered by divine sovereignty, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand." The Lord purposed that they which were born after the spirit should be the true heirs, and not those that are born after the flesh. We, therefore, believe that to us, even to us who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, appertain the promises and the covenant. It shall come to pass that all the elect of God shall yet be gathered together from the places whereto they have wandered in their sin, and for them a clear way shall be opened up to the land of their inheritance. The Breaker, who is also their King and God, shall lead them through all opposition, and bring them without fail to their quiet resting-place. Even as at the first all Israel was brought out of Egypt and safely led with a high hand and an outstretched arm through sea and desert, so shall the Lord Jesus lead the whole host of his redeemed to the place of his glory. Hath not the Lord God declared it—"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon

their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy: and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"?

An august spectacle is set before us in our text. May our eyes be anointed of the Holy Spirit, that we may behold its glories, so that our hearts shall leap for joy!

First, in the text I see *the flock gathered*: "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men." Secondly, we behold *the champion Shepherd clearing the way of the flock*: "The breaker is come up before them." He, with the arm of his strength, breaks all opposers, and breaks up for them a way from their captivity. Thirdly, behold *the flock abounding*, with their great Shepherd at their head: "They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and have gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them." Jehovah leads the van, and the hosts of his redeemed march triumphantly after him.

I. To begin then, brethren; here is THE FLOCK GATHERED: "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee."

Who knows where God's chosen are? Babylon was far off from Jerusalem, but our places of wandering are farther off from God than that. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." In the cloudy and dark day we have wandered to the uttermost ends of the earth. The Lord's chosen ones lie wide of one another, and they are far off from God himself. What a mercy it is that in the text we have a promise that they shall be gathered *divinely*! "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of

thee ; *I* will surely gather the remnant of Israel." Who else could gather them but the Lord? What power less than divine could fetch such wanderers from their haunts and hidings? One is aloft yonder on the hill side in his pride and self-conceit; another is down low in the despondency of his disappointment. One wanders in the pastures of worldliness, sporting himself in the plenty thereof, and hard to be brought back for that reason; another is entangled in the briars of poverty, half-starved and ready to die, and hopeless of ever seeing the face of God with joy. They are everywhere, my brethren,—these lost sheep: they seem to have chosen out, as if deliberately, the most dangerous places; they stumble on the dark mountains, they are caught in the tangled thickets, they have fallen into pits. O sin, what hast thou done? rather, what hast thou not done? for men seem to have gone to the utmost extreme of rebellion against God, and to have done evil with both hands earnestly. Therefore doth God himself come to the rescue. He himself shall assemble Jacob, and gather the remnant of Israel. Driving with the terrors of his law, drawing with the sweetness of his gospel, he shall surely bring them in. By one instrumentality or by another, and in some cases, apparently, without instrumentality at all, he will bring them from all points of the compass to the place where he will meet with them.

“There is a period known to God,
When all his sheep, redeemed by blood,
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold, and enter in.”

This is the result of the divine working, and of that alone. Our hope of the salvation of God's elect lies in the fact that it is God himself who undertakes to

gather them. Remember his word by the prophet Ezekiel, "For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out."

Following the text closely, we notice that this gathering is to be performed *surely*. I dwell with great pleasure upon that word "surely," because it is spoken twice, "I will *surely* assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will *surely* gather the remnant of Israel." There are no "ifs" where there is a God: there are no "peradventures" where divine predestination rules the day. Let Jehovah speak, and it is done; let him command, and it shall stand firm. Inasmuch as he saith "surely" twice, it reminds me of Joseph's word to the Egyptian king: "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God." God will not change his purpose, nor turn from his promise, nor forget his covenant: he will surely gather together his chosen people wherever they may be. O thou that art buffeted by opposition, and driven to sore distress in thy holy service, be not thou dismayed, for the purpose of the Lord shall stand. *Thou* mayest fail, but the eternal God will not. Thy work may be washed away like the work of little children in the sand of the sea shore, but that which God doeth endureth for ever. God shaketh the earth out of its place, but who can move *him*? When God says *surely*, who shall cast doubt in the way? The Lord will without fail call out his redeemed from among men. As a worker and a soul-winner I grasp at these words, "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel," and I feel that I shall not labor in vain, nor spend my strength for nought. When the end cometh, and the whole business of sal-

vation shall be complete, it shall be seen that the Lord hath achieved his purpose. Jesus saith, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," and it shall surely be so. Wherefore let us be of good courage, and seek out the lost ones in full confidence that they must and shall be found.

This leads us to notice that they shall be gathered *completely*. "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, *all of thee*." Not some of the chosen, but all of them shall be brought out from the world which lieth in the wicked one. Not some of the redeemed, but each one of them, shall be made to walk at liberty under the leadership of their Shepherd-king. The Lord will leave none of his sheep in their wanderings, and surrender none to the lion or the bear. Dear friends, sighing and crying afar off and thinking that God will never gather you, have faith in him. Helpless as thou art, trust him to do his work as a Saviour. It is written, "I will surely gather, O Jacob, all of thee." and thou mayest not think that thou hast wandered beyond the reach of the infinite arm. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Thou must not dream that thou hast sinned thyself beyond the power of grace, for his mercy endureth for ever! Only do thou look unto Christ, and let thy soul stay itself on him, and God will not overlook thee in the day when he gathers his own. Though thou be least in Israel, and most unworthy of his regard, yet he has expressly said, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." He will not forget thee, thou weakest of all the flock. Thou art needful to the completeness of the company. If thou be not there, how shall the

Lord keep his word, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee"?

Further, our text declares that the people shall be gathered *unitedly*. There shall be a wonderful union among them: "I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." Oh that the Lord would in these days more fully and evidently carry out his promise in the happy unity of his visible church! Sinners hate each other while they wander in their different ways; but when the Lord brings them together by his grace, then love is born in their hearts. What enmities are cast out by the power of divine grace! When lusts are conquered, wars and fightings cease. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. It is grace which causes that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. I notice that sinners, when they are under conviction of sin, are not apt to quarrel with one another; and saints, when they behold the Saviour and rejoice in pardoning love, come together in holy love. In that visible community which stands for the Church of God—I mean the combined external organization of Christendom—there are many divisions and fierce heart-burnings; but in the real Church of God, that spiritual body which the Holy Spirit inhabits, these evils are buried. The truly spiritual are really one in heart. You may meet with a man from whom you differ in many respects, but if the life of God is in him and in yourself also, you will feel a kinship with him of the nearest kind. Often have I read books which have awakened in my soul a sense of true brotherhood with their authors, although I have known them to be of a church opposed to many of my own views. If they praise my divine Lord, if they speak of the inner life, and touch upon communion with God, and if they

do this with that unction and living power which are the tokens of the Holy Spirit, then my heart cleaves to them, be they who they may. Is it not so with you? When the Lord brings people to himself, he brings them to one another. Though depraved nature divides, and pride and self set men apart, yet the Lord overcomes these dividing elements by his renewing grace, and his divine word is accomplished—"I will put them together!" When the Lord puts us together, no man can put us asunder. What is wanted in the much-divided visible church of God is, that we should all come under the divine hand more fully, that we should all feel the touch of the divine life, and yield ourselves more completely to the teaching of the divine truth. Schemes of union are of small value; it is the spirit of union which is wanted. Our Lord Jesus prayed, "that they all may be one; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me;" and his prayer cannot fall to the ground. The church is one in Christ, and none can rend the seamless vesture. Yet more openly as the days pass on, the Lord will gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. (John xi. 52.)

This gathering together will be done *happily*: they are to be gathered "as the flock in the midst of their fold." God's gathering of his chosen is not to a place of barrenness and misery, but to a place of security and quietude, even to his appointed fold. The Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, maketh us to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth us beside the still waters. He folds his flock, and makes it to lie down in peace. He saith, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He gives us all things

richly to enjoy. O you that are wandering afar from God, there can be no rest for you until the Lord gathers you to the fold of which Jesus is the centre and the Shepherd. When you come to Jesus you shall find rest unto your souls, but not till then. "The peace of God that passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus," but by Christ Jesus only. Christians are not a miserable company of restless spirits; they are not a pack of dogs howling at one another, and smarting under the keeper's lash; but they are a flock feeding in happy communion, while Jesus in their midst finds for them a place where they may rest at noon. He so loves his own, and so reveals himself to his own, that they are a happy people, highly favored, and greatly honored. God hath blessed them, and they shall be blessed, let the world say what it will concerning them.

One more note must be made on this head: they shall be gathered *numerously*: "They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men." The Lord's camp is very great. If you have taken into your head the idea that the Lord has chosen for himself a very small company, and that in the end there will be only a few saved, dismiss the notion. The redeemed are a number that no man can number. Now, a man can count to a very great extent; and if the chosen are beyond the numbering of men, they are a multitude indeed. The prophet represents them as making a great noise by reason of their multitude; he alludes to "the busy hum of men," the buzz of the crowd as when the bees are swarming. As in a city there is an indescribable sound by reason of the multitude who are making traffic in it, so shall

there be a noise in the church of a great concourse of men. Conceive of the noise heard at Bozrah, in the sheep country of Edom, when all the flocks of the country were gathered together to be numbered for the purpose of tribute. Hearken to the indescribable noise of the bleating myriads. What a suggestion of the voices of the innumerable hosts of the redeemed when they shall finally be brought together, and shall all in fullest joy lift up their voices! If all the gathered-out company were to pray together, what a sound of supplication would go up by reason of the multitude of men! But when they all sing—what a sound shall that be! Do you wonder that John said, “I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as a voice of a great thunder”? It makes my eyes water to think of the incomparable armies of the redeemed gathered together in one place. Well might the prophet turn poet when he began to picture that countless flock, and speak of the “great noise by reason of the multitude of men”! I believe we shall not any one of us restrain our voices in that day when we shall meet together with our Lord at our head. I saw one stand up at the opening of this service to look around the Tabernacle, to see the multitude: and well he might, for it is a thing to do one’s eyes good to behold this vast assembly. But what shall be our joy when we shall stand up in the midst of the great company of the redeemed? We shall look far and wide, and see no end of the great gathering. When they begin to sing, how will our spirits bear the swell of that majestic psalmody? I know I shall find my best voice that day, when in the midst of the congregation of the faithful I shall sing praise unto the Lord my God. The

“great noise by reason of the multitude of men” sets forth the enthusiasm of the praise, and the immense number of the perfected ones who shall pour out their hearts before the throne. Thus I have set before you in a feeble way the gathering of the flock.

II. Follow me while, next, I speak of **THE CHAMPION SHEPHERD** clearing the way. “The breaker is come up before them.” In the tenth verse the Lord says to his people, “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted.” But we say to ourselves—How are they to depart from the place where they now are, and press forward to the pastures on the hill-tops of heaven? They are as sheep. How can they find their way? How can they face their foes? How can they break down barriers? A flock is but ill fitted to tramp over pathless deserts, infested by ferocious wolves. How shall the church attain to the abodes of the perfected? Long leagues of distance must be traversed, hills of guilt must be crossed, and nights of blackest darkness must be experienced. Ah, Lord God! how canst thou expect that this thy church, which is like a flock of sheep, should find its way through all difficulties and adversaries unto thyself? The answer to our fears is before us: “The breaker is come up before them.” That great Shepherd of the sheep, whose name is “The Through-breaker” or the “The Breaker-up,” makes a way for his people, yea, creates it by force of arms.

Between us and heaven once lay the tremendous Alps of sin. Not one of all the flock of God could climb those hills; all must perish who attempt to cross those awful barriers. The way to heaven was effectually blocked by these heaven-defying mountains, for no passes existed: even the eagle’s eye

could not discover a way. One sin might keep a man out of heaven; but the multitudes of our iniquities, the blackness, the aggravation, the repetition of our offences made the case hopeless to all human power or wisdom. I see those awful hills, and wonder how the flock of God can hope to reach eternal bliss with those in the way. Behold he comes, "The Breaker," before whom the mountains sink. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree; and by that bearing he put them all away." He took upon himself the whole load of his people's iniquities; he endured the entire weight of the crushing burden, and by his atoning death he cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea. The pass of the atonement is our clear way to glory. In the sepulchre of Jesus all our sins are buried. To as many as believe in Jesus Christ no sin remaineth.

"This Breaker once made sin to be,
Broke from the curse his people free.
He broke the power of death and hell,
And cleared the road for Israel."

"In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." The glorious Breaker, with his pierced hands, and nailed feet, and opened side, hath wrought a miracle of miracles by putting away sin through the sacrifice of himself. Jesus saith, "I am the way"; and the way he is the way which neither past nor present sin can effectually close. But, my brethren, if our sins were all forgiven us, there are other difficulties in the way; for we are without strength, and the depravity of our nature is not

readily to be overcome. Think of the hardness of our hearts, the waywardness of our wills, the blindness of our judgments, the readiness of our minds to yield to temptation! How can we force our way through such obstacles? Why, if the Lord would forgive me all my sin, and give me heaven on condition that I should find my way to it, mine would still be a hopeless case. Even the regenerate find that they have a hard struggle with the flesh; how can we win our way in the teeth of our fallen nature? Beloved, the Breaker has gone up before us. The Lord Jesus Christ assumed our nature, and was "tempted in all points like as we are"; he overcame the adversary at every point of the conflict, that through his victory we might be more than conquerors. He sends forth the Holy Spirit to renew us in the spirit of our minds; he takes the stony heart out of our flesh; he rules the will, he governs the affections, he enlightens the understanding, he sanctifies the soul; and thus, though weak in ourselves, we are made strong in him; so strong that we shall not perish in the wilderness, but shall pursue our pilgrimage till we cross the Jordan, and stand in our lot at the end of the days. Because the Breaker has gone up before us, we shall break through the ramparts of sinfulness, and cut our way to holiness and perfection.

Yet, even though this be so, that sin is forgiven and our corrupt nature overcome, still there is another difficulty: the prince of darkness has set himself to obstruct the way: he defies us to advance, he stands across the road, and swears that he will spill our souls. By no means let us be afraid, for the Breaker is gone up before us, and the enemy knows the force of his strong right hand. In the wilderness and in the gar-

den our Lord vanquished this great adversary, and therein gave us full assurance that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. We need not fear all the devils in hell : if by faith we have courage to resist them they will flee from us. We shall reach the haven of our rest, the heaven of our bliss. Our glorious Breaker with the mace of the cross has broken the head of leviathan, and made an open show of his adversaries. Thus was it spoken of our Lord at the gates of Eden concerning the old serpent—"Thou shalt bruise his heel": and now by his ascension to heaven he has done the deed, leading captivity captive.

"Gone up to God's co-equal Son,
With all his blood-stained garments on,
While seraphs sing his deathless fame,
And chant the Breaker's glorious name."

This brings us face to face with the last enemy. Death blocks the way to eternal life. Be of good courage, the Breaker has gone up before you in this matter also. Jesus died : the Ever-blessed bowed his head and yielded up the ghost. Harken yet again : he has risen from the dead ; he slept a while in the cold prison of the tomb, but he could not be holden with the bands of death, and therefore in due time he arose. He arose in newness of life, that all his own might also rise in him. Come, be not afraid to die, for you will travel a well-beaten track. Be not afraid to go down into the heart of the earth, for there your Emmanuel has slept. Nor will he suffer you to go by this dark road alone. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He will go down into this Egypt with you, and he will surely bring you up again. The Breaker goeth up before you.

But can I hope I shall ever enter the gates of heaven? Those gates of pearl whose mild, pure radiance chides my perturbed and guilty heart—can I hope to pass their portal? Can I hope to stand where all is absolutely perfect? I shrink in the presence of such matchless purity. But, brethren, the Breaker has gone up before us. He hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It will be safe for us to enter where he has gone: yea, we must enter; for where he is, there also shall his servants be. He will welcome each one of us with, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?” Adown those streets of pure gold like unto transparent glass we shall walk without fear, and up to that blazing throne of purest light we shall pass without dismay; for Jesus has gone up before us. Behold him!

“He is at the Father’s side,
The Man of Love, the Crucified.”

The way into the holiest is now made manifest. The Breaker has rent the veil from the top to the bottom, and given us free access to heaven itself.

But I must pause. Certainly my matter is not exhausted: time alone restrains.

III. Lastly, I have to show you for a minute or two THE FLOCK ADVANCING, their royal Breaker leading the way. As the Lord Jesus, in his death, resurrection, and ascension, has gone up before us, so by his grace we are led to follow him from grace to glory. “They go from strength to strength.” He saith to them, “Follow me”: they know his voice, and as his sheep they follow him.

Along the way which the great Champion clears we find the whole of the flock proceeding. “The

Breaker is come up before them," therefore they keep to his footprints. "They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out of it." Behold, my brethren, the vision of visions : the whole company of God's elect following their triumphant Leader! Do you see yonder the pillar of fire and cloud leading the way through the desert? Do you see the host of Israel in glorious order marching to their predestined inheritance? Such is the Church of God as it is seen by spiritual eyes. All down the centuries, in every land, they are marching along that appointed road which Jesus, the Breaker, has cleared for them. You and I, I hope, are in that goodly company: sometimes our following is lame and halting, but yet we are not turned out of the way. To whom else could we go if we were to lose our chosen Leader? Faint we may be, but pursuing we will be. Oh, that we could keep closer to the Breaker! Oh, that he would break our hearts with his love! Oh, that all our evil habits might be broken by his grace. We would follow our King whithersoever he goeth. Yes, we are in that company, I trust; and God grant we may never stray from it! No other road is prepared by a great Breaker as this road is prepared. This is the King's highway, and we will keep to it all our days.

Observe, that in the text the people of God are described as imitating their King; for it is written, "They have broken up." He is the Breaker; and are they breakers too? Yes, they also have broken up. Christ is the great warrior for his people; but not without conflict will any one of them be crowned. It is so arranged in the wisdom of God, that everything is so done for us as not to drive us into inaction,

but to draw us into holy diligence. Christ's warfare is repeated in his saints in their measure. The crown is of grace ; but we must run for it. Christ has conquered sin, and we have to overcome through faith in him. He has subdued the adversary, but we also shall have to wrestle with spiritual wickednesses. "They have broken up." Herein is condescending love. Christ might have saved us, and there might have been nothing for us to do ; but to display his grace, he intends to conform us to himself, in conflict and in crown, in breaking up, and in going forth, and in entering in. He makes us know the fellowship of his sufferings. Come, brethren and sisters, let us ask God to fulfil in us the words of the text, "They have broken up." Let us be resolved to break down all sin. Let us be determined to overcome through the blood of the Lamb. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. If we have it, let us use it to good purpose this day.

Notice that as these people were led on by the Breaker: they persevered in following him. "They have broken up: they have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." They did a little at a time; they advanced step by step; they stopped at nothing, but went onward and upward. So do saints go from grace to grace, from faith to greater faith. Note the sentences: "they have broken up, they have passed through the gate, and have gone out by it": this looks as if they did it slowly but surely, gradually but grandly. So, when the grace of God enters into the heart, and we, the sheep of God, are made to follow him, we are attentive to detail, and notice each part of our obedience. You cannot in grace, any more than in anything else, do a great deal at once, and do it effectually. I find

that advance in grace, if it be supposititious, can be rapid; but if it be real it requires patience. Our Lord gives us line upon line, precept upon precept: here a little, and there a little. Let us be sure, even if we be slow.

But now I would have you dwell upon the fact that they are marching under royal leadership: "Their King shall pass before them." Christ is always at the head of his own church. Why? because he loves it so that he cannot be away from it. He is at the head of his own flock because he has purchased it with his own blood. He will not send an angel to lead his chosen, but he himself will watch over the objects of his everlasting love. He knows the necessities of his church to be such as he, and only he, can meet: therefore as the King he always remains at their head. Brethren, let us always reverence, honor, and obey him. Our active, present King must be loyally and earnestly served. As Breaker he did us service; as King we must render him service. Remember how the Psalmist put it to the chosen bride: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." As a church, we know no other head; as the people of his pasture, we know no other leader. Let us follow him boldly and gladly.

Let us give him praise this day; yea, let us worship and adore him, for he is Jehovah. He who is at our head is Lord: in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Is it not written, "The Lord shall go before thee"? Let us rejoice because the Lord is our King, and he will save us. Do you ever fear that the cause of truth and righteousness will fail? Shake this dust from off thee. Banish such a thought. If Jehovah leads the van, who shall stand against him? If Jesus Christ, once the man of sorrows, but now the

King of kings, is to the fore, he will reckon with our adversaries, and make short work of their boastings. Wherefore, follow quietly and unquestioningly as sheep follow the shepherd, and your way shall be prosperous. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge: wherefore comfort one another with these words.

I cannot express the joy I feel in the belief that I am one of the company which is following the Breaker's lead; but my sorrow is that some of you are not of his flock. Oh, that you may belong to those of whom he says, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." Oh, that he may bring you in speedily! Do you feel a desire towards Christ this morning? Have you any longings to be reconciled to God by him? Then you may freely come, with the confident assurance that him that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out. He invites you to his cross, yea, to himself. Obey the gentle impulse which is now stirring your bosom. Jesus has come on purpose to seek and to save the lost: you are lost; therefore pray that he may save you.

Should the enemy of all good tell you that if you should believe, yet you would never hold out to the end, remind him that the Breaker has gone up before his people, and their King at the head of them, and therefore you are not afraid of meeting anything upon the road which can beat you back from hope and heaven. Join the army which marches under our victorious Joshua, and through sin, and hell, and death, the Breaker will clear your way. To him be praise for ever and ever! Amen.

IV.

JESUS DECLINING THE LEGIONS.

March 27, 1887.

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be.”
—*Matthew* xxvi. 53, 54.

It is the garden of Gethsemane. Here stands our Lord, and yonder is the betrayer. He is foremost of the multitude. You know his face, the face of that son of perdition, even Judas Iscariot. He comes forward, leaving the men with the staves, and the swords, and the torches, and lanterns, and he proceeds to kiss his Master; it is the token by which the officers are to know their victim. You perceive at once that the disciples are excited: one of them cries, “Lord, shall we smite with the sword?” Their love to their Master has overcome their prudence. There are but eleven of them, a small band to fight against the cohort sent by the authorities to arrest their Master; but love makes no reckoning of odds. Before an answer can be given, Peter has struck the first blow, and the servant of the high-priest has narrowly escaped having his head cleft in twain; as it is, his ear is cut off.

One is not altogether surprised at Peter's act; for, in addition to his headlong zeal, he had most likely misunderstood the saying of his Lord at supper—“He

that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." There was not time for our Lord to explain, and they were so accustomed to his concrete style of speech, that they should not have misunderstood him; but they did so. He had simply told them that the days of peace, in which they could go in and out among the people, and be joyfully received by them, had now come to an end; for as he himself, who had once been in favor with all the people, would now be "reckoned among the transgressors," (see Luke xxii. 35-38)—so would they be counted among the offscouring of all things. Now they could no longer reckon on the hospitality of a friendly people, but must carry their own purse and scrip; and instead of feeling safe, wherever they went, they must understand that they were in an enemy's country, and must travel through the world like men armed for self-defence. They were now to use their own substance, and not to hope for cheerful entertainment among a grateful people; and they would need to be on their guard against those who in killing them would think that they were doing God service. They took this language literally, and therefore replied, "Lord, behold, here two swords." Methinks he must have smiled sadly at their blunder as he answered, "It is enough." He could never have thought of their fighting that he might not be delivered unto the Jews, since for that purpose two swords were simply ridiculous. They had missed his meaning, which was simply to warn them of the changed circumstances of his cause: but they caught at the words which he had used, and exhibited their two swords. Possibly, as some have supposed, these were two long sacrificial knives with which they had killed the Paschal lamb; but, indeed, the wearing of weap-

ons is much more general in the East than with us. Our Lord's disciples were largely Galileans, and as the Galileans were more of a fighting sort than other Jews, the wearing of swords was probably very general among them. However, two of the apostles had swords; not that they were fighting men, but probably because it was the fashion of their country, and they had thought it needful to wear them when passing through a dangerous district. At any rate, Peter had a sword, and instantly used it. He smites the first man he could reach. I wonder he had not smitten Judas, one might have excused him if he had; but it is a servant of the high-priest who bears the blow and loses his ear.

Then the Saviour comes forward in all his gentleness, as self-possessed as when he was at supper, as calm as if he had not already passed through an agony. Quietly he says, "Suffer it to be so now"; he touches the ear, and heals it, and in the lull which followed, when even the men that came to seize him were spell-bound by this wondrous miracle of mercy, he propounds the great truth, that they that take the sword shall perish with the sword, and bids Peter put up his weapon. Then he utters these memorable words: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And he also said what John alone appears to have heard—"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.)

The wound of Malchus served a gracious purpose; for it enabled our Lord to work a new miracle, the like of which he had never wrought before, namely, the

restoration of a member maimed or cut off by violence. The blunder of the apostles was also overruled to answer a very instructive purpose. You wonder that the Lord should, even in appearance, encourage his disciples to have swords, and then forbid them to use them. Follow me in a thought which is clear to my own mind. For a man to abstain from using force when he has none to use is no great virtue: it reminds one of the lines of Cowper's ballad:—

“Stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright.”

But for a man to have force ready to his hand, and then to abstain from using it, is a case of self-restraint and possibly of self-sacrifice, of a far nobler kind. Our Saviour had his sword at his side that night, though he did not use it. “What!” say you, “how can that be true?” Our Lord says, “Can I not now pray to my Father, and he will give me twelve legions of angels?” Our Lord had thus the means of self-defence; something far more powerful than a sword hung at his girdle; but he refused to employ the power within his reach. His servants could not bear this test; they had no self-restraint, the hand of Peter is on his sword at once. The failure of the servants in this matter seems to me to illustrate the grand self-possession of their Master. “Alas,” he seems to say, “you cannot be trusted even with swords, much less could you be entrusted with greater forces. If you had the angelic bands at your command, down they would come streaming from the sky to execute works of vengeance, and so mar my great life-work of love.” Brethren, we are better without swords and other forms of force than with them; for we have not yet

learned, like our Lord, to control ourselves. Admire the glorious self-restraint of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, armed not with a sword but with the embattled hosts of "helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim," yet refused even by a prayer to bring them down to his relief. Peter's passionate use of the sword illustrates the happy self-control of his Lord, and this is the use of the incident.

Let us now proceed to learn from the words of the Lord Jesus which we have selected as our text.

I. First, brethren. I would have you notice from the text OUR LORD'S GRAND RESOURCE. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father?" Our Lord is surrounded by his adversaries, and there are none about him powerful enough to defend him from their malice; what can he do? He says, "I can pray to my Father." This is our Lord's continual resource in the time of danger; yea, even in that time of which he said, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." He can even now pray to his Father.

First, Jesus had no possessions on earth, but *he had a Father*. I rejoice in his saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father?" He is a betrayed man; he is given up into the hands of those who thirst for his blood; but he has a Father almighty and divine. If our Lord had merely meant to say that God could deliver him, he might have said, "Thinkest thou not that I can pray to Jehovah?" or, "to God": but he uses the sweet expression "my Father," both here and in that text in John, where he says, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" O brethren, remember that we have a Father in heaven. When all is gone and spent, we can say, "Our Father." Relatives are dead, but our Father lives. Supposed

friends have left us, even as the swallows quit our wintry weather; but we are not alone, for the Father is with us. Cling to that blessed text, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you." In every moment of distress, anxiety, perplexity, we have a Father in whose wisdom, truth, and power, we can rely. Your dear children do not trouble themselves much, do they? If they have a want, they go to father; if they are puzzled, they ask father; if they are ill-treated, they appeal to father. If but a thorn is in their finger, they run to mother for relief. Be it little or great, the child's sorrow is the parent's care. This makes a child's life easy: it would make ours easy if we would but act as children towards God. Let us imitate the Elder Brother, and when we, too, are in our Gethsemane, let us, as he did, continue to cry, "My Father, My Father." This is a better defence than shield or sword.

Our Lord's resource was to approach his Father with prevailing prayer. "Can I not now pray to my Father?" Our Lord Jesus could use that marvellous weapon of All-prayer, which is shield, and sword, and spear, and helmet, and breast-plate, all in one. When you can do nothing else you can pray. If you can do many things besides, it will still be your wisdom to say, "Let us pray!" But I think I hear you object, that our Lord had been praying, and yet his griefs were not removed. He had prayed himself into a bloody sweat with prayer, and yet he was left unprotected, to fall into his enemies' hands. This is true, and yet it is not all the truth; for he had been strengthened, and power for deliverance was at his disposal. He had only to press his suit to be rescued at once. The Greek word here is not the same word which would set forth ordinary

prayer: the Revised Version puts it, "Thinkest thou that I cannot *beseech* my Father?" We make a great mistake if we throw all prayer into one category, and think that every form of true prayer is alike. We may pray and plead, and even do this with extreme earnestness, and yet we may not use that mode of beseeching which would surely bring the blessing. Hitherto our Lord had prayed, and prayed intensely, too; but there was yet a higher form of prayer to which he might have mounted if it had been proper so to do. He could so have besought that the Father must have answered; but he would not. O brethren, you have prayed a great deal, perhaps about your trouble, but there is a reserved force of beseeching in you yet: by the aid of the Spirit of God you may pray after a higher and more prevailing rate. This is a far better weapon than a sword. I was speaking to a brother yesterday about a prayer which my Lord had remarkably answered in my own case, and I could not help saying to him, "But I cannot always pray in that fashion. Not only can I not so pray, but I would not dare to do so, even if I could." Moved by the Spirit of God, we sometimes pray with a power of faith which can never fail at the mercy-seat; but without such an impulse we must not push our own wills to the front. There are many occasions upon which, if one had all the faith which could move mountains, he would most wisely show it by saying nothing beyond, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Had our Lord chosen to do so, he had still in reserve a prayer-power which would have effectually saved him from his enemies. He did not think it right so to use it; but he could have done so had he pleased.

Notice, that our Lord, *felt that he could even then pray.*

Matters had not gone too far for prayer. When can they do so? The word "now" practically occurs twice in our version, for we get it first as "now" and then as "presently." It occurs only once in the original; but as its exact position in the verse cannot easily be decided, our translators, with a singular wisdom, have placed it in both the former and the latter part of the sentence. Our Saviour certainly meant—"I am come now to extremities; the people are far away whose favor formerly protected me from the Pharisees; and I am about to be seized by armed men; but even now I can pray to my Father." Prayer is an ever open door. There is no predicament in which we cannot pray. If we follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth we can now pray effectually unto our Father, even as he could have done. Do I hear you say, "The fatal hour is near"? You may now pray. "But the danger is imminent!" You may now pray. If, like Jehah, you are at the bottom of the mountains, and the weeds are wrapped about your head, you may even now pray. Prayer is a weapon that is usable in every position in the hour of conflict. The Greeks had long spears, and these were of grand service to the phalanx so long as the rank was not broken; but the Romans used a short sword, and that was a far more effectual weapon at close quarters. Prayer is both the long spear and the short sword. Yes, brother, between the jaws of the lion you may even now pray. We glory in our blessed Master, that he knew in fulness of faith that if he would bring forth his full power of prayer he could set all heaven on the wing. As soon as his beseeching prayer had reached the Father's ear, immediately, like flames of fire, angels would flash death upon his adversaries.

Our Lord's resort was not to the carnal weapon, but to the mighty engine of supplication. Behold, my brethren, where our grand resort must always be. Look not to the arm of flesh, but to the Lord our God. Church of God, look not piteously to the State, but fly to the mercy-seat. Church of God, look not to the ministry, but resort to the throne of grace. Church of God, depend not upon learned or moneyed men, but beseech God in supplicating faith. Prayer is the tower of David, builded for an armory. Prayer is our battle-axe and weapons of war. We say to our antagonist: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father." Let this suffice to display our Saviour's grand resource in the night of his direst distress.

II. Secondly, let me invite your attention to OUR LORD'S UNDIMINISHED POWER IN HEAVEN at the time when he seemed to have no power on earth. He says, when about to be bound and taken away to Caiaphas, "I can presently call down twelve legions of angels from the skies." He had influence in heaven with the Father, the great Lord of angels. He could have of the Father, all that the Father possessed. Heaven would be emptied if needful to satisfy the wish of the Beloved Son. The man Christ Jesus who is about to be hung upon the cross has such power with the Father that he has but to ask and to have. The Father would answer him at once: "He shall *presently* send me twelve legions of angels." There would be no delay, no hesitation. The Father was ready to help him, waiting to deliver him. All heaven was concerned about him. All the angelic bands were waiting on the wing, and Jesus had but to express the desire, and instantaneously the garden of Gethsemane would have

been as populous with shining ones as the New Jerusalem itself.

Our Lord speaks of angels that his Father would give him, or send him. We may interpret it that the Father would at once put at his disposal the glorious inhabitants of heaven. Think of seraphs at the disposal of the Man of Sorrows! He is despised and rejected of men, and yet angels that excel in strength are at his beck and call. Swift of wing, and quick of hand, and wise of thought, they are charmed to be the messengers of the Son of Man, the servitors of Jesus. Think of this, beloved, when you bow before the thorn-crowned head, and when you gaze upon the nailed hands and feet. Remember that angels and principalities and powers, and all the ranks of pure spirits, by whatsoever name they are named, were all at the beck of Jesus when he was newly risen from his agony, and was about to be led away bound, to the High-priest. He is our Lord and God, even at his lowest and weakest.

Jesus speaks of "twelve legions." I suppose he mentions the number twelve as a legion for each one of the eleven disciples and for himself. They were only twelve, and yet the innumerable hosts of heaven would make forced marches for their rescue. A legion in the Roman army was six thousand men at the very lowest. Twelve times six thousand angels would come in answer to a wish from Jesus. Nay, he says "more" than twelve legions. There can be no limit to the available resources of the Christ of God. Thousands of thousands would fill the air if Jesus willed it. The band that Judas led would be an insignificant squad to be swallowed up at once if the Saviour would but summon his allies. Behold, dear

brethren, the glory of our betrayed and arrested Lord. If he was such then, what is he now, when all power is given him of his Father! Bear in your minds the clear idea that Jesus in his humiliation was nevertheless Lord of all things, and especially of the unseen world, and of the armies which people it. The more clearly you perceive this, the more you will admire the all-conquering, all-abjuring love which took him to the death of the cross.

Tarry here just a minute to recollect that the angels also are, according to your measure and degree, at your call. You have but to pray to God, and angels shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone. We do not think enough of these heavenly beings; yet are they all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation. Like Elijah's servant, if your eyes were opened you would see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of God. Let us learn from our Master to reckon upon forces invisible. Let us not trust in that which is seen of the eye, and heard of the ear; but let us have respect to spiritual agencies which evade the senses, but are known to faith. Angels play a far greater part in the affairs of providence than we wot of. God can raise up friends on earth, and if he does not do so he can find us abler friends in heaven. There is no need to pluck out the sword with which to cut off men's ears; for infinitely better agencies will work for us. Have faith in God, and all things shall work for your good. The angels of God think it an honor and a delight to protect the least of his children.

III. But I cannot linger, although I feel a great temptation to do so. My text is full of teaching, but

a main point is the third one—OUR LORD'S PERFECT WILLINGNESS IN SUFFERING. I hope I have already brought that before you. Our Lord would be betrayed into the hands of sinners, but he would go with them willingly. He had not shunned the garden though Judas knew the place. No part of our Lord's sufferings came upon him by the necessity of his nature. Neither as God nor as sinless man was he bound to suffer. There was no necessity that Christ should endure any of the inflictions laid upon him, except the necessity of his fulfilling the Scriptures, and performing the work of mercy which he came to do. He must die because he became the great sacrifice for sin; but apart from that, no necessity of death was on him. They scourged him; but they could not have lifted the thong if he had not permitted it. He thirsted on the cruel tree; but all the springs of water in the world he makes and fills, and therefore he needed not to have thirsted if he had not chosen to submit thereto. When he died, he did not die through the failure of his natural strength; he died because he had surrendered himself to death as our great Propitiation. Even in his expiring moment our Lord cried with a loud voice, to show that his life was in him still. He "gave up the ghost," freely parting with a life which he might have retained. He voluntarily surrendered his spirit to God. It was not snatched from him by a force superior to his own will; he willingly bore our sins, and willingly died as our Substitute. Let us love and bless the willing Sufferer.

Indeed, our Lord was not merely submissive to the divine will, but, if I may use words in a paradoxical manner, I would say that he was actively submissive. A single prayer would have brought our Lord deliv-

erance from his enemies; but he exercised force upon himself, and held in his natural impulse to beseech the Father. He held in abeyance that noblest of spiritual gifts, that choicest of all forms of power—the power of prayer. One would have thought that a good man might always exercise prayer to the full of his bent, and yet Jesus laid his hand upon his prayer-power as if it had been a sword, and he put it back into its sheath. “He saved others, himself he could not save.” He prayed for others; but, in this instance, for himself he would not pray, as he might have done. He would do nothing, even though it were to pray a prayer which even in the slightest degree would oppose the will of the Father. He was so perfectly submissive, yea, so eager to accomplish our salvation, that he would not pray to avoid the cruelty of his enemies and the bitterness of death. He sees it is the Father’s will, and therefore he will not have a wish in opposition to it. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Remember, that he needed not to commit any wrong thing to prevent his being taken and slain: a good thing, namely, a prayer, would do it; but he will not pray; he has undertaken the work of redemption, and he must and will go through with it. He has such a desire for your salvation and for mine, such a thirst to honor and glorify his Father in the work which he had engaged to do, that he will not even prevent his sufferings by a prayer.

Wonderful is that question, “How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?” It is as much as to say, “Who else can drink that cup? Who else can tread the wine-press of Almighty wrath? No, I must do it. I cannot lay this load upon any other shoulders.”

Therefore, for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame. He was willing, ay, willing from beginning to end, to be our suffering Saviour. He was willing to be born at Bethlehem, to work at Nazareth, to be mocked at Jerusalem, and at last to die at Calvary. At any one point he could have drawn back. No constraint was upon him but that of a love stronger than death.

I want you, dear hearers, to draw the inference that Jesus is willing to save. A willing Sufferer must be a willing Saviour. If he willingly died, he must with equal willingness be ready to give to us the fruit of his death. If any of you would have Jesus, you may surely have him at once. He freely delivered himself up for us all. If he was so willing to become a sacrifice, how willing must he be that the glorious result of his sacrifice should be shared in by you, and by all who come to God by him! If there be unwillingness anywhere, you are unwilling. He rejoices to be gracious. I wish the charm of this truth would affect your heart as it does mine. I love him greatly, because I see that at any moment he might have drawn back from redeeming me, and yet he would not. A single prayer would have set him free; but he would not pray it, for he loved us so!

"This was compassion like a God,
 That when the Saviour knew
 The price of pardon was his blood
 His pity ne'er withdrew."

Do not grieve him by thinking that he is unwilling to forgive, that he is unwilling to receive a sinner such as you. Has he not said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? You will delight him if you come to him, whoever you may be. If

you will but draw near to him by simple trust, he will see in you the purchase of his agony; and all the merit of his death shall flow out freely to you. Come and welcome, sinner. come.

IV. Now I must lead you, with great brevity, to notice OUR LORD'S GREAT RESPECT FOR HOLY SCRIPTURE. He can have twelve legions of angels, but "how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Notice, that our Lord believed in *the divinity of Scripture*. He says, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" But if the Scriptures are only the writings of men, there is no necessity that they should be fulfilled. If they are merely the fallible utterances of good men, I see no particular necessity that they should be fulfilled. Our Lord Jesus Christ insisted upon it that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, and the reason was, that they are not the word of man, but the Word of God. The Scriptures were evidently the Word of God to our Lord Jesus Christ. He never trifles with them, nor differs from them, nor predicts that they will vanish away. It is he that saith, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

He believed in the divine origin of the Scriptures and also in *their infallibility*. "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" He does not hint that the Scriptures might be a little mistaken. He does not argue, "I will bring the twelve legions of angels down to deliver myself, and it is no matter to me that then the Scriptures will be made void." Oh, no! the Scriptures must be true,

and they must be fulfilled, and therefore he must be betrayed into the hands of men. He settles it as a matter of necessity that Scripture must infallibly be verified, even to its jots and tittles.

See, brethren, *the priceless worth* of Scripture in the estimation of our Lord. In effect he says, "I will die rather than any Scripture shall be unfulfilled. I will go to the cross rather than any one word of God should not be carried out." The prophet Zechariah has written, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." The fulfilment of that prophecy fell due that night, and the Son of God was prepared to be smitten as the Shepherd of the sheep, rather than the word of the Father should fall to the ground. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" but Jesus would give his life for the Scriptures. Brethren, it were worth while for the whole church to die rather than any truth of Scripture should be given up. Let all our thousands be consumed upon the altar as one great holocaust sooner than the Scriptures should be dishonored. The Word of the Lord must live and prevail, whether we die or not. Our Lord teaches us to prize it beyond liberty or life.

The force of our Lord's language goes further yet. Let me repeat the words and then enlarge upon them. "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Holy Scripture is the transcript of the secret decree of God. We do not believe in fate, a blind, hard thing; but we believe in predestination, the settled purpose of a wise and loving Father. The Book of Fate is cruel reading, but the book of divine Fore-

ordination is full of charming sentences, and these lines out of it which are written in the Scriptures we joyfully choose to have fulfilled. It is the will of our Father who is in heaven which settles the things which must be; and because of this we cheerfully yield ourselves up to predestination. Once being assured that God has appointed it, we have no struggles, nay, we will not even breathe a wish to have the matter otherwise. Let the will of the Father be the supreme law. It ought to be so. We find a depth of comfort in saying, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Now, the prophecies of Scripture were to the Lord Christ the revelation of the predestination of God that so it must be, and he cheerfully, joyfully, even without a prayer against it, gives himself up at once to that which must be, because God has appointed it. If any of you do not believe in the predestination of God, you will, probably, in some hour of depression, ascribe your sorrows to a cruel fate. The human mind, somehow or other, is driven at last to this decision, that some things are beyond the control of man and of his will, and that these are fixed by necessity. How much better to see that God has fixed them! There is the wheel revolving surely and unalterably; would it not comfort you to believe that it is full of eyes, and that it is moving according to the settled purpose of the Lord? That man who says, "It is my Father's will," is the happy man. Predestination is as sure and as certain as fate; but there is at the back of it a living and loving personality, ordering all things. To this we cheerfully yield ourselves.

Beloved, let us value Scripture as much as Christ did; I was going to say, let us value it even more; for if our Lord valued unfulfilled Scripture—which was but

a shell till he became its kernel—how much more should we value it, to whom the Scriptures are fulfilled in a large degree, because the Christ has suffered and has done even as it was written of him by the prophets of God!

Time flies so quickly that I must pass on. You perceive that I have a pregnant text; it is full of living instruction to those who desire to learn. God help us to receive with joy all its holy teaching!

V. But I must come to the last point. We will consider OUR LORD'S LESSONS TO EACH ONE OF US in this text.

The first lesson is this: Desire no other forces for God's work than God himself ordains to use. Do not desire that the Government should come to your rescue to support your church. Do not desire that the charms of eloquence should be given to ministers, that they may therewith command listening ears, and so maintain the faith by the wisdom of words. Do not ask that learning and rank and prestige may come upon the side of Christianity, and so religion may become respectable and influential. Means that God has not chosen to use should not be looked upon by us with covetous eyes. Has he not said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts"? Jesus has all those squadrons of angels at his disposal; do you not wish that he would use them? What a glorious vision is before us as we see their serried ranks and mark their glittering splendor! But Jesus bids them stand still and see the salvation of God wrought out without their interposition. To them he has not put in subjection the new world. They must not meddle with the redemption of men. The conflict for truth is to be a spiritual battle between man and the serpent: nothing but spiritual force is to be employed, and that

not by angels, but by men. Man must overcome sin by spiritual means only. Put up the sword, Peter! Jesus does not want its keen edge. Keep your swords in your sheaths, ye seraphim! Jesus does not want even your blades of celestial temper. His weakness has done more than human or angelic strength. His suffering and death have done the deed which all the hierarchy of angels could never have accomplished. The truth is to win the fight. The Spirit is to subdue the powers of evil. Brethren, do not ask anybody else to interfere. Let us have this fight out on the ground which God has chosen. Let us know that God is omnipotent in the realm of mind, and by his truth and Spirit he will overcome. He holds back all forces other than those of argument, and suasion, and enlightenment by his Spirit: do not let us even wish to put our hand to any force other than he ordains to use.

And, next, take care that when other forces are within reach, you do not use them for the promotion of the heavenly kingdom. When you are in argument for the truth, do not grow angry; for this would be to fight the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons. Do not wish to oppress a person whose views are erroneous or even blasphemous. The use of bribes for the propagation of opinions is mean, and the refusal of charities to those who differ from us in sentiment is detestable. Let no threat escape your lip, nor bribe pollute your hand. It is not thus that the battles of truth are to be fought. If you ever feel inclined to shut a man's mouth by wishing him banishment, or sickness, or any sort of ill, be grieved with yourself that so unchristly a thought should have entered your head. Desire only good for the most perverse of men. Fighting for Christ would be wounding him sorely.

The French king heard of the cruelties perpetrated upon our Lord, and he exclaimed, "Oh, if I had been there with a troop of my guards, I should have cut the villains in pieces!" Yes, but Jesus did not want the King of France nor his guards: he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The Lord Jesus desires you, my brethren, to fight for him in your faith, in your holy life, by your confidence in truth, by your reliance upon the Spirit of God; but whenever your hand begins to itch for the sword-hilt, then you may hear him say, "Put up thy sword into its sheath." He will conquer by love, and by love alone. If at this present moment I could take this church and endow it with all the wealth of the Establishment, and gather into the midst all the wisdom and talent and eloquence which now adorns society, and if I could do this by one single prayer, I should long hesitate to offer the petition. These might prove idols, and provoke the living God to jealousy. Infinitely better for us to be poor and weak and devoid of that which is highly esteemed among men, and then to be baptized into the Holy Ghost, than to become strong and be left of our God. We shall war this warfare with no unsanctified weapons, with no instrument other than God appoints. Speaking the truth in the power of the Spirit of God, we are not afraid of the result. Surely this is what Christ means: "I could pray to my Father and receive at once a body-guard of angels, but I will do nothing of the kind, for by other means than these must my kingdom come."

And the next lesson is: Never attempt to escape suffering at the expense of truth: "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" says Christ: "I can escape being taken, and bound, and made a felon of ;

but then how are the Scriptures to be fulfilled? Would you like to be throughout life screened from all affliction? I think I hear a great many say, "I should." Would you? Would you be always free from sickness, poverty, care, bereavement, slander, persecution? How, then, could that word be true, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction"! What would that text mean, "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not"? Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." Are you to be an exception to the rule? Oh, do not kick against suffering, for in so doing you may be fighting against God. When Peter drew his sword he was unconsciously fighting to prevent our redemption. When we struggle against tribulation or persecution we may be warring against untold benefit. Do you desire to ride through the world like princes? Do not desire such a dangerous fate; for how then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that the disciple is not above his Lord? Bow your spirit before the majesty of Scripture, and patiently endure all things for the elect's sake.

Again, never tremble when force is on the wrong side. You see they are coming, Pharisees and priests and the *prose comitatus* sent by the authorities to arrest the Saviour; but he is not afraid. Why should he be? He could command twelve legions of angels to beat off the foe. The man who knows he has a reserve behind him may walk into an ambush without fear. The multitude think that there stands before them a mere man, a feeble man, strangely red as with bloody sweat. Ah! they know neither him nor his Father. Let him give a whistle, and from behind the olives of the grove, and from the walls of the garden,

and from every stone of the Mount of Olives would spring up warriors mightier than those of Cæsar, valiant ones, before whom armies would be consumed. One of these mighties of God slew of Sennacherib's army one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in a single night; another smote all the first-born of Egypt. Think, then, what more than twelve legions of them could accomplish! Brethren, all these holy, heavenly beings are on our side. "Oh, but there are so many against us!" Yes, I know there are; but more are they that are for us. All the myriads of heaven are our allies. See ye not the legions waiting for the summons? Who wants to give the word of command until our great Commander-in-chief decides that the hour is come? Let us patiently wait till he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; then will the reserves pour forth from heaven's gate, and all the holy angels shall swell the pomp of the great appearing. Till that moment, wait! In your patience possess ye your souls! The Lord Jesus waited; his angels waited; his Father waited. They are all still waiting. Heaven's long-suffering still runs like a silver thread through the centuries. Jesus will come with his angels in all the glory of the Father; but dream not that he must come to-morrow or else be charged with being slack concerning his promise. Desire that he may come in your lifetime, and look out for him; but if he tarrieth be not dismayed. If he tarry for another century do not be weary; if another thousand years should intervene between us and the bright millennial day, yet stand ye fast each man in his place, fearing nothing, but setting up your banners in the name of the Lord.

“The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” We have no lack of strength, it is only that God wills that it be not put forth, and that our weakness for the present should be the instrument of his most majestic conquests. Lord, we are content to trust in thee and wait patiently for thee; but leave us not, we beseech thee. **Amen.**

V.

ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH.

April 3, 1887.

“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”—*John* xix. 31—37.

CRIMINALS who were crucified by the Romans were allowed to rot upon the cross. That cruel nation can hardly be so severely condemned as our own people, who up to a late period allowed the bodies of those condemned to die to hang in chains upon gibbets in conspicuous places. The horrible practice is now abandoned, but it was retained to a time almost, if not quite, within living memory. I wonder whether any aged person here remembers such a horrible spectacle. Among the Romans it was usual, for there are classical allusions to this horror, showing that the bodies of persons crucified were usually left to be devoured by ravenous birds. Probably out of deference to the cus-

toms of the Jews, the authorities in Palestine would sooner or later allow of the interment of the crucified; but they would by no means hasten it, since they would not feel such a disgust at the sight as an Israelite would. The Mosaic law, which you will find in the Book of Deuteronomy, runs as follows:—"If thou hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day" (Deuteronomy xxi. 22, 23). This alone would lead the Jews to desire the burial of the executed; but there was a further reason. Lest the land should be defiled upon the holy Sabbath of the pass-over, the chief-priests were importunate that the bodies of the crucified should be buried, and therefore that their deaths should be hastened by the breaking of their legs. Their consciences were not wounded by the murder of Jesus, but they were greatly moved by the fear of ceremonial pollution. Religious scruples may live in a dead conscience. Alas! this is not the only proof of that fact: we could find many in our own day.

The Jews hurried to Pilate, and sought as a boon the merciless act of having the legs of the crucified dashed to pieces with an iron bar. That act was sometimes-performed upon the condemned as an additional punishment; but in this instance it was meant to be a finishing stroke, hastening death by the terrible pain which it would cause, and the shock to the system which it would occasion. Ferocious hate of our Lord made his enemies forgetful of everything like humanity: doubtless the more of pain and shame which they could cause him the better would they be pleased. Not, however, out of cruelty, but out of regard to the ceremonials of their religion, they "besought Pilate

that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." I have already told you that this breaking of the bones of the crucified was a Roman custom; and of this we have evidence, since there is a Latin word *crucifragium*, to express this barbarous act. Pilate had no hesitation in granting the desire of the Jews: what would he care about the dead body, since he had already delivered up the living man?

Soldiers go at once to perform the hideous operation, and they commence with the two malefactors. It is a striking fact that the penitent thief, although he was to be in Paradise with his Lord that day, was not, therefore, delivered from the excruciating agony occasioned by the breaking of his legs. We are saved from eternal misery, not from temporary pain. Our Saviour, by our salvation, gives no pledge to us that we shall be screened from suffering in this life. It is true, as the proverb hath it, "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the clean, and to the unclean." Accidents and diseases afflict the godly as well as the ungodly. Penitent or impenitent, we share the common lot of men, and are born to troubles as the sparks fly upward. You must not expect because you are pardoned, even if you have the assurance of it from Christ's own lips, that, therefore, you shall escape tribulation; nay, but from his gracious mouth you have the forewarning assurance that trial shall befall you; for Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." Suffering is not averted, but it is turned into a blessing. The penitent thief entered into Paradise that very day, but it was not without suffering; say, rather, that the terrible stroke was the actual means

of the prompt fulfilment of his Lord's promise to him. By that blow he died that day; else might he have lingered long. How much we may any of us receive by the way of suffering it were hard to guess: mayhap, the promise that we shall be with our Lord in Paradise will be fulfilled in that way.

At this point it seemed more than probable that our blessed Lord must undergo the breaking of his bones; but "he was dead already." It had pleased him, in the infinite willinghood with which he went to his sacrifice, to yield up his life, and his spirit had therefore departed. Yet one might have feared that the coarse soldiers would have performed their orders to the letter. See, they do not so! Had they conceived a dread of one around whom such prodigies had gathered? Were they, like their centurion, impressed with awe of this remarkable personage? At any rate, perceiving that he was dead already, they did not use their hammer. Happy are we to see them cease from such loathsome brutality. But we may not be too glad; for another outrage will take its place: to make sure that he was dead, one of the four soldiers with a spear pierced his side, probably thrusting his lance quite through the heart. Here we see how our gracious God ordained in his providence that there should be sure evidence that Jesus was dead, and that therefore the sacrifice was slain. Paul declares this to be the gospel, that the Lord Jesus died according to the Scriptures. Strange to say, there have been heretics who have ventured to assert that Jesus did not actually die. They stand refuted by this spear-thrust. If our Lord did not die, then no sacrifice has been presented, the resurrection is not a fact, and there is no foundation of hope for men. Our Lord assuredly died, and was

buried: the Roman soldiers were keen judges in such matters, and they saw that "he was dead already," and, moreover, their spears were not used in vain when they meant to make death a certainty.

When the side of Christ was pierced, there flowed thereout blood and water, upon which a great deal has been said by those who think it proper to dilate upon such tender themes. It was supposed by some that by death the blood was divided, the clots parting from the water in which they float, and that in a perfectly natural way. But it is not true that blood would flow from a dead body if it were pierced. Only under certain very special conditions would blood gush forth. The flowing of this blood from the side of our Lord cannot be considered as a common occurrence: it was a fact entirely by itself. We cannot argue from any known fact in this case, for we are here in a new region. Granted, that blood would not flow from an ordinary dead body; yet remember, that our Lord's body was unique, since it saw no corruption. Whatever change might come over a body liable to decay, we may not ascribe any such change to his frame; and therefore there is no arguing from facts about common bodies so as to conclude therefrom anything concerning our blessed Lord's body. Whether, in his case, blood and water flowed naturally from his holy and incorruptible body, or whether it was a miracle, it was evidently a most notable and remarkable thing, and John, as an eye-witness, was evidently astonished at it, and so astonished at it that he recorded a solemn affirmation, in order that we might not doubt his testimony. He was certain of what he saw, and he took care to report it with a special note, in order that we might believe; as if he felt that if

this fact was truly believed, there was a certain convincing power which would induce many to believe on our Lord Jesus as the appointed Saviour. I could enter into many details, but I prefer to cast a veil over this tender mystery. It is scarcely reverent to be discoursing of anatomy when the body of our adorable Lord is before us. Let us close our eyes in worship rather than open them with irreverent curiosity.

The great task before me this morning is to draw truth out of this well of wonders. I shall ask you to look at the events before us in three lights: first, let us see here *the fulfilment of Scripture*; secondly, *the identification of our Lord as the Messiah*; and thirdly, *the instruction which he intends*.

I. I ask you to notice THE FULFILMENT OF SCRIPTURE.

Two things are predicted: not a bone of him must be broken, and he must be pierced. These were the Scriptures which now remained to be accomplished. Last Lord's-day morning we were all of us delighted as we saw the fulfilment of Scripture in the capture of our Lord, and his refusal to deliver himself from his enemies. The theme of the fulfilment of Scripture is worth pursuing yet further in an age when Holy Scripture is treated with so much slight, and is spoken of as having no inspiration in it, or, at least, no divine authority by which its infallibility is secured. You and I favor no such error; on the contrary, we conceive it to be to the last degree mischievous. "If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?" We are pleased to notice how the Lord Jesus Christ and those who wrote concerning him treated the Holy Scriptures with an intensely reverent regard. The prophecies that went before of Christ must be fulfilled, and holy souls found

great delight in dwelling upon the fact that they were so

I want you to notice concerning this case, that *it was singularly complicated*. It was negative and positive: the Saviour's bones must not be broken, and he must be pierced. In the type of the Passover lamb it was expressly enacted that not a bone of it should be broken; therefore not a bone of Jesus must be broken. At the same time, according to Zechariah xii. 10, the Lord must be pierced. He must not only be pierced with the nails, and so fulfil the prophecy, "They pierced my hands and my feet"; but he must be conspicuously pierced, so that he can be emphatically regarded as a pierced one. How were these prophecies, and a multitude more, to be accomplished? Only God himself could have brought to pass the fulfilment of prophecies which were of all kinds, and appeared to be confused, and even in contradiction to each other. It would be an impossible task for the human intellect to construct so many prophecies, and types, and foreshadowings, and then to imagine a person in whom they should all be embodied. But what would be impossible to men has been literally carried out in the case of our Lord. There are prophecies about him and about everything connected with him, from his hair to his garments, from his birth to his tomb, and yet they have all been carried out to the letter. That which lies immediately before us was a complicated case; for if reverence to the Saviour would spare his bones, would it not also spare his flesh? If a coarse brutality pierced his side, why did it not break his legs? How can men be kept from one act of violence, and that an act authorized by authority, and yet how shall they perpetrate another violence

which had not been suggested to them? But, let the case be as complicated as it was possible for it to have been, infinite wisdom knew how to work it out in all points; and it did so. The Christ is the exact substance of the foreshadowings of the Messianic prophecies.

Next, we may say of the fulfilment of these two prophecies, that *it was specially improbable*. It did not seem at all likely that when the order was given to break the legs of the crucified, Roman soldiers would abstain from the deed. How could the body of Christ be preserved after such an order had been issued? Those four soldiers are evidently determined to carry out the governor's orders; they have commenced their dreadful task, and they have broken the legs of two of the executed three. The crosses were arranged so that Jesus was hanging in the midst; he is the second of the three. We naturally suppose that they would proceed in order from the first cross to the second; but they seem to pass by the second cross, and proceed from the first to the third. What was the reason of this singular procedure? The supposition is, and I think a very likely one, that the centre cross stood somewhat back, and that thus the two thieves formed a sort of first rank. Jesus would thus be all the more emphatically "in the midst." If he was placed a little back, it would certainly have been easier for the penitent thief to have read the inscription over his head, and to have looked to our Lord, and held conversation with him. Had they been placed exactly in a line this might not have been so natural; but the suggested position seems to suit the circumstances. If it were so, I can understand how the soldiers would be taking the crosses in order when

they performed their horrible office upon the two malefactors, and came last to Jesus, who was in the midst. In any case, such was the order which they followed. The marvel is that they did not in due course proceed to deal the horrible blow in the case of our Lord. Roman soldiers are apt to fulfil their commissions very literally, and they are not often moved with much desire to avoid barbarities. Can you see them intent upon their errand? Will they not even now mangle that sacred body? Commend me for roughness to the ordinary Roman soldier: he was so used to deeds of slaughter, so accustomed to an empire which had been established with blood and iron, that the idea of pity never crossed his soul, except to be scouted as a womanly feeling unworthy of a brave man. Yet behold and wonder! The order is given to break their legs: two out of the three have suffered, and yet no soldier may crush a bone of that sacred body. They see that he is dead already, and they break not his legs.

As yet you have only seen one of the prophecies fulfilled. He must be pierced as well. And what was that which came into that Roman soldier's mind when, in a hasty moment, he resolved to make sure that the apparent death of Jesus was a real one? Why did he open that sacred side with his lance? He knew nothing of the prophecy; he had no dreams of Eve being taken from the side of the man, and the church from the side of Jesus. He had never heard that ancient notion of the side of Jesus being like the door of the ark, through which an entrance to safety is opened. Why, then, does he fulfil the prediction of the prophet? There was no accident or chance here. Where are there such things? The hand of

the Lord is here, and we desire to praise and bless that omniscient and omnipotent Providence which thus fulfilled the word of revelation. God hath respect unto his own word, and while he takes care no bone of his Son shall be broken, he also secures that no text of Holy Scripture shall be broken. That our Lord's bones should remain unbroken, and yet that he should be pierced, seemed a very unlikely thing; but it was carried out. When next you meet with an unlikely promise, believe it firmly. When next you see things working contrary to the truth of God, believe God, and believe nothing else. Let God be true and every man a liar. Though men and devils should give God the lie, hold you on to what God has spoken; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fall to the ground.

Note again, dear friends, concerning this fulfilment of Scripture, that *it was altogether indispensalle*. If they had broken Christ's bones, then that word of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God," had seemed to have a slur cast upon it. Men would have objected, "But the bones of the Lamb of God were not broken." It was especially commanded twice over, not only in the first ordaining of the Passover in Egypt, but in the allowance of a second to those who were defiled at the time of the first Passover. In Numbers, as well as in Exodus, we read that not a bone of the lamb must be broken. How, then, if our Lord's bones had been broken, could we have said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," when there would have been this fatal flaw? Jesus must remain intact upon the cross, and he must also be pierced; for else that famous passage in Zechariah, which is

here alluded to, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced," could not have been true of him. Both prophecies must be carried out, and they were so in a conspicuous manner. But why need I say that this fulfilment was indispensable? Beloved, the keeping of every word of God is indispensable. It is indispensable to the truth of God that he should be true always: for if one word of his can fall to the ground, then all may fall, and his veracity is gone. If it can be demonstrated that one prophecy was a mistake, then all the rest may be mistakes. If one part of the Scripture is untrue, all may be untrue, and we have no sure ground to go upon. Faith loves not slippery places; faith seeks the sure word of prophecy, and sets her foot firmly upon certainties. Unless all the Word of God is sure, and pure "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," then we have nothing to go upon, and are virtually left without a revelation from God. If I am to take the Bible and say, "Some of this is true, and some of it is questionable," I am no better off than if I had no Bible. A man who is at sea with a chart which is only accurate in certain places, is not much better off than if he had no chart at all. I see not how it can ever be safe to be "converted and become as little children," if there is no infallible teacher for us to follow. Beloved, it is indispensable to the honor of God and to our confidence in his Word, that every line of Holy Scripture should be true. It was indispensable evidently in the case now before us, and this is only one instance of a rule which is without exception.

But now let me remind you that although the problem was complicated, and its working out was improbable, yet *it was fulfilled in the most natural man-*

ner. Nothing can be less constrained than the action of the soldiers; they have broken the legs of two, but the other is dead, and they do not break his legs; yet, to make sure that they will be safe in omitting the blow, they pierce his side. There was no compulsion put upon them; they did this of their own proper thought. No angel came from heaven to stand with his broad wings in the front of the cross, so as to protect the Saviour; no awful ægis of mystery was hung over the sacred body of the Lord so that intruders might be driven back with fear. No, the quaternion of soldiers did whatever they wished to do. They acted of their own free will, and yet at the same time they fulfilled the eternal counsel of God. Shall we never be able to drive into men's minds the truth that predestination and free agency are both facts? Men sin as freely as birds fly in the air, and they are altogether responsible for their sin; and yet everything is ordained and foreseen of God. The fore-ordination of God in no degree interferes with the responsibility of man. I have often been asked by persons to reconcile the two truths. My only reply is—They need no reconciliation, for they never fell out. Why should I try to reconcile two friends? Prove to me that the two truths do not agree. In that request I have set you a task as difficult as that which you propose to me. These two facts are parallel lines; I cannot make them unite, but you cannot make them cross each other. Permit me also to add that I have long ago given up the idea of making all my beliefs into a system. I believe, but I cannot explain. I fall before the majesty of revelation, and adore the infinite Lord. I do not understand all that God reveals, but I believe it. How can I expect to understand all the mysteries

of revelation, when even the arithmetic of Scripture surpasses my comprehension, since I am taught that in the Godhead the Three are One, while in the undivided One I see most manifestly Three? Need I measure the sea? Is it not enough that I am upborne by its waves? I thank God for waters deep enough for my faith to swim in: understanding would compel me to keep to the shallows, but faith takes me to the main ocean. I think it more to my soul's benefit to believe than to understand, for faith brings me nearer to God than reason ever did. The faith which is limited by our narrow faculties is a faith unworthy of a child of God; for as a child of God he should begin to deal with infinite sublimities, like those in which his great Father is at home. These are only to be grasped by faith. To return to my subject: albeit the matter must be as Scripture foreshadowed, yet no constraint nor inducement was put forth; but, as free agents, the soldiers performed the very things which were written in the Prophets concerning Christ.

Dear friends, suffer one more observation upon this fulfilment of Scripture: *it was marvellously complete*. Observe that in these transactions a seal was set upon that part of Scripture which has been most exposed to sceptical derision: for the seal was set first of all upon *the types*. Irreverent readers of Scripture have refused to accept the types: they say, "How do you know that the Passover was a type of Christ?" In other cases, more serious persons object to detailed interpretations, and decline to see a meaning in the smaller particulars. Such persons would not attach spiritual importance to the law, "Not a bone of it shall be broken;" but would dismiss it as a petty regulation of an obsolete religious rite. But observe, beloved, the Holy

Spirit does nothing of the kind; for he fixes upon a minor particular of the type, and declares that this must be fulfilled. Moreover, the providence of God intervenes, so that it shall be carried out. Wherefore, be not scared away from the study of the types by the ridicule of the worldly-wise. There is a general timidity coming over the minds of many about Holy Scripture, a timidity to which, thank God, I am an utter stranger. It would be a happy circumstance if the childlike reverence of the early fathers could be restored to the church, and the present irreverent criticism could be repented of and cast away. We may delight ourselves in the types as in a very Paradise of revelation. Here we see our best Beloved's beauties mirrored in ten thousand delightful ways. There is a world of holy teaching in the books of the Old Testament, and in their types and symbols. To give up this patrimony of the saints, and to accept criticism instead of it, would be like selling one's birthright for a mess of pottage. I see in our Lord's unbroken bones a setting of the seal of God upon the types of Scripture.

Let us go further. I see, next, the seal of God set upon *unfulfilled prophecy*; for the passage of Zechariah is not yet completely fulfilled. It runs thus: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Jehovah is the speaker, and he speaks of "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." They are to look on Jehovah whom they have pierced, and to mourn for him. Although this prophecy is not yet fulfilled on the largest scale, yet it is so far certified; for Jesus is pierced: the rest of it, therefore, stands good, and Israel shall one day mourn because of her insulted King. The prophecy was fulfilled in part

when Peter stood up and preached to the eleven, when a great company of the priests believed, and when multitudes of the seed of Abraham became preachers of Christ crucified. Still it awaits a larger fulfilment, and we may rest quite sure that the day shall come when all Israel shall be saved. As the piercing of their Lord is true, so shall the piercing of their hearts be true, and they shall mourn and inwardly bleed with bitter sorrow for him whom they despised and abhorred. The point to mark here is, that a seal is set in this case to a prophecy which yet awaits its largest fulfilment; wherefore, we may regard this as a pattern, and may lay stress upon prophecy, and rejoice in it, and receive it without doubt, come what may.

I have said this much upon the fulfilment of the Word concerning our Lord; let us learn hence a lesson of reverence and confidence in reference to Holy Scripture.

II. But now, secondly, and briefly, THE IDENTIFICATION OF OUR LORD AS THE MESSIAH was greatly strengthened by that which befell his body after death. It was needful that he should conclusively be proved to be the Christ spoken of in the Old Testament. Certain marks and tokens are given, and those marks and tokens must be found in him: they were so found.

The first mark was this: *God's Lamb must have a measure of preservation.* If Christ be what he professes to be, he is the Lamb of God. Now, God's lamb could only be dealt with in God's way. Yes, there is the lamb; kill it, sprinkle its blood, roast it with fire, but break not its bones. It is God's lamb, and not yours, therefore hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. Not a bone of it shall be broken. Roast it, divide it among yourselves, and eat it, but break no bone of it.

The Lord claims it as his own, and this is his reserve. So, in effect, the Lord says concerning the Lord Jesus: "There is my Son; bind him, scourge him, spit on him, crucify him; but he is the Lamb of my Passover, and you must not break a bone of him." The Lord's right to him is declared by the reservation which is made concerning his bones. Do you not see here how he is identified as being "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"? It is a mark of identity upon which faith fixes her eyes, and studies that mark until she sees much more in it than we can this morning speak about, for we have other things to dwell upon.

The next mark of identity must be, that *Jehovah our Lord should be pierced by Israel*. So Zachariah said and so must it be fulfilled. Not merely must his hands and feet be nailed, but most conspicuously must himself be pierced. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." Pierced he must be. His wounds are the marks and tokens of his being the real Christ. When they shall see the sign of the Son of man in the last days, then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and is not that sign his appearing as a Lamb that has been slain? The wound in his side was a sure mark of his identity to his own disciples; for he said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing." It shall be the convincing token to all Israel: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son." To us the opened way to his heart is in his flesh, the token that this is the incarnate God of love, whose heart can be reached by all who seek his grace.

But I have not finished this identification; for observe, that when that side was pierced, "forthwith came therout blood and water." You that have your Bibles will have opened them already at Zechariah xii. Will you kindly read on till you come to the first verse of the thirteenth chapter, which ought not to have been divided from the twelfth chapter? What do you find there? "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." They pierced him, and in that day they began to mourn for him; but more, in that day there was a fountain opened. And what was that fountain but this gush of water and of blood from the riven side of our redeeming Lord? The prophecies follow quickly upon one another; they relate to the same person, and to the same day; and we are pleased to see that the facts also follow quickly upon one another; for when the soldier with the spear pierced the side of Jesus, "*forthwith* came there out blood and water." Jehovah was pierced, and men repented, and beheld the cleansing fountain within a brief space. The men who saw the sacred fountain opened rejoiced to see in it the attestation of the finished sacrifice, and the token of its cleansing effect.

The identification is more complete if we add one more remark. Take all the types of the Old Testament together, and you will gather this, that *the purification of sin was typically set forth by blood and water*. Blood was conspicuous always, you have no remission of sin without it: but water was exceedingly prominent also. The priests before sacrificing must wash, and the victim itself must be washed with water. Impure things must be washed with running water.

Behold how our Lord Jesus came by water and by blood, not by water only, but by water and blood. John who saw the marvellous stream never forgot the sight; for though he wrote his Epistles, I suppose, far on in life, the recollection of that wondrous scene was fresh with him. Though I suppose he did not write his Gospel until he was a very old man, yet when he came to this passage it impressed him as much as ever, and he uttered affirmations which he was not at all accustomed to use: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true." In solemn form he thus, after a manner, gave his affidavit before God's people, that he did really behold this extraordinary sight. In Jesus we see one who has come to atone and to sanctify. He is that High Priest who cleanses the leprosy of sin by blood and water. This is one part of the sure identification of the great Purifier of God's people, that he came both by water and by blood, and poured out both from his pierced side. I leave these identifications to you. They are striking to my own mind, but they are only part of the wonderful system of marks and tokens by which it is seen that God attests the man Christ Jesus as being in very deed the true Messiah.

III. I must close by noticing, thirdly, THE INSTRUCTION INTENDED FOR US in all these things.

The first instruction intended for us must be only hinted at, like all the rest. *See what Christ is to us.* He is the Paschal Lamb, not a bone of which was broken. You believe it. Come, then, and act upon your belief by feeding upon Christ; keep the feast in your own souls this day. That sprinkling blood of his has brought you safety: the Destroying Angel

cannot touch you or your house. The Lamb himself has become your food; feed on him; remove your spiritual hunger by receiving Jesus into your heart. This is the food whereof if a man eat he shall live for ever. Be filled with all the fulness of God, as you now receive the Lord Jesus as God and man. Ye are complete in him. Ye are "perfect in Jesus Christ." Can you not say of him: "He is all my salvation, and all my desire"? "Christ is all and in all." Do not merely learn this lesson as a doctrine, but enjoy it as a personal privilege. Jesus our Passover is slain, let him be eaten. Let us feast on him, and then be ready to journey through the wilderness, in the strength of this divine meat, until we come to the promised rest.

What next do we learn from this lesson but this? *See man's treatment of Christ.* They have spit upon him, they have cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," they have nailed him to the cross, they have mocked his agonies, and he is dead; but man's malice is not glutted yet. The last act of man to Christ must be to pierce him through. That cruel wound was the concentration of man's ill-treatment of Jesus. His experience at the hands of our race is summoned up in the fact that they pierced him to the heart. That is what men have done to Christ: they have so despised and rejected him that he dies, pierced to the heart. Oh, the depravity of our nature! Some doubt whether it is *total* depravity. It deserves a worse adjective than that. There is no word in human language which can express the venom of the enmity of man to his God and Saviour: he would wound him mortally if he could. Do not expect that men will love either Christ or you, if you are like him. Do not expect

that Jesus will find room for himself in the inn, much less that he will be set on the throne by guilty, unrenewed men. Oh, no! Even when he is dead they must insult his corpse with a spear-thrust. One soldier did it, but he expressed the sentiment of the age. This is what the world of sinners did for him who came into the world to save it.

Now, learn, in the next place, *what Jesus did for men*. Beloved, that was a sweet expression in our hymn just now—

“Even after death his heart
For us its tribute poured.”

In his life he had bled for us: drop by drop the bloody sweat had fallen to the ground. Then the cruel scourges drew from him purple streams: but as a little store of life-blood was left near his heart, he poured it all out before he went his way. It is a materialistic expression, but there is something more in it than mere sentiment—that there remains among the substance of this globe a sacred relic of the Lord Jesus in the form of that blood and water. As no atom of matter ever perishes, that matter remains on earth even now. His body has gone into glory, but the blood and water are left behind. I see much more in this fact than I will now attempt to tell. O world, the Christ has marked thee with his blood and he means to have thee! Blood and water from the heart of God's own Son have fallen down upon this dark and defiled planet, and thus Jesus has sealed it as his own, and as such it must be transformed into a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Our dear Lord, when he had given us all he had, and even resigned his life on our behalf, then parted with a priceless stream from the fountain

of his heart: "forthwith came there out blood and water." Oh, the kindness of the heart of Christ, that did not only for a blow return a kiss, but for a spear-thrust returned streams of life and healing!

But I must hurry on. I can see in this passage also *the safety of the saints*. It is marvellous how full of eyes the things of Jesus are; for his unbroken bones look backward to the Paschal lamb, but they also look forward throughout all the history of the church to that day when he shall gather all his saints in one body, and none shall be missing. Not a bone of his mystical body shall be broken. There is a text in the Psalms which saith of the righteous man—and all righteous men are conformed unto the image of Christ—"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." I do rejoice in the safety of Christ's elect; he shall not permit a bone of his redeemed body to be broken.

"For all the chosen seed
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his glories known."

A perfect Christ there shall be in the day of his appearing, when all the members of his body shall be joined to their glorious Head, who shall be crowned for ever. Not one living member of Christ shall be absent; "Not a bone of him shall be broken." There shall be no lame, maimed Christ, no half-wrought redemption; but the purpose that he came to accomplish shall be perfectly achieved to the glory of his name.

I have not quite done, for I must add another lesson. *We see here the salvation of sinners*. Jesus Christ's side is pierced to give to sinners the double cure of

sin, the taking away of its guilt and power; but, better than this, sinners are to have their hearts broken by a sight of the Crucified. By this means also they are to obtain faith. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." Beloved, our Lord Jesus came not only to save sinners, but to seek them: his death not only saves those who have faith, but it creates faith in those who have it not. The cross produces the faith and repentance which it demands. If you cannot come to Christ *with* faith and repentance, come to Christ *for* faith and repentance, for he can give them to you. He is pierced on purpose that you may be pricked to the heart. His blood, which freely flows, is shed for many for the remission of sins. What you have to do is just to look, and, as you look, those blessed feelings which are the marks of conversion and regeneration shall be wrought in you by a sight of him. Oh, blessed lesson! Put it into practice this morning. Oh, that in this great house many may now have done with self and look to the crucified Saviour, and find life eternal in him! For this is the main end of John's writing this record, and this is the chief design of our preaching upon it: we long that you may believe. Come, ye guilty, come and trust the Son of God who died for you. Come, ye foul and polluted, come and wash in this sacred stream poured out for you. There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for every one of you who will look to him. God grant you may look and live, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

VI.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE RISEN LORD TO THE ELEVEN.

April 10, 1887.

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wonder, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”—LUKE xxiv. 36—44.

This, beloved friends, is one of the most memorable of our Lord's many visits to his disciples after he had risen from the dead. Each one of these appearances had its own peculiarity. I cannot at this time give you even an outline of the special colorings which distinguish each of the many manifestations of our risen Lord. The instance now before us may be considered to be the fullest and most deliberate of all the manifestations, abounding beyond every other in “infallible proofs.” Remember, that it occurred on the same day in which our Lord had risen from the dead, and it was the close of a long day of gracious appear-

ings. It was the summing-up of a series of interviews, all of which were proofs of the Lord's resurrection. There was the empty tomb and the grave-clothes left therein: the place where the Lord lay was accessible to all those who chose to inspect it—for the great stone which had been sealed and guarded was rolled away. This in itself was most impressive evidence. Moreover, the holy women had been there, and had seen a vision of angels, who said that Jesus was alive. Magdalene had enjoyed a special interview. Peter and John had been into the empty tomb and had seen for themselves. The report was current that "the Lord was risen indeed, and had appeared unto Simon." It was a special thing that he should appear unto Simon: for the disciples painfully knew how Simon had denied his Master, and his appearance unto Simon seemed to have struck them as peculiarly characteristic: it was so like the manner of our Lord.

They met together in their bewilderment: the eleven of them gathered, as I suppose, to a social meal, for Mark tells us that the Lord appeared unto them "as they sat at meat." It must have been very late in the day, but they were loath to part, and so kept together till midnight. While they were sitting at meat two brethren came in who, even after the sun had set, had hastened back from Emmaus. These new-comers related how one who seemed a stranger had joined himself to them as they were walking from Jerusalem, had talked with them in such a way that their hearts had been made to burn, and had made himself known unto them in the breaking of bread at the journey's end. They declared that it was the Lord who had thus appeared unto them, and, though

they had intended to spend the night at Emmaus, they had hurried back to tell the marvellous news to the eleven. Hence the witnesses accumulated with great rapidity; it became more and more clear that Jesus had really risen from the dead. But as yet the doubters were not convinced, for Mark says: "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them."

Everything was working up to one point: the most unbelieving of them were being driven into a corner. They must doubt the truthfulness of Magdalene and the other saintly women; they must question the veracity of Simon; they must reject the two newly-arrived brethren, and charge them with telling idle tales, or else they must believe that Jesus was still alive, though they had seen him die upon the cross. At that moment the chief confirmation of all presented itself: "for Jesus himself stood in the midst of them." The doors were shut; but, despite every obstacle, their Lord was present in the centre of the assembly. In the presence of one whose loving smile warmed their hearts, their unbelief was destined to thaw and disappear. Jesus revealed himself in all the warmth of his vitality and love, and made them understand that it was none other than his very self, and that the Scriptures had told them that it should be so. They were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken concerning him, but he brought them to it by his familiar communion with them. Oh that in a like way he would put an end to all our doubts and fears!

Brethren, though you and I were not at that inter-

view, yet we may derive much profit from it while we look at it in detail, anxiously desiring that we may in spirit see, and look upon, and handle the Word of Life manifested in the flesh. Oh to learn all that Jesus would teach us, as we now in spirit take our places at that midnight meeting of the chosen ones!

In this wonderful manifestation of our Lord to his apostles I notice three things worthy of our careful observation this morning. This incident teaches us *the certainty of the resurrection of our Lord*; secondly, it shows us a little of *the character of our risen Master*; and, thirdly, it gives us certain hints as to *the nature of our own resurrection*, when it shall be granted us. Oh that we may be accounted worthy to attain to the resurrection from among the dead!

I. First, then, let us see here **THE CERTAINTY OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION**. We have often asserted, and we affirm it yet again, that no fact in history is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The common mass of facts accepted by all men as historical are not one-tenth as certainly assured to us as this fact is. It must not be denied by any who are willing to pay the slightest respect to the testimony of their fellow-men, that Jesus, who died upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa, did literally rise again from the dead.

Observe, that when this person appeared in the room, the first token that it was Jesus was his speech: *they were to have the evidence of hearing*: he used the same speech. No sooner did he appear than he spoke. He was never dumb, and it was natural that the great Teacher and Friend should at once salute his followers, from whom he had been so painfully parted. His first accents must have called to their minds those

cheering notes with which he had closed his last address. They must have recognized that charming voice. I suppose its tone and rhythm to have been rich with a music most sweet and heavenly. A perfect voice would naturally be given to a perfect man. The very sound of it would, through their ears, have charmed conviction into their minds with a glow of joy, had they not been frozen up in unbelief. "Never man spake like this man:" they might have known him by his speech alone. There were tones of voice as well as forms of language which were peculiar to Jesus of Nazareth.

What our Lord said was just like him; it was all of a piece with his former discourse. Among the last sounds which lingered in their ears was that word "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you;" and now it must surely be the same person who introduces himself with the cheering salutation, "Peace be unto you." About the Lord there were the air and style of one who had peace himself, and loved to communicate it to others. The tone in which he spake peace tended to create it. He was a peace-maker, and a peace-giver, and by this sign they were driven to discern their Leader.

Do you not think that they were almost persuaded to believe that it was Jesus when he proceeded to chide them in a manner more tender than any other chiding could have been? How gentle the accents when he said, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Our Lord's chidings were comforts in disguise. His upbraidings were consolations in an unusual shape. Did not his upbraiding on this occasion bring to their minds his question

upon the sea of Galilee when he said to them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Did they not also remember when he came to them walking on the water, and they were afraid that he was a spirit, and cried out for fear; and he said to them, "It is I; be not afraid"? Surely they remembered enough of these things to have made sure that it was their Lord, had not their spirits been sunken in sorrow. Our Lord had never been unwisely silent as to their faults. He had never passed over their errors with that false and indulgent affection which gratifies its own ease by tolerating sin; but he had pointed out their faults with the fidelity of true love; and now that he thus admonished them, they ought to have perceived that it was none other than he. Alas! unbelief is slow to die.

When Jesus came at last to talk to them about Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, he was upon a favorite topic. Then the eleven might have nudged each other and whispered, "It is the Lord." Jesus had, in his later hours, been continually pointing out the Scriptures which were being fulfilled in himself, and at this interview he repeated his former teaching. This is assuredly none other than he who always spoke his Father's mind and will, and constantly did honor to the Holy Ghost by whom the sacred books were inspired. Thus in his tones and topics our Lord gave clear indications that it was himself who had suddenly appeared in that little assembly.

I want you to notice that this evidence was all the better, because they themselves evidently remained the same men as they had been. "They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen

a spirit"; and thus they did exactly what they had done long before when he came to them walking on the waters. In the interval between his death and his appearing, no change has come over them. Nothing has happened to them to elevate them as yet out of their littleness of mind. The Holy Spirit was not yet given, and therefore all that they had heard at the Last Supper, and seen in Gethsemane, and at the cross had not yet exercised its full influence upon them: they were still childish and unbelieving. The same men, then, are looking at the same person, and they are in their ordinary condition; this argues strongly for the correctness of their identification of their well-beloved Lord. They are not carried away by enthusiasm, nor wafted aloft by fanaticism: they are not even as yet upborne by the Holy Spirit into an unusual state of mind, but they are as slow of heart and as fearful as ever they were. If *they* are convinced that Jesus has risen from the dead, depend upon it, it must be so. If they go forth to tell the tidings of his resurrection, and to yield up their lives for it, you may be sure that their witness is true, for they are not the sort of men to be deceived. In our day there has been a buzz about certain miracles of faith, but the statements usually come from persons whose impartiality is questionable—credulous persons who saw what they evidently wished to see. I know several good people who would not wilfully deceive, who nevertheless upon some points are exceedingly unreliable, because their enthusiasm is prepared to be imposed upon. Any hawker of wonders would expect them to be buyers, they have a taste for the marvellous. As witnesses, the evidence of such people has no value in it as compared with that of

these eleven men, who evidently were the reverse of credulous or excitable. In the apostles' case the facts were tested to the utmost, and the truth was not admitted till it was forced upon them. I am not excusing the unbelief of the disciples, but I claim that their witness has all the more weight in it, because it was the result of such cool investigation. These apostles were in special manner to be witnesses of the resurrection, and it makes assurance doubly sure to us when we see them arrive at their conclusion with such deliberate steps. These were men like ourselves, only perhaps a little less likely to be deceived: they needed to be convinced by overwhelming witness, and they were so: ever afterwards they declared boldly that their crucified Lord had indeed risen from the dead.

Thus far in the narrative they have received the evidence of their ears, and that is by no means weak evidence; but now *they are to have the evidence of sight*; for the Saviour says to them, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself;" "and when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet." John says also "his side," which *he* specially noted, because he had seen the piercing of that side, and the outflow of blood and water. They were to see and identify that blessed body which had suffered death. The nail prints were visible, both in his hands which were open before them, and also in his feet which their condescending Lord deigned to expose to their deliberate gaze. There was the mark of the gash in his side; and this the Lord Jesus graciously bared to them, as afterwards he did more fully to Thomas, when he said, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." These were the marks of the Lord

Jesus, by which his identity could be verified. Beyond this there was the general contour of his countenance, and the fashion of the whole man by which they could discern him. His body, though it was now in a sense glorified, was so far veiled as to its new condition that it retained its former likeness: they might perceive that their Lord was no longer subject to the pains and infirmities of our ordinary mortality—else his wounds had not been healed so soon; but yet there remained sure marks by which they knew that it was Jesus, and no other. He looked like a lamb that had been slain: the signs of the Son of Man were in his hands and feet and side. Their sight of the Lord was not a hasty glimpse, but a steady inspection, for John in his first epistle writes, “Which we have seen and looked upon.” This implies a lengthened looking, and such the Lord Jesus invited his friends to take. They could not have been mistaken when they were afforded such a view of those marks by which his identity was established. The same Christ that died had risen from the dead, the same Jesus that had hung upon the cross, now stood in the midst of those who knew him best. It was the same body, and they identified it, although a great change had doubtless come over it since it was taken down from the tree.

Furthermore, that they might be quite sure, *the Lord invited them to receive the evidence of touch or feeling.* He called them to a form of examination, from which, I doubt not, many of them shrank; he said, “Handle me. Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” Writers have remarked upon the use of the word “bones,” instead of blood, in this case; but I do not think that

any inference can be safely drawn therefrom. It would have been barely possible for the disciples to have discovered by handling that the Lord had blood, but they could by handling perceive that he had bones; hence the expression is natural enough, without our imputing to it a meaning which it may never have been intended to convey. The Saviour had a reason, no doubt, other than some have imagined, for the use of the terms, "a spirit hath not flesh *and bones* as ye see me have." The Saviour had not assumed a phantom body: there was bone in it as well as flesh; it was to the full as substantial as ever. He had not put on an appearance, as angels do when they visit the sons of men. No, his body was solid substance, which could be handled. "Handle me, and see that it is I myself." He bade them see that it was flesh and bone, such as no spirit has. There were the substantial elements of a human frame in that body of Christ which stood in the midst of the eleven. Jesus cried, "Handle me, and see."

Thus our Lord was establishing to the apostles, not only his identity, but also his substantial corporeal existence; he would make them see that he was a man of flesh and bones, and not a ghost, airy and unsubstantial. This should correct a certain form of teaching upon the resurrection which is all too common. I was present some years ago at a funeral of a man of God for whom I had much respect. In the chapel a certain excellent Doctor of Divinity gave us an address before the interment in which he informed us as to the condition of his departed friend. He said that he was not in the coffin: indeed, there was nothing of him there. This I was sorry to hear, for if so I was ignorantly mourning over a body which had no

relation to my friend. The preacher went on to describe the way in which the man of God had ascended to heaven at the moment of death, his spirit fashioning for itself a body as it passed through the air. I believed in my friend's being in heaven, but not in his being there in a body. I knew that my friend's body was in the coffin, and I believed that it would be laid in the tomb, and I expected that it would rise again from the grave at the coming of the Lord. I did not believe that my friend would weave for himself a filmy frame, making a second body, nor do I believe it now, though I heard it so affirmed. I believe in the resurrection of the dead. I look to see the very body which was buried raised again. It is true that as the seed develops into the flower, so the buried body is merely the germ out of which will come the spiritual body; yet still it will not be a second body, but the same body, as to identity. I shall enter into no dispute about the atoms of the body, nor deny that the particles of our flesh, in the process of their decay, may be taken up by plants and absorbed into the bodies of animals, and all that; I do not care one jot about identity of atoms, there may not be a solitary ounce of the same matter, but yet identity can be preserved; and it must be preserved if I read my Bible aright. My body to-day is the same as that which I inhabited twenty years ago, and yet all its particles are different: even so the body put into the grave and the body that rises from it are not two bodies, but one body. The saints are not at the coming of their Lord to remain disembodied spirits, nor to wear freshly created bodies, but their entire manhood is to be restored, and to enjoy endless bliss. Well said the patriarch of old, "in my

flesh shall I see God." "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus." I cannot see how the doctrine of Christ goes beyond the doctrine of Plato and others if it be not a doctrine which respects this body. The immortality of the soul was accepted and known as a truth before the faith of Christ was preached, for it is dimly discoverable by the light of nature; but the resurrection of the body is a revelation peculiar to the Christian dispensation, at which the wise men of the world very naturally mocked, but which it ill becomes Christian men to spirit away. The body which is buried shall rise again. It is true it is sown a natural body and shall be raised a spiritual body, but it will be truly a body, and the same *it* which was sown shall be raised. It is true it is sown in weakness and raised in power, but the same *it* is thus raised. It is true that it is sown in weakness to be raised in power, and sown a corruptible body, to be raised in incorruption, but in each case it is the same body, though so gloriously changed.

It will be of a material substance also; for our Saviour's body was material, since he said, "Handle me, and see that it is I myself; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Still further to confirm the faith of his disciples, and to show them that their Lord had a real body, and not the mere form of one, *he gave them evidence which appealed to their common sense.* He said, "Have ye any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it and did eat before them." This was an exceedingly convincing proof of his unquestionable resurrection. In very deed and fact, and not in vision and phantom, the man who had died upon the cross stood among them.

Let us just think of this and rejoice. This resurrection of our Lord Jesus is a matter of certainty ; for, if you spirit this way, you have done away with the gospel altogether. If he is not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain ; ye are yet in your sins. Justification receives its seal in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ; not in his appearing as a phantom, but in his very self being loosed from death, and raised to a glorious life. This is God's mark of the acceptance of the word of the great Substitute, and of the justification of all for whom his atoning work was performed.

Note well that this is also our grand hope concerning those that are asleep. You have buried them forever if Christ was not raised from the dead. They have passed out of your sight, and they shall never again have fellowship with you, unless Jesus rose again from the dead ; for the apostle makes the resurrection of all who are in Christ to hinge upon the resurrection of Christ. I do not feel it necessary, when I talk with the bereaved, to comfort them at all concerning those that are asleep in Christ, as to their souls : we know that they are forever with the Lord, and are supremely blessed, and, therefore, we need no further comfort. The only matter upon which we need consolation is that poor body, which once we loved so well, but which now we must leave in the cold clay. The resurrection comes in as a final undoing of all that death has done. "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." Jesus saith, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." If we question the resurrection of Christ, then is the whole of our faith questioned, and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have per-

ished, and we are left just where others were, before Christ brought this divine truth to light. Only as we are sure of the resurrection of Jesus can we cry, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

II. Secondly, will you follow me while I very briefly set forth OUR LORD'S CHARACTER WHEN RISEN FROM THE DEAD?

What is he now that he hath quitted death, and all that belongs to it? What is he now that he shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more? He is much the same as he used to be; indeed he is altogether what he was, for he is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever."

Notice, first, that in this appearance of Christ we are taught that *he is still anxious to create peace in the hearts of his people*. No sooner did he make himself visible than he said, "Peace be unto you." Beloved, your risen Lord wants you to be happy. When he was here on earth he said, "Let not your hearts be troubled": he says just the same to you to-day. He takes no delight in the distresses of his people. He would have his joy to be in them, that their joy may be full. He bids you rejoice in him evermore. He whispers to you this morning, as you sit in the pew, "Peace be unto you." He has not lost his tender care over the least of the flock; he would have each one led by the still waters, and made to lie down in green pastures.

Note again, that *he has not lost his habit of chiding unbelief, and encouraging faith*; for as soon as he has risen, and speaks with his disciples, he asks them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" He loves you to believe in him, and be at

rest. Find if you can, beloved, one occasion in which Jesus inculcated doubt, or bade men dwell in uncertainty. The apostles of unbelief are everywhere to-day, and they imagine that they are doing God service by spreading what they call "honest doubt." This is death to all joy! Poison to all peace! The Saviour did not so. He would have them take extraordinary measures to get rid of their doubt. "Handle me," he says. It was going a long way to say that, but he would sooner be handled than his people should doubt! Ordinarily it might not be meet for them to touch him. Had he not said to the women, "Touch me not"? But what may not be allowable ordinarily becomes proper when necessity demands it. The removal of their doubt as to our Lord's resurrection needed that they should handle him, and therefore he bids them do so. O beloved, you that are troubled and vexed with thoughts, and therefore get no comfort out of your religion because of your mistrust, your Lord would have you come very near to him, and put his gospel to any test which will satisfy you. He cannot bear you to doubt. He appeals tenderly, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" He would at this moment still encourage you to taste and see that the Lord is good. He would have you believe in the substantial reality of his religion, and handle him and see: trust him largely and simply, as a child trusts its mother and knows no fear.

Notice, next, that when the Saviour had risen from the dead, and a measure of his glory was upon him, *he was still most condescendingly familiar with his people.* He showed them his hands and his feet, and he said, "Handle me, and see." When he was on earth, be-

fore his passion, he was most free with his disciples: no affectation of dignity kept him apart from them. He was their Master and Lord, and yet he washed their feet. He was the Son of the Highest, but he was among them as one that serveth. He said, "Suffer little children to come unto me." He is the same to-day.

"His sacred name a common word
On earth he loves to hear;
There is no majesty in him
Which love may not come near."

Though he reigns in the highest heavens, his delights are still with the sons of men. Still he will permit us to sit at his feet, or even to lean our head upon his bosom. Jesus will hear us tell out our griefs; he will regard our cry when we are not pleading about a sword in our bones, but only concerning a thorn in our flesh. Jesus is still the brother born for adversity; he still manifests himself to us as he doth not unto the world. Is not this clear, and also very pleasant to see, as we study this interview?

The next thing is that *the risen Lord was still wonderfully patient*, even as he had always been. He bore with their folly and infirmity; for "while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered," he did not chide them. He discerned between one unbelief and another, and he judged that the unbelief which grew out of wonder was not so blamable as that former unbelief which denied credible evidence. Instead of rebuke he gives confirmation. He says, "Have ye here any meat?" and he takes a piece of broiled fish, and of a honeycomb, and eats it. Not that he needed food. His body could receive food, but it did not require it. Eating was his own sweet way of showing

them that if he could he would solve all their questions. He would do anything in his great patience that they might be cured of their mistrust. Just so to-day, beloved, Jesus doth not chide you, but he invites you to believe him : he invites you, therefore, to sup with him, and eat bread at his table. "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever ;" but in his great mercy he will use another tone, and encourage you to trust him. Can you hold back? Oh, do not so.

Observe that our Saviour, though he was risen from the dead, and therefore in a measure in his glory, *entered into the fullest fellowship with his own*. Peter tells us that they did eat and drink with him. I do not notice in this narrative that he drank with them, but he certainly ate of such food as they had, and this was a clear token of his fellowship with them. In all ages eating and drinking with one another has been the most expressive token of communion, and so the Saviour seems to say to us to-day, "I have eaten with you, my people, since I have quitted the grave, I have eaten with you through the eleven who represented you. I have eaten, and I will still eat with you, till we sit down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. If any man open unto me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Yes, the Lord Jesus is wonderfully near to us still, and he waits to grant us the highest forms of fellowship which can be known on this side of the gate of pearl. In this let our spirits quietly rejoice.

Let me call your attention to the fact that when Jesus had risen from the dead *he was just as tender of Scripture as he was before his decease*. I have dwelt for two Sunday mornings upon the wonderful way in

which our Lord always magnified the Scriptures ; and here, as if to crown all, he told them that “ all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning himself ; and he opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them. Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.” Find Jesus where you may, he is the antagonist of those who would lessen the authority of holy Scripture. “ It is written ” is his weapon against Satan, his argument against wicked men. The learned at this hour scoff at the Book, and accuse of Bibliolatry those of us who reverence the divine word ; but in this they derive no assistance from the teaching or example of Jesus. Not a word derogatory of Scripture ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ ; but evermore he manifested the most reverent regard for every jot and tittle of the inspired volume. Since our Saviour, not only before his death, but after it, took care thus to commend the Scriptures to us, let us avoid with all our hearts all teaching in which holy Scripture is put into the background. Still the Bible, and the Bible alone, should be and shall be the religion of Protestants, and we will not budge an inch from that stand-point, God helping us.

Once again, our Saviour, after he had risen from the dead, *showed that he was anxious for the salvation of men* ; for it was at this interview that he breathed upon the apostles, and bade them receive the Holy Ghost, to fit them to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature. The missionary spirit is the spirit of Christ—not only the spirit of him that died to save, but the spirit of him who has finished the work, and has gone

into his rest. Let us cultivate that spirit, if we would be like the Jesus who has risen from the dead.

III. I can stay no longer, because I would draw your attention, in the third place, to the light which is thrown by this incident upon THE NATURE OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION.

First, I gather from this text that our nature, *our whole humanity, will be perfected at the day of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we that may then be alive shall be changed. Jesus has redeemed not only our souls, but our bodies. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" When the Lord shall deliver his captive people out of the land of the enemy, he will not leave a bone of one of them in the adversary's power. The dominion of death shall be utterly broken. Our entire nature shall be redeemed unto the living God in the day of the resurrection. After death, until that day, we shall be disembodied spirits; but in the adoption, to wit, the redemption, of the body, we shall attain our full inheritance. We are looking forward to a complete restoration. At this time the body is dead because of sin, and hence it suffers pain, and tends to decay; but the spirit is life because of righteousness: in the resurrection, however, the body shall be quickened also, and the resurrection shall be to the body what regeneration has been to the soul. Thus shall our humanity be completely delivered from the consequences of the fall. Perfect manhood is that which Jesus restores from sin and the grave; and this shall be ours in the day of his appearing.

I gather next that in the resurrection *our nature will be full of peace*. Jesus Christ would not have said, "Peace

be unto you," if there had not been a deep peace within himself. He was calm and undisturbed. There was much peace about his whole life; but after the resurrection his peace becomes very conspicuous. There is no striving with scribes and Pharisees, there is no battling with anybody after our Lord is risen. A French author has written of our Lord's Forty Days on earth after the resurrection under the title of "The Life of Jesus Christ in Glory." Though rather misleading at first, the title is not so inaccurate as it appears; for his work was done, and his warfare was accomplished, and our Lord's life here was the beginning of his glory. Such shall be our life, we shall be flooded with eternal peace, and shall never again be tossed about with trouble, and sorrow, and distress and persecution. An infinite serenity shall keep our body, soul, and spirit, throughout eternity.

When we rise again *our nature will find its home amid the communion of saints*. When the Lord Jesus Christ had risen again his first resort was the room where his disciples were gathered. His first evening was spent among the objects of his love. Even so, wherever we are we shall seek and find communion with the saints. I joyfully expect to meet many of you in heaven, and to know you, and commune with you. I should not like to float about in the future state without a personality in the midst of a company of undefined and unknown beings. That would be no heaven to me. No, brethren, we shall soon perceive who our comrades are, and we shall rejoice in them, and in our Lord. There could be no communion among unknown entities. You cannot have fellowship with people whom you do not recognize; and therefore it seems to me most clear that we shall in

the future state have fellowship through recognition, and our heavenly bodies shall help the recognition and share in the fellowship. As the risen Christ wends his way to the upper room of the eleven, so will you by force of holy gravitation find your way to the place where all the servants of God shall gather at the last. Then shall we be truly at home, and go no more out for ever.

Furthermore, I see that in that day *our bodies will admirably serve our spirits*. For look at our Lord's body. Now that he has risen from the dead he desires to convince his disciples, and his body becomes at once the means of his argument, the evidence of his statement. His flesh and bones were text and sermon for him. "Handle me," says he, "and see." Ah, brethren! whatever we may have to do in eternity, we shall not be hindered by our bodies as we now are. Flesh and blood hamper us, but "flesh and bones" shall help us. I want to speak sometimes, and my head aches, or my throat is choked, or my legs refuse to bear me up: but it is not so in the resurrection from the dead. A thousand infirmities in this earthly life compass us about; but our risen body shall be helpful to our regenerated nature. It is only a natural body now, fit for our soul; but hereafter it shall be a spiritual body, adapted to all the desires and wishes of the heaven-born spirit; and no longer shall we have to cry out, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." We shall find in the risen body a power such as the spirit shall wish to employ for the noblest purposes. Will not this be well?

In that day, beloved, when we shall rise again from the dead, *we shall remember the past*. Do you not

notice how the risen Saviour says, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you." He had not forgotten his former state. I think Dr. Watts is right when he says that we shall "with transporting joys recount the labors of our feet." It is rather a small subject, and probably we shall far more delight to dwell on the labors of our Redeemer's hands and feet; but still we shall remember all the way whereby the Lord our God led us, and we shall talk to one another concerning it. In heaven we shall remember our happy Sabbaths here below, when our hearts burned within us while Jesus himself drew near. Since Jesus speaks after he has risen of the things that he said while he was with his disciples, we perceive that the river of death is not like the fabled Lethe, which caused all who drank thereof to forget their past. We shall arise with a multitude of hallowed memories enriching our minds. Death will not be oblivion to us, for it was not so to Jesus. Rather shall we meditate on mercies experienced, and by discoursing thereon we shall make known to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God.

Observe that our Lord, after he had risen from the dead, *was still full of the spirit of service*, and therefore he called others out to go and preach the gospel, and he gave them the Spirit of God to help them. When you and I are risen from the dead, we shall rise full of the spirit of service. What engagements we may have throughout eternity we are not told, because we have enough to do to fulfil our engagements now; but assuredly we shall be honored with errands of mercy and tasks of love fitted for our heavenly being; and I doubt not it shall be one of our greatest delights

while seeing the Lord's face to serve him with all our perfected powers. He will use us in the grand economy of future manifestations of his divine glory. Possibly we may be to other dispensations what the angels have been to this. Be that as it may, we shall find a part of our bliss and joy in constantly serving him who has raised us from the dead.

There I leave the subject, wishing that I could have handled it much better. Think it over when you are quiet at home, and add this thought to it, that you have a share in all that is contained in the resurrection. May the Holy Ghost give you a personal grip of this vital truth! You yourself shall rise from the dead; therefore, be not afraid to die.

If any of my hearers have no share in our Lord's resurrection, I am truly sorry for them. O my friend, what you are losing! If you have no share in the living Lord, may God have mercy upon you! If you have no share in Christ's rising from the dead, then you will not be raised up in the likeness of his glorified body. If you do not attain to that resurrection from among the dead, then you must abide in death, with no prospect but that of a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation. Oh, look to Jesus, the Saviour! Only as you look to him can there be a happy future for you. God help you to do so at once, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

VII.

GOD'S THOUGHTS OF PEACE, AND OUR EXPECTED END.

May 29, 1887.

“ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”—JEREMIAH XXIX. 11.

I HAVE already explained to you, while expounding the twenty-fourth and twenty-ninth chapters of this prophet, that these words were written by Jeremiah in a letter to the captives in Babylon. A considerable part of the people of Israel were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar into a far country. They were exhorted by the prophet to build houses, form families, and to abide peaceably there till the Lord should lead them back at the end of seventy years. But at that time there was a general uneasy feeling among the Jews and other subjected nations, who did not rest quietly under the iron yoke of Babylon. They were plotting and planning continual rebellions, and certain false prophets in Babylon worked with them, stirring up the spirit of revolt among the exiles. Jeremiah, on the other hand, assured them that they had been sent of God into the land of the Chaldeans for good, bade them seek the peace of the city wherein they now dwelt, and promised them that in due time the Lord would again plant them in their own land.

A people in such a position as the Jews in Babylon

were in danger in two ways : either to be buoyed up with false hopes, and so to fall into foolish expectations ; or, to fall into despair, and have no hope at all, and so become a sullen and degraded race, who would be unfit for restoration, and unable to play the part which God ordained for them in the history of mankind. The prophet had the double duty of putting down their false hopes, and sustaining their right expectations. He, therefore, plainly warned them against expecting more than God had promised, and he aroused them to look for the fulfilment of what he had promised. Read the tenth verse, and note that pleasant expression, “and perform my good word unto you.” At the present time the Church has need of both admonitions. Expectations which are not warranted, are being raised in many quarters, and are leading to serious delusions. We hear men crying, “Lo here!” and “Lo there!” This wonder and that marvel are cried up. It would seem that the age of miracles has returned to certain hot heads. Take ye no heed of all this. Go not beyond the record. On the other hand, we need to be urged to believe our Lord implicitly, and to hold on to his word with a strong, hearty, realizing faith ; being assured that while God will *not* do what we propose to him, yet he will do what he has promised. False prophets will be left in the lurch, but the word of the Lord will stand.

This morning my desire shall be to comfort any of God's people who are in a state of perplexity, and thus are carried away captive. I would assure them of the Lord's kindness to them, and urge them to trust and not be afraid. God's thoughts towards them are good, though their trials may be grievous.

The text puts me upon two tracks. First, let us *consider the Lord's thoughts towards his people*. "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Secondly, let us *consider the believer's proper attitude towards his Lord*. What should we think of our gracious God who thus unveils his heart to us?

I. First, then, dear friends, CONSIDER THE LORD'S THOUGHTS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.

It is noteworthy, first of all, that *he does think of them, and towards them*. Observe that this Scripture saith not, "I know the thoughts that I *have thought* toward you." That would be a happy remembrance; for the thoughts of God concerning his people are more ancient than the everlasting hills. There never was a time when God did not think upon his people for good. He saith, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." But the point here brought forward is, that *he still thinks of them*. It would be possible for you to have thought out a plan of kindness toward a friend, and you might have so arranged it that it would henceforth be a natural fountain of good to him without your thinking any more about it; but that is not after the method of God. His eye and his hand are towards his people continually. It is true he did so think of us that he has arranged everything about us, and provided for every need, and against every danger; but yet he has not ceased to think of us. His infinite mind, whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth, continues to exercise itself about us. "I am poor and needy," saith David, "yet the Lord thinketh upon me." We love to be thought of by our friends; in-

deed, thought enters into the essence of love. Delight yourselves this morning, O ye who believe your God, in this heavenly fact, that the Lord thinketh upon you at this moment. "The Lord hath been mindful of us," and he is still mindful of us.

The Lord not only thinks *of* you, but *towards* you. His thoughts are all drifting your way. This is the way the south wind of his thoughts of peace is moving: it is towards you. The Lord never forgets his own, for he has graven them upon the palms of his hands. Never at any moment does Jehovah turn his thoughts from his beloved, even though he has the whole universe to rule. He saith of his church, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

This truth, although it is easily spoken, is not readily comprehended in the fulness of its joy; nor is it always believed as it should be. These people in captivity were likely to fear that their God had forgotten them: hence the Lord repeats his words in this place, and speaks of thoughts and thinking three times. His words are so repeated as to seem almost redundant, out of a desire to make his people feel absolutely sure that not only did he act towards them, but that he still thought towards them. To the banished this would be a grand consolation. The Lord thought of them when they walked the strange streets of "the golden city," and heard a language which they understood not. He thought of them when they were buffeted as aliens by those who marched in the proudest pomp, and danced in cruel derision to the sound of their viols. The Lord thought of his exiles when their sole solace was solitude by the brink of the Baby

Ionian canals, where among the willows they remembered Zion.

All that the Lord was doing towards them was done thoughtfully. His thoughts of peace, and not of evil, towards them, had suggested their captivity and the continuance of it for seventy years. If any of you are in trouble and sorrow to-day, do not doubt that this is sent you according to the thoughtful purpose of the Lord. It is in this fixed intent and thoughtfulness that the real character of an action lies. A person may happen to do you a good turn; but if you are sure that he did it by accident, or with no more thought than that wherewith a passing stranger throws a penny to a beggar, you are not impressed with gratitude. But when the action of your friend is the result of earnest deliberation, and you see that he acts in the tenderest regard to your welfare, you are far more thankful: traces of anxiety to do you good are very pleasant. Have I not heard persons say, "It was so kind and so thoughtful of him!" Do you not notice that men value kindly thought, and set great store by tender consideration! Remember, then, that there is never a thoughtless action on the part of God. His mind goes with his hand: his heart is in his acts. He thinks so much of his people, that the very hairs of their heads are all numbered: he thinks not only of the great thing, but of the little things which are incidental to the great thing; as the hairs are to the head. Every affliction is timed and measured, and every comfort is sent with a loving thoughtfulness which makes it precious in a sevenfold degree. O believer, the great thoughtfulness of the divine mind is exercised towards you, the chosen of the Lord. Never has anything happened to you as the result of a re-

morseless fate; but all your circumstances have been ordered in wisdom by a living, thoughtful, loving Lord.

Brethren, if I said no more you might go on your way rejoicing. Remember that the infinite God has thoughts of peace towards you, and your own thoughts will be thoughts of peace all the day.

To go a step further, let us next note that *the thoughts of God are only perfectly known to himself*. It would be a mere truism for God to say, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you." Even a man usually knows his own thoughts; but the meaning is this: when *you* do not know the thoughts that I have towards you, yet *I* know them. Brethren, when we cannot know the thoughts of the Lord because they are too high for our conception, or too deep for our understanding, yet the Lord knows them. Our heavenly Father knows what he is doing; when his ways towards us appear to be involved and complicated, and we cannot disentangle the threads of the skein, yet the Lord sees all things clearly, and knows the thoughts that he thinks towards us. He never misses his way and becomes embarrassed. We dare not profess to understand the ways of God to man: they are past finding out. Providence is a great deep. Its breadth exceeds the range of our vision, and its depth baffles our profoundest thought. "Thy way, O Lord, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." When we are overwhelmed with wonder at what we see, we are humbled by the reminder, "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him!" "Truly the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." God alone understands himself and his thoughts. We stand by a powerful machine, and we

see the wheels moving this way and that, but we do not understand its working. What does it matter? He who made the engine and controls it, perfectly understands it, and this is practically the main concern; for it does not matter whether *we* understand the engine or not, it will work its purpose if he who has the control of it is at home with all its bands and wheels. Despite our ignorance, nothing can go wrong while the Lord in infinite knowledge ruleth over all. The child playing on the deck does not understand the tremendous engine whose beat is the throbbing heart of the stately Atlantic liner, and yet all is safe; for the engineer, the captain and the pilot are in their places, and well know what is being done. Let not the child trouble itself about things too great for it. Leave you the discovery of doubtful causes to him whose understanding is infinite; and as for yourself, be you still, and know that Jehovah is God. Unbelief misinterprets the ways of God; hasty judgment jumps at wrong conclusions about them: but the Lord knows his own thoughts. We are doubtful where we ought to be sure, and we are sure where we have no ground for certainty: thus we are always in the wrong. How should it be otherwise with us, since vain man would be wise, and yet he is born like a wild ass's colt? We are hard to tame and to teach; but as for the Lord, "his way is perfect."

"His thoughts are high, his love is wise,
His wounds a cure intend;
And though he does not always smile,
He loves unto the end."

Let us go a step further still: *the Lord would have us know that his thoughts toward us are settled and definite.* This is part of the intent of the words, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord."

Sometimes a man may hardly know his own thoughts, because he has scarcely made up his mind. There are several subjects now upon the public mind, concerning which it is wise to say little or nothing, because it is not easy to decide about them. Upon a certain matter one asks you this question, and another asks you another question; and it is possible that you have so carefully weighed and measured the arguments both *pro* and *con* that you cannot come to a conclusion either way. Your thoughts differ from day to day, and therefore you do not yet know them. You need not be ashamed of this: it shows that you have a just sense of your own imperfect knowledge. A fool soon makes up his mind, because there is so very little of it; but a wise man waits and considers. The case is far otherwise with the only wise God. The Lord is not a man that he should need to hesitate; his infinite mind is made up, and he knows his thoughts. With the Lord there is neither question nor debate: "He is in one mind, and none can turn him." His purpose is settled, and he adheres to it. He is resolved to reward them that diligently seek him, and to honor those that trust in him. He is resolved to remember his covenant for ever, and to keep his promises to those who believe him. His thought is, that the people whom he has formed for himself shall show forth his praise. The Lord knoweth them that are his; he knows whom he gave to his Son, and he knows that these shall be his jewels for ever and ever. Beloved, when you do not know your own mind, God knows *his* mind. Though you believe not, he abideth faithful; when you are in the gloom, he is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Your way may be closed, but his way is open. God knows all when you know nothing at all. When

Moses came out of Egypt, he had no plan as to the march of Israel. He knew that he had to lead the children of Israel to the promised land, but that was all. He probably hoped to take them by the shortest ent to Palestine at once. Their journey was far otherwise, but it was all pre-arranged by the divine mind. It was by no error that the tribes were told to turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. The Lord knew that Pharaoh would say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." There was no going back, for the Egyptians were there, and no going forward, for the Red Sea was there: but the Lord had the way mapped out in his own mind. He was not taken by surprise when the enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;" since for this purpose had he raised him up, that he might show forth his power in him. The passage of the Red Sea was no hurried expedient: Jehovah knew what he would do. When our blessed Lord was surrounded by the hungry crowd, he asked his disciples, "How many loaves have ye?" But "Jesus knew what he would do." He had his thoughts, and he knew them. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward." Thou hast said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;" and it is even so. Brother, you do not know what is to be done, but the Lord knows for you. O body of Christ, let thy head think for thee! O servant of Christ, let thy Master think for thee. "I know," saith God, "the thoughts that I think toward you."

Now we have advanced some distance into the

meaning of our text, and we are prepared to go a step further, namely, that *God's thoughts towards his people are always thoughts of peace.* He is at peace with them through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. He regards them in Christ with perfect complacency. The Spirit of God speaks peace to their troubled conscience, and works in them the spirit of adoption and desires after holiness: thus the holy God is able to commune with them, and have thoughts of peace toward them. The Lord delights in them; he seeks their peace, he creates their peace, he sustains their peace, and thus all his thoughts towards them are peace. Note well the negative, which is expressly inserted. It is very sweet to my own heart. It might have appeared enough to say, "My thoughts are thoughts of peace." Yes, it would be quite sufficient when all things are bright with us; but those words, "and not of evil," are admirably adapted to keep off the goblins of the night, the vampires of suspicion which fly in the darkness. When under affliction we are sorely depressed, and when conscience perceives that there are reasons why the Lord should contend with us, then the enemy whispers, "The Lord has evil thoughts towards you, and will cast you off for ever." No, beloved, his thoughts are *not of evil.* Though the Lord hates thy sin, he does not hate thee. Though he is the enemy of thy follies, he is thine own firm friend; yea, he is all the truer friend, because he fights against thy faults.

He would have thee pure and holy, therefore doth he bathe thee in the rivers, and baptize thee in the fires. Not in anger doth he afflict thee, but in his dear covenant love. The hardest blow that he ever laid upon his child was inflicted by the hand of love.

Thou mayest rise from thy bed in the morning to be chastised, and ere thou dost fall asleep in the night thou mayest smart under the rod, and yet be none the less, but all the more, the favorite of heaven: therefore, beloved, lay hold upon the negative, "not of evil." God has no evil thought towards his chosen: he has no desire to grieve us, but to save us.

There shall not a hair of your head perish, but yet that head may ache with weariness. It is for good, and only for good, that God thinks of us, and deals with us. Oh, that we could settle this in our hearts, and have done with dark forebodings! Though thy way may now lie through dark ravines where the crags rise so steep above thee as to shut out the light of day, yet press thou onward, for the way is safe. Follow the Lord, for where the road is rough, thou wilt be less likely to slip than in more smooth and slippery places. If the way be steep, thou wilt the sooner ascend on high; or if thy way inclines downward, thou wilt the sooner feel the needful humiliation, and the more readily cease from thyself, and cast thyself upon thy Lord. Though I am not yet so old and gray-headed as many here present, yet one thing I know: that God hath done unto me good, and not evil, all the days of my life; and I bear my public witness at this hour, that in very faithfulness he hath afflicted me, and not one good thing hath failed of all that he hath promised me.

No, his thoughts are "not of evil." The next time the devil comes to you with a dark insinuation, tell him that the Lord's thoughts are "not of evil." Drive him away with that. When he hisses his foul suggestions, say, "Not of evil." God cannot have an evil thought towards his own elect. He that gave his

own Son to die for us cannot think anything but good towards us.

Once more, and then we shall have fully compassed this text. *The Lord's thoughts are all working towards "an expected end,"* or, as the Revised Version has it, "to give you hope in your latter end." Some read it, "a future and a hope." The renderings are instructive. God is working with a motive. All things are working together for one object: the good of those who love God. We see only the beginning; God seeth the end from the beginning. We spell the alphabet out, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, but God reads all, from Alpha to Omega, at once. He knows every letter of the Book of Providence; he sees not only what he is doing, but what will come of what he is doing. As to our present pain and grief, God seeth not these things exclusively, but he seeth the future joy and usefulness which will come of them. He regardeth not only the tearing up of the soil with the plough, but the clothing of that soil with the golden harvest. He sees the after consequences of affliction, and he accounts those painful incidents to be blessed which lead up to so much of happiness. Let us comfort ourselves with this. God meant in Babylon to prepare a people that should know him, of whom he could say, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." At the end of seventy years, he would bring these people back to Jerusalem like a new race, who, whatever their faults might be, would never again fall into idolatry. He knew what he was driving at in their captivity; and in our case the Lord is equally clear as to his purpose. We do not ourselves know, for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." You have never seen the Great Artist's masterpiece: you

have seen the rough marble, you have marked the chippings that fall on the ground; you have felt the edge of his chisel, you know the weight of his hammer, and you are full of the memory of these things; but oh, could you see that glorious image as it will be when he has put the finishing stroke to it, you would then understand the chisel, and the hammer, and the Worker better than you now do! O brethren, we should not know ourselves, if we could see ourselves as we are to be when the Lord's purpose is accomplished upon us! We know that we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is; but what is he like "as he is"? What is that glory of the Lord which is to be ours? We can picture him in his humiliation, but what is he like in his glory? He is the first-born, and we are to be conformed to him. God is working, working, working always to that end, and so all his thoughts tend towards this expected end.

Here I pause to make a practical application. I may be addressing some person here who is in great distress under conviction of sin. You despair because the Lord is bringing your sin to remembrance, but indeed, there is no cause; the Lord is sending you into captivity for a purpose. You are being shut up by the law, that you may be set at liberty by Christ; you are being stripped in order that you may be clothed, and you are being emptied that you may be filled. If you could see the end from the beginning, you would rejoice that you are made to know the burden of sin; for so shall you be driven to the cross to find rest from your load. This sorrow shall be the death of your pride and self-righteousness. By this way the Lord is working out for you "a future and a hope." When clean divorced from self, you shall

be wedded to Jesus, and dowried with his salvation.

I am also probably addressing many a child of God who is vexed in daily conflict with his inward corruption. Alas! we find the old man yet alive within us. The old nature in the Christian is no better than the old man in the sinner; it is the same carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not reconciled, neither indeed can be. The new nature has a hard struggle to hold its own against this embodied death. We are, as it were, chained to a rotting carcase, and we cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Now, do not despair because of this experience. It is better to mourn over imperfection than to be puffed up with the idle notion that there is no sin in you to be watched and conquered. Certain of the children of Israel remained with Zedekiah at Jerusalem, and boasted of their position, but they were none the better for their pretensions. You have been carried away into captivity, and you are sighing and crying because of indwelling sin; but the Lord's thoughts toward you are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, and he will "give you an expected end." You will come to true holiness by this painful process, and so shall you glorify God.

I may also be addressing some child of God in very deep trouble. Everything goes wrong with you, at home, in business, and perhaps in the church too. Very well, you will never have to raise that question, "How is it that I am not chastened?" That will never trouble you. Chastening for the present is not joyous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore gladly endure it. God's thoughts are towards you, for he is refining you; believe also that

his thoughts are peaceable, and that he designs your highest good.

So far have I tried to justify the ways of God to men. May his own spirit make you feel that the thoughts of the Lord are peace!

II. In the second part of my discourse I would ask you to CONSIDER THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF GOD'S PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR LORD.

You will all agree with me when I say that *our attitude should be that of submission*. If God, in all that he does towards us, is acting with an object, and that object a loving one, then let him do what seemeth him good. Henceforth let us have no quarrel with the God of Providence; but let us say, "Thy will be done." Who would not yield to that which works his health, his wealth, his boundless happiness? "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Next, let our position be one of *great hopefulness*, seeing the end of God, in all he does, is to give us "a future and a hope." We are not driven into growing darkness, but led into increasing light. There is always something to be hoped for in the Christian's life. Let us not look toward the future nor regard the present with any kind of dread. There is nothing for us to dread.

" If sin be pardon'd I'm secure,
 Death has no sting beside;
 The law gave sin its damning power
 But Christ, my ransom, died."

The death of Christ is the death of evil to the child of God. Let us trust, and not be afraid. Let us not be

content with sullenly making up our minds to stoical endurance. We must not only bear the will of the Lord, but rejoice in it. It is a blessed thing when we come to rejoice in tribulations, and to glory in infirmities. It is fine music when we can sing, "Sweet affliction."

"Hard work," says one. Yes, but it is worth the pains; for it secures perfect peace. If thy will is brought to thy circumstances; and if, better still, thy will is brought to delight in God's will, then the fangs of the serpent are extracted. The sorrow is sucked out of the sorrow by the lips of acquiescence. When thou canst say, "Not my will, but thine be done," thou shalt have thy will. There is always something "better on before" for those who believe in Jesus. Be you sure of that.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
With blessings on your head."

Welcome clouds, if showers of mercy are to come of them. God forbid we should always have sunshine, for that would mean drought. Let the clouds come if they bring a blessed rain.

Our relation to God should, next, be one of *continual expectancy*, especially expectancy of the fulfilment of his promises. I call your attention again to the tenth verse: "I will perform my good word toward you." I do so love that expression; we must have it for a text one of these days: "I will perform my good word toward you." His promises are good words: good indeed, and sweetly refreshing. When your hearts are faint, then is the promise emphatically *good*. Expect the Lord to be as good as his good word.

Brethren, do not heap up to yourselves sorrow, as some do in these days, by expecting that which the Lord has not promised. I earnestly warn you against those who have been led by a fevered imagination to expect, first, perfection in the flesh, and then perfection of the flesh, and then an actual immortality for the flesh. God will fulfil his promise, but he will not fulfil your misreading of it. I should not wonder if there should arise a race of people who will believe that they can live without eating, because it is said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live." If healed without medicine, why not fed without food? What absolute need of any visible means when God can work without them? Those who think it needful to lay aside all outward means in order to a true faith in God, are on the way to any absurdity. Truly, if God had bidden me to live without eating, I would fast at his command and expect to live; but as he has not done so, I shall not presume. Faith that is not warranted by the word of God is not faith, but folly; and folly is not the faith of God's elect. The Lord will perform his own word, but he will not perform the delirious declarations of madmen. If it needs a million miracles to fulfil God's promise they shall be forthcoming; but we are not anxious for miracles, because our larger faith believes that the Lord can overrule the ordinary ways of Providence to perform his good word, and bring us the expected end.

Again, beloved, our position towards God should be one of *happy hope as to blessed ends being answered even now*. In the twenty-fourth chapter we observe one of the ends of the Lord's sending his people into exile.

I noticed in the fifth verse that the Lord said, "So will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah." Their sorrow would bring about *the Lord's acknowledgment of them*. Thus do we, brethren, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Affliction is the seal of the Lord's election. I remember a story of Mr. Mack, who was a Baptist minister in Northamptonshire. In his youth he was a soldier, and calling on Robert Hall, when his regiment marched through Leicester, that great man became interested in him, and procured his release from the ranks. When he went to preach in Glasgow, he sought out his aged mother, whom he had not seen for many years. He knew his mother the moment he saw her; but the old lady did not recognize her son. It so happened that when he was a child, his mother had accidentally wounded his wrist with a knife. To comfort him she cried, "Never mind, my bonnie bairn, your mither will ken you by that when ye are a man." When Mack's mother would not believe that a grave, fine-looking minister could be her own child, he turned up his sleeve and cried, "Mither, mither, dinna ye ken *that*?" In a moment they were in each other's arms. Ah, brethren, the Lord knows the spot of his children. He acknowledges them by the mark of correction. What God is doing to us in the way of trouble and trial is but his acknowledgment of us as true heirs, and the marks of his rod shall be our proof that we are not bastards, but true sons. He knows the wounds he made when he was exercising his sacred surgery upon us. By this also shall you yourself be made to know that verily you are a piece of gold, or else you would not have been put into the furnace. This will be one "expected end" of the Lord towards us; let us rejoice in it.

God's dealings with us work out *our good in every way*. The Lord said (Jer. xxiv. 5), "I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." We know that "All things work together for good to them that love God." Thus from day to day the Lord gives us "an expected end."

In the twelfth verse of the chapter from which we have taken our text, we see that *prayer is quickened* by the Lord's work towards them. "Then shall ye call upon me." Our troubles drive us to our knees. If it had not been for Esau, Jacob had never wrestled at Jabbok. I hope we usually go to our closets of our own accord; but ofttimes we are whipped there. Many of the most earnest prayers that ever rise to heaven come from us when we are in bondage under grief. Yes, yes, we must thank God that his trying ways with us have produced in us a prayerful spirit, and a full conviction that we do not pray in vain.

The Lord's end with us is also *our sanctification*. "And I will give them an heart to know me that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." See the value of sanctified afflictions! God grant that from day to day we may feel the expected ends of his corrections! O that we may *grow in grace*, and may *our graces grow*! May we increase in faith, and hope, and love, and patience, and courage, and joy! Surely our knowledge ought to widen out, our consecration should be confirmed, our insight should be clearer, our outlook steadier. We ought by all our experience to become more Christ-like, better reflectors of the heavenly light, fitter temples of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore let us be of good cheer, and rejoice that from day to day we

receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, and thus the Lord's end is being answered.

But to close. We have kept the best wine until now. The thoughts of God towards us are that he will give us "an expected end." *An end*: there is good cheer in that. We do not wish to remain here for ever. We would be diligent in running the race, but we long for the end of it. I should be satisfied to preach here throughout all eternity if I might always bring glory to God; but yet I am glad that there is to be an end of preaching, and a season of pure praise. You, my brethren, love the Lord's work; but still you look forward to the time when you shall take your wage, and have done. It is a comfort that there is an end.

Blessed be God, *it is an expected end*. You ungodly people can only look forward to a dreaded end; an end of your foolish mirth, an end of your carelessness, an end of your boasting. You fear your end. But God will give his people an *expected* end. Suppose that end should be the coming of Christ! Oh, how we long for it! Oh that the Bridegroom would now appear! Oh that he would descend from heaven with a shout, and gather his chosen from the four winds of heaven! "Even so, come quickly!" This is our *expected end*.

If our Lord does not come, and we must be taken home by death, we feel no alarm in looking forward to that expected end. One by one our dear friends go home from this church. As I have often told you, there is never a week without some of our number being taken up. Although I have visited a large number of dying believers, I have never yet visited a member of this church who has expressed the least

fear in his dying moments, or the slightest dismay in the hour of departure. It makes me feel happy to see how the brethren and sisters die: they pass away as if they were going to a wedding rather than to a tomb—as if it were the most joyful thing that ever happened to them to have reached their expected end. Doubts are all driven away when you see how believers die. Grace is given them, so that they surmount the weakness of the hour. The Lord Jesus in them triumphs over pain and death. Our venerable brother and elder, Mr. Court, who has just passed away at a great age, looked forward to his departure with peaceful hope. He used to speak of it as a thing from which he had no shrinking. There was no discontent or murmuring about him; no feverish eagerness to quit the infirmities of this life; but, on the other hand, a happy foresight of his end, and a joyful expectation of it. Some of the Lord's saints have not yet received dying grace; but then they are not going to die yet. Brethren, saints are prepared to go before they go. Our Lord does not pluck his fruit unwisely. Foolish people may tear the green apples from the tree with a pull and a wrench, and bruise them as they throw them into the basket; but our Lord values his fruit, and so he waits until it is quite ripe, and then he gathers it tenderly. When he puts forth his hand, the fruit bows down to it, and parts from the bough without a strain. When the believer comes to die, it will not be to an end which he feared, but to an end which he expected.

Brethren, when death is past, then comes that expected end which shall never end. What will the first five minutes in heaven be? There is a larger question: what will thousands of years in heaven be? What will

myriads of ages be? My disembodied spirit will at the first be perfectly happy in the embraces of my Lord; but in due time the resurrection day will dawn, that this body may rise again in full glory. Then there will be a re-marriage of soul and body, and we shall be perfected, even as our risen Lord. Oh, the glory of that expected end!

What will it be when our completed manhood shall be introduced to the society of angels, to the presence of cherubim and seraphim? What will it be to see him whom we have loved so long? What to hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father"? What joy to sit at his right hand! Yesterday, my heart was ravished with that text, "They cast their crowns before the throne." If ever I am privileged to have a crown at all, how gladly will I lay it down at the feet of my Lord! Is not this your mind? How sweetly will we sing, *Non nobis, Domine!* "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory." Brethren, what singing it will be when we shall be loosened from the deadening influence of the flesh! How will we praise when we have done with these tongues of clay, which hamper us so much! I would speak greatly to my Lord's praise, but I fail. Strip me of this house of clay, and I will sing as sweetly as any of the birds of paradise that carol forever in the Tree of Life above. Do you not feel a longing to be up and away? Indulge these longings, for thus you will be drawn nearer to the understanding of the text,—“to give you an expected end.” All that you are suffering, all that you are enjoying, all that God sends you, has this one design, to make you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Ending this discourse, I would ask you to plight

your troth that you will meet me where glory dwelleth, in Emmanuel's land. We shall soon be with the angels. The Lord is thinking of us, and he is expecting us home. Our Lord Jesus is waiting for his wedding-day, which is his expected end. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him."

VIII.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

June 5, 1887.

“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.”—DEUTERONOMY xxxiv. 5.

WHAT an honorable title! Moses is distinguished as “*the servant of Jehovah.*” He was this of choice, for he willed to be the servant of God rather than to be great in the land of the Pharaohs. Such he was most perseveringly throughout the whole of his life. Such he was most intensely, for he waited upon God for his directions, as a servant waits upon his master; and he endeavored to do all things according to the pattern which was shown him in the holy mount. Though he was king in Jeshurun, he never acted on his own authority, but was the lowly instrument of the divine will. Moses was faithful to God in all his house, as a servant. You neither see him overstepping his office nor neglecting it. His reverence for the Lord’s name was deep; his devotion to the Lord’s cause was complete, and his confidence in the Lord’s word was constant. He was a true servant of God from the time when he was appointed at the burning bush until the hour when he surrendered his keys of office to his successor, and climbed the appointed mount to die. Oh that you and I may so live as to approve ourselves servants of God! Unto as many as

have received him our Lord Jesus has given power to become the sons of God, and this is our great joy; but as sons we aspire to serve our Father, even as his great First-born Son has done, who took upon himself the form of a servant that he might accomplish his Father's good pleasure for his church. Let us with good will do service unto our Father who is in heaven, seeing it is but our reasonable service that we should lay out ourselves for him who has made us his sons and daughters. Redeemed from the slavery of sin, let us, as the Lord's freemen, cry unto him henceforth, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds."

But servant of God as Moses was, *he must die*. It is the common lot of men. Only two have passed out of this world into the abodes of glory without fording the stream of death. Moses is not one of the two. Even had he crossed the Jordan into Canaan, he would in due course have died in the land. We might have expected that he would live on till the people were settled in Canaan: but it seemed right unto the Lord God that on account of his one slip he should die outside of the Promised Land, like the rest of the people. Caleb and Joshua alone of all that generation who came out of Egypt were permitted to possess the land towards which they had journeyed for forty years. If that one offence lost him the privilege of entering the earthly Canaan, there may have been still more powerful reasons why he should not enter the heavenly Canaan without experiencing the change of death. He must not make a third with Enoch and Elias, but he must die and be buried. Such will probably be our lot in due season. Breth-

ren, it may be that we shall not die, our Lord Jesus may come before we fall asleep; but if he do not come speedily, we shall find that it is appointed unto all men once to die. We shall pass from this world unto the Father by that common road which is beaten hard by the innumerable feet of mortal men. Since we must die, it is well to meditate upon the solemn future. Moses shall be our teacher in the art of dying. We will consider his decease, in the hope that so our fears may be removed, and our desires may be excited. There is a Pisgah where we must yield up the ghost, and be gathered to our fathers: may we climb to it as willingly as did Moses, the servant of God!

The manner of Moses' death was exceedingly remarkable. I suppose that no subject presents a finer field for oratory than the sublime decease of the prophet; but we have nothing to do with oratory: our object is spiritual and practical profit. Poets might well expend their noblest powers in depicting this strange scene of the man of God alone on the mountain's brow, with a view of Canaan at his feet, and himself in holy rapture passing away into the eternal state. We are not poets, but simple believers, desiring to learn some holy lesson from the death of one who, though the greatest of men, knew no higher honor than to be the servant of the Lord. Oh that the Spirit of grace and truth, who has come to us by Christ Jesus, may help us to find instruction in the death of him who brought the law from the mouth of God to men!

I. We are told in the text that "Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." This I shall read

first, as meaning that Moses died on Pisgah, ACCORDING TO THE WARNING OF THE LORD.

His death was long foreseen. Moses knew some time before that he must die without setting foot in Canaan. Read in the first chapter of Deuteronomy his own account of the sin of the people at Meribah, and the Lord's sentence then and there pronounced: "Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord." "Also," adds Moses, "the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither."

His death outside the Promised Land did not come upon him at all as a surprise. He had to see his sister Miriam, first of the great trio, fall asleep; and next, he was called to go up to Mount Hor and disrobe his brother Aaron of his priestly garments which he placed upon Eleazar, his son. Moses had also to see the whole of the generation that came out of Egypt with him buried in the wilderness. The ninetyeth psalm is his, and it is a sort of Dead March; fit hymn for a nation whose track was marked by countless graves. Because of unbelief "their carcasses fell in the wilderness." Only Caleb and Joshua remained, the sole survivors of the great host which crossed the Red Sea. The Great Lawgiver had thus abundant pledges of his own departure, and he must have had in his brother's death a rehearsal of his own. Have not we also had many warnings? Are we ready?

Concerning his death in the land of Moab, it is nat-

ural to remark that *it was exceedingly disappointing*. He had been for forty years engaged in leading the people to the land of promise: must he die when that country was within a day's march? It was his life's work, for which he had been prepared by forty years in Egypt, where he became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and by another forty years in the solitary wilderness, where he kept sheep and held high fellowship with God. His third forty years had been spent in freeing Israel from Egypt, training them to become a nation, and conducting them to the land of promise: must he now expire before the nation entered in? What years his had been! What a life was that of Moses! How glorious was the man who had confronted Pharaoh, and broken the pride of Egypt! How tried and troubled a man had he been while called to carry all that nation in his bosom, and care for them as a shepherd careth for his sheep! His was a task that well-nigh broke him down; and had not the man Moses been made very meek by the indwelling Spirit of the Lord, and had he not also been graciously sustained by fellowship with God, his task had proved too heavy even for him. Yet, after all that toil in fashioning a nation, he must die before the long-expected conquest. It was a bitter disappointment when first the sentence pierced his heart. He had known one great disappointment before; for Stephen tells us that when he smote the Egyptian, "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not." Then, when his brethren had refused him, he fled into the land of Midian, a rejected leader, a patriot whose heroism had only brought forth from his countrymen the contemptuous question, "Who

made thee a prince and a judge over us?" But this denial of entrance into Canaan was a greater disappointment still. To have toiled so long, and to reap no harvest; to see the land, but not to enter it; to bring the tribes to the Jordan's brink, and then to die in Moab after all: it was a grievous disappointment. Brethren, are we ready to say as to our most cherished hope, "Thy will be done"! Are we holding our life's dearest purpose with a loose hand? It will be our wisdom so to do.

Apparently it was a severe chastisement. His offence was but one, and yet it excluded him from Canaan. We have not time to describe in detail the sin of Moses. It would appear to have been a sin of unbelief occasioned by his feeling so intensely for and with the people. Moses was thoroughly knit to Israel. When they sinned he interceded as for himself. When Jehovah made him the offer that he would make of him a great nation, he declined it solely from his love to Israel. He lived for the nation, and for the nation he died. Remember how once he went so far as to say, "If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." In every way he was of the people, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh: Israel was hidden in his heart; and out of that master passion of sympathy with the people came the weakness which at last made him speak unadvisedly with his lips. They strove with God; and though Moses never yielded a point to them in that wicked contest, yet that unbelief so far influenced him that he spake in anger, and said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then, "the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believe me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, there-

fore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Numb. xx. 12). Three times in the Book of Deuteronomy Moses tells the people, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." It was not so much that which Moses did personally which involved him in judgment, but he suffered because of his being mixed up with Israel. As the Lord had spared the people aforetime for Moses' sake, it became necessary that, when he in any measure shared in their great sin of unbelief, he should be chastened for their sake as well as his own. His faith had saved them, and now his unbelief, being backed by theirs, secures for him the sentence of exclusion from the land.

My brethren, when I think of this severity of discipline towards so faithful a servant as Moses, I do exceedingly fear and quake. Truly, "the Lord our God is a jealous God." We are sure that he is never unjust, we are sure that he is never unduly severe: we do not for a moment impugn the righteousness or even the love of our God in this or any other act; but he is terrible out of his holy places. How true it is that he will be sanctified in them that come near to him! Behold and wonder! That highly-favored servant, Moses, though accepted always, in the economy of grace, yet must he come under the rule of the house, and feel the chastising hand if he transgresses. Hence the sentence of exclusion is passed. As he had once joined that unbelieving generation by manifesting a measure of hasty unbelief, he must now share their doom, and die on Moab's side of Jordan. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." Oh for grace to behave ourselves aright in thine house! Lord, teach us thy statutes, and keep us in thy way.

Beloved, *it seemed a great calamity* that Moses must die when he did. He was an aged man as to years, but not as to condition. It was true he was a hundred and twenty years old, but his father and his grandfather and his great grandfather had all lived beyond that age, two of them reaching a hundred and thirty-seven, so that he might naturally have expected a longer lease of life. This truly grand old man had not failed in any respect ; his eye was not dim, neither had his natural force abated, and therefore he might have expected to live on. Besides, it seems a painful thing for a man to die while he was capable of so much work ; when, indeed, he was more mature, more gracious, more wise than ever. The mental and spiritual powers of Moses were greater in the latter days of his life than ever before. Notice his wonderful song ! Observe his marvellous address to the people ! He was in the prime of his mental manhood. He had been tutored by a long experience, chastened by a marvellous discipline, and elevated by a sublime intercourse with God ; and yet must he die. How strange that, when a man seems most fit to live, it is then that the mandate comes, "Get thee up into the mountain and die" !

Naturally speaking, it seemed a sad loss for the people of Israel. Who but Moses could rule them ? Even he could scarcely control them. They were a heavy burden even to his meekness : who else could so successfully act as king in Jeshurun ? Without Moses to awe them, what will not these rebels do ? It was a grave experiment to place a younger and an inferior man in the seat of power, when the nation was entering upon its great campaign. It would need all the faith and discretion of Moses to conduct the conquest

of the country, and to divide their portions to the tribes. Yet so it must be : precious as his life was, the word went forth, "Get thee up into the top of Pisgah : for thou shalt not go over this Jordan." Even thus to the best and most useful must the summons come. Who would wish to forbid the Lord to call home his own when he wills ?

The sentence was *not to be averted by prayer*. Moses tells us that he besought the Lord at that time, "O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand : for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might ? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." This was altogether a very proper prayer : he did not plead his own services, but he urged the former mercies of the Lord. Surely this was good pleading, and he might have hoped to prevail for himself, seeing he had formerly been heard for a whole nation. But no. This boon must be denied him. The Lord said, "Let it suffice thee ; speak no more unto me of this matter." Moses never again opened his lips upon the subject. He did not beseech the Lord thrice, as Paul did, in his hour of trouble ; but seeing that the sentence was final he bowed his head in holy consent.

Brethren, he had often asked a greater thing than this of the Lord his God. Once he had even dared to say, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," and he was heard even in that high request. The Lord placed him in the cleft of the rock, and made all his goodness pass before him. Yet now he begs for a comparatively small thing, and it is refused. What a mercy that it is in the small things of this life that our re-

quests may be denied, but in things which touch the kingdom of the Lord our prayer never returns empty! All heaven is open to our bended knee, though for wise ends and purposes a Canaan on earth may be closed against us. All sufficient grace was given though the thorn was not removed: Moses the servant of the Lord died, but triumphed over death.

When I thought of the trial of Moses in being shut out of the land, I found myself unable to read the chapter which lay open before me, for I was blinded by my tears. How shall any of us stand before a God so holy? Where Moses errs how shall we be faultless? Never servant more favored of his Lord, and yet even he must undergo a disappointment so great as a rebuke for a single fault. The flower of his life is broken off from the stalk for one act of unbelief. To be exalted so near to God is to be involved in a great responsibility. A fierce light beats about the throne of God. He that is the king's chosen, admitted to continual intercourse with him, must stand in awe of him. Well is it written, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." An offence which might be passed over as a mere trifle in an ordinary subject, would be very serious in a prince of the blood, who had been favored with royal secrets, and had been permitted to lean his head upon the bosom of the king. If we live near to God we cannot sin without incurring sharp rebukes. Even the common run of the elect must remember that word, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Much more must the elect out of the elect hear such warning. God did, in effect, say to Moses, "Thou only have I chosen of all mankind to speak with me face to

face, and, therefore, since thou hast failed in thy faith after such intercourse with me, it behoves me, in very faithfulness and love towards thee, to mark thy failure with an evident token of displeasure." The discipline of saints is in this life. I doubt not but many a man's life has come to an end when he wished it to be continued, and he has missed that which he has striven for, because of an offence against the Lord in his earlier years. We had need walk carefully before our jealous God, who will not spare sin anywhere, and least of all in his own beloved. His love to them never faileth, but his hatred of their sin burns like coals of juniper. Foolish parents spare the rod, but our wise Father acteth not so. Walk circumspectly. O ye heirs of life eternal, for "even our God is a consuming fire." The Lord give us to feel the sanctifying power of this passage in the story of the great Lawgiver!

II. But now I have to conduct you to a second point of view. Moses, the man of God, died in the land of Moab, "according to the word of the Lord," that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT.

All the details of the death of Moses had been ordered of the Lord. Time, place, and circumstances were arranged by God. So, brethren, it is appointed unto us where we shall die, and when we shall die. We speak of certain persons as having "died by accident," and we sometimes bewail the deaths of Christian men as premature; but in the deepest sense it is not so. God hath marked out for us the place where and the time when we must resign our breath. Let this suffice us. That which is of divine appointment should be to our contentment. We do not believe in the *Kismet* of blind fate; but we believe in the predestination of infi-

nite wisdom, and therefore we say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

Moses died according to the divine appointment, that is also *according to an appointment which is very general amongst God's people*. He died without seeing the full result of his life-work. If you look down the list of the servants of God you will find that the most of them die before the object which they had in view is fully accomplished. It is true that we are immortal till our work is done; but then we usually think that our work is something other than it is. It never was the work of Moses to lead Israel into the promised land. It was his wish, but not his work. His work he saw; but his wish he saw not. Moses did really finish his own proper work; but the desire of his heart was to have seen the people settled in their land; and this was not granted him. Thus David gathered together gold and silver wherewith to build the Temple, but he was not to build it; Solomon, his son, undertook the work. Even thus great reformers rise and speak the truth, and cause colossal systems of error to tremble; but they do not themselves utterly destroy these evils. Their successors continue the work. Most men have to sow that others may reap. The prayer of Moses is fulfilled to others as well as to himself: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." We must not hope to engross all things: let us be content to do our own part in laying the foundation upon which other men may build in due course. It is according to the divine appointment which links us to each other that one plants and another waters, one brings out of Egypt, and another leads into Canaan.

And I may here notice that Moses thus "died accord-

ing to the word of the Lord," *for a deep dispensational reason.* It was not for Moses to give the people rest, for the law gives no man rest, and brings no man to heaven. The law may bring us to the borders of the promise, but only Joshua or Jesus can bring us into grace and truth. If Moses had given them Canaan, the allegory would have seemed to teach us that rest might be obtained by the law ; but as Moses must be laid asleep, and buried by divine hands, so must the law cease to rule that the covenant of grace may lead us into the fulness of peace.

"Moses may lead to Jordan's flood,
But there surrenders his command ;
Our Joshua must the waves divide,
And bring us to the promised land.
Trained by the law, we learn our place,
But gain th' inheritance by grace."

Thus there was a mysterious reason why Moses should die in Moab according to the eternal purpose of God. Not without such divine decree shall any other of the servants of the Lord depart out of the camp of Israel. We also shall in life and death answer some gracious purpose of the Lord. Are we not glad to have it so ? Yea, Lord, thy will be done.

III. I have conducted you a little out of the dark now, and the sky is clearing around us. In the third place, Moses died ACCORDING TO THE LOVING WISDOM OF THE LORD. It was a meet thing, a wise thing, and a kind thing that Moses should not go over Jordan.

First, by so doing *he preserved his identity with the people for whom he had cared.* For their sakes he had forsaken a principedom in Egypt, and now for their sakes he loses a home in Palestine. He had suffered with them, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater

riches than all the treasures of Egypt"; and he had been with them in all that great and terrible wilderness, afflicted in all their affliction, bearing and carrying them in God's name all his days; was it not meet that he should at last die with them? He had been all along the mirror of self-denial: neither for himself, nor his brother, nor his son had he sought honor: he lived only for others, and never for himself, and his death was agreeable with his whole life; for he leads others to the border of Canaan, but enters it not himself. He sleeps with the older nation; he ends his career on the hither side of Jordan, like all the generation which he had numbered when they came out from under the iron hand of the Egyptian tyrant. It seemed fit that one so identified with the people should say, "Where thou diest I will die." Are not we satisfied to take our lot with the holy men and women who already sleep in Jesus?

Moreover, Moses might be well content to die there and then, since he was thus *released from all further trial*. Surely he had known enough of sorrow in connection with that rebellious nation! Forty years was enough for a pastorate over a people so fickle and perverse. Surely he must have blessed the hand that removed his shoulder from the burden! His was no life of luxury and ease, but of stern self-denial, and perpetual provocation. What trial he endured! What self-restraint he exercised! What a lonely life he led! Are you surprised to hear me say that? With whom could he associate? Even Aaron, his brother, was a poor comrade for such a man. Remember how he failed Moses, when that man of God was absent for forty days upon the Mount with God. It was Aaron that made the golden calf, and this clearly proved his

spiritual inferiority to Moses. The man of God had to watch even his brother who stood next to him. With whom could he take counsel? Who would talk with him as a friend? He dwelt apart, and shone as a lone star. It is significant that he died alone, for so had he lived. Aaron had tender attendants to disrobe him : he who put the vestments on most fitly aided to take them off ; but the crown which Moses wore, God himself had set upon his brow, and no human hand must remove it. Surely this burdened watcher of Israel must have been glad when his watch was over ! Surely this lonely man, after one hundred and twenty years of service, must have felt it a happy release to be admitted to the glorious society of heaven ! As Noah was a preacher of righteousness for one hundred and twenty years, and then entered into the ark, so Moses, after one hundred and twenty years of service, enters into his rest. Is it not well? Do you grieve that the battle is fought, and the victory is won for ever? We also in our deaths shall find the end of toil and labor, and the rest will be glorious.

Remember, that by his so dying, in the next place he was *relieved from a fresh strain upon him*, which would have been involved in the conquest of Canaan. He would have crossed the Jordan, not to enjoy the country, but to fight for it: was he not well out of so severe a struggle? You think of the clusters of Esheol, but I am thinking of the sieges and the battles. Was it so very desirable to be there? Would Moses really have desired that dreadful fray? Was it not a gracious act on the part of the Commander-in-chief to relieve from his command a veteran who had already served through a forty years' war? The Lord would not put upon Moses a burden so little

agreeable to his age and to his turn of mind as that of executing the condemned Canaanites. Joshua was naturally a man of war; let him use the sword, for Moses was abler at the pen. Recollect that the people of Israel were no better when they reached Canaan than when they were in the wilderness: they suffered defeat through unbelief, and they missed much of their inheritance through self-indulgence. Moses had seen enough of them on one side Jordan, without being troubled with them on the other. The Lord therefore graciously took his servant off the active list, and promoted him to a higher sphere. Let us not be distressed by the fact that he will one day perform the like kindness to us in our turn.

But, you will say, surely it might have been as well if Moses had lived to have seen Joshua win the country. Would this have been desirable? Do active men find much delight in sitting still and seeing others take the lead? Moreover, had Moses lived, he would before long have felt those infirmities from which he had for one hundred and twenty years been screened: is it so very desirable to survive one's powers, and to be a tottering old man amidst constant battles? Peace suits age: age agrees not with war's alarms. Had Moses remained the leader of the people, he might have injured the glory of his former days. Have we not seen aged men survive their wisdom? Have not their friends wished that they had closed their career long before? Have we not seen pastors, once able and efficient, holding to their pulpits to the injury of the churches they once edified? Oh that men would have wisdom enough not to undo in their age what they have wrought in their youth! Moses is removed before this evil can happen to him, and it is well.

“But,” you say, “perhaps he might have been there to watch with joy the victories of Joshua.” Is that always an easy thing to one who has been in the front rank himself? At least, it is not an unmingled privilege: there is a mixture of trial in the blessing. Moses did not “lag superfluous on the stage.” He did not survive his work. Who wishes to do so? He passed away on the crest of the wave before any ebb had set in, or any weakness had been discoverable. He died so as to be missed. Israel wept for him, and no man said that he had lived too long. That prayer of his, after all, was a mistake. What would have been the particular joy of merely treading the soil of Canaan? The land looked far more beautiful from Pisgah than it would have done had he stood by Jericho; assuredly at the present day you and I, who have never seen Palestine, have a much more delightful idea of it than those who have endured its noon-day heats and midnight frosts. Moses had more joy in gazing upon it from above than in actually warring among its hills.

IV. I must hasten on to say that while the death of Moses thus exhibits the loving wisdom of God, the way in which he died abundantly displays the GRACE OF GOD.

After Moses had been well assured that he must die, you *never hear a complaint of it*, nor even a prayer against it. Remember, that he himself wrote the story, and it is charming to see how he recorded his own fault, his prayer to be allowed entrance into Canaan, and its denial: had he murmured he would have recorded this also. He seems to me always to write about Moses as if he were somebody he had known: he is strictly impartial in his praise or blame

of himself. He calls himself "king in Jeshurun," he says that the man Moses was very meek, and yet he records his outbursts of anger. No man was ever less self-conscious, or lived so little for himself, as Moses did : therefore, when once the Lord told him he must die, he acquiesced without a word.

Most fitly the old man immediately *called forth all his energies to finish his work*. You will find in the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers that he took in hand a war: "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people" (Num. xxxi. 1, 2). He would die warring with Israel's adversaries, and obeying Israel's Lord. Certain ordinances to be observed in war he delivered to Eleazar, and he supervised the division of the spoils. Fearing lest the tribes which had settled east of Jordan might excuse themselves from future labors, he stirred up Reuben and Gad, and gained from them a promise to go over armed with their brethren till the whole land was conquered. Furthermore, he prepared his manuscripts, not for the press, but to be put away in the ark and to be preserved. He would have his testimony to future generations complete before his hand was paralyzed by death. He knew that he was to die, but he did not sit down and weep, nor sulk, nor give himself up to bitter forebodings of the hour of departure. He served his God with increased vigor, and was more than ever alive as life neared its close. Then he preached his best sermon. What a wonderful sermon it was! How he poured out his heart in pleading with the people! The sermon over, he began to sing. The swan is fabled to sing but once, and that just before it dies; so did Moses at the last give

us that famous ninetieth Psalm, the song commencing, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God." Moses had no time for poetry while his whole strength was needed in his government; but now he is about to die, his frame of mind is ecstatic; prose will not content him, he must weave his thoughts into verse. In fine, all the faculties of his manhood were drawn out to their utmost in a final effort to glorify the Lord his God. Brethren, is not this a fine fruit of grace? O that we may bear it!

Then he gathered the tribes together and blessed them in prophetic words, pouring out his soul in benedictions. Having already cried to God about his successor, he laid his hands upon Joshua, and charged him, and encouraged him, and bade the people help him in all his service.

He did all that remained to be done, *and then went willingly to his end.*

"Sweet was the journey to the sky,
The wondrous prophet tried.
'Climb up the mount,' says God, 'and die;'
The prophet climbed, and died.

Softly his fainting head he lay
Upon his Maker's breast;
His Maker kissed his soul away,
And laid his flesh to rest."

We, my brethren, also expect to die. Let us not fear it, but let us arouse ourselves to labor more abundantly; let us preach more boldly, let us sing more sweet-

ly, let us pray more ardently. As flowers before they shed their leaves pour out all their perfumes, so let us pour out our souls unto the Lord. Let us live while we live, and dying, let us die unto the Lord. May our life-work close as sets the sun, looking greater when he sinks into the west than when he shines at full meridian height!

V. Now let us conclude by noticing, in the last place, that Moses died "according to the word of the Lord," that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE FAVOR.

His death leaves nothing to regret; neither is any desirable thing lacking. Failing to pass over Jordan seems a mere pin's prick, in presence of the honors which surrounded his departing hours. His death was the climax of his life. He now saw that he had fulfilled his destiny, and was not as a pillar broken short. He was ordered to lead the people through the wilderness, and he had done so. There they stood on the borders of their heritage, a people moulded by his hand. By his instrumentality they were, so to speak, a regenerated race, far more fitted than their fathers to become a nation. The degrading results of long bondage had been shaken off in the free air of the desert. They were all young men, vigorous, hardy, and ready for the fray. It is grand to pass away while there is nothing of infirmity yet seen, nothing left undone, and nothing allowed to fail through too long persistence in office. We may say of Moses, that he did

" His body with his charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

Moreover his successor was appointed, and was just below in the plain. It was not his son, but it was his servant who had become his son at length. He did

not leave his flock to be scattered, his building to be thrown down. Happy Moses, to see his Joshua! Happy Elijah, to see his Elisha! No trembling, for the ark of the Lord mars such a departure. The succession of workers lies with the Master, not with the workers. We are to train men "who can teach others also"; but our own especial work we must leave with the Lord. Yet as Paul was glad of Timothy, so must Moses have rejoiced over Joshua, and felt in his appointment, a release from care.

He died, moreover, in the best company possible. Some men expire most fitly in the presence of their children; their strength has laid in their domestic duties and affections, and their children fitly close their eyes: but for the man Moses there was no true kindred. You hear that he married an Ethiopian woman; but you know nothing about her. You know that he had sons, but you do not hear a word about them except their names: their father was too engrossed in honoring his God to crave office for them. As we have seen, he lived as to men, alone, and as to men he died alone. But God was with him, and in the peculiarly near and dear society of God he closed his life on the lone peak. If he suffered any weakness no mortal eye beheld it. So far as his people were concerned, "he was not, for God took him." Pisgah was to him the vestibule of heaven. God met him at the gates of Paradise.

As he died, the sweetness of his last thought was indescribable. Before his strengthened eye there lay the goodly land and Lebanon. The Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan. Yonder is Carmel, and beyond it he sees the gleam of the utmost sea. Through breaks of the mountains he sees Bethlehem and Jebus,

which is Jerusalem. Then, like Abraham, he saw the day of Christ, and by faith beheld the track of the incarnate God. Thy land, O Immanuel, appeared before him, and he saw it in all its spiritual bearings. What a vision! Yet even this melted into a nobler view. As we have seen in our childhood by the light of a magic lantern one view dissolve into another, so did the lower scene gradually melt away into another; and the servant of the Lord found himself removed from the shadows which his eye had seen into the realities which eyes cannot behold. He had gone from Canaan below to Canaan above, and from the vision of Jerusalem on earth to the joy of the City of Peace in glory. The Rabbis say that our text means that Moses died at the mouth of God, and that his soul was taken away by a kiss from the Lord's mouth. I do not know, but I have no doubt that there was more sweetness in the truth than even their legend could set forth. As a mother takes her child and kisses it, and then lays it down to sleep in its own bed; so did the Lord kiss the soul of Moses away to be with him for ever, and then he hid his body we know not where.

Whoever had such a burial as that of Moses? Angels contended over it, but Satan has failed to use it for his purposes. That body was not lost, for in due time it appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Jesus concerning the greatest event that ever transpired. Oh that we also may pass away amid the most joyful prospects; heaven coming down to us as we go up to heaven! May we also attain unto the resurrection from among the dead, and be with our Lord in his glory!

Soon our turn shall come. Do we dread it? As we are favored to serve our Lord we shall be favored

to be called home in due season. Let us be ever ready ; yea, joyfully ready. When we are dying we shall see not the land of Naphtali and Ephraim, but the covenant ; and the infinite provisions of its promises will be outspread before our soul, as Canaan at the feet of Moses. Wrapt in happy enjoyment of precious promises, we shall with surprise find ourselves ushered into the place where the promises are all fulfilled.

“ There shall we see his face,
And never, never sin,
But from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

To the believer it is not death to die. Since Jesus has died and risen again, the sting of death is gone ; wherefore let us prepare ourselves to climb where Moses stood, and view the landscape o'er. Amen.

IX.

LOVING PERSUASION.

June 26, 1887.

“Persuading them concerning Jesus.”— ACTS xxviii. 23.

WHEREVER Paul is, he has but one errand; and whenever Paul preaches, he has but one subject. Once at Athens, when he addressed the Areopagus, he seemed to wander a little from his main point, and no special good followed, but this experience bound him all the faster to the cross; for he afterwards said to the Corinthians, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” The cross of Christ was his one theme. He henceforth hammered on the head of this one nail. Whatever faculty, ability, and power he had, he turned its whole current into this one channel, and cried, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Brethren, we have not strength enough for a dozen things, we have not even strength enough for two. What little vigor we have, let us use it all in one direction; let us say, “For me to live is Christ.” You could not have dropped into Paul’s lodging at any time during the two years that he was at Rome before the emperor liberated him, without hearing him preach of the “things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” Every arrow in his quiver

was aimed at the one target; and he knew how to hit the white of it each time. "This one thing I do," said he. His motto was—All for Jesus, and for Jesus only.

The one topic the apostle brought forward in different ways. When addressing the chief men of the Jews in Rome, observe that he expounded, and testified, and persuaded. These three methods were needful among the people of those days; and they are the wisest that can be adopted to bring men to Christ even now. We must *expound*, set forth, explain, make clear the gospel. We must tell men what the Word of God means, in the plainest possible language; for they need to know what it is that the revelation from heaven has really declared. The more of true exposition the better. We must also *testify*. We must bear witness to the effect which the gospel has had upon our heart and life. The telling out of our personal experience is a means of grace to our hearers. Paul was wont to describe his own conversion. He told the story of how the Lord appeared unto him in the way to Damascus; and he did this so often, that Luke and others, who were his companions, must have heard it several times. Indeed, it was a tale so worth the telling that none could weary of hearing it. Paul knew that personal witness-bearing has a great weight upon the minds of men; and, therefore, he was not afraid of being accused of egotism, for he knew that he did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and the narrative of his conversion was not intended at all to honor himself, but to glorify that blessed Christ, who out of heaven had spoken to him, and called him to be a chosen vessel to bear his word to the Gentiles. There is much force in such a per-

sonal testimony. Oh, that you and I, after having explained the gospel, may always be able to tell out something from our own experience which will prove it! Men love, when they hear of a medicine, to meet with a case of cure; and in the same way, when they hear of religion, they desire to hear from persons like themselves what that religion has done for them. Brethren, we should speak of Jesus in a happy, grateful, earnest manner, and commend him as a Saviour to our fellow-sinners. Yet this was not all; our apostle was not satisfied simply to expound and testify; his heart was full of love to his countrymen; and, therefore, he *persuaded* them. He entreated, he besought, he implored his hearers to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Paul was speaking to Jews, he fetched the arguments of his persuasion from their own holy books. I have no doubt that he had spread out on the table before him the books of Moses, and the various rolls of the prophets: to these he continually referred his Jewish friends. We cannot this morning go into that argument, neither is there need; for you are not Israelites, and you are already well acquainted with that mode of argument. Paul must have been a master in that line of things. I think I hear him now explaining to them concerning Jesus as he appeared in Melchisedec; here was a wide subject. Hear him open up to them the justification of Abraham by faith; and then the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, and the two covenants. I should have liked to have heard him speak of Isaac and Ishmael, and of Jacob and Esau, and the electing love of God as seen in those memorable instances. With what rapture would Paul speak of the sacrifices, reminding them that "without

shedding of blood there is no remission," and pointing them to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel! How he would then open up to them the meaning of the daily offerings, the mystery of the day of atonement, the sacred teaching of the entering in of the high priest within the veil! How earnestly would he remind his brethren that the continual repetition of the sacrifices was a sure evidence that they had not made the consciences of the offerers clean from a sense of sin, or they would have ceased to be offered! How heartily would he direct their minds to that one sacrifice which Jesus presented once for all when he bowed his head in death! I think I can hear him turning to that memorable passage in Isaiah which so much engaged the attention of the Ethiopian eunuch, and opening up to his audience the person and suffering of the Lord Jesus, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter for our sakes, and for us was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. With such arguments men who believed those books to be inspired ought to have been convinced. It is clear that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. Had not their hearts been so gross, their eyes so blind, and their ears so dull, they must have believed in Jesus; but as it was, many of the Jewish leaders went away in a pet, quarrelling with those who believed, and angry with Paul. None are such bitter enemies of the cross as those who, by a firm resolve, determine to be blind to its glory and dead to its power.

Thus Paul, you see, in his pleading, adapted himself to his audience. He had acquired the knack of being all things to all men, that he might save some. In pleading with Israel, for whose salvation his heart's

desire and prayer ever rose to heaven, he followed the wisest and most hopeful course. He argued from what they did believe: he urged the truth they already knew as a reason why they should admit another truth; or, rather, let me say, he showed them that the gospel of Jesus was involved and contained within those truths which were assuredly accepted among them. He spent the whole day at this; but at this time I shall not pursue his line of reasoning, because it is not needed among you, and you have need of persuasion of another sort. It would ill become me to beat the air, or exhibit before you a mimic combat with an absent adversary. No, my friends, I have before me another sort of people, whose condition needs another treatment. I long for your immediate conversion. With earnest prayer have I come hither, seeking with tears and entreaties to win men from destruction. Others have joined me in supplication, and therefore I look to the Holy Spirit for his gracious work, that my hearers may be convinced of sin and led to Jesus.

I. LET ME FIRST DESCRIBE THOSE WHOM WE WOULD PERSUADE. I will so picture you that some of you will see yourselves as in a looking-glass. I shall not talk to a people far away, but to you who sit before me this day.

I would persuade those persons who believe the truth notionally, and yet do not receive it in their hearts. It seems a strange thing that men should believe, and yet not believe. This peculiar form of unbelief is current among us at this day. It is strange that men believe the Bible, and even profess to believe it all, and yet they act as if it were all a dream. If we preach the deity of Christ, it is an easy task; for they never

thought of questioning it. If we proclaim the need of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, they are agreed; for they never doubted it. Whatever doctrine it is that we can prove by the Word of God, they bow before it. They are not guilty of scepticism. Alas! they hardly give the matter thought enough to observe any difficulties. Avoiding the whirlpool of questioning, they run upon the rock of indifference. Their belief holds the truth as spices and linen preserve a mummy. The gospel is to them a dead monarch, honorably interred in the sarcophagus of their reverence. It has no more power over them than if they disbelieved it. As a medicine retained upon the druggist's shelf has no effect upon the body, so is the gospel stowed away in the minds of many so as to have no result in their lives. This must be a sad misuse of a divine revelation. It cannot have been sent to us to be without effect. O my hearers, if you believe that Jesus is the Saviour, why is he not *your* Saviour? If you believe that repentance and faith bring salvation, why have *you* not repented and believed? If you believe that there is a God that heareth prayer, why do you not pray? If you know that you must be born again, how is it you are content without the new birth? How is it that with regard to the hearing of the word you come and you go, not once nor twice, but year after year, and yet you are unmoved and unchanged? Age steals over some of you, and finds you not an inch in advance of what you were in your youth. If you did not believe the Word of God, I could understand your conduct; but if you do believe it, why do you not receive it practically into your hearts? If you were awakened by a cry of fire, and you were sure that your

own house was burning, I should expect to see you hurrying from the flame. I could understand you keeping to your bed if you were persuaded that the cry was the mere idle noise of boys in the street; but if you believed it to be a real alarm, I should be perplexed if I saw you seeking a little more sleep. If you were told that you had a disease about you which would soon bring you to your grave, and that a certain physician could work a speedy cure; if you did not believe the report, I should expect that you would suffer in the patience of despair; but if you did believe in the repute of the physician, and in the cures which he had wrought, I should not be able to understand you if you did not go to him, and seek relief. O sirs, how is it that you are willing to continue in sin when Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost? How strangely you act! Alas! Human nature has become monstrous: it is false to its own instinct of self-preservation, and acts in a suicidal manner. Oh that you were wise! If Jesus tells you the truth, why do you not believe him? If Jesus be himself the truth, why do you not receive him? Why do you need persuading to a course so proper, so reasonable?

Many need persuading, who intend soon to practice what they have believed, but the time has not fully come. You have a resolve in your heart that before long you will turn to Christ; but the unhappy thing is, that you have for many a day retained this resolve, and it has grown mouldy within your bosoms. When we met you as a child you meant to love the Lord. When we conversed with you as young men and women you were very hopeful, and your parents felt that their prayers would soon be heard. You seemed so thoughtful and impressible, and you had such good intentions, that we

all reckoned upon your speedily being decided. You are much older now, but you are not more advanced: still with you it is all intentions and intentions. I wish there could be a time fixed in your mind when it should be either "yes," or "no." "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How long shall Jesus be put off, and the world be served? Some of you are not a whit more hopeful than you were twenty years ago. Let me recall the expression: you are a deal more hopeless, for you are becoming gospel-hardened. Appeals which once pierced your hearts do not even wound you now. As water rolls down a marble slab and leaves nothing behind, so it is now with what you hear. The sword of the Spirit is as sharp as ever, but your heart has hardened like steel in the annealing. Oh, you that are for ever resolving and resolving, and yet abide where you are—you are the people whom at this time I would persuade to decision!

Some have gone further still: for they are *earnestly seeking salvation, but they have chosen a wrong method of search, which can only end in disappointment.* I would fain persuade them to leave off seeking the living among the dead. Salvation is by immediate trust in Jesus; but you want to feel up to a certain degree of anguish, or you want to change yourselves up to a certain point of excellence: in a word, you want to save yourselves first, and then come to Jesus. You are trying to make the lantern shine before a candle is put within it. "You want to renew your own nature, and then to come to Christ for a new heart: you are not content to come to Jesus as sinners. All will be done for you if you will but put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; but this you fail to do. If I knew how to put the gospel more plainly than I do, God knows

I would not be slack to do so; but yet, with all the plainness of our preaching, our hearers will persist in going about after this and that hope of their own, instead of at once accepting salvation by Jesus Christ. Oh, that you were so persuaded of the things concerning Jesus, as to lay hold of them at once! You need to be led to see that salvation is all finished, and that you have but to take it as a free gift. "Christ hath died," and in that expression lies your life. Believing in Jesus, you have eternal life the moment you believe. You need to be persuaded to accept this as the present truth, the most precious truth you can ever hear. If you will receive it, happy will it be with you; but if you continue running hither and thither after salvation, and neglecting the Lord Jesus, you shall perish in your sins. Why will you pursue the will-o'-the-wisp, and shut your eyes to the day-star? Why will you follow the mirage, and leave the lone well in the desert whose sweet waters will for ever remove your thirst? Oh, that you were rightly persuaded at this very moment!

One other class I should like to deal with this morning: I would fain persuade *those who have tried a long time to do their best, and, having never succeeded, are falling into a state of despair*. Theirs is not a painful despair; I wish it were so; but, alas! they have fallen into a lethargy, a paralysis of the mind with regard to heavenly things. "It is no good," they say, "I cannot get peace, I shall never find pardon. A child of God I cannot hope to be; I might as well expect to be a peer of the realm!" Therefore they sit down in sullen hopelessness. They mutter that if it is to be it will be, and it is of no use caring. They are rendered insensible by the frost-bite of their horrible idea of fate.

Oh, that they had been warmed by the sunlight of belief in a gracious predestination! Men die by insensibility as surely as by passion. I fear that some of you will never awake until in hell you lift up your eyes. I have had you laid on my heart, and the thought of your danger presses me down into the dust at this time. I feel but little joy, even in these jubilee-times, when I think about those of you who are so near to the kingdom, and yet are aliens from it. I must persuade you with all my heart to come to Jesus, for if you perish in the light, you will perish with a vengeance. If you go down to destruction from the borders of salvation, it will be sevenfold destruction. If you die with Jesus weeping over you, as he did over Jerusalem, you will die horribly. If you sink down to hell with that word in your ears, "How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" your sinking will be like that of a millstone in the sea. If you perish under a gospel ministry, it were better for you that you had never been born.

These are the people I long to persuade. O Divine Spirit, work through me at this time, and let the eternal purposes of love be fulfilled! O my brethren in Christ, I entreat you, by the love of Jesus, strive together with me in your prayers for this blessing!

II. Our second point shall be: LET US PERSUADE THEM. But are we right in trying to persuade men? Are not human hearts too hard to be broken by so feeble a hammer as our persuasion? Yes, I most solemnly believe they are: but that is not the question. "What is the use of persuading them, if you know that they will not be won by your persuasion in and of itself?" Well, brethren, I feel safe in doing what Paul did

I will not stop to solve difficulties, but merely say, Paul persuaded, and so will I. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "Oh," says one. "we may persuade awakened sinners, but not dead sinners!" But I reply that Paul persuaded these chief men of the Jews, some of whom never believed in Jesus, for their hearts were gross, and their eyes were blinded. Paul persuaded them, though they were judicially blinded. He knew that they were living men, and that they were possessed of reason, even though they had no grace; and so he appealed to what remained in them, and he persuaded them. Again I say, I will do what Paul did. But I know, as Paul also knew, that all the human persuasion in the world will fall short of the mark without divine power. I never dreamed that my persuasion was of the slightest avail without the Holy Ghost. If the Holy Spirit will cause the persuasion to reach the inward ear, then it will prevail, and not else: if he will drive home the persuasion, so that it touches the heart which is encased in the fat of worldly pleasure, indifference, prejudice, and pride, then men will yield, and men will be persuaded indeed. But the Holy Spirit will do this! He has done it; he is doing it; he will do it; and therefore we persuade. Brothers, why should we not expect the Holy Spirit to display his power? We have sought it with fervent prayer. The preacher comes on this platform neither without his own prayers, nor without your prayers; and so we are persuaded that we shall have divine help. Therefore, O sinners, "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God!"

Once more, in the name of God, I return to the work to which God has ordained me. I would persuade you

concerning Jesus. *To what shall I persuade you?* My dear hearers, I would persuade some of you to *think of Christ*, the Lord's anointed; to think of Jesus, the Saviour. I would have you read about him, and study his person, work, and character. Turn to the four evangelists, and see what he was, and what he did. Read carefully and reverently the inspired lives of Jesus. Faith often comes to men when they are thinking about Christ. The cross not only claims faith, but it creates it. To sit and see the Son of God die on the cross is the way to get faith. Some of you, perhaps, have been sitting still, and trying to believe. That is a very absurd thing to do, for faith is not a first effort of the mind, but it follows upon other states. Know what is to be believed, and why you are to believe it. Know who he is in whom you are to put your trust, and why he deserves to be trusted. Shut yourselves up a bit: read the Bible carefully, and then meditate, and meditate, and meditate. This is the way in which faith grows up in the soul, even as plants spring from seed sown and watered. Faith cometh by hearing or reading—the hearing or reading of the Word of God. “Incline your ear,” saith the Lord God, “and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.” May I not persuade you to think seriously and often about the way of salvation by Jesus Christ?

The next thing I would persuade you to is to *trust in him*. Trust is the essence of saving faith. Faith is not merely believing facts, but trusting to a person. God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin: he becomes to me my propitiation when I trust him. Can you not trust Jesus? Is he not worth trusting? Where else can you trust? The moment you trust in him you are saved. You know that: why not prove it

true by personal faith? To trust is the meaning of that text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." There is life in a glance of trust. You are living men when you look to Christ, or trust him. "But," you say, "I do not feel——" Away with your buts! What have I said about your feelings? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life." Salvation lies in the simple act of trusting in your Saviour. Oh, that I could persuade you to trust!

And when you have trusted him, I want to persuade you concerning Jesus that you should *avow that trust*. The Lord puts it thus: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Be baptized, therefore, in obedience to his command. Come out boldly, and say, "I am on the Lord's side." Do not attempt to go sneaking to heaven along some back lane; come into the king's highway; take up your cross and follow him. He that will not confess him before men, Christ will not confess before his Father who is in heaven. What is there to be ashamed of in Jesus? If Christ be your Saviour, the very least thing you can do is to say, "I am his disciple," and openly to declare yourself on his side. He puts it so—"He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." I would persuade you to an open confession; may God the Holy Spirit lead you at once to the doing of it!

And if I were happy enough to persuade you so far, I would persuade you *to obey Christ throughout life*. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Seek to lead a holy, harmless, blameless life. Endeavor to avoid all sin, endeavor to copy the Son of God throughout

your whole course, making him your model and your Master, your leader and your Lord. Some of you who have openly confessed Him, still need to be persuaded to a closer obedience. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The way of complete obedience is the way of happiness; and many professors miss the joy of their Lord—I am half afraid they will miss his acceptance at the last, because they are not careful to walk in his ways, and to glorify his holy name by a holy life. I would persuade you then to think of Christ, to trust in Christ, to confess Christ, and to obey Christ.

What shall be my arguments? I can summon battalions of them *from Jesus himself*. He is the Son of God: therefore, trust him. He loves with a supreme love; shall we not love him who first loved us? He died! Oh, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, I would persuade you to turn to him! Every drop of blood of the great Substitute, every sigh and every cry of the Redeemer, is an argument with men that they should not neglect his salvation, but should come and trust him. He is risen, and lives again: despise not the risen Saviour; come and bow before him who is proved to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. He has gone up into his glory. He sitteth at the right hand of God: obey him, then, for all power is given to him in heaven and in earth. He will shortly come, and you and I (in how short a time!) will have to stand before his judgment-seat. Believe not those who would bid you trifle with a future state, and think little of the judgment to come. O men and women, a short time will swallow us all up in the grave, and we shall pass into another world; in little more than the twinkling of an eye we

shall hear the last trumpet heralding the Judge! Then shall we hear the summons, "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!" Then I shall have to give an account of this morning's sermon. What a weight to have to preach to all of you, and to have your blood laid at my door if I preach not faithfully to you! O God Most Merciful, grant to all of us that knowing that Christ will come, and come to judgment, we may lay this fact to heart, and be persuaded to put our trust in him, who will otherwise pronounce upon us the sentence of eternal perdition!

I may summon another battalion of arguments *from your own state and need*. O sirs, you that are unconverted are yet in your sins, encrusted with years of gathered foulness! Your sins hang about you now like the white scales of leprosy: they are on your brows, and in your hearts. There is but one that can cleanse these defilements: it is Jesus. Why do you not fly to him? Moreover, remember the sinfulness of your nature. You will go on to sin; your heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; you will not cease from sinning. Jesus alone can give you a new heart and a right spirit. He is the one physician able to cure your fatal disease. Will you not cry to him, "Jesus, Eumannel, heal me with a touch"? Will you refuse to be made whole? I pray you do not so.

Even now you are conscious of a wearisome restlessness: you are not happy, you have forebodings of an awful future. You know you are not at peace. From all the gay and gallant sights you have seen this week you have turned away sick at heart: you need something better, and more substantial. Be assured there is no rest for you but in Christ: he saith unto you,

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Turn not away from the one and only rest of your souls ; but this day accept him ; take his yoke upon you, and learn of him, and you shall find rest unto your souls. As you love your souls, as you desire happiness here, as you desire blessedness hereafter, I beseech you to lay hold on eternal life in Jesus.

If I wanted more arguments there are many quarters from which they would come at my bidding. I would try to find them *in your hopes and fears*. I do not know to whom I may be speaking now ; but, my friend, there is a glorious future before you if Christ becomes yours. Burdened sinner, there is a peace which passeth all understanding if you will look to Jesus ! O distracted, tempest-tossed soul, there is a haven of rest for you if you steer to Christ ! I would fain persuade you now to come to him whose gift is heaven below and then heaven above. I myself have tried him. Blessed was the day in which I fell into his arms. O happy hour in which I looked to him and was lightened ! Truly, my face is not ashamed, nor is my tongue ashamed of my Lord, nor is my understanding ashamed to believe his gospel, though all men should cast doubt upon it. I have no other hope under heaven, no other joy in heaven, but my Saviour and his infallible word. If you knew the comfort which my soul finds in Jesus you could not desire a better. O you young people, I would especially say to you—come early to Jesus, for they that seek him early shall find him with supreme delight ! You will come to die soon ; here is the antidote of death. The strongest and youngest will one day have to go up-stairs and gather up his feet in the bed.

Oh, what a comfort and joy it gives you in that hour to have the presence of your Lord! After death comes the for ever and ever. What bliss to be "for ever with the Lord"! That endless fellowship with Jesus means an immeasurable weight of glory. Surely these arguments ought to prevail with you. They will, if your reason is made reasonable.

How ought I to plead with you when I have told you these arguments? I ought to plead with you in a manner far superior to that which I have yet reached. Alas! I cannot persuade you as I would. I think the preacher should feel a burning desire for his hearers' conversion, and even an intense anguish of heart for the immediate salvation of those to whom he speaks. To this I have attained: I long for your salvation most vehemently. I would say anything, and say it anyhow, if I could but win you to immediate faith in the Lord Jesus. The desire is so strong upon me that should I not succeed on this occasion, I will try again; and if, unhappily, I should fail again, I will continue at the work as long as you live and I am able to reach you. O my hearers, I cannot endure that you should die in your sins! I will go before God in secret, and lay your case before him, and beg him to interpose. We cannot let you be damned, my hearers. It is too dreadful. We cannot stand by and see you lost. If you are so insane as to refuse the Saviour, those who have sober judgments will still continue to pray for you, and to weep in secret places because of your sins. If we cannot prevail with you for God, we will endeavor to prevail with God for you. I would have every person in this place act reasonably, righteously, truthfully, honestly to his own soul; and if he does so, he will be persuaded

this day to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and cast himself at his pierced feet.

III. Now I have to speak a few words upon another subject, with the same object. It is this—
LET US LAMENT THE FACT THAT OUR PERSUASIONS FAIL IN CERTAIN CASES. Paul found it so; and where this chief of apostles was baffled, can I wonder if I fail? The sower went forth to sow; he was a model sower; the Master put him in his parable as a pattern: he could not have sown better seed, nor have sown it better, and yet some of his seed fell on stony places, some fell by the wayside, and yet a third fell among thorns. Only one portion of what he sowed appears to have fallen upon good soil. Let me speak to those of you who will, I fear, be our failures. I grieve to think there should be any such. It is a sad business *in the present* for a man to be living without Christ. We pity abject poverty; but this is worse than the worst poverty. We are sorry for the friendless; but none are so forlorn as those who have not Jesus for a friend. No ignorance is so terrible as ignorance of the Saviour; no blindness so deplorable as blindness towards the Lord Jesus. To live without Christ is not life, but a breathing death. You are in the hey-day of your youth, perhaps, and think that you are enjoying pleasure; but indeed it is not worth the name. You are eating husks and missing the kernels. Your mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot: it flares, and blazes up, but there is no heat in it; it dies down in a moment, and leaves nothing but a few ashes. If I had to die like a dog I should still wish to live the life of a Christian. Faith is good for this life. There is more solid joy in five minutes' fellowship with Christ than in a thousand years of

revelling in the palaces of kings. You are a loser in a thousand ways by remaining an hour without Christ. It is a wretched business to be God's enemy, to miss rest of heart, and to be a stranger to the Holy Spirit.

It is a wretched business to be now neglecting the great salvation; but this is not all: your present hardness of heart reveals a good deal as to *your past life*. If you will not be persuaded of the things concerning Jesus, it shows that your heart and conscience have been injured by years of wilful resistance to the power of truth. You have been stopping up your ears, and that is why you are so deaf. You have been scaling up your eyes, or you would not be so utterly blind. You have been hardening your heart against gracious appeals, or else you would not now be made of such hardened steel. Remember those years of broken Sabbaths, and see what they have done for you; they have blinded and hardened you. Remember the neglected house of God, and see how callous you have now become. Think of the times in which you have heard the gospel, and refused its tender warnings, instructions, and invitations, and see what has come of those refusals. You are now well nigh insensible. Oh, that black, black past!

We are also fearful about you, because your past and present foretell *a future* of continued and increasing blindness, deafness, and insensibility. I fear for some of you that you have been judicially hardened by the withdrawal of the Holy Ghost, that you are also hardened by the terrible influence of Satan, and that you have also allowed the suicidal influence of self-will to sear your conscience, as with a hot iron. You are such a trifle that it is hard to get a serious thought into your mind; you are so fickle that none

of our hopes concerning you are ever realized; you are so superficial that it is difficult to make any deep impression upon you. You crush beneath your feet the eggs of better things: you stifle the good thoughts which sometimes are born within you. Holy teachings fall upon your mind as sparks which drop into a pool of water. You have almost come to a condition of mind in which you are like a man covered with armor, from which the sharpest arrows glance off. O God, let it not be quite so, we beseech thee, with any one here!

This is all the sadder because it suggests such tremendous sin, and such overwhelming punishment. I cannot tell you what must be the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, neither can you yourselves conceive its full horror. They gave themselves up unto unmentionable lusts, until at last God was so provoked that he would bear it no longer, and he resolved to destroy the filthy ones, and the place which they had polluted. He pulled up the sluices of his wrath, and cataracts of fire poured down from heaven upon the unclean ones. Heaven sent down fire and brimstone instead of silver showers. Then were the sinners burned up on a sudden, and not a wreck, either of the Sodomites or of their city, was left. This was an unparalleled instance of divine justice, for their sin had broken all bounds. What their doom must be in the day of judgment I leave you to imagine; but remember these words and weigh them well—"It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you." Dear boy that you were upon your mother's knee, fair girl that you were in the Sunday-school class, speaking so hopefully in your younger days, you will have to give

an account for the delays which are ruining you. Hearer as you were, and as you are this morning, listening respectfully to God's ambassador—if you refuse the monitions of infinite love, what must become of you? Those were not my lips, remember, which first spoke those dagger-like words; but they fell from the lips of the Prince of love who died for men. It is Christ himself who said to those who heard his word and saw his mighty works, and yet refused to repent, "Woe unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you."

Yes, I have endeavored to persuade you, and if I must labor in vain, I shall turn away with great reluctance, mourning that I may not be allowed to be a blessing to you. I quit you with lingering foot-step, and bow regretfully before the Lord, crying, "Who hath believed my report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Why will you die? Why will you rush upon such a destruction? Oh, that you were wise!

IV. But now, to change my strain, that we may not finish upon so sad a note, LET ME PERSEVERE IN PERSUADING OTHERS. Notice that the apostle was not hindered in his work by sorrowing over those who rejected his persuasion, but he turned to others of whom he had better hope. Having spoken a solemn parting word, he said, "Be it known, therefore, unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." To these Gentiles for two years Paul continued "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." He kept to his work, but he changed his audience. We also will preach the gospel to those who have not enjoyed Christian privi-

leges. We preach Jesus to you who were not born of godly parents, nor brought up under Christian care. We preach free grace and dying love to you who hitherto have not attended the house of prayer, nor cared to hear the word of everlasting life. If the moral refuse mercy, we declare it to the immoral. The Jews had been religious in profession; but as they refused Christ, our apostle preached him to the Gentile population in Rome, which in Paul's day was worse than London, if worse can be. Rome was an infamous den of every villany beneath the sky; but Paul without hesitation preached Christ to all the Romans that he could reach; to soldiers, and to slaves, to Cæsar's household, and to runaways. He believed in the adaptation of the gospel to the most degraded. With no weapon but the cross, he attacked a city sunk in idolatry and vice. So we also, when repulsed by you who think yourselves exceedingly respectable, turn with hope to those who have been drunkards, swearers, thieves, harlots, and the like. To the chief of sinners we present the great salvation. To you is the word of this salvation sent. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."

Ye far-off ones, that dwell out of the reach of the common means of grace, the arm of mercy is stretched out to you. You who are not a people shall be made a people, and she that was not beloved shall be called the beloved of the Lord. Paul said of the Gentiles, "They will hear it"; and we have the same confidence concerning many great transgressors. I thank God that those who never heard the gospel before have heard it in this great house, and have sc

heard it that they have at once yielded to its demands, and accepted its provisions. Many who have been without hope, and without God, and without fear of eternal things, have heard the doctrine of free, rich, sovereign mercy, and have turned at once from their sins, and laid hold upon the hope set before them.

Oh that more would come! They will come: "They will hear it." The divine purpose is that the Lord will provoke the outwardly religious by saving those who made no pretence of godliness. Because you were invited to the feast, and would not come, therefore the master of the house, being angry, issues a wider invitation, and gives the grand command, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and as many as ye find compel them to come in." If *you* will not have salvation, others will. Christ shall not be disappointed; he shall not die in vain; his Spirit shall not strive without success. "A seed shall serve him." Jesus shall have a people saved by his precious blood. I hope that many such are brought here this morning on purpose to be blessed. I hope they will leap forward to catch at the gracious message. Oh that some of them would cry out, "I believe, I trust, I rest in Jesus"! If it be so, go your way, God has saved you. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, thou art born of God. Thou hast been worldly, sinful, abundantly wicked; yet, if thou wilt have Christ now, have him, and welcome. If thou art now drawn towards him, come at once, and linger not. "For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." May his sweet love persuade you in the things concerning Jesus! Amen.

X.

THE BLOOD SHED FOR MANY.

July 3, 1887.

“This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”—MATTHEW xxvi. 28.

THE Lord Jesus Christ was then alive, sitting at the table; and yet, pointing to the cup filled with red wine, he said, “This is my blood, which is shed for many.” This proves that he could not have intended that the wine was literally his blood. Surely it is no longer necessary to refute the gross and carnal dogma of transubstantiation, which is obviously absurd. There sat the living Lord at the supper, with his blood in his veins, and therefore the wine could not literally be his blood. Value the symbol, but to confound it with the thing symbolized would draw into the idolatrous worship of a piece of bread.

Our Lord spoke of his blood as shed, when as yet the nails had not pierced his hands and feet, and the spear had not broached his side. Is not this to be accounted for by the fact that our Lord was so taken up with the thought of our redemption by his death that he speaks of that as done which he was so resolved to do? Enjoying loving intercourse with his chosen disciples, he spake freely; his heart did not study accuracy so much as feeling; and so, in speech as in feeling, he antedated his great work of atonement, and spoke of it as done. To set forth the future intent of

the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper he must of necessity treat his death as an accomplished fact ; and his complete absorption in his work made it easy and natural for him to do so. He ignores moods and tenses ; " his work is before him."

By the use of such language, our Lord also shows us the abiding presence of the great sacrifice as a power and an influence. He is the " Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and therefore he speaks of his blood as shed. In a few hours it would be literally poured forth ; but long ages before, the Lord God had regarded it as done. In full confidence in the great Surety that he would never draw back from the perfect fulfilment of his engagements, the Father saved multitudes in virtue of the future sin-offering. He communed with myriads of saints on the strength of the purification which would in the fulness of time be presented by the great High Priest. Could not the Father trust his Son ? He did so, and by this act set us a great example of faith. God himself is in very deed the Father of the faithful, seeing that he himself reposed the utmost confidence in Jesus, and because of what he would yet do in the pouring out of his soul unto death, he " opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." What, my soul ! canst thou not trust the sacrifice now that it has been presented ? If the foresight of it was enough for God, is not the consummation of it enough for thee ? " Behold the Lamb of God," who even before he died was described as taking away the sin of the world. If this was so before he went to Calvary, how surely is it so now that he has said in verity and truth, " It is finished " !

Dear friends, I am going to preach to you again upon the corner-stone of the gospel. How many times

will this make, I wonder? The doctrine of Christ crucified is always with me. As the Roman sentinel in Pompeii stood at his post even when the city was destroyed, so do I stand to the truth of the atonement though the church is being buried beneath the boiling mud-showers of modern heresy. Everything else can wait, but this one truth must be proclaimed with a voice of thunder. Others may preach as they will, but as for this pulpit, it shall always resound with the substitution of Christ. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Some may continually preach Christ as an example, and others may perpetually discourse upon his coming to glory: we also preach both of these, but mainly we preach Christ *crucified*, to the Jews, a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are saved, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

You have before you a cup filled with wine, which Jesus has just blessed, and presented to his disciples. As you look into its rosy depths, hear him speak of the cup as his blood; for thus he would teach us a solemn lesson.

I. Note, first, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST. The vital importance of the great truth of the death of Christ as a vicarious sacrifice, is set before us in this cup, which is the memorial of his blood shed for many.

Blood represents suffering; but it goes further and suggests suffering unto death. "The blood is the life thereof," and when blood is too copiously shed death is suggested. Remember that in the sacred supper you have the bread as a separate emblem of the body, and then the wine as a separate symbol of the blood:

thus you have a clear picture of death, since the blood is separated from the flesh. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death." Both acts are essential.

Upon the death of Christ you are invited to fix your attention, and upon that only. In the suffering of our Lord unto death we see the boundless stretch of his love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Jesus could not be more loving to us than to yield himself unto death, even the death of the cross. O my Lord, in thy bloody sweat, and in the piercing of thy hands, and feet, and side, I see the highest proof of thy love! Here I see that Jesus "loved me, and gave himself for me." Beloved, I beg you to consider often and lovingly the sufferings of your Redeemer, unto the pouring out of his heart's blood. Go with him to Gethsemane, and thence to the house of Caiaphas and Annas, and then to Pilate's hall, and Herod's place of mockery! Behold your Lord beneath the cruel scourges, and in the hands of the executioners upon the hill of shame. Forget not one of the sorrows which were mingled in the bitter cup of his crucifixion—its pain, its mockery, its shame. It was a death reserved for slaves and felons. To make its deep abysses absolutely bottomless, he was forsaken even of his God. Let the darkness of "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," bear down upon your spirit, till, as you sink in awe, you also rise in love. He loved you better than he loved himself! The cup means love, even to the shedding of his blood for you.

It means something more. We have called our Lord, in our hymn, "Giver of life for life," and that is what this cup means. He gave up his life that we

might live. He stood in our place and stead in the day of Jehovah's wrath, receiving into his bosom the fiery sword which was unsheathed for our destruction. The pouring out of his blood has made our peace with God. Jehovah made the soul of his only-begotten an offering for sin, that the guilty might be cleared. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." That is what the wine in the cup means: it means the death of Jesus in our stead. It means the blood poured out from the heart of the incarnate God, that we might have fellowship with God, the sin which divided us being expiated by his death.

Our blessed Saviour would have us hold his death in great reverence: it is to be *our chief memory*. Both the emblems of the Lord's Supper set forth the Saviour's death. This peculiarly Christian ordinance teaches nothing if it does not teach this. Christ's death for men is the great doctrine of the church. We profess ourselves partakers of the merit of his death when we come to this table; our Lord's death is then remembered, shown, declared, testified, and trusted in. Evidently the Lord Jesus means us to treat the fact of his death as a truth to be made pre-eminently prominent: he would not have instituted an ordinance specially to remind us of the shedding of his blood, if he had not regarded it as the forefront of his whole earthly career.

The other ordinance of our holy faith also sets forth our Lord's death. Are we not "Buried with him by baptism into death?" Is not baptism an emblem of his being immersed beneath the waves of sorrow and death? Baptism shows us that participation in Christ's suffering by which we begin to live; the Lord's Sup-

per shows us that participation in Christ's suffering by which that life is sustained. Both institutions point to his death.

Besides, beloved, we know from Holy Scripture that this doctrine of the death of Christ is the very core of Christianity. Leave out the cross, and you have killed the religion of Jesus. Atonement by the blood of Jesus is not an arm of Christian truth; it is the heart of it. Even as the Lord said of the animal, "The blood is the life thereof," so is it true of the gospel, the sacrificial death of Jesus is the vital point of our profession. I know nothing of Christianity without the blood of Christ. No teaching is healthy which throws the cross into the background. The other day, when I was inquiring about the welfare of a certain congregation, my informant told me that there had been few additions to the church, although the minister was a man of ability and industry. Furthermore, he let me see the reason of the failure, for he added, "I have attended there for several years, and during all that time I do not remember hearing a sermon upon the sacrifice of Christ. The atonement is not denied, but it is left out." If this be so, what is to become of our churches? If the light of the atonement is put under a bushel, the darkness will be dense. In omitting the cross you have cut the tendon Achilles of the church: it cannot move, nor even stand, when this is gone. Holy work falls to the ground: it faints and dies when the blood of Jesus is taken away. The cross must be put in the front more than ever by the faithful, because so many are unfaithful. Let us endeavor to make amends for the dishonor done to our divine Master by those who deny or dishonor his vicarious sacrifice: let us abide steadfast in this faith while oth-

ers waver, and preach Christ crucified if all else forbear. Grace, mercy, and peace be to all who exalt Christ crucified!

This remembrance of the death of Christ must be a *constant remembrance*. The Lord's Supper was meant to be a frequent feast of fellowship. It is a grievous mistake of the church when the communion is held but once in the year, or once in a quarter of a year; and I cannot remember any Scripture which justifies once in the month. I should not feel satisfied without breaking bread on every Lord's-day. It has come to me even oftener than once a week; for it has been my delight to break bread with many a little company of Christian friends. Whenever this Supper is celebrated, we declare that "Christ died for our sias according to the Scriptures." We cannot think of that death too often. Never was man blamed in heaven for preaching Christ too much; nay, not even on earth to the sons of God was the cross ever too much spoken of. Outsiders may say, "This man harps only upon one string." Do you wonder? The carnal mind is enmity against God, and it specially shows its hatred by railing at the cross. Saintly ones find here, in the perpetual monotony of the cross, a greater variety than all other doctrines put together. Preach you Christ, and Christ, and Christ, and nothing else but Christ, and opened ears shall find in your ministry a wondrous harmony of linked sweetnesses, a charming perfectness of all manner of delicious voices. All good things lie within the compass of the cross; its outstretched arms overshadow the whole world of thought; from the east even unto the west it sheds a hallowed influence; meanwhile, its foot is planted deep in the eternal mysteries, and its top pierces all earth-born clouds, and rises

to the throne of the Most High. Christ is lifted up upon the cross, that he may draw all men unto him; and if we desire to draw them, this must be our magnet.

Beloved, the precious blood of Christ should be had by us *in vivid remembrance*. There is something to me most homely about that cup filled with the fruit of the vine. The bread of the Supper is the bread of our common meal, and the wine is the usual attendant of feasts. That same pure blood of the grape which is set on our sacramental table I drink with my friend. Look at those ruby, ruddy drops, suggesting your Lord's own blood. I had not dared to invent the symbol, nor might any man of mortal mould have ventured on such a thing, lest he should seem to bring that august death down to our lowly level; but in infinite condescension Jesus himself chooses the symbol, and while by its materialism he sets forth the reality of the sacrifice, by its commonness he shows how freely we partake thereof. He would not have us know him after the flesh, and forget the spiritual nature of his griefs; but yet he would have us know that he was in a real body when he bled, and that he died a real death, and became most truly fit for burial; and therefore he symbolizes his blood, not by some airy fancy, or mystic sign, but by common wine in the cup. Thus would he reach us by our eye and by our taste, using two gates of our nature which lead up to the castle of the heart, but are not often the King's roadway thereto. O blessed Master, dost thou arrange to teach us so forcibly? Then let us be impressed with the reality of the lesson, and never treat thy passion as a thing of sentiment, nor make it a myth, nor view it as a dream of poesy. Thou shalt be in death most real to us, even as is that cup whereof we drink.

The dear memorials of our Lord's blood-shedding are intended for *a personal remembrance*. There is no Lord's Supper except as the wine touches the lip, and is received into the communicant's own self. All must partake. He says, "drink ye all of it." You cannot take the Lord's Supper by deputy or representative; you must each of you approach the table, and personally eat and drink. Beloved, we *must* come into personal contact with the death of Christ. This is essential. We must each one say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." In his blood you must be personally washed; by his blood you must be personally reconciled to God; through his blood you must personally have access to God; and by his blood you must personally overcome the enemy of your souls. As the Israelite's own door must be smeared with the blood of the Paschal lamb, so must you individually partake of the true Sacrifice, and know each one for himself the power of his redemption.

As it is personal, it is a charming fact that it is *a happy remembrance*. Our remembrance of Christ is chastened with repentance, but it is also perfumed with faith. The Lord's Supper is no funeral meal, but a festival; most fitly do we begin it with the giving of thanks, and close it with a hymn. It is by many called the "Eucharist," or the giving of thanks: it is not a fast, but a feast. My happiest moments are spent with the King at his table, when his banner over me is love. The death of Christ is a well-spring of solemn joy. Before our great Sacrifice died, the best token of his death was the blood of bulls and of goats. See how the victims writhe in death! The sacrificial knife does terrible work at the foot of the altar; it is hard to stand by, and see the creatures bleed. After our

Lord's death was over, the blood of animals was not the type, but the blood of the grape. That which was terrible in prospect is joyous in remembrance. That which was blood in the shedding is wine in the receiving. It came from him with a wound, but it comes to us with a blessing. His blood is our song in the house of our pilgrimage, and it shall add the best music to our heavenly harmonies as we sing before the throne: "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory for ever and ever." If our Lord Jesus has made the memory of his love to be more sweet than wine, let us never turn from it as though it had become a distasteful theme. Let us find our choicest pleasures at the cross.

Once more, our Saviour meant us to maintain the doctrine of his death, and the shedding of his blood for the remission of sins, even to the end of time, for he made it to be of *perpetual remembrance*. We drink this cup "until he comes." If the Lord Jesus had foreseen with approbation the changes in religious thought which would be brought about by growing "culture," he would surely have arranged a change of symbols to suit the change of doctrines. Would he not have warned us that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, men would become so "enlightened" that the faith of Christendom must of necessity take a new departure, and therefore he had appointed a change of sacramental memorials? But he has not warned us of the coming of those eminently great and wise men who have changed all things, and abolished the old-fashioned truths for which martyrs died. Brethren, I do not believe in the wisdom of these men, and their changes I abhor; but had there been any ground for

such changes, the Lord's Supper would not have been made of perpetual obligation. The perpetuity of ordinances indicates a perpetuity of doctrine. But hear the moderns talk—"The Apostles, the Fathers, the Puritans, they were excellent men, no doubt, but then, you see, they lived before the uprise of those wonderful scientific men who have enlightened us so much." Let me repeat what I have said. If we had come to a new point as to believing, should we not have come to a new point as to the ordinances in which those beliefs are embodied? I think so. The evident intent of Christ in giving us settled ordinances, and especially in settling this one which so clearly commemorates his bloodshedding, was that we might know that the truth of his sacrifice is forever fixed and settled, and must unchangeably remain the essence of his gospel. Neither nineteen centuries, nor nineteen thousand centuries, can make the slightest difference in this truth, nor in the relative proportion of this truth to other truths, so long as this dispensation lasts. Until he comes a second time without a sin-offering unto salvation, the grand work of his first coming must be kept first and foremost in all our teaching, trusting, and testifying. As in the southern hemisphere the cross is the mariner's guide, so, under all skies, is the death of our Redeemer the polestar of our hope upon the sea of life. In life and in death we will glory in the cross of Christ, and never be ashamed of it, be we where we may.

II. Secondly, note well THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WITH THE COVENANT. Read the text again: "This is my blood of the new testament." The translation would be better, "This is my blood of the covenant."

What is this covenant? The covenant is that which I read to you just now in Jeremiah xxxi. 33: "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." See also Jeremiah xxxii. 40: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Turn also to Ezekiel xi. 19: "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh." Look in the same prophecy at xxxvi. 26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." What a Magna Charta is this! The old covenant saith, "Keep the law and live." The new covenant is, "Thou shalt live, and I will lead thee to keep my law, for I will write it on thine heart." Happy men who know their standing under this covenant!

What has the blood of Jesus Christ to do with this covenant? It has everything to do with it, for the covenant could never have been made apart from the blood of Jesus. Atonement was taken for granted in the establishment of the covenant. No one else could have stood as our representative, to fulfil our side of the covenant, except the Lord Jesus Christ; and even he could only have performed that covenant by shedding his blood. In that cup you see the emblem of the blood which made the covenant possible.

Moreover, the blood of Jesus makes the covenant sure. His death has fulfilled man's side of the cove-

nant, and God's part standeth sure. The stipulation of the covenant is fulfilled in Christ, and now the tenor of it is pure promise. Note how the "shalls" and "wills" follow each other in quick succession. An arrangement of absolute grace on God's part towards the undeserving sons of men is now in full action through the sacrifice of Christ.

This covenant of grace, when rightly understood, exerts a blessed influence over the minds of men conscious of sin. The chaplain of a jail, a dear friend of mine, once told me a surprising case of conversion in which a knowledge of the covenant of grace was the chief instrument of the Holy Spirit. My friend had under his charge a man most cunning and brutal. He was singularly repulsive, even in comparison with other convicts. He had been renowned for his daring, and for the utter absence of all feeling when committing acts of violence. I think he had been called "the king of the garotters." The chaplain had spoken to him several times, but had not succeeded even in getting an answer. The man was sullenly set against all instruction. At last he expressed a desire for a certain book, but as it was not in the library the chaplain pointed to the Bible, which was placed in his cell, and said, "Did you ever read *that* Book?" He gave no answer, but looked at the good man as if he would kill him. The question was kindly repeated, with the assurance that he would find it well worth reading. "Sir," said the convict, "you would not ask me such a question if you knew who I was. What have I to do with a Book of that sort?" He was told that his character was well known to the chaplain, and that for this very reason he recommended the Bible as a Book which would suit his case.

“It would do me no good,” he cried, “I am past all feeling.” Doubling up his fist he struck the iron door of the cell, and said, “My heart is as hard as that iron; there is nothing in any book that will ever touch me.” “Well,” said the chaplain, “you want a new heart. Did you ever read the covenant of grace?” To which the man answered sullenly by inquiring what he meant by such talk. His friend replied, “Listen to these words—‘A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’” The words struck the man with amazement, as well they might; he asked to have the passage found for him in the Bible. He read the words again and again; and when the chaplain came back to him next day, the wild beast was tamed. “Oh, sir,” he said, “I never dreamed of such a promise! I never believed it possible that God would speak in such a way as that to men. If he gives me a new heart it will be a miracle of mercy; and yet I think,” he said, “he is going to work that miracle upon me, for the very hope of a new nature is beginning to touch me as I never was touched before.” That man became gentle in manner, obedient to authority, and child-like in spirit. Though my friend has nothing left of the sanguine hopes he once entertained of converted criminals, he yet believes that in this case no observer could have questioned the thorough nature of the work, and yet the only means was the doctrine of the covenant. My rebellious heart is not affected by the fact that God commands me to do this or that; but when he declares free and full forgiveness, and goes on to promise love and favor, and renewal of nature, I feel broken down. How can I rebel against one who does such wonders in me, and designs such great things for me?

“Dissolved by his goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”

How dear and precious this makes the blood of Christ, since it is the blood of the everlasting covenant! Coming under this blessed covenant, we henceforth adore the fulness of that grace which, at the cost of the most precious of all lives, has made this arrangement for unworthy men.

You will perhaps say to me, “Why did our translators use the word ‘testament’ in our Authorized Version?” They were hardly so wise as usual in this instance, for “covenant” is the better word of the two to set forth the original; but yet the idea of a testament is there also. The original may signify either or both. The word “settlement,” which has dropped out of use nowadays, was often employed by our Calvinistic forefathers when they spoke of the everlasting arrangement of grace. The word settlement might take in both covenant and testament—there is a covenant of grace, but the covenant stipulation being fulfilled by our Lord Jesus, the arrangement becomes virtually a testament, through which, by the will of God, countless blessings are secured to the heirs of salvation. The blood of Jesus is the seal of the covenant, and transforms its blessings into bequests of love, entailed upon believers. The settlement or arrangement, by which God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly, and can deal with believers, not on terms of law, but on terms of pure grace, is established by the sacrifice of our Lord. O my brethren, as God’s covenanted ones, drink ye of the cup with joy, and renew your pledge with the Lord your God!

III. A third point comes up in the text very mani-

festly: THE BLOOD HAS AN INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH REMISSION. The text says, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Jesus suffering, bleeding, dying, has procured for sinners the forgiveness of their sins.

Of what sins? Of all sins of every sort and kind, however heinous, aggravated, and multiplied. The blood of the covenant takes every sin away, be it what it may; there was never a sin believingly confessed and taken to Christ that ever baffled his power to cleanse it. This fountain has never been tried in vain. Murderers, thieves, liars, adulterers, and what not, have come to Jesus by penitence and faith, and through the merit of his sacrifice, their sins have been put away.

Of what nature is the remission? It is pardon, freely given, acting immediately, and abiding forever, so that there is no fear of the guilt ever being again laid to the charge of the forgiven one. Through the precious blood our sins are blotted out, east into the depths of the sea, and removed as far from us as the east is from the west. Our sins cease to be; they are made an end of; they cannot be found against us any more for ever. Yes, hear it, hear it, O wide earth! Let the glad news startle thy darkest dens of infamy, there is absolute remission of sins! The precious blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin: yes, turns the scarlet into a whiteness which exceeds that of the newly-fallen snow—a whiteness which never can be tarnished. Washed by Jesus, the blackest of sinners shall appear before the judgment-seat of the all-seeing Judge without a spot.

How is it that the blood of Jesus effects this? The secret lies in the vicarious or substitutionary character of our Lord's suffering and death. Because he stood

in our place the justice of God is vindicated, and the threatening of the law is fulfilled. It is now just for God to pardon sin. Christ bearing the penalty of human sin instead of men has made the moral government of God perfect in justice, has laid a basis for peace of conscience, and has rendered sin immeasurably hateful, though its punishment does not fall upon the believer. This is the great secret, this is the heavenly news, the gospel of salvation, that through the blood of Jesus, sin is justly put away. Oh, how my very soul loves this truth ! Therefore do I speak it in unmistakable terms.

And for what end is this remission of sins secured? My brethren, if there were no other end for the remission of sins but its own self, it would be a noble purpose, and it would be worth preaching every day of our lives ; but it does not end here. We mistake if we think that the pardon of sins is God's ultimatum. No, no ; it is but a beginning, a means to a further purpose. He forgives our sins with a design of curing our sinfulness. We are pardoned that we may become holy. God forgives the sin that he may purify the sinner. If he had not aimed at thy holiness, there had not been so imperative a necessity for an atonement ; but to impress thee with the guilt of sin, to make thee feel the evil which sin hath wrought, to let thee know thine obligation to divine love, the Lord has not forgiven thee without a sacrifice. Ah, what a sacrifice ! He aims at the death of thy sinfulness, that thou mayest henceforth love him, and serve him, and crucify the lusts which crucified thy Lord. The Lord aims at working in thee the likeness of his dear Son. Jesus hath saved thee by his self-sacrificing obedience to justice, that thou mayest yield thy whole

soul to God, and be willing to die for the upholding of the kingdom of love and truth. The death of Christ for thee pledges thee to be dead to sin, that by his resurrection from the dead thou mayest rise into newness of life, and so become like thy Lord. Pardon by blood aims at this. Dost thou catch the thought? If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's intent is to make thee like the Firstborn among many brethren, and to work in thee everything that is comely and of good report. Even this is not all: he hath a further design to bring thee into everlasting fellowship with himself. He is sanctifying thee, that thou mayest behold his face, and that thou mayest be fit to be a comrade of his only-begotten Son throughout eternity. Thou art to be the choice and dear companion of the Lord of love. He has a throne for thee, a mansion and a crown for thee, and an immortality of such inconceivable glory and blessedness that, if thou didst but form even a distant conception of it, no golden apple of earth would turn thee aside from pursuing the prize of thy high calling. Oh, to be forever with the Lord! Forever to behold his face! I fail to reach the height of this great argument! See, my brethren, to what the blood of your Lord destines you. O my soul, bless God for that one cup, which reminds thee of the great sacrifice, and prophesies to thee thy glory at the right hand of God forever!

IV. I cannot forget to notice, in closing, THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH MEN. We are told in the text that this blood is shed "*for many* for the remission of sins." In that large word "*many*" let us exceedingly rejoice. Christ's blood was not shed for the handful of apostles alone. There were but eleven of them who really partook of the blood symbolized by

the cup. The Saviour does not say, "This is my blood which is shed for you, the favored eleven:" but "shed for many." Jesus did not die for the clergy alone. I recollect in Martin Luther's life that he saw, in one of the Romish churches, a picture of the Pope, and the cardinals, and bishops, and priests, and monks, and friars, all on board a ship. They were all safe, every one of them. As for the laity, poor wretches, they were struggling in the sea, and many of them drowning. Only those were saved to whom the good men in the ship were so kind as to hand out a rope or a plank. That is not our Lord's teaching: his blood is shed "for many," and not for the few. He is not the Christ of a caste, or a class, but the Christ of all conditions of men. His blood is shed for many sinners, that their sins may be remitted.

Those in the upper room were all Jews, but the Lord Jesus Christ said to them, "This blood is shed for *many*," to let them see that he did not die alone for the seed of Abraham, but for all races of men that dwell upon the face of the earth. "Shed for many." His eye, I doubt not, glanced at these far-off islands, and at the vast lands beyond the western sea. He thought of Africa, and India, and the land of Sinim. A multitude that no man can number gladdened the far-seeing and fore-seeing eye of the Redeemer. He spoke with joyful emphasis when he said, "shed for many for the remission of sins." Believe in the immeasurable results of redemption. Whenever we are making arrangements for the preaching of this precious blood, let us make them on a large scale. The mansion of love should be built for a large family. Let us not sing—

“We are a garden walled around,
Pray keep the walls most tight and sound.”

Let us expect to see large numbers brought within the sacred enclosure. We must yet break forth on the right hand and on the left. The masses must be compelled to come in. This blood is shed for many. A group of half-a-dozen converts makes us very glad, and so it should; but oh, to have half-a-dozen thousand at once! Why not? This blood is shed “for many.” Let us cast the great net into the sea. You young men, preach the gospel in the streets of this crowded city, for it is meant for many! You who go from door to door, do not think you can be too hopeful, since your Saviour’s blood is shed for many, and Christ’s “many” is a very great many. It is shed for all who ever shall believe in him—shed for thee, sinner, if thou wilt now trust him. Only confess thy sin, and trust Christ, and be assured that Jesus died in thy place and stead. It is shed for many, so that no man or woman born shall ever trust Christ in vain, or find the atonement insufficient for him. Oh, for a large-hearted faith, so that by holy effort we may lengthen our cords, and strengthen our stakes, expecting to see the household of our Lord become exceedingly numerous! He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his righteousness shall he justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. Dwell on that word “many,” and let it nerve you for far-reaching labors.

V. NOW NOTE THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH OURSELVES. Dear hearer, are you among the many? Why are you not? May his grace bring you to trust in him, and you may not doubt that you are among the many. “Ah,” say you, “that is what I am listen-

ing for! How can I partake in the effect of this sacrifice?" Seest thou that wine-cup which I set before thee just now? How art thou to enjoy that wine which fills the cup? Its ruddy drops, how are they to be thine? The matter is very simple. I think I see thee take the chalice in thine hand, and raise it to thy mouth. Thou drinkest, and the deed is done. This is no mystery. Bread and wine are ours by eating and drinking; Christ is ours by our receiving him. The merit of his precious blood becomes ours by that simple child-like faith which accepts Jesus to be our all. We say, "Here it is; I believe in it; I take it; I accept it as my own." It is yours. No man can take from you that which you have eaten and drunk. Christ is yours for ever if you receive him into your heart.

If you have any question as to whether you have drunk, I will tell you how to solve it—*drink again!* If you have been eating, and you have really forgotten whether you have eaten or not—such things do occur to busy men, who eat but little; if, I say, you would be sure that you have eaten, *eat again!* If thou wilt be assured that thou hast believed in Jesus, *believe again!* Whenever thou hast any doubt about whether Christ is thine, take him over again. I like to begin again. Often I find the best way of going forward is to go back to my first faith in Jesus and as a sinner renew my confidence in my Saviour. "Oh," says the devil, "thou art a preacher of the gospel, but thou dost not know it thyself." At one time I used to argue with the accuser; but he is not worth it, and it is by no means profitable to one's own heart. We cannot convert or convince the devil; it is better to refer him to our Lord. When he tells me I am not a

saint, I answer, "Well, what am I, then?" "A sinner," says he. "Well, so are you!" "Ah!" saith he, "you will be lost." "No." say I, "that is why I shall not be lost, since Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I therefore trust in him to save me." This is what Martin Luther calls cutting the devil's head off with his own sword, and it is the best course you can follow.

You say, "If I take Christ to myself as a man takes a cup and drinks the contents, am I saved?" Yes, thou art. "How am I to know it?" Know it because God says so. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." If I did not feel a pulse of that life (as I did not at first), I nevertheless would believe that I had it, simply on the strength of the divine assurance. Since my conversion, I have felt the pulsings of a life more strong and forcible than the life of the most vigorous youth that ever ran without weariness; but there are times when it is not so. Just now I feel the heavenly life joyously leaping within me; but when I do not feel it, I fall back on this: God has said, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." God's words against all my feelings! I may get into a fainting fit, and my circumstances may operate upon my heart, as this hot weather operates upon my body, and make me feel dull and sleepy; but this cannot make the Word of God of none effect. I go back to the Book, and believe the bare Word of the Lord, "He that believeth in him *hath* everlasting life." That is enough for me. I believe, and therefore I live. Our inward experience is fine corroborative evidence, but God's testimony is the best foundation our confidence can have.

I recollect a story told of William Dawson, whom

our Wesleyan friends used to call Billy Dawson, one of the best preachers that ever entered a pulpit. He once gave out as his text, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." When he had given out his text he dropped down to the bottom of the pulpit, so that nothing could be seen of him, only there was a voice heard saying, "Not the man in the pulpit, he is out of sight, but the Man in the Book. The Man described in the Book is the Man through whom is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." I put myself and you, and everybody else out of sight, and I preach to you the remission of sins through Jesus only. I would sing with the children, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Shut your eyes to all things but the cross. Jesus died, and rose again, and went to heaven, and all your hope must go with him! Come, my hearer, take Jesus by a distinct act of faith this morning! May God the Holy Ghost constrain thee to do so, and then thou mayest go on thy way rejoicing! So be it in the name of Jesus.

XI.

A BIT OF HISTORY FOR OLD AND YOUNG.

“And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.”—GENESIS xlviii. 15, 16.

JOSEPH was one by himself. In Jacob's family he was like a swan in a duck's-nest; he seemed to be of a different race from the rest, even from his childhood. He was the son of old age, the son of the elders, that is, a child who was old when he was young, in thoughtfulness and devotion. He reached an early ripeness, which did not end in early decay. In consequence of this Joseph was one by himself in the peculiarity of his trials. Through his brothers' hatred of him he was made to suffer greatly, and at last was sold into slavery, and underwent trials in Egypt of the severest kind. “The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.” But, brethren, see the recompense; for he had blessings which were altogether his own. “His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” He was as distinguished by the favor of God as by the disfavor of his brethren. When Jacob was old and about to die, Joseph gave him a blessing all to himself, in addition to that which he received with his brothers. In the forty-ninth chapter we read, “Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of

Jacob: and hearken unto Israel your father"; and they did so, and received as a family such blessings as their father's prophetic eye foresaw; but before this, "by faith Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph" at a private interview specially granted to them. Had not his tribulations abounded, his consolations would not so have abounded. Do you seem yourself, my friend, to be marked out for peculiar sorrows? Do the arrows of affliction make your life their target, and are you chastened above all other men? Do not be regretful, for the arrows are winged by a covenant love, which designs by their wounds to prepare you for a special work which will lead up to a special benediction from your Father who is in heaven. The day will come when you will be grateful for every smart you now endure; yes, grateful for that bitter pang of unkindness from your brethren, though now it tortures your heart. The abundance of the revelation of God is usually joined with a thorn in the flesh either before or after it. Notwithstanding your grief, there shall yet be born to you as to Joseph, a Manasseh, for God shall make you to forget all your toil, and an Ephraim, for God shall make you fruitful in the land of your affliction. You shall be blessed above all others. "Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." Surely it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth: his shoulders shall be the better able to

bear the government when God shall lay it upon them. Instructed by affliction, the man shall become a father to his people, and a comforter to the afflicted.

Our text tells us that Jacob blessed Joseph, and we perceive that *he blessed him through blessing his children*; which leads us to the next remark, that no choicer favor could fall upon ourselves than to see our children favored of the Lord. Joseph is doubly blessed by seeing Ephraim and Manasseh blessed. Dear young people, to whom I now speak, your fathers can say, "We have no greater joy than this, that our children walk in the truth." If any of you who are unconverted knew the deep searching of heart of your parents about you, I think you would not long be careless and indifferent about divine things; and if you could conceive the flashes of heavenly joy that would light up your parents' hearts if they saw you saved in the Lord, it would be an inducement to you to consider your ways, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. God himself, next to giving to his chosen the covenant of grace, can do them no greater earthly kindness than to call their children by his grace into the same covenant. Will you not think of this?

Those of us who are parents are bound to do our best that our children may be partakers with us of the divine inheritance. As Joseph took Ephraim and Manasseh to see their aged grandfather, let us bring our children where blessings may be expected. Let us be careful of the company into which we take our sons and daughters. Let us never conduct them where they may get harm rather than benefit. Carefully, lovingly, wisely, using no undue severity, let us guide them into likely places for the divine benediction, and encourage them to seek the blessing for themselves by the fact,

that their parents are seeking it for them. The father who will not seize every opportunity of getting a blessing for his Ephraim and Manasseh is not likely to see the lads seeking the blessing for themselves. Especially should this care be taken, by parents who are growing rich, whose offspring will be tempted by this very fact to seek grander society than the poor people of God can afford them. I doubt not that these two sons of Egypt's prime minister were exposed to exceedingly great temptations: As the sons of a very wealthy and distinguished parent, their tastes might lie in an Egyptian direction. I believe that they were nevertheless greatly swayed to the right side, and led to worship the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, by the zeal of the father, Joseph, and by the recollection of the benediction of their dying grandsire. There is no trace of their having inclined to the religion of the king and the nobles of Egypt, but they adhered to the faith of their father. Oh that all the descendants of Puritan fathers might be steadfast to the pure truth of God in these evil days!

Furthermore, observe that, *if we want to bless young people, one of the likeliest means of doing so will be our personal testimony to the goodness of God.* Young men and women usually feel great interest in their fathers' life-story—if it be a worthy one—and what they hear from them of their personal experience of the goodness of God will abide with them. We all read biographies, and we value the results of experience which we find there, but the biographies of our own relatives are peculiarly treasured; and when these biographies are not read but spoken, what wonderful force they have! I recollect in my younger days hearing a minister, blind with age, speak at the communion table, and

bear witness to us young people, who had just joined the church, that it was well for us that we had come to put our trust in a faithful God; and as the good man, with great feebleness and yet with great earnestness, said to us, that he had never regretted that he had given his heart to Christ as a boy, I felt my heart leap within me with delight that I had such a God to be my God. His testimony was such as a younger man could not have borne: he might have spoken more fluently, but the weight of those eighty years at the back of it made the old man eloquent to my young heart. We who are growing gray in our Master's service ought not to be backward to speak well of his name. Why, my brethren, you will not be able to do so much good in heaven as you can on earth, for they all know about it up there, but men here need our witness to the God whom we have tried and proved. Let us make occasions in which we may speak well of the Lord, even the God who has fed us all our life long, and redeemed us from all evil. This is one of the best ways in which to bless the laity. The benediction of Jacob was intertwined with his biography; the blessing which he had himself enjoyed, he wished for them, and as he invoked it he helped to secure it by his personal testimony.

One thing further: I want you to note, that *Jacob, in desiring to bless his grandsons, introduced them to God.* He speaks of "God before whom my fathers did walk: God who blessed me all my life long." This is the great distinction between man and man: there are two races, he that feareth God, and he that feareth him not. The religion of this present age, such as it is, has a wrong direction in its course. It seeks after what is called "the enthusiasm of humanity," but

what we want far more is enthusiasm for God. We shall never go right unless God is first, midst, and last. I despair for benevolence when it is not based upon devotion. We shall not long have love to man if we do not first and chiefly cultivate love to God. What our boys need in starting in life is a God: if we have nothing else to give them, they have enough if they have God. What our girls want in quitting the nurture of home, is God's love in their hearts, and whether they have fortunes or not, is a small matter. In fellowship with God lies the essence of true human life: life in God, life by the knowledge of the Most High, life through the Redeeming Angel—this is life indeed.

Jacob died as one who had been delivered from all evil, aye, even the evil of old age. His eyes were dim; but that did not matter, for his faith was clear. I love to think that we are going where our vision of God will not be through the eye, but through the spiritual perceptions. These were brighter in Jacob in his old age than ever before; his faith and love, which are the earthly forms of those perceptions, were apprehending God in a more forcible manner than ever, and therefore it signified little that the eyes which he would need no longer were failing him. We cannot say that he was in decay, after all; for he was losing what he only needed in this world of shadows, and was gaining fitness for the higher state. His gracious faculties grew as his bodily faculties declined; and, therefore, he felt that his life was ending in a fulness of blessing such as he wished for the children of his dearest son. How ardently do I wish the like blessing for all the young people before me! The Lord God Almighty bless you! When your earthborn fa-

culties fail you, may heavenly graces more than supply their place!

All this is introduction ; so now we must come at once and plunge into the discourse, and I will be brief upon each point of it. Jacob's testimony wherewith he blessed the sons of Joseph, has in it four points.

I. First, HE SPEAKS OF ANCESTRAL MERCIES; he begins with that "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk." As with a pencil he sketches the lives of Abraham and Isaac. He does not fill in with coloring, but the outline is perfect: you see the two men in their whole career in those few words—"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk."

They were men who recognized God and worshipped him, beyond all others of their age. God was to them a real existence; they spake with God, and God spake with them; they were friends of God, and enjoyed familiar acquaintance with him. No agnosticism blinded their understandings, and deadened their hearts. They were worshippers of the one living and true God. Happy children who have such fathers! happy children who are like such fathers!

They not only recognized God, but *they owned him in daily life.* I take the expression, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did *walk*," to mean that he was their God in common life. They not only knelt before God when they prayed, but they walked before him in everything. When they went forth from their tents, and when they returned from their flocks, they walked before God. They were never away from his service, or without his presence. He was their dwelling-place. Whether they sojourned under an oak or dwelt by a well, whether they enter-

tained strangers or walked in the field to meditate they lived and moved in God. This is the kind of life for you and me : whether we live in a great house or in a poor cottage, if we walk before God we shall lead a happy and a noble life, whether that life be public or obscure. Oh that our young people would firmly believe this!

They walked before God ; that is, *they obeyed his commands*. His call they heard, his bidding they followed. Abraham quitted country and kindred to go to an unknown land which God would show him; yea, more, he took his son, whom he greatly loved, and stood prepared to sacrifice him at God's command. Isaac also yielded himself up to be slain, if so Jehovah willed. To them the will of the Lord was paramount: he was law and life to them, for they loved and feared him. They were prompt to hear the behests of God, and rose up early to fulfil them. They acted as in the immediate presence of the All-seeing.

To the full *they trusted him*. In this sense they always saw him. *We* sometimes talk about *tracing* him. We cannot trace him, except as we trust him; and because they trusted, they traced him. Notwithstanding all the danger and difficulty of their pilgrim state, they dwelt in perfect security in an enemy's land, for the Lord had said, "Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm." They were serene and tranquil because they walked before God, knowing him to be their friend, and that he was their shield and their exceeding great reward. For temporal things they had no anxiety for they lived upon the All-sufficient God. Therefore these two men, Abraham and Isaac, though much tried, led peaceful

lives: they conversed with heaven while they sojourned on earth.

They enjoyed the favor of God, for this also is intended by walking before him. His face was towards them: they sunned themselves in his smile. God's love was their true treasure. We read that God had blessed Abraham in all things, and of Isaac we hear even the Philistines say, "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee." God was their wealth, their strength, their exceeding joy. I say again, happy sons who have such ancestors! happier still if they follow in their track!

So Jacob spoke of Abraham and Isaac, and so can some of us speak of those who went before us. Those of us who can look back upon godly ancestors now in heaven must feel that many ties bind us to follow the same course of life. Had they transgressed against the Lord our duty would have called us to quit the ways of the family, even as Abraham left his kindred who dwelt on the other side of the flood; but as their way was right, we are doubly called to follow it, because it is the good old way, and the way our godly fathers trod. *There is a charm about that which was prized by our fathers.* Heirlooms are treasured, and the best heirloom in a family is the knowledge of God. When I spoke, the other day, with a Christian brother, he seemed right happy to tell me that he sprang of a family which came from Holland during the persecution of the Duke of Alva, and I felt a brotherhood with him in claiming a like descent. I dare say our fathers were poor weavers, but I had far rather be descended from one who suffered for the faith than bear the blood of all the emperors within my veins. There should be a sacred-

ness to you young people in the faith for which your ancestors suffered. Choose not the society of Egypt, and its wealth and honors, but keep to the stock of Israel, and claim the inheritance of Jacob as Ephraim and Manasseh did. Let it not be said that as your family increased in riches it departed from the living God. Shall the goodness of God be perverted into a reason for apostasy?

The way of holiness in which your fathers went is *a fitting way* for you, and it is seemly that you maintain the godly traditions of your house. In the old times they expected sons to follow the secular calling of their fathers; and although that may be regarded as an old-world mistake, yet it is well when sons and daughters receive the same spiritual call as their parents. Grace is not tied to families, but yet the Lord delights to bless to a thousand generations. Very far are we from believing that the new birth is of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man. The will of God reigns here supreme, and absolute: but yet there is a sweet fitness in the passing on of holy loyalty from grandsire to father, and from father to son. I like to feel that I serve God "from my fathers." I feel that it is right and comely that I should be found preaching out of my whole soul the same doctrine which my grandfather and my father preached, and equally fit that my sons should be found, as they are, preaching none other gospel than that which we have received—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." I say again, if our fathers were wrong we ought boldly to dissent from them, and obey God rather than man; but where they are right we are bound to follow them. I stood last Wednesday in a sort of dream as I gazed upon

my much-beloved grandfather's place of sepulchre. I was encouraged by seeing the record of his fifty-four years of service in the midst of one church and people, and I rejoiced that, could he rise from the dead, he would find his grandson preaching that selfsame old-fashioned and much-despised Calvinistic doctrine of the grace of God which was his joy in life and his comfort in death.

A godly ancestry *casts responsibility* upon young people. These Ephraims and Manassehs perceive that their fathers knew the Lord, and the question arises, Why should they not know him? O my beloved young friends, the God of your fathers will be found of you and be your God. The prayers of your fathers have gone before you; let them be followed by your own. Be hopeful of being heard at that mercy-seat where they found grace to help in every time of need. They died in the hope that you would fill their places; shall not their hopes become facts? Do I speak to some who have godly parents in heaven, and yet they are themselves pursuing the ways of sin or of worldliness? Registered upon that file are your mother's prayers. I trust they will yet be heard. Even now they stand like a hedge about you, making it hard work for you to go to hell. Will you force your way to perdition over a father's grave? Will you, by a desperate effort, push aside your pleading mother's form, and pursue your dreadful road to ruin? If so, you will involve yourselves in tremendous guilt. I beseech you hear the tender voice of love which now invites you to be blest.

A godly ancestry should invest a man's case with *great hopefulness*. May he not argue, "If God blessed my ancestors, why should he not bless me? If they

sought mercy, and found it, why should not I? My father and my mother were not perfect, any more than I am; but they had faith in God, and he accepted them and helped them. If I have faith in God he will accept me, and be faithful to me. They were saved as sinners trusting in the blood of Jesus, and why should not I?" I beseech you put this argument to the test, and you will find it hold good.

II. Thus we have seen Jacob seeking to bless his seed by bearing testimony to the blessings which God had bestowed upon his house. Now he comes to deal with PERSONAL MERCIES. The old man's voice faltered as he said, "The God which fed me all my life long." The translation would be better if it ran, "The God which shepherded me all my life long."

He spoke of the Lord as his Shepherd. Jacob had been a shepherd, and therefore he knew what shepherding included: the figure is full of meaning. There had been a good deal of Jacob about Jacob, and he had tried to shepherd himself. Poor sheep that he was, while under his own guidance he had been caught in many thorns, and had wandered in many wildernesses. Because he would be so much a shepherd to himself, he had been hard put to it. But over all, despite his wilfulness, the shepherding of the covenant God had been exercised towards him, and he acknowledged it. O dear saints of God, you to whom years are being multiplied, give praise to your God for having been your shepherd. You delight in the twenty-third Psalm, sing it sometimes with variations by using the past tense: "The Lord has been my shepherd; and I have known no want. He hath made me to lie down in green pastures; he hath led me beside the still waters. Yea, though I have walked through the valley

of the shadow of death in times of great darkness, yet I have feared no evil : for he has been with me, his rod and his staff have comforted me." Bear your witness to the shepherding of God, for this may lead others to become the sheep of his pasture.

This shepherding had been perfect. Our version rightly says that the Lord had *fed* Jacob all his life long. Take that sense of it, and you who have a daily struggle for subsistence will see much beauty in it. Jacob had a large family, and yet they were fed. Some of you say, "It is all very well of you to talk of providence who have few to provide for." I answer, it is better still to talk of providence where a large household requires large provision. Remember Jacob had thirteen children, yet his God provided them bread to eat and raiment to put on. None of that large company were left to starve. You think perhaps that Jacob was a man of large estate. He was not so when he began life. He was only a working-man, a shepherd. When he left his father's house he had no attendants with camels and tents. I suppose he carried his little bit of provision in a handkerchief, and when he laid down that night to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for curtains, the heavens for his canopy, and the earth for his bed, he had no fear of being robbed. God was with him; apart from this, he had nothing to begin life with but his own hands. Whatever he received from his father Isaac afterwards, he had at first to fight his own way; but he knew no lack either at the beginning or at the end, for he could speak of the great Elohim as "the God which fed me all my life long." Hundreds of us can say the same. I remember one who came to be wealthy who used to show me with great pleasure the axle-tree of the truck

in which he used to wheel his goods through the streets when he began in business : I liked to see him mindful of his original. Mind you do not go and say, "See how I have got on by my own talents and industry!" Talk not so proudly, but say, "God hath fed me." Mercies are all the sweeter when seen to come from the hand of God.

But besides being fed Jacob had been *led*, even as sheep are guided by the shepherd who goes before them. His journeys, for that period, had been unusually long, perilous, and frequent. He had fled from home to Padan-aram ; after long years he had come back again to Canaan, and had met his brother Esau ; and after that, in his old age, he had journeyed into Egypt. To go to California or New Zealand in these times is nothing at all compared to those journeys in Jacob's day. But he says, "God has shepherded me all my life long ;" and he means that the great changes of his life had been wisely ordered. At home and in exile, in Canaan and in Goshen, God had been a shepherd to him. He sees the good hand of God upon him in all his wanderings, until he now finds himself sitting up on his bed and blessing Joseph through his sons. I am glad that he went into detail with these young men, for they needed to be confirmed in their fidelity to God. They were in a perilous condition, for they had the *entrée* of the rank and fashion of Egypt, and were tempted to forsake the poor family of the Hebrews. Some of you young fellows begin where your fathers left off : and, having the means of self-indulgence, you are apt to follow the fashions and frivolities of the period. Oh that the Holy Spirit may make you feel that you want God with you with wealth as much as your fathers needed

God without wealth! You may come to beggary yet, with all your inheritance, if you cast off the fear of the Lord and fall into sin. You who began life with nothing but your own brains and hands, trusting in your father's God, shall yet have to sing as your fathers sang, "the God which fed me all my life long." Young men and young women beginning life, I charge you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. It is not life to live without God : you miss the kernel, the cream, the crown of life if you miss the presence of God. Life is but a bubble blown up of toil and trouble without God. Life ends in blighted hope if you have not hope in God. But with God you are as a sheep with a shepherd—cared for, guided, guarded, fed, and led, and your end shall be peace without end.

III Thirdly, bear with me while I follow Jacob in his word upon REDEEMING MERCIES. "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil." There was to Joseph a mysterious Personage who was God, and yet the Angel or messenger of God. He puts this Angel in apposition with the Elohim : for this Angel was God. Yet was he his Redeemer. He saw him doing the office of the next-of-kin : though God he was his *goel* ; and as his kinsman, effected redemption for him. Jacob's faith enabled him, like Job, to know that his Redeemer liveth. He saw that this covenant messenger had redeemed him from all evil, and he magnified the name of the Lord who revealed himself in this Angel. When he was in his sorest straits, this Redeeming Angel always interposed. He fell into an evil state through the influence of his mother, and he did Esau serious wrong. He fled for his life, and at that time there was a great gulf between him and God. Then that Angel came in, and bridged the gulf with a lad-

der by which he might rise to God. The kinsman, God, came in, and showed him how the abyss might be crossed, so that he might return to his God. When he was away in Padan-aram he began to sink very low, while chaffering with churlish Laban. Then again the Angel came and said, "Get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred." The Redeeming Angel held back wrathful Laban, and when Esau came to meet him in hot anger the Angel specially appeared to Jacob. The Angel wrestled, as a Man, with Jacob to get Jacob out of Jacob, and raise him into Israel. How marvellous was the redemption which was wrought for him that night at Jabbok! Jacob came forth from the conflict halting, but he walked before the Lord far better than before. That same mysterious person had bidden him go down into Egypt with the promise that he would go down with him. It was the Angel of God's presence who held his shield over Jacob, and preserved him from all evil.

Brothers and sisters, let us also tell of the redeeming mercies of the Lord Jesus towards us. He redeemed us on the bloody tree ; but he has also redeemed us from our death in sin. Do you remember the place and time when Jesus first met with you? Perhaps not. But blessed be the Redeeming Angel that quickened me into spiritual life! I recall the place and time with pleasure. He redeemed us also from despair : when, under a sense of sin, we could not dare to hope, he came to us and showed us our healing in his wounds, and our life in his death. Afterwards, when our corruptions began to arise, and we had a hard battle to believe that such sinners were indeed saved, the Redeeming Angel confirmed our faith, and

gave us inward strength. Do we not well remember when he said unto us, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee"? I want you to look back and remember the times when you were sick, and this Redeeming Angel so sweetly visited you that you were half afraid to get well, for fear you should lose his presence: your bed had become a throne to you.

You remember, too, when that pinch came in business, so that you could not see how to provide things honest in the sight of all men; then Jesus revealed his love and bade you think of the lilies and the ravens, which neither spin nor sow, and yet are clothed majestically and fare sumptuously. Many a time has the Lord delivered you because he delighted in you. When you were likely to fall into sin, when you did get very wrong in spirit, he beheld you in pity, and restored your soul. Though you were so lukewarm that he was ready to spue you out of his mouth, yet he knocked at your door, and when you admitted him he came in and supped with you, and your soul was soon on fire with love to him. He restored your soul, and the love of your espousals came back to you. Blessed Redeemer, how graciously dost thou deliver! Oh, that we oftener thought of the interpositions of the loving Christ! He did not only redeem us when he died, but he redeems us still by his living power. This is the sum of our life: the angel of the covenant has delivered us day by day, is delivering us, and will deliver us to the end. Do you wonder that we commend him to our offspring, and desire to commit them to his loving care? Young friends who know not the Saviour, I would fain lead you to this Guardian Angel,

this God-like Man, who will save you from all evil from this day forth and for evermore.

IV. Now comes the last point—I do not know if any one has gone to sleep in this close atmosphere, but if so, let him kindly wake up, for I have somewhat to say which will interest him. Jacob has spoken of ancestral mercies, personal mercies and redeeming mercies, and now he deals with FUTURE MERCIES, as he cries, “*Bless the lads.*” He began with blessing Joseph, and he finishes with blessing his lads. O dear friends, if God has blessed you, I know you will want him to bless others. There is the stream of mercy, deep, broad, and clear : you have drunk of it, and are refreshed, but it is as full as ever. It will flow on, will it not? You do not suppose that you and I have dammed up the stream so as to keep it to ourselves. No, it is too strong, too full a stream for that. It will flow on from age to age. God will bless others as he has blessed us. Unbelief whispers that the true church will die out. Do not believe it. Christ will live, and his church will live with him till the heavens be no more. Hath he not said, “Because I live, ye shall live also?” “Oh,” you say, “but we shall not see such holy men in the next generation as in past ages.” Why not? I hope the next age will see far better men than any of those who are with us at this time. Pray that it may be so. Instead of the fathers, may there be the children, and may these be princes before the Lord!

The stream of divine grace will flow on. Oh, that it may take our sons and daughters in its course! “*Bless the lads.*” Sunday-school teachers, is not that a good prayer for you? Pray the Lord to bless the lads and the lassies, because he has blessed you. There is

the stream, it must flow somewhere ; pray, " Lord, make it flow to my family, and to my class." For thy mercy's sake, gracious Lord, " bless the lads."

We need not say in what precise form or way the blessing shall come : let us leave it in all its breadth of inconceivable benediction. May the Lord bless our youth as only he can do it ; and if he causes them to fear and trust him, he will be blessing all of us, and blessing ages to come. Upon these Ephraims and Manassehs will depend the work of the Lord in the years to come. Therefore, with emphasis we pray, " Bless the lads." As for us, we are content to work on, saying, " Let thy work appear unto thy servants ;" but our anxious desire is that our children may reap the result of our labors, and therefore we add, " and thy glory unto their children."

In closing, I wish to bear a personal testimony by narrating an incident in my own life. I have been preaching in Essex this week, and I took the opportunity to visit the place where my grandfather preached so long, and where I spent my earliest days. Last Wednesday was to me a day in which I walked like a man in a dream. Everybody seemed bound to recall some event or other of my childhood. What a story of divine love and mercy did it bring before my mind ! Among other things, I sat down in a place that must ever be sacred to me. There stood in my grandfather's manse garden two arbors made of yew trees, cut into sugar-loaf fashion. Though the old manse has given way to a new one, and the old chapel has gone also, yet the yew trees flourish as aforetime. I sat down in the right hand arbor and bethought me of what had happened there many years ago. When I was a young child staying with my grandfather, there came to

preach in the village Mr. Knill, who had been a missionary at St. Petersburg, and a mighty preacher of the gospel. He came to preach for the London Missionary Society, and arrived on the Saturday at the manse. He was a great soul-winner, and he soon spied out the boy. He said to me, "Where do you sleep? for I want to call you up in the morning." I showed him my little room. At six o'clock he called me up, and we went into that arbor. There, in the sweetest way, he told me of the love of Jesus, and of the blessedness of trusting in him and loving him in our childhood. With many a story he preached Christ to me, and told me how good God had been to him, and then he prayed that I might know the Lord and serve him. He knelt down in that arbor and prayed for me with his arms about my neck. He did not seem content unless I kept with him in the interval between the services, and he heard my childish talk with patient love. On Monday morning he did as on the Sabbath, and again on Tuesday. Three times he taught me and prayed with me, and before he had to leave, my grandfather had come back from the place where he had gone to preach, and all the family were gathered to morning prayer. Then, in the presence of them all, Mr. Knill took me on his knee, and said, "This child will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill, where (I think he said) I am now the minister." He spoke very solemnly, and called upon all present to witness what he said. Then he gave me sixpence as a reward if I would learn the hymn,

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

I was made to promise that when I preached in Rowland Hill's Chapel that hymn should be sung. Think of that as a promise from a child! Would it ever be other than an idle dream? Years flew by. After I had begun for some little time to preach in London, Dr. Alexander Fletcher had to give the annual sermon to children in Surrey Chapel, but as he was taken ill, I was asked in a hurry to preach to the children. "Yes," I said, "I will, if the children will sing, 'God moves in a mysterious way.' I have made a promise long ago that so that should be sung." And so it was: I preached in Rowland Hill's Chapel, and the hymn was sung. My emotions on that occasion I cannot describe. Still that was not the chapel which Mr. Knill intended. All unsought by me, the minister at Wotton-under-Edge, which was Mr. Hill's summer residence, invited me to preach there. I went on the condition that the congregation should sing, "God moves in a mysterious way"--which was also done. After that I went to preach for Mr. Richard Knill himself, who was then at Chester. What a meeting we had! Mark this! he was preaching in a theatre! His preaching in a theatre took away from me all fear about preaching in secular buildings, and set me free for the campaigns in Exeter Hall and the Surrey Music Hall. How much this had to do with other theatre services you know.

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

After more than forty years of the Lord's loving-kindness, I sat again in that arbor! No doubt it is a mere trifle for outsiders to hear, but to me it was an overwhelming moment. The present minister of Stambourn meeting-house, and the members of his family,

including his son and his grandchildren, were in the garden, and I could not help calling them together around that arbor, while I praised the Lord for his goodness. One irresistible impulse was upon me : it was to pray God to bless those lads that stood around me. Do you not see how the memory begat the prayer ? I wanted them to remember when they grew up my testimony of God's goodness to me ; and for that same reason I tell it to you young people who are around me this morning. God has blessed me all my life long, and redeemed me from all evil, and I pray that he may be your God. You that have godly parents, I would specially address. I beseech you to follow in their footsteps, that you may one day speak of the Lord as they were able to do in their day. Remember that special promise, "I love them that love me ; and those that seek me early shall find me." May the Holy Spirit lead you to seek him this day ; and you shall live to praise his name as Jacob did.

XII.

GOD'S NEARNESS TO US.

July 17, 1887.

“Though he be not far from every one of us.”—*Acts xvii. 27.*

WHEN man disobeyed his God he died spiritually, and that death consisted in the separation of his soul from God. From that moment man began to think that God was far away, and this has since been his religion in all ages. Either he has said, “There is no God” ; or he has believed the visible creation to be God, which is much the same as having no God ; or else he has thought God to be some far-away, mysterious Being, who takes no note of man. Even after obtaining a better conception of God, he has thought him hard to find and hard to be entreated of. Because his own heart is far from God, he imagines that God’s heart is far from him. But it is not so. The living God is not far from any one of us ; for “ In him we live, and move, and have our being.”

The nearness of God to man is a teaching of revelation. Look back to the record of the Garden of Eden, and see an early evidence there of God’s nearness to man. Adam, having transgressed, hid himself among the trees of the garden ; but in his hiding-place God sought him, and the voice of the Lord God was heard, walking among the trees of the garden, and saying, “Adam, where art thou?” Man will not seek God,

but God seeks man. Though man's voice is not, "Where is my God?" yet God's voice is, "Adam, where art thou?" All through history God has been familiar with man. He has spoken to him in divers ways, but principally through chosen men. One after another he has raised up prophets, and by their warning voices he has pleaded with men, and invited them to seek his face. His own voice might have caused dismay and distance, and so he has used human voices, that he might come nearer to the heart. All the history of the chosen nation, as we read it in the Old Testament, reveals the nearness of Jehovah; whatever we read upon the page, we know that within, above, or behind it, the Lord is near, even when he appears to have hidden himself. In these latter days, the Lord has come nearer to us still, for he has spoken to us by his Son. The Son of God became the Friend of sinners: could he come nearer than that? The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and men beheld his glory. Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh is the Christ, and yet he is very God of very God. In him God is next-of-kin to man, and manhood is brought near to the eternal throne. Christ Jesus is God and man in one person, and thus the closest union is formed between God and man. Verily, verily, the Lord God is not far from each one of us in his own dear Son.

To-day, though Jesus has gone up on high, the Spirit of God abides in the midst of the church, and thus again the Lord is near. The Comforter is at work still; the Convincer still presses upon man's conscience sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Still does the Holy Ghost work with the Word of God, directing his ministers so to speak that their hearers

shall perceive a personality and pointedness in the word delivered. Oh, you that hear the gospel, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you in a very special sense! I may say of you with an emphasis, "He is not far from any of you, and you are not far from the kingdom."

That God is near by his omnipresence and by his gracious dealings with men, is the clear teaching of the inspired volume. To the enlightened mind, God is evidently seen to be near in the works of nature. Whose voice was it that we heard last night thundering overhead? Who fashioned the drops of rain that refreshed the fields? Who breathed the gentle breeze which cooled and cheered the drooping flowers? Who has sent us this day so clear, so calm, so bright, "the bridal of the earth and sky"? Who is creating for us our harvests, and preparing food for man and beast? It is God that doeth this, doing it in ways beyond our comprehension, yet doing it before our eyes. There is no other force in the universe save that which is derived from God. There is no other life except the life which has leaped from the eternal self-existence. God is in all. Above us in the stars he shines; but he works also in the grass beneath our feet. Each dew-drop gleams his glory, and every grain of dust bears his impress. He is within us, keeping our hearts in motion; and around us, giving to the air we breathe its power to sustain life.

So also is the Lord very near in providence. Albeit that this godless age seeks to banish God, yet is he present in the transactions of every day. All things come of him, both the little and the great. He ordains, and rules, or over-rules. Pestilence and famine, earthquake and hurricane, are his heavier treads; and days

and nights, harvests and springtides, are his gentler footsteps. The events of history, whether on a large or small scale, betray an evident design and arrangement. All things work together, with singular accuracy and punctuality, to accomplish a lofty purpose. It is the fashion nowadays to say that these are *coincidences*. It is a pretty word for boys to play with. Some of us observe God's providences, and we are never without a providence to observe. We see the hand of God in daily life, and we are glad to do so, though we are laughed at as poor fools. Those who can see may well be content to bear the jests of the blind. In my own personal experience I have met with numbers of singular and special tokens of God's working in providence, some of which I would scarce dare to tell, because they might seem incredible. I remember preaching at Halifax, in a huge timber building which was erected for the purpose. During the previous day the snow fell heavily, and it lay deep upon the ground. Nevertheless, the people came in their thousands, and thronged the enormous edifice; and gratefully do I remember how they went away to their homes in safety. They had no sooner cleared the building to the last man, than it fell in one gigantic ruin. Why had it not fallen when the crowds were there? In my joy that no one was harmed I thought that God was there, and I praised his holy name. Was that a piece of superstition?

Take another instance. I was one day in great perplexity upon a certain matter of great importance to the cause of God. I laid it before God in prayer, but still I did not see my way: I could get no direction or guidance. Having to preach in North London, a friend kindly drove me to the spot, and afterwards I

asked him to take me to the house of one of our people whom I wished to see. I scarcely noticed my way, till at last I found myself in a street unknown to me. I then said, "You are surely going wrong." "No," he said, "I am right enough." He was making for the private house of the person I had named, but I knew that he would at that time be at his office in the city, and I had intended to go there after him. We were on the wrong track, and so the horse's head was turned down a side-street unknown to me, and as we passed along it, I saw the only man in all the world who could assist me out of my difficulty. How he came to be there I could not tell; how I came to be there I have already told you. Strangely had the Lord guided me, and the information guided the affair to a happy issue. God was near me. *Mere coincidences, they tell me! Mere coincidences!* Let me tell a true story. The other day I met with a series of similar "mere coincidences." I set out by railway to a certain town, and the train went on till we came to a junction, and I was bidden to change. By a strange coincidence another train had drawn up, and was going in the direction I desired. I had only time to cross a platform and take my place, and off it went. A few miles further again I heard a voice, saying, "Change here!" I changed a second time, and by another coincidence a train was just starting for my destination. When I reached the end of my railway journey another coincidence was in store for me, for a well-known friend was waiting with his carriage, and he took me to his house, where by another coincidence, a dinner was ready. At the dinner there happened to be a dish upon the table intended for a person who did not eat flesh meat. Was not this a special coinci-

dence for me? I went to the chapel to preach, and I found it crowded with people anxious to hear : another coincidence, of course ! Somebody cries, " You talk nonsense ; it was all arranged." I confess I thought so. I am glad that you own the arranging hand ; but, pardon me, I saw an arranging hand in the other cases also, and I think it was as clear in the other cases as in this. To the story of my journey you find a clue in a previous arrangement, and in the history of nations, and in the story of each human life, I also find a clue in the presence of a Divine mind which arranges all things. When human arrangement explains a series of events you admit it without question ; why not admit Divine arrangement, since it equally well explains the great occurrences of history ? Do you demur ? I fear it is that you resolve not to believe in the one case, while in the other, having no theory to maintain, you follow your natural common-sense.

God is so near us that he hears the prayers of his people, and orders events in correspondence to those prayers. Do you doubt this? Do you tell me that the many answers to prayer which we joyfully narrate are *mere coincidences*? I have hardly patience to answer you. Yet let me tell you of some strange incidents which happened to me yesterday. In the morning, when I came into my study, I needed to break my fast. I had scarcely wished it, before my breakfast was on the table. During the day I wished for a glass of water. In a few moments it stood by my side. I required some one to take a telegram to the post-office for me. Heigh ! Presto ! A suitable messenger appeared. Was this magic ? The evening came on and I desired to have the lamps lighted and the curtains drawn. In a few seconds my desire was

accomplished. Were these matters "mere coincidences"? "No," cries one, "you rang the bell." Now I come to think of it, some one did pull at a handle; but I saw no bell. Yet you assure me that the ringing of a bell accounts for it all. I will not argue the point with you. Only when I yield to you, I want you also to yield to me when I tell you that we pray to the Lord our God, and that we receive answers to our prayers. Our daily experience is that prayer is answered by the Lord our God, for he is near to fulfil his promises, and to grant the petitions of them that put their trust in him. You believe in the power of the bell, and we believe in the power of prayer. Our speaking to the living God is as much a fact and a reality to us as the ringing of a bell to you; why, then, do you heap scorn upon us? Why do you snuff us out with your big talk about *coincidences*? Scoff away! We shall not pray any the less so long as in our experience we find the Lord so swift to hear, so bountiful to bless. The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God"; but even he is not so much a fool as he who, believing that there is a God, will not allow that he is near enough to hear and answer prayer. Oh, that my hearers who doubt the nearness of God would cry to him, and see if he would not be found of them!

Beloved, the fact is, that God is everywhere. He is so present in all places that he is specially near to each person. His circumference is nowhere, but his centre is everywhere. God is as much with you as if there were no other person in the world. His being near to you does not make him far off from another. This truth is high, and we cannot attain to it, but it is none the less sure. God is near each one of us, observing

us with exactness, perceiving the secret intents of our hearts. He is near us, feeling for us, and thinking of us. He is near us in active energy, ready to interpose and help us. He is near us in all places, and at all times. By night and by day he surrounds us. At this moment, "surely God is in this place." Know it, and be filled with awe. I pray that, ere the service is over, you may know it by feeling the power of his grace. In answer to prayer may the Lord's presence and power be with the words which I shall try to speak to you, though I speak in great feebleness.

First, I am going to address myself for a little *to those who only feel after him*, but as yet have not perceived him; and then I shall speak *to those who have found him*, and who know by a sweet experience how near he is to his chosen.

I. TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE FEELING AFTER GOD I speak in deepest earnestness. Like blind men who grope for the wall, you stretch out your hands to feel after him. Rejoice, for he is not far from you!

What then? *How impious is sin* when seen in this light! You have transgressed the commands of the great King in the King's presence. When you blasphemed him, you thought little of him; but you spoke into his ear. When you ridiculed his ways and his people, you did it to his face. You insulted your Creator while his eyes were fixed on you. Did you dream that you were in the outskirts of his dominion, far off from his throne? and did you, therefore, take liberty to offend? O sir, you were mistaken; you rebelled in his courts! He heard your evil words; he noted down your unrighteous acts. Think of this, you that have never sought mercy at his hands; from your childhood until now you have lived under his

close inspection. You have, perhaps, seen those hives which permit you, through a glass, to see all that the bees are doing. You have watched them busy in their cells. All the world is but a hive of this sort to the mind of God. You could not read the designs and intents of the bees, but the Lord has read your thoughts and imaginations. Would some of you have sinned as you have done if you had realized the Divine presence? Would you have dared to go to such lengths as you have gone, if you had seen him as he has seen you? "Hush," they say, when they are speaking evil of any person, "here he comes." Why did you not "hush," since God was there? Servants who have wasted their master's time will hurry up when they see that he is near: how is it that you have not only loitered, but done mischief while your Master has been looking over your shoulder? How impious is that sin which is done despite the presence and observation of God!

Next, note *how profane is indifference!* To be indifferent to God when God is near in the glory of his majesty and the riches of his love, is a sign of great hardness of heart. God is near, supplying you with breath, keeping you in life, and yet you care not! Holy men have trembled with awe in his presence, and you have trifled! How is this? If he had gone on a journey, and you had forgotten him, there might be some little excuse; but with the Lord close to you, how could you ignore him? Can I call this less than sheer profanity? If an angel in the presence of the Most Highest refused to adore; if a spirit before his burning throne maintained a sullen silence, we should count it unmistakable sedition: what is it in your case? What shall I say to those who here, in

the presence of God, have lived ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, and yet have never given their Lord a serious thought? Do you so lightly esteem your Maker? Is he not worth a thought? Will you neither bow your knee in homage, nor lift up your voice in thankfulness? O men and women, why do you act so unjustly, so ungratefully? What has God done that you should slight him? How can you excuse yourselves, that you live and move in him, and yet have no more care for him than if there were no such being?

Furthermore, if God be so near, this shows *the evident impossibility of deceiving him*. God is not mocked. Thinkest thou that if thou wilt go to God's house that will avail thee, though thou goest not to God? Dost thou imagine that to repeat certain gracious words will suffice, though thy heart be wandering on the mountains of vanity? Hast thou thought that to make a religious profession will be enough? and that God will be so duped, as to think thee his servant and his child, if thou takest upon thee the names which belong to such relationships? Dost thou think that he can be deceived when he is near thee, around thee, and within thee? Thy heart is as open to him as thy book is open before thee, and he reads thee as thou readest the plainest print. How, then, canst thou deceive him? Beware, I beseech you, of having any dealings with God but those which are in downright honesty. We must be true to the core before the All-seeing One. A lie to our fellow-men is meanness, but a lie to God is madness. What meanest thou, thou pretender to godliness, if thy heart be not right with God? Dost thou think to play tricks with the only wise God? Canst thou cheat the eyes before which all things are

naked and open? He besets thee behind and before, and lays his hand upon thee : he possesses thy reins and searches thy heart : be plain and sincere with him, lest he smite thee as he smote Ananias and Sapphira. Oh, that the words of Hagar in the wilderness would rise from every heart—"Thou God seest me"! That God is as near to us as we are to ourselves should make us greatly ashamed, if in any way whatever, we seemed to be what, in the depths of our being, we are not.

But, hark! this shows us *how vain is all hope of escape from God!* What if a man says there is no God! God is all the same. What if a man forgets God, and therefore ceases to tremble! There is as much cause for trembling as ever, and somewhat more. What if a man is able throughout life to shut his eye to his lost estate, and at last dies without bands in his death—what of that? He cannot escape the judgment, he cannot flee from the far-reaching arms of justice. The Lord's impartial sentence will find him out, though he plunge into depths of darkness, or make his bed in hell. It was said once of the whole world that it was nothing better than a prison for the man that had offended Cæsar; and I may say of the great universe, however wide it be, that it is but a narrow cell for the man who has offended God. Where canst thou fly, my hearer? Where canst thou hide? Neither mountains nor abysses, can conceal thee from those eyes of fire! If thou hadst but half a grain of wit thou wouldst fall at the feet of thy pursuer, and invoke his mercy! Confess thy wickedness, and beg for pardon. Quit thy sin, and be reconciled to thy Judge through the death of his Son: then those eyes

shall be suns of light to thee, whereas now they are as flames of fire.

This is the solemn side of the matter, and I confess it is dark as the pillar of cloud when it turned its blackness on the Egyptians. Oh, this God! this God who is not far from us! What shall we do? We have provoked him! He is angry with the wicked every day. His great longsuffering holds back the strokes of his justice; but they must come one day, for he will by no means spare the guilty. Oh, my ungodly hearer, thou hast sinned, and thou art sinning in the presence of thy God; I beseech thee, think of this! Thou hast been indifferent, and thou art still indifferent, in the presence of One, who with a thought can wither thee, and with a word can send thee where hope can never come. Be warned, I pray thee. May God bless this solemn warning to thy soul's arousing!

There is a bright side to this great truth of the Divine nearness. If God is not far from each one of us, then *how hopeful is our seeking of him!* If I seek God, and he is not far from me, I shall surely find him. I have not to climb to heaven nor to dive into the abyss, for he is near! Oh, for faith to perceive him! Where I sit, or stand, I may come to him. If I seek him he is seeking me for certain, or else I should never have sought him. When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner, they will soon meet. Is it not written, "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee"? "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Omnipresence yields good cheer to those who are panting for their God.

How perceptible must repentance be! If God be near you, he sees that tear which just now scalded your

cheek. He marks that sigh ; he sees that heaving of the breast ; that trouble of the soul he knows ; that restlessness he sees. When I stand by a person who labors under emotion, I am not long before I sympathize with him ; I cannot help it ; God is much more tender-hearted than we are, and, like as a father pitieth his children, so he pitieth them that fear him. If thine heart is breaking, thy God perceives it. If thou art bewailing thy sin, he hears it, and cries, "How can I give thee up?" The sight of thy tears hath melted him, the hearing of thy sighs hath moved his compassion. Doubt not this ; thou canst not have him near and yet have him callous, for his name is Love. He heard thee, and he pitied thee, when yesterday in thy chamber thou wast in an agony of shame and fear. He sees thee at this moment in thy loneliness and dire distress. A fugitive and a vagabond thou mayest be, but yet the Lord is near.

Since the Lord is near to us, *how quick will he be to perceive our faith!* If you, this morning, glance an eye to the cross, the Lord will see your eye looking that way. He sees the feeble as well as the strong ; if thou hast but a grain of mustard seed of faith he will at once discern it. When the messenger of the church cannot perceive it, and before the minister can detect it, God hath seen faith. Believest thou that Jesus is the Christ? Dost thou trust thyself with him? God hath accepted thy faith and he hath said, "There is therefore now no condemnation." If he were far off thy faith might be unnoticed, but being close at hand he sees the first glimmer of light within thy mind. Though thy trust be of the feeblest kind he accepts it and protects it.

If God be so near thee, poor soul, *how readily he can*

reveal himself to thee! I know how sadly you are urged to despair, and yet ere that clock hath finished the half hour your despair may vanish. There is nothing between thee and thy Saviour but thine unbelief. Let unbelief go, and thou shalt see Jesus, to thy heart's joy. A prisoner was taken out to die, and as he rode along in the death cart his heart was heavy at the thought of death, and none could cheer him of all the throng. The gallows-tree was in sight, and this blotted out the sun for him. But lo, his prince came riding up in hot haste, bearing a free pardon. Then the man opened his eyes, and, as though he had risen from the dead, he returned to happy consciousness. The sight of his prince had chased all gloom away. He declared that he had never seen a fairer countenance in all his days: and when he read his pardon he vowed that no poetry should ever be dearer to his heart than those few lines of sovereign grace. Friends, I remember well when I was in that death-cart, and Jesus came to me with pardon. Death and hell were before me; but I rejoiced exceedingly when I saw the nailprints in his hands and feet, and the wound in his side. When he said, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee," I thought I never saw such loveliness before, and never heard such music in all my days. Nay, it was not mere thought, I am sure my judgment was right. Eternity itself shall never disclose anything to me more sweet. My pardoning Lord hath no peer nor rival. Oh, what a Christ is he who appeared to me, a guilty, condemned sinner, on the way to hell! Blessed be his name, he bore on the tree my curse, and shame, and death, and I am free. This is the manifestation which I desire for each of you; and,

since Jesus is near, how readily can he grant you the boon!

If the Lord be near, there is no reason why he should not grant pardon now to all of you who see it. Ere the words I speak have reached your ear, God, in the person of his Son, may manifest himself to you, and make your heart to leap for joy. Do it, O Lord Jesus! Grant a vision of thyself, good Lord: grant it now, and thou shalt have the praise. God often reveals himself by men to men: why should he not speak to you through this sermon of mine? God often reveals himself to men by the Scriptures. A precious text laid home to an aching heart will soon give it peace. Wherefore, be of good cheer, my hearer; God is near you, and therefore hope is near you. Believe in Jesus and he will give you rest. He waiteth to be gracious; he looks out for objects of mercy. Be of good cheer, for Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Even at this hour he is near.

II. The time is too short, therefore I must turn at once to God's people, and speak to THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE FOUND THE LORD. Brothers, you need not that I seek out choice words when I speak to *you*. You are soldiers, and you only want short sentences, such as captains give to the ranks. I say to you, redeemed by precious blood, and made sensitive to the all-surrounding God, note *how strictly God observes us!* Let us walk in his sight, let us live in his presence. I charge you, remember that the Lord your God is a jealous God. Under such weighty obligations to him, and bound to him by such marvellous ties of love, live—live obediently, live intensely, live with concentration of heart, and mind, and strength; live wholly unto him. Being ever in his sight, set him always

before you. Be your life such as life should be in the fierce light that beats about the throne of Deity. Oh, our poor lives! Our empty lives! God fill them and elevate them! May he help us to rise out of our dead selves by a sense of his living presence. If God's nearness does not make us cry to him to make men of us, what will? O thou who art so divinely near, draw our lives into thy life!

If God be not far from us, let us see *how readily he hears our prayers!* I am sometimes startled at the power of a feeble prayer to win a speedy answer. "Startled," you will say; why am I startled? for it is written, "Before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Yes, it is so written, but we do not always apprehend the fact. When the promise comes speedily to pass, have you never felt your flesh creep with a solemn awe in the presence of God, who has so remarkably drawn near at the voice of prayer? You turn aside from your business but a minute and pray, and you come back calm and composed. This is the finger of God. You do not leave the counter, but simply dart a glance heavenward, and the thing you sought for is bestowed upon you. Is it not often so, my beloved? You know it is. Is it not easily accounted for by the fact that God is at your right hand, ready to be gracious? There is no need in every case to break the continuity of business, and to get away from the concerns of this life, for the Lord is in the shop, and in the barn, as well as in the closet. You are in the midst of a throng of wicked men, but God is there too, if his providence has called you into such company. The pressure of incessant occupation racks your mind, but

it would be less if you felt that God is there to help and guide.

How simple is communion with the Lord when we know that he is near us! When you seek quietude for meditation, do you think it wonderful that you enter speedily into communion with God? Is he not waiting for you? If you go into the field with Isaac, God is there. Resort, therefore, to communion with God without doubt of obtaining it. Speak, for he hears: listen, for he speaks. Pray without ceasing, because God is near without ceasing. Pour out your heart before him, for he is ever near to mark your heart's outpourings. It makes life a blessed thing when we remember that we spend it with God. We dwell in him. It is not as if we were visitors, and had to make calls on God now and then; but he is our dwelling-place. We have not to seek him as though he had hidden himself away, for he is the sun whose presence fills our life with strength and comfort. He is in us, and therefore with us. Wherefore let us pray, and praise, and hold sweet communion with him.

Further, dear brethren, if God be so near us, *how securely are we defended!* A Christian lady not long ago dreamed a dream which was not a dream, but fact. She saw herself as surrounded with God; encircled above, beneath, and all around, as with a blaze of light. Brilliance inconceivable made a pavilion for her; and while she stood in the midst of the glory she saw all her cares and her troubles, and her temptations, and her sins, wandering about the outside of the wall of light, unable to reach her. Unless that light itself should open and make a way for them she was serenely secure, although she could see the perils which else would destroy her. Is not the Lord a wall of fire

round about us, and the glory in the midst? Is it not written, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most Highest shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"? Evil shall not come near to him who is near to God. Go where we may, a more than royal guard surrounds us; for the Lord of Hosts is with us. Blind eyes, blind eyes, ye see not the Infinite Protector! If our eyes were anointed, we should see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about us; nay, better than horses, though they be of fire, we should see the omnipotent God to be our shield and buckler. I want you, dear people of God, to feel that you are never in real danger, because never far from God. How can he be in peril whom the Lord keepeth both night and day?

To the living God we look for life when threatened by the powers of death. You have a little fish in your hand: it will soon die if it remains there. It is newly taken from the stream; make haste to restore it to its element, and it will speedily recover. In the river it will find all it needs; even so, in God we have all we want. In God we dwell in all-sufficiency and in perfect peace. As the dove in the dovecote, and the coney on the rock, and the chick beneath the hen; so do we dwell in God. Who is he that can harm us, since God is near?

If the Lord be thus near us, *how speedily he can renew our graces!* Alas! our souls too often need restoring; but, blessed be his name, he is at hand to renew our life. I confess with shame that I have felt dull and dead and heavy, and I thought it was the weather, or my bodily weakness, or some other matter: but whatever was the cause, I have found only one cure. As in a moment, quicker than the twinkling of an eye, I

have been lifted into life, and love, and light, and energy : I have awakened in the night with all the bells of my soul ringing out peals of praise. I have said to myself, "What a strange creature I am ! Now I can rejoice in my God ; now I can pray with holy prevalence ; now I can leap as a hart." Then I have wished to rush into the pulpit and preach straight away. I was all death before, and the Lord made me all life. Is not this to be expected, since God is near to hear our bemoanings ? He speaks, and it is done. "His word runneth very swiftly." By the exercise of faith the Lord enables us to overcome the body. Plato used to say that by thought the soul could get out of the body. I am not philosopher enough to know whether this is true or not ; indeed, I never tried to quit my body, for I am afraid I might not find my way back again : but this I know, that by the spiritual life the spirit can rise above the body. Some grievous ache, some bitter pain has made you feel as if you did not care to live, and yet a flash of sacred joy has gone through you, and you have laughed at the pain, and have even been quickened by it. Pain is a rough bare-backed steed which throws every common rider ; but when he comes who is taught by the Spirit, he leaps upon it, rides it, and outstrips the wind. How many a grand thought has been the child of pain. Now, if God be with us we see how such a thing can be. Never despair while the living God is near. Believe in the living One, and, touching the hem of his garment, the virtue of his life shall stream into your dying heart : "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

I hear people sometimes talk about "the higher life." Happy is that man who obtained the highest

life when he first believed in Jesus Christ. The divine life is neither lower nor higher, but there are increasing degrees of its strength. These are all reachable, for God is near to help us. If God be near us, brothers, infinite resources are near us. We need not be unbelieving; we need not be sorrowful; we need not be afraid. We need not be the captives of sin; we are able to overcome it by the Divine help. We can master ourselves, for God is near us to give us the victory.

I do not think that any one of you should go away to-day, saying, "I feel so dull, so stupid, so unspiritual." God is not far from any one of us, and his presence should remove these complaints. What doth Jesus say? "I am the resurrection, and the life." You looked for a miracle. Behold your Lord! He is the miracle. Receive him, and you have the resurrection and the life. What though you be in the grave, sheeted and bound: if Jesus is at the mouth of the sepulchre, at his bidding you shall quit the abode of death. Have hope, O Lazarus! for though you be dead and stinking, yet the Christ who calls you gives you life. Never, child of God, never think that you cannot be filled with life and power. That cry of "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" is heard by your present God, and he gives you the victory through Jesus Christ.

Let me say once more, if God be so near us, *there is no reason why we should not speedily enjoy a manifestation of his glory.* Moses keeps the flock of Jethro. Poor comrades, those woolly sheep! He has led them to the back-side of the desert. Poor region, it scarcely yields a blade of grass for sheep, and nothing for man. What can one expect in a howling wilderness? Stop:

yonder is a bush! But what of that? No grapes or figs can be gathered there. A bird may rest in a bush, but not a man. Turn thou aside, O Moses, for God can make that bush to be the throne of Deity! The commonplace can be made celestial, the despicable, divine. Though to-day, dear heart, in all thy trouble and deadness of heart thou wilt go to a home which is no home, yet since God is there he can appear to thee in anything and everything. He can make the bush of thy trouble to become the embodiment of his glory. He can manifest himself to thee as he does not to the world. Time was, they say, when God could be found under a tree, and by the brook, and near the town wall, and even in a furnace, and a lion's den; but men do not see him now even in temples. Whose fault is this? It is the fault of our dull eye, and duller hearts. God is as near as ever. I see him in this house of prayer. I pray that you may see him, and then the spot whereon you now are will become holy ground to you throughout the rest of your life. In your quiet room this afternoon, there is no reason why a door should not be opened in heaven. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." He shows his glory to the meek and lowly. The recognized presence of God will make a garret as glorious as the Mount of Transfiguration. When Jesus is to us Emanuel, God with us, we see him in his glory, for this is to see him as he is.

This truth of the presence of God makes me feel happy with regard to this my much beloved church. I often fear lest we should not have conversions. I have feared lest coldness of heart should take hold of myself and you; and then this has been my comfort—the Lord is not far from any of us, and therefore he

can use us, and work conversions in our midst. Brethren, he can incline the outsiders to come and hear the word, and when they hear it he can bless them, for he is not far from them. I read in the *Life of John Wesley* a story of Methodists meeting in a barn, and how certain of the villagers, who were afraid to break through the door, resolved to place one inside who would open the door to them during the service, that they might disturb the congregation. This person went in before service began, and concealed himself in a sack in a corner of the barn. When the Methodists began to sing, he liked the tune so well that he would not get out of the sack till he had heard it through. Then followed a prayer, and during that prayer, God worked on the man in the sack, so that he began to cry for mercy. The good people looked around, and were astonished to find a sinner in a sack seeking his Saviour. The door was not opened to the mob after all; for he who intended to do so was converted. It does not matter why the people come to hear the gospel; God can bless them in any case. If Christ is preached, men will be saved, even if they come to disturb. "Sir," said one to me, "I had been to bargain about a pair of ducks on Sunday morning, and I passed by the door, and I thought I would just look in. There and then the Lord met with me, and those ducks were forgotten, for I found a Saviour." He is not far from any; and in answer to believing prayer he can deal with men and turn their hearts to himself. Wherefore, work on! Go round with your tracts this afternoon. God is not far away from those houses. Stand in the street corner and preach: God is not far away from those who pass by. Go to your Sunday-school class, for God is not far from any one

of the children. Work with cheerful hope, for the Lord is near you.

This presence of God which cheers in life, also sustains in death. He is not far from any one of us when all the world flies far away. This morning the end came suddenly to our friend Mr. Murphy. He hoped to preach this morning, but he is doing better work. His congregation is gathered expecting their pastor; may they find the Master with them, though the servant is gone! If God be always near, what matters whether we die or live? We would like to have our friends gathered about our bed to bid them farewell; but, perhaps, it will not be so. It is of small moment after all, since our God will be near. Our best Friend will be there; our Father will be there; for our God will be there. Go your way and make no bargain as to whether you live or die; only plead that promise, "Certainly I will be with thee." God is with us now, and soon we shall be with him. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, abide with us, O Lord. Amen, and amen.

XIII.

TRUST.

August 21, 1887.

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”—EPHESIANS i. 12, 13.

It appears from the preceding verse that the predestinating purpose of God deals not only with salvation as a whole, but with the details of it: it includes faith as well as salvation, which comes of faith. “Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” The trust is appointed as well as the justification: the means as well as the end. We are not ordained to be saved apart from faith, but those who are predestinated to eternal life are ordained to receive it through faith in Christ Jesus. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Beloved friends, I would have you notice in this verse the remarkable object which is set before us as the grand design of predestinating grace. Observe the singular expression of the apostle—“That we should *be* to the praise of his glory.” Observe that he does not say, that we should *sing* to the praise of our glorious God, though we will do that; nor that we should *suffer* to his praise, though we would not refuse to do that; nor that we should *work* to his praise,

though by grace we will do that; but "that we should *be* to the praise of his glory." The very being of a believer is to the praise and glory of God. It is written, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" but this is still more comprehensive, you are to *be* to his glory, your very existence is to *praise* him. Your being, which is now turned into well-being, is to glorify the God of grace. When in the quiet of the garden I have looked upon the lilies standing erect in their marvellous beauty, and I have realized our Master's words, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these, then I have said to myself, "What do these to the glory of God?" Quickly my heart has answered, "They exist to show forth the glory of their Creator:" by merely standing where they are, they yield praise to the Lord: their very being is worship. Even those flowers which are born to blush unseen of men do not bloom in vain, they do not waste their sweetness, though they pour it on the desert air, for God is in the lone places, and beholds with joy his own handiwork. God is glorified by the being of that which he makes, and especially by the being of that which he has a second time created by the power of his grace, according to his purpose through faith. Is it not enough result of being if we are to his praise?

Beloved, see the importance of that trust which is so constant an item in the purpose of God when he causes us to be to the praise of his glory. Unless we have trusted in Christ we are not living to the praise of God: but when we have come by faith into the place wherein we ought to stand, then is our very being unto the praise of his glory. In Christ our very existence glorifies God, and it is faith which con-

sciously places us in Christ. Concerning that trust, or if you will—for the original bears that translation—that hope, which is so essential to the fulfilment of the purpose of God—concerning that trust I am about to speak this morning. May the praise of his glory be promoted by what I am enabled to say!

I. Our first point will be that TRUST IN CHRIST IS THE CONSTANT MARK OF THE SAVED. “That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ, in whom ye also trusted.” I care not whether you read it “trusted” or “hoped,” the idea will still be the same. Trust in Christ, or hope in Christ, is the distinguishing token of God’s people.

It was the mark of the apostles. It was necessary to an apostle that he should have seen the Lord, for he was to bear personal witness to that which he had seen with his eyes, and looked upon and handled; but this alone was not sufficient, for many saw the Lord and remained in unbelief, enemies of the cross of Christ. These could not have been apostles, since they did not trust in Jesus. The apostles were those who, with an inner as well as an outer eye, had seen the Lord, and had trusted themselves wholly to him as their Leader, Master, Teacher, and Saviour. There were no apostles worthy to be called apostles who did not trust in Christ. Truly Judas bore the name, but his Lord said of him, “One of you is a devil.” He who is sent of Christ as his witness first trusts in Christ.

This was also the mark of the first converts, *the chosen from among the Jews*. These had the honor to be the elder born—these who first trusted in Christ. Some of them had the advantage of having trusted in him before his actual advent, for they were looking for the hope of Israel, and earnestly expecting the coming

of the Messiah. Before our Lord appeared at the waters of Jordan, and was pointed out by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," there were hearts that believed in him, and eyes that looked for him. Still, whether they were Jewish believers, looking for his advent, or not, this was the mark of their being truly saved—that they trusted in Jesus, when he was revealed as the Anointed of the Lord. The best instructed Jew could not find eternal salvation apart from his putting his trust in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Now, dear friends, *This was the mark of those who were first saved by the great Redeemer*, and I want you to notice how the Holy Spirit sets them in a class by themselves. He makes a distinction between those who first trusted, and those who trusted afterwards, because it is a noteworthy honor to have been among the first that trust Christ. It is a privilege to be led by Jesus, to trust him first in order of time by beginning in your earliest youth. Happy are those who enter the Lord's vineyard amid the dews of the morning, for these redeem years of time from the bitter servitude of sin, and turn them to blessed account, in the delightful service of the Lord Jesus. Such are usually distinguished in the church: early piety makes eminent piety, early consecration often leads to abounding usefulness. The Lord evidently delights to be found in a high degree of those who seek him early. They come to him first, and he remembers the kindness of their youth, and the promptitude with which they obeyed his call. It is also a great privilege to be called first out of a family or a neighborhood. Peradventure some of you live where there are none who believe in Christ; may the Lord grant you this high fa-

vor to be the leader of your household and your district as a believer! May the shower of grace fall first on you, and then bless all those who are round about you! Possibly in your family you do not know of one who has passed from death to life—may you be the firstfruits out of spiritual death! I have often observed that where God begins with a family he goes on with a family. He makes one or two to be the firstfruits, and then he considers the lump as also holy, and goes on to bless the rest of the household. Even in nations I scarcely remember a nation or people that has ever received Christ which has been quite left without his blessing throughout after centuries: the fire which the first live coals had kindled has never absolutely been quenched. Therefore, I admire the gray fathers of the past, the pioneers of the army of the Lord. Paul mentions with respect those who were in Christ before him, and so should we honor those who led the way for us by first trusting in Christ. I greatly esteem in my own mind those first believers who were not borne in by the throng of others, but went forward alone. I compare them to the first navigators upon an untried sea; the men who first sailed out of sight of shore, greatly venturing. To be first in perceiving that Jesus of Nazareth was the Anointed of the Lord was no mean thing, for none of the princes of this world had any idea of that great fact. These were in truth the “men of light and leading,” the foremost minds of their age, peasants and fishermen though they were. These were the first swallows heralding a glorious summer-tide. These were the first song-birds waking the morning to behold the newly risen sun. It is a patent of nobility to be numbered with these. I would put a holy ambition into

the hearts of those who are young, and others who belong to ungodly families, suggesting to them that they should be among their households those "who first trust in Christ." In the history of your tribe you will have an honored place as the first who brought salvation to your house. But, whether you are first or last, if you are saved at all it will be through trust in Christ. Come young, come old, you will still be saved alone by trust in Christ. Come as the leader of your family, or come as the last left out in the cold, you will still have to come by a simple trust and reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the one sole way of salvation.

Now, as this was the mark of the elder born, the text goes on to tell us that *it was the mark of the younger born*: in "whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." The Ephesians did not see the Christ, they never listened to the melodious tones of his voice, nor looked into his beloved countenance; but they were converted by hearing the report of him. They were brought into salvation afterwards; but still it came to the same thing: they received like precious faith with those who in former days had obtained eternal life. Those to whom I now speak trusted in Christ after they had heard the word of truth. Note the expression. It is the word of *the* truth—the most important and vital of all truths. Nothing but truth can truly renew the heart. Falsehood works to evil: only truth works towards righteousness. We heard the word of the God of truth, and it came to us as the word of God: it came with the force of truth, carrying conviction with it, and it came as the word of God, exercising a divine power over our nature, and hence it was that we came

to trust in Christ. My unconverted hearer, if you desire to have faith in Christ, listen to the truth, and to the truth only. Shut your ears to error, and hold yourselves only ready to hear the glorious gospel of the blessed God. "Faith cometh by hearing," but that hearing must be the hearing of the word of God. It is by the hearing of the word of truth that men come to trust in Christ, but trust in Christ they must, or they will perish. He is the sole Rock on which we must rest: the one Foundation laid for us to build upon.

The apostle also says to these Ephesians, "Ye heard the gospel of your salvation." O delightful word! The gospel, the glad tidings! The glad tidings of salvation! Yea, more, the glad tidings of *your* salvation! The gospel brings to us a personal deliverance. We heard Christ preached, and we saw that he had salvation for us. Another man's Saviour brings us little joy, but salvation for ourselves is good news indeed. Joyful was the day when my heart said, "Blessed be God, I need salvation, and it is joyful tidings to me that there is an atoning sacrifice by which my sin is put away! I can be reconciled to God through the death of his Son, and in Christ Jesus I can be accepted and beloved of the Lord." By such reflections we were led to a simple and hearty trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That trust is the broad arrow of the King, set upon all his royal possessions. Where that trust is found, that soul is God's possession; where it is wanting, that soul still lies in the arms of the wicked one. This trust, of which some make so little, is, nevertheless, the distinguishing and the discriminating mark by which we must discern between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not.

Note, before I leave this portion of the subject, that *trust in Christ is of the same nature in all believers.* It is not the same in degree, nor in constancy, nor in energy; but yet it is the same faith. "Ye received like precious faith," said Peter. Paul's faith and your faith are the same faith if your faith be true faith. The faith of Abraham and the faith of a little child who has newly believed in Jesus are the same faith. A diamond is a diamond, whatever its size may be, and so little faith and great faith are of the same essence. Whether it be a grain of mustard-seed or a mountain-moving faith, it is still faith of the operation of God, faith in the same object, and faith working to the same end. Hence John, speaking to his converts, prays, "That you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." If thou art a believer, thou hast a right to the same fellowship with God as the apostle had, thou hast the same perfect cleansing by the precious blood, thou hast the same adoption, the same regeneration, thou standest in the same place of love and acceptance, thou shalt be blessed with the same blessings on earth, and thou shalt enter into the same joy at the right hand of God. See, then, dear friends, that trust in Christ is the invariable and the inflexible mark of the saved ones.

II. Secondly, THIS TRUST IS NO EMPTY NOTION. The trust in Christ which saves the soul is no idle sentiment, but a strong, vital, active principle, having a living and conquering power within it. It is of the operation of the Spirit of God, and hence it is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever.

True trust in Christ is an entire reliance upon him. This day, if you trust Christ, you rest the whole weight

and stress of your soul's affairs upon him. Looking at your sin and your sinfulness, looking at the past, the present, and the future, looking at death and at judgment, you deliberately believe that Christ is equal to every emergency, and you just cast yourself entirely and without reserve upon him to save you, and to keep you saved for ever. No other trust is worth a pin except this. It must be an absolute severance from all reliance upon your past merit, or upon your present resolutions, or upon your future expectations of what you shall be or shall do. You must have done with all other trust if Christ is your confidence. Your motto must be "Jesus only." In this life-boat you must swim to glory, but all other you must cast away. Another reliance would be as a weight about your loins to sink you in the sea of despair. O my hearer, hast thou such a simple, unadulterated trust as this?

A saving trust leads us to accept Christ in all his offices. He is to us not only Priest to put away our sin, but Prophet to remove our ignorance, and King to subdue our rebellions. If as Priest he purges the conscience, as Prophet he must direct the intellect, and as King he must rule the life. We must yield our will to Christ's will, that henceforth every thought may be brought into captivity to his holy sway. There is no whole-hearted trust in Christ unless Christ is taken as a whole. You cannot have half a Christ and be saved, for half Christ is no Christ. You must take him as he is revealed in Scripture, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour of men, very God of very God, the faithful and true Witness, your Guide, your Lord, your Husband, your everything. Do you trust him so? If not, you have not trusted him at all. This is the trust which

brings salvation with it—an entire reliance upon an entire Saviour so far as you know him.

This trust includes obedience to him: we have not trusted him at all unless we are prepared to accept his commands as the rule of our lives. The ship is on fire; the bales of cotton are pouring forth a black, horrible smoke; passengers and crew are in extreme danger, but a capable captain is in command, and he says to those around him, “If you will behave yourselves, I think I shall be able to effect the escape of you all.” Now, if they trust in the captain they will do precisely as he orders. No sailor or engineer will refuse to work the pumps, or to prepare the boats, neither will any passenger disobey rule. In proportion to their confidence in their leader will be the alacrity with which they obey him at once. They believe his orders to be wise, and so they keep to them. Neither their fear, nor their rashness, will lead them to rush to and fro contrary to his bidding if they have a firm trust in him. When the boats are lowered, and are brought one by one to the ship’s side, those who are to fill them wait till their turns come, in firm reliance upon the captain’s impartiality and prudence. They will get into the boats or they will wait on board, for they consider that his orders are dictated by a better judgment than their own. So far as each man and each woman firmly believes in the superior officer, discipline will be maintained. Do you not see this?

Obedience is the necessary outcome of true and real faith, and there is no trust where there is no obedience. Some of you fancy that you are to trust Christ, and then do what you like. You believe a lie, for such is not the teaching of God’s word. The faith which saves is a faith which obeys. Learn this from

the sermon of last Sabbath morning. Jesus becomes the Physician of the blind man, and puts clay upon his eyes; and then he bids him go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and he shall see. If he had refused to go and wash, he would not have received sight. Do not tell me you have trusted for sight; you cannot have done so, unless you go and wash in the appointed pool. We must follow Christ's directions, if we would receive Christ's promises. Trust in Christ implies a yielding up of all that we have and all that we are into Christ's hands. We must be to him as the wax to the seal, or the clay to the potter. There must be an unreserved submission to his supremacy. O thou seeking sinner, wilt thou submit to this? Art thou full of self-will and pride? Then these must be taken from thee. If thou dost heartily accept the Lord Jesus as thy Lord and King, thou hast the faith which saves; but if not, what faith hast thou that is worth the having?

Trust in Christ leads to an open following of him. Trust is not lame, but it walks in the footsteps of him it relies upon. If the Lord's way be the way of the cross, thou wilt nevertheless follow it, because thou wilt know it to be the right way, since he leads therein. He that is ashamed to confess Christ has good reason to fear that he is not trusting him. How can I be trusting him of whom I am ashamed? If I am not on his side in the great battle of life, how can I say that he is my confidence? He declares that he that is not with him is against him. How can I trust him, and yet be against him? If I refuse to have my name recorded on the muster-roll of his army below, how dare I hope that it is written in the Lamb's book of life above? If I refuse to accept Jesus as my cap-

tain, how can I claim him as my Saviour? A hearty trust in Christ involves an honest confession of him. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." Thus the matter is put in Scripture. Wilt thou come out, then? Wilt thou come out on his side? If thou wilt, then thou hast saving trust. If thou wilt truly, and fully, and wholly decide for Christ, and live for Christ, then thou hast the trust which is the mark of his elect.

This trust will lead a man to labor or to suffer for Christ as need occurs. The true truster considers it to be real gain to lose for Jesus. He reckons that toil unrewarded of men is the best rewarded form of labor when it is accepted of the Lord. It is enough wage to be permitted to serve the Lord Christ. This is faith: this which counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, this which hath respect unto a future recompense when the Lord shall come in his kingdom, but looks not for honor among men or any other form of reward here below. True trust cleaves to Christ when the many turn aside, for it knows that he has the living word, and none upon earth beside. My hearer, if thou hast a real trust in Christ, thou wilt follow his teachings though all the world should run madly after new opinions; thou wilt stand by his truth though thou be called a fool for thy steadfastness; and thou wilt not be ashamed though no one should keep thee in countenance. If thou be trusting in Christ, thou wilt spend thy life for him, and reckon it to be the best way of using thine existence. God grant us to have more and more of this trust!

That trust which lives on men's lips and never

affects their hearts is a deadly delusion. He that saith "I believe," and then never lives according to that belief, is a deceiver, and will find himself deceived if he looks for salvation in such a faith. That presumptuous trust which indulges in sin and boasts of forgiveness in Christ, is in itself an aggravation of a sinful life and will involve its possessor in increased condemnation. Hang up on the gibbet of infamy that evil confidence which is in league with unholiness. The conceit of safety while we love sin is a mockery of God's salvation, the base counterfeit of the coin of heaven. God alone gives the faith which works by love and purifies the soul, all other faith is spurious and ruinous.

True trust rejoices in the hope which Christ inspires. It looks for his coming and his glory, his reign and his heaven. It is full of hope; that living, lively, life-giving hope which sustains the heart. This trust hath a window of hope through which light comes into the heart in the darkest hours. It lives and triumphs in the future, through trusting the promise of Christ Jesus.

If we have such trust as this we shall constantly meet with something whereon to exercise it. God never leaves true trust without work to do. It is not a presentation sword to be worn only on high days and holidays, neither is it like the old armor in the Tower of London, hung up to be looked at; no, true trust is for every-day wear and use, and between here and heaven it will be tested in every conceivable way. That sword will snap if it be not a true Jerusalem blade, and that armor will be pierced if it be not of proof, able to endure the battle-axe of fierce temptation. In a thousand fields our trust will be tried ere

we shall be able to sheathe the sword and enjoy the triumph. It is in this way that trust in Christ is made by our God to work to the praise of the glory of his grace. Trust in Christ brings to God greater glory than anything else we can produce. "What shall we do," said one, "that we may work the work of God?" meaning thereby a god-like work, a work so great as to bear a heavenly name. Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Dear friend over yonder, you cannot build a row of almshouses to the glory of God; but you can trust Christ with all your heart to the glory of God. You cannot stand up and deliver an eloquent oration to God's praise, but you can by divine grace pursue a life of faith, and thus praise him. You cannot be a hero in fight, and turn to flight the armies of the alien, but by trust in Jesus, exercised in prevailing prayer, you can win great victories to the praise of his glory. Walk humbly with your God, in patience possess your souls, and with an unshattering faith embrace the promises, and you shall be found in that cloud of witnesses who are ennobled of God Most High. The Lord grant us, then, to have this trust, which is more than mere notion or sentiment—a divine principle created by the Holy Spirit.

III. Thirdly, THIS TRUST IN CHRIST IS HIS DUE. There came to me the other day a young man who wished to speak with me about his soul troubles, and he began thus, "Dear sir, I cannot trust Christ." To which I answered, "Have you found out something fresh in his character? Has he ceased to be trustworthy? Pray let me know all about it, for it is a serious matter to me; I have trusted him with everything I have for time and for eternity, and if he is not

fit to be trusted I am in a terrible case." He looked at me, and he said, "I will not say that again, sir; I see I have made a mistake. Truly the Lord Jesus is in every way trustworthy." "Well, then," I said, "Why cannot you trust him?" I left him with that unanswerable question. A man is certainly able to trust one whom he regards as trustworthy. My young friend saw that at once, and asked me further: "But may I trust Christ to save me? Am I permitted to trust my soul with him?" I said to him, "Is not this the command of the gospel: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved? And are you not warned that if you do not believe in him you will be damned? How can we doubt that we are permitted to do that which is commanded us of the Lord? I am to preach the gospel to every creature, and this is the gospel:—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" He said, "So, then, if I trust Christ, he will save me?" and I replied, "Certainly he will; he is the Saviour of all them that put their trust in him. He says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' It is written, 'He that believeth on him hath everlasting life;' he that trusts in Jesus is saved." He thanked me, and saying that he had found out the secret, he went on his way rejoicing. I told him the gospel; he received it; and he entered into rest. I hope I may be equally successful with my hearers at this time. May the Holy Spirit work with me in this case also! I have been talking about faith, and I trust I have not darkened counsel by words without knowledge. It is simplicity itself, but we are exceedingly apt to becloud it. To trust Christ is to find salvation. He that sincerely relies upon Jesus is saved. Now,

concerning this trust, I say that this is our Lord's due.

Observe, first, that we are bound to trust him from *his very name*. His name is "Christ," that is, the "Anointed." God has sent him, God has commissioned him, God has equipped him, he is the anointed of God: dare I distrust him? An ambassador from heaven, with the divine warrant at his back, known to speak in the name of the Lord God, how dare I say I have no confidence in him? By the glorious name of Christ I claim for him that you who seek salvation should trust him implicitly, and trust him at once.

Remember, next, *his glorious person*. He who is set forth as the object of saving trust is none other than the Son of God. In his Godhead and in his humanity, yea, in his undivided person, he claims your trust. Canst thou not trust him that made heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that was made? Can his power fail thee? Can his wisdom mislead thee? Can his mind change toward thee? Can he be unfaithful? The Son of the Highest, canst thou not trust him? Away with the impertinence of mistrust! Canst thou doubt the Holy and the True? Darest thou doubt the Lamb of God? Be not so foolhardy as thus to defy the incarnate Son of God, and treat him as though he could deceive thee.

Next, trust him, because of *his matchless character*. Hast thou ever heard of such another as the Christ of God? Among the sons, no one is like to him.

"All hail, Emmanuel, all divine,
In thee thy Father's glories shine
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest one
That eyes have seen or angels known."

He is all goodness, the fulness of love, and the pattern of tenderness. He is always true, and always

faithful. By that blessed character which he bears, which I am sure you would not for a moment question—a character which even infidels have been forced to admire—I pray you trust him! Let it not be a question with you: “How can I trust him?” Say rather: “How can I distrust him?” What reason can you have for doubt? What excuse for mistrust?

Remember next, *his work, and especially his death*. Here is immovable ground for my claim that you should trust him. Jesus loved men so as to die for them, how can we doubt his love? I do not know how it is with you, but I lose the power to doubt when I realize Christ crucified. That crown of thorns hedges my mind around, and shuts out mistrust. His five wounds kill my suspicions and my fears. A crucified Saviour is the life of faith, and the death of unbelief. Canst thou stand and view the flowing of the Saviour’s precious blood upon the tree of doom, and not trust Him? What more can he do to prove his sincerity than to die for us? His life is the mirror of love, but in his death the sun shineth on it with a blaze of glory, so that we cannot steadily look into its brightness. Behold how he loved us! Oh, believe thou in the crucified Christ, for this is no more than his right and due!

Besides, *he lives, and he has gone up into the glory with the same purpose of grace upon his heart*. When men change their places, they often change their minds; but he that loved us when he was despised and rejected, loves us now that he is highly exalted. He is not like the chief butler, who forgot in the palace the promise which he made in the prison. The love of Calvary is with the Lamb in the midst of the throne. On earth he bleeds, in heaven he pleads. Ye sinners, come and trust the ever-living Christ, for he makes

intercession for transgressors! I stand here this morning, and I say to all of you in this house that I claim your confidence in the Lord Jesus. I do not humbly ask for it as a beggar asks an alms: I demand for the Christ of God that you put your trust in him. God has sent him forth to be a propitiation for sin, that through faith in his blood every one that believeth in him should be saved. I demand your trust in the name of God. Christ deserves it at your hands, and you cannot refuse it without doing him a gross injustice. I beseech you do not make God a liar; yet, according to the apostle John, "He that believeth not hath made him a liar, because he believeth not in the Son of God." If Christ were here this morning, standing on this platform, and you saw his pierced hands, and the wound in his side, you would be ready to fall down and worship him: you can worship him better still by trusting him in his absence. "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." Trust is among the sublimest forms of adoration. A childlike, tearful, broken-hearted, sincere trust in Christ is a hallelujah unto his name. If thou wouldst crown him, thou needst not go far for a coronet: thy trust is the best diadem thou canst bring him. Trust thou him, then, at this moment, and thus bow at his feet with cherubim and seraphim. But again I say, do not insult him by saying that thou canst not trust him. I should think it hard if any one of my acquaintance said to me, "Sir, I cannot trust you." It would be a cruel cut. I should inquire of him, "What have I done to merit this? When have I been untrue?" It would be too unkind a stab if it came from one whom I had aimed to benefit. Do not crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame

O my hearers, I have chosen an old theme this morning, and I have been studiously simple in my style, for my heart longs to bring you to trust in Jesus! I have no desire to be thought a fine preacher. I want to save your souls. This trust is the vital point; do not slight it. Oh that you would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! If you believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. This is the way of salvation, and it is very plain. God help you to run in it! Lay aside pride and self-confidence, and trust wholly in Jesus; and this will be better than all tears, and despairs, and resolves, and efforts. Fall back into the arms of redeeming love. Lean your whole weight on Jesus. Take your soul to Christ as you take your money to your banker, and leave it in his hands. He will keep it until that day when, at his appearing, you shall appear with him in glory.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, what I have already insisted upon, that THIS TRUST IS IN EVERY CASE THE INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION.

Trust is selected by God as the instrument of salvation, and it is not selected arbitrarily, but with great wisdom and prudence. When a man trusts Christ, *by his trust he is brought into mental and spiritual contact with Christ*; and there is a more hopeful influence about that contact than in anything which a man will resolve to do or even perform in his own strength. It is a grand thing for a man to be elevated above self-confidence, and brought to rely upon such an one as the Son of God. Thus he is made to feel that he must look to some one greater and better than himself; and he is brought to own that he is a feeble and dependent creature. I think I see in this consideration

an adaptation in faith to be the means chosen of God in the matter of salvation

Moreover, faith is no doubt selected by God to be the means of salvation, because *it never robs God of his glory*. If you and I are to be saved, we shall be saved by God and by his grace alone. Now if the appointed way of salvation leaves something for us to do in order that we may be saved by God, we shall in all probability attribute our salvation to that something, and forget the Lord. If we are bidden to trust, there will be no temptation in that direction; for we cannot rely upon our trust, since its very essence lies in depending upon Christ alone. Trust ascribes salvation to him who saves. Faith never seeks honor for herself: she is a self-denying grace. Christ saith, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace;" and by this saying he crowns faith, and he does so because faith crowns him.

Trust, again, is selected as the instrument of salvation because *it has wondrous power over the heart of God*. Marvellous is the influence of trust. I have aforetime illustrated this to you by the power which faith has over us, mortal men. I will venture to tell you an old story, which you have heard from me before. I cannot recollect anything better, and you must bear with a repetition. I once lived where my neighbor's garden was only divided from me by a very imperfect hedge. He kept a dog, and his dog was a shockingly bad gardener, and did not improve my beds. So one evening, while I walked alone, I saw this dog doing mischief, and being a long way off, I threw a stick at him, with some earnest advice as to his going home. This dog, instead of going home, picked up my stick and came to me with it in his

mouth, wagging his tail. He dropped the stick at my feet, and looked up to me most kindly. What could I do but pat him and call him a good dog, and regret that I had ever spoken roughly to him? Why, it brings tears into my eyes as I talk about it! The dog mastered me by his trust in me. The illustration is to the point. If thou wilt trust God as that dog trusted me, thou wilt overcome. God will be held by thy trust in such a way that he could not smite thee, but must accept thee for Jesus' sake. If thou dost trust him, thou hast the key of his heart, the key of his house, the key of his heaven. If thou canst trust thy God in Jesus Christ, thou hast become a son of God. I see a philosophy in the choice of faith: do not you?

But then faith operates also to salvation by *the effect it has on the character*. When I doubt God, then I follow my own judgment and do what I please; but when I trust him wholly, and know him to be my Father and my Friend, then I yield my will to him naturally, not as a matter of constraint, but with great joy. And is it not a wonderful thing, that this simple trust turns the whole current of our life, and changes the entire color and complexion of our thought? Wisely is it ordained to be the instrument of salvation, since it touches the main-spring of our being, and makes that which was erratic and rebellious become orderly and obedient?

Moreover, brethren, trust saves us, because *it grasps the promises of God and pleads them*. It says to God, "Thou hast promised this; therefore I pray thee do as thou hast said." The God of truth cannot lie; and, therefore, he must keep his word. Trust pleads the sacrifice of Jesus, and says—"Lord, the blood of thy

Son was shed for the remission of sins, therefore, I pray thee let my sins be remitted. Thou hast said that thou hast laid on him the iniquity of us all. I pray thee let me be unburdened of my load, because thou hast laid it on him." Trust must save, for it has all the promises of the covenant at its back, and the Christ of the covenant at its side, exhibiting his own precious blood. How can trust but save the soul when God declares it shall do so?

In our most honest hours we are driven to faith for our comfort. If in our prosperity our eyes wander to other confidences, in our distress they come back to Christ and his cross. When the head is aching, and the heart is throbbing, and the death-sweat lies on the brow, none of us dare look to works, or feelings, or sacraments, but we cry—

“ Hold thou thy cross before my failing eyes.”

The wounds of Jesus are the ultimate hope of the forlorn. When the soul is about to quit the body, the most eminent preacher, the most earnest worker, the most devout thinker asks that he may see Jesus, and be washed in his blood and covered with his righteousness. I dare not trust all the heaped-up merits of all the saints, but I dare trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinner as I am, I am assured of salvation through the sinner's Saviour. If I had as many souls in this one body as there are souls in this house of prayer, I dare trust them all with Christ. If all the sins ever committed by all the men that ever lived since time began were all heaped upon my one guilty head I dare trust Jesus Christ to cleanse me from them all. O come, dear hearts, and trust my Lord! He cannot fail you. According to your faith be it unto you.

You shall be able to live graciously, and to die calmly, if your trust settles itself upon Jesus, the Christ, the anointed of the Lord. Ere yet the harvest is past and the summer is ended, trust Christ, and live. O Holy Spirit, by thy secret workings upon the heart, lead all these thousands to trust in the Lord Jesus! Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

XIV.

FOLLY OF UNBELIEF.

August 28, 1887.

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”—LUKE xxiv. 25.

THE two disciples who walked to Emmaus and conversed together, and were sad, were true believers. We may not judge men by their occasional feelings. The possession of gladness is no clear evidence of grace; and the existence of depression is no sure sign of insincerity. The brightest eyes that look for heaven have sometimes been holden so that they could not see their heart's true joy. Be not cast down, my brethren and sisters, if occasionally the tears of sadness bathe your cheeks. Jesus may be drawing near to you, and yet you may be troubled by mysteries of grief.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to the two disciples, and took a walk of some seven miles with them to remove their sadness; for it is not the will of our Lord that his people should be cast down. The Saviour does himself that which he commanded the ancient prophet to do. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.” Thus he spake and thus he acts. He was pleased when he went away to send us another Comforter, because he wishes us to abound in comfort; but that promise proves that he was, and is, him-

self a Comforter. Do not dream, when in sadness, that your Lord has deserted you; rather reckon that for this very reason he will come to you. As her babe's cry quickens the mother's footsteps to come to it more speedily, so shall your griefs hasten the visits of your Lord. He hears your groanings; he sees your tears—are they not in his bottle? He will come to you as the God of all consolation.

Observe that, when the Saviour did come to these mourning ones, he acted very wisely towards them. He did not at once begin by saying, "I know why you are sad." No; he waited for them to speak, and in his patience drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn hence the way of wisdom. Do not talk too much yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Jeremiah derives a measure of help from his own lamentations: even Job feels a little the better from pouring out his complaint. Those griefs which are silent run very deep, and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy hath an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties: do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them, and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often, by facing the disease of sorrow the cure is half effected; for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery, and when that mystery is extracted by a clear description, the sharpness of the woe is over. Learn, then, ye who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine.

Learn also a sacred lesson, O ye mourners! It is well for you, when you are pouring out your griefs, that you do so before the Lord. These two troubled wayfarers, though they knew it not, were telling their sorrow to him who best of all could help them to bear it. You may tell your friends, if you will, and it will be some relief to you; but if you seek the throne of grace, and make the Redeemer your chief confidant, your relief will be sure. Get you alone; shut to the door; bow there apart from the disciples, and say, "Jesus, Master. I would tell thee that which saddens me! Thou great High Priest, who wast compassed with infirmities, thou wilt understand me better than my nearest friend, and I would place myself beneath thy care!" How great the privilege that we have access with boldness to the ear and heart of Jesus our Lord!

Again, learn another point of wisdom. When our Lord had heard their statement of distress he might immediately have comforted them: a word would have done it. Did he not say, "Mary," and did she not at once turn and say, "Rabboni" with ecstatic delight? He went more wisely to work than to administer hurried consolation: he rather rebuked than encouraged them. He began by saying, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Observe that I quote the Revised Version, for the Authorized is too harsh. Our Lord did not call them *fools*, but foolish persons. The difference is rather in the manner than in the sense. He chided them; gently, but still wisely. He let them know that their unbelief was blameworthy, and he called them foolish for indulging it. O beloved brother, if thy Master chide thee, do not

doubt his love! If, when thou goest to him in grief, he answers thee roughly, it is his love scarcely disguised, which thus seeks thy truest welfare. If thou believe in thy Lord, thou wilt reply, "Master, say on." If he call thee foolish, thou wilt wonder that he does not say something worse of thee; and in any case thou wilt trust him after the manner of Job when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Especially observe that our Saviour's rebuke was aimed at their unbelief. Unbelief, which we so often excuse, and for which we almost claim pity, is not treated by our Lord as a trifle. It is for this that he calls them foolish; it is about this that he chides the slowness of their hearts. Do not let us readily excuse ourselves for mistrust of God. If we ever doubt our gracious Lord, let us feel ourselves to be verily guilty. Regard unbelief as a fault rather than a weakness. Brace yourselves to seek a braver and more constant faith than you have reached as yet. Why should we go on blundering, and misjudging, and therefore fretting, when a little consideration will set us right, and at the same time cause us to honor our Lord, and to be ourselves filled with joy and peace through believing?

I am going to handle this rebuke as God the Holy Spirit shall help me; first addressing it *to the true believer*, and secondly, *to the secker*. I shall have to bring forth some bitter things which will act as a tonic, but by giving tone to your system, they will, in the end, remove your fears better than sweeter matters would have done. Hear then our Lord say, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"

In speaking to believers, I would have them observe that our Lord rebuked their unbelief under two heads: first, *as being folly*, and secondly, *as arising from slowness of heart*.

First, then, UNBELIEF IS FOLLY. Not to believe all that the prophets have spoken, and not to draw comfort out of it, is great folly. Folly! Note the word. "O fools! O foolish men!" It is folly such as makes the tender Jesus cry out.

It is folly because it arises from want of thought and consideration. Not to think is folly. To give way to sadness, when a little thought would prevent it, is foolishness. Is it not? If these two disciples had sat down and said, "Now the prophets have said concerning the Messiah that he shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and thus was it with our Master," they would have been confirmed in their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah. If they had said, "The prophet David wrote, 'They pierced my hands and my feet,' they would have recognized in this their crucified Lord. And if then they had turned to the other passages of the prophets in which they speak of Messiah's future glory, they would have been refreshed with hope. In the Scriptures they would have found types, and figures, and plain words, in which the death and the rising again, and the shame and the glory of Christ are linked together, and his cross is made the road to his throne. Had they compared the testimony of the holy women with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they would have obtained ground of hope. The women reported that the body was no longer in the tomb, and that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive; two apostles went to the sepulchre, and gave in a like report; and this tallied

with the Lord's own words, in which he made Jonah his type, because he came up from the deep on the third day. But they forgot the Scriptures; they did not think of that great source of hope. Their eyes were dimmed with tears, so that they did not see what was plain before them. How many a precious text have you and I read again and again without perceiving its joyful meaning, because our minds have been eluded with despondency! We take the telescope, and try to look into heavenly things, and we breathe upon the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety, till we cannot see anything; and then we conclude that there is nothing to be seen. Do you not think, beloved, you that are distressed and sorrowing to-day, that if you thought more of the promises revealed in God's Word, you would soon see things differently, and would rise out of your downcast condition? You put your Bibles away, and read nothing but the roll of your troubles. There are no handkerchiefs for the tears of saints like those which are folded up within the golden box of God's Word. He who inspired this volume is the "The Comforter"; will you not apply to him in your dark hours? O you, whose melancholy arises from forgetfulness of the words of your heavenly Father, of the tender Saviour, and of the divine Spirit, I beseech you be more considerate! Think of God's providence, his unchanging love, his power, his faithfulness, his mercy. Think of the promises, and as you handle them by thought, they will exhale a sweet perfume which will delight you. Holy thought will charm you out of your griefs. But what folly is it that, for want of thought, we should bow our heads like the bulrush, when, like the sunflower,

we might look at the light till we became little suns ourselves !

Unbelief is folly *because it is inconsistent with our own professions.* The two disciples professed that they believed in the prophets; and I have no doubt that they did do so. They were devout Jews who accepted the Holy Books as divinely inspired, and therefore infallible; and yet now they were acting as if they did not believe in the prophets at all. Are we not often found guilty of like inconsistency? O brethren, it is one thing to say, "I believe the Bible," but it is quite another thing to act upon that belief! We have more of seeming faith than of real faith. That Book is true, and every promise in it is true, and I know and believe that it is so; and yet, when I come to the test, how much of faith evaporates, and how sadly my fluttering heart proves that my belief was more in fancy than in fact! There is more infidelity in the best believer than he dreams of. We think we believe in the gross; and yet, when it comes to the detail, and we have to deal with this promise and with that as a matter of fact in every-day life, we have to light a candle, and sweep the house, to find our faith. What folly this is! If the Word of the Lord be true, it is true, and we ought to act upon it; if it be not true, why do we profess to believe it? That which is unquestionably true, will bear all the strain and pressure which life and its trials may put upon it, and it is for us to act upon this belief. Brethren, it ill becomes us to play at believing; let us have our wits about us, and make serious business of that which is not sent to delude us, but soundly to instruct us. The Word of the Lord is in harmony with his providence; and as we believe him as to the one, we must trust him as to the other.

We may safely rest the weight of our body and soul, our present and future, upon the sure promise of a faithful God; and we are bound by our profession to do so. It is folly to call ourselves believers in the Bible, and then to doubt and distrust.

Folly, again, is clearly seen in unbelieving sadness, because *the evidence which should cheer us is so clear*. In the case of the brethren going to Emmaus they had solid ground for hope. They spake, to my mind, a little cavalierly of the holy women as "certain women." Yet there were no better disciples in the world than those women. They were surely the best of the chosen company—Mary and the Magdalene. Even the testimonies of Peter and John, the very chief of the apostles, are not sufficiently valued, for they speak of "certain of them which were with us." I say not they speak disrespectfully; but there is a slurring of their witness by casting a doubt upon it. Concerning these godly women they leave an impression on my mind as if they had said, "Women will talk, and these women said that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive." It is rehearsed as hearsay of a hearsay; they said that they had seen those who had said. If they had been pushed to the point, the two disciples would not have allowed that the Magdalene and the other women, or Peter, or John, were unworthy of credence; and yet they were by their sadness, acting as if the witnesses were mistaken. If those who were at the empty sepulchre were to be believed, why did they doubt? The evidence which they themselves detail, though we have it only in brief in this place, was conclusive evidence that Christ had left the tomb; and yet they doubted it. Now, dear friends, you and I have had superabundant evidence of the faithfulness

of God, and if we are unbelieving, we are unreasonable and foolish. At least, I stand here to confess, that whenever I doubt my God it is on my part a superfluity of naughtiness. I have never had any reason to distrust him. These many years that I have trusted in him he has never failed me once. Experienced Christians, how can you waver in your confidence? If we disbelieve, is it not folly? If the Saviour does not call us fools, we are forced to call ourselves so.

We could not suppose that the promise, covenant, and oath of God could fail. The supposition cannot be tolerated for an instant. Thousands of souls are resting everything upon the faithfulness of God, and desire no other security; but if God be unfaithful, what will become of them? If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do? Then they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished; or, even if they be in heaven, what security have they there, if God can change? I feel quite safe on board the ship of the covenant, for all the saints are floating in this one vessel. If God fails, then we all fail together, and there is an end of faith, and hope, and all things. Wherefore, let us not be so foolish as to sin against the light of clear truth. Let us believe what we have known, and tasted, and handled. Let past experience anchor us firmly as to future circumstances.

Unbelief is folly, because *it very often arises out of our being in such a hurry.* They said, "Beside all this, this is the third day." I know that they had expected great things on that third day, and were justified in expecting them; but still, the day was not yet over, and they were in as great a fever as if it was past a month ago. Although the Saviour had said that he would rise on the third day, he had not said that he would appear

to them all on the third day. He told them to go into Galilee and there they should see him ; but that meeting had not yet come. "He that believeth shall not make haste ;" but they that do not believe are always restless. Well is it written, "Ye have need of patience." God's promises will be kept to the moment, but they will not all be fulfilled to-day. Divine promises are some of them bills which are payable so many days after sight; and because they are not paid at sight we doubt whether they are good bills. Is this reasonable? Are we not foolish to doubt the sure handwriting of a God that cannot lie? Because the Lord has not carried out your interpretation of his promise in the way of your own dictation, therefore you question his truthfulness! If the vision tarry, wilt thou not wait for it? It will come in its own appointed time; wouldst thou have it hurried on for thee? What next? Shall the sun and moon be quickened in their pace to suit thy rashness? Must God himself alter his purposes at thy bidding? Truly, things have come to a pretty pass! Art thou man or God? If thou be a man, wait God's time, and in thy patience possess thy soul. If thou do not, but, like a fretful child, must have everything now, or else cry and fight, thou deservest the rod, and well may the Lord say to thee, "O foolish one!"

Yet, again, I think we may well be accused of folly whenever we doubt, because *we make ourselves suffer needlessly*. There are enough bitter wells in this wilderness without our digging more. There are enough real causes of sorrow without our inventing imaginary ones. I believe that the sharpest griefs in the world are those that men make for themselves. No asp ever stung Cleopatra so terribly as that which she

hold to her breast herself. Certain of our friends spend all their days in stitching away to make themselves garments of sackcloth. I have seen the cobbler with his lapstone cobbling up a trouble, and he has done his work so well that the shoe has pinched his foot for many a day. It seems a pity, does it not? Yet, brethren and sisters, we have those about us who are great adepts at self-worrying. When you were boys, I do not suppose you ever went into the woods to find a stick for your father to beat you with; but you have done so again and again since you have been men; and the more is the pity that you should be so foolish. If these two travellers had considered and believed, they would have known that Christ was risen from the dead; and as they walked along to Emmaus, if indeed they had ever taken that walk at all, their faces would have brightened at the prospect of soon seeing him they loved so well.

I want you to notice yet further that it was folly, but *it was nothing more*. I feel so thankful to our Lord for using that word. Though we ought to condemn our own unbelief with all our hearts, yet our Saviour is full of tenderness, and so freely forgives, that he looks upon our fault as folly, and not as wilful wickedness. He does not take our doubt as an affront, but he calls it folly. He knows that it is true of his children, as it is of ours, that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. He puts that down to childish folly which he might have called by a harsher name. I am sure that any dear, obedient child will feel thankful if his father calls his fault by the lighter name of folly, because it will prove that he loves him, and will endeavor to teach him better. It was not wicked rebellion, there was no enmity in it. They loved

their Lord, though they feared he had *not* risen from the dead. I do not want you to draw undue comfort from this gentle word, but yet I would have you lose none of the cheer it is meant to convey. You that are vexed at your own doubts are not to come to the conclusion that the Lord utterly rejects you. He discriminates between the folly of a child and the wickedness of a rebel: he knows what is in your heart, and knows that you are his. You are like a ship that is well anchored, and though the tide is rushing in, and makes your vessel roll from side to side, so that you yourself stagger, yet the vessel is not loosed from its moorings, neither are you in any danger. Your faith is fixed on Christ, and this anchor holds you; though you are tossed about a little, you will suffer no shipwreck because of sin, but much sea-sickness because of folly. So much concerning unbelieving sadness as folly.

In the second place, our Lord rebuked them for SLOWNESS OF HEART TO BELIEVE.

This is an evil greatly to be fought against, but it is by no means a rare sin among the people of God. Let me try and bring home the charge made by our Lord against the two disciples, since I fear it applies to us as much as to them. Our hearts are full often sluggish in believing; at least, mine is so, and I suppose we are much alike.

First, we are slow in heart to believe our God, for *we are much more ready to believe others than to believe him*. I am often amazed with the credulity of good people whom I had credited with more sense. Credulity towards man and incredulity towards God are singular things to find in the same person. We cannot help seeing in the daily papers how easily people

are duped. Get up a prospectus, and a list of names as directors, including a titled pauper, and you can bring in money by wagon-loads. The confidence trick can still be successfully performed. One impostor lived for months by calling at the door of guileless old people in almshouses, and telling them that a cousin in America had died, and left them a fortune, but it was essential that fees should be paid at the government offices, and then the legacy would at once be handed over. Times and times the money has been scraped together, the rogue has gone his way, and no more has been heard of the cousin in America. There are so many simpletons about that rogues reap harvests all the months of the year. And yet the God of truth is doubted! Yet the incorruptible Word is mistrusted! This makes our slowness of heart in believing God all the more sad a sign of our inward depravity of nature. We *can* believe, for we believe in man. In the course of our lives we are fools enough to believe in men to our cost; in fact, it is not easy to rise out of this snare: and yet we are slow at heart to believe our God. Oh, my brethren, can we excuse ourselves? The Lord forgive and cleanse us! Let us henceforth accept every syllable of God's Word as infallible, while we turn our unbelief towards man and his philosophies and infidelities!

Is it not clear that we are slow of heart to believe, since *we judge this of others when they are mistrustful*? When we see our brethren in trial desponding and distrusting, we are very apt to think them needlessly dull, and sinfully slow to grasp the promise: and yet, if we come into the like case, we are by no means better than they. That which we censure we commit. The beam is in our own eye as well as the mote in our

brother's eye. You have come home from visiting a friend who was distressed at heart, and you have said, "I cannot make her out, I have put the promises before her, but she is so foolish that she refuses to be comforted." Yes, and from this learn what you may be! Within a month's time, you may be sinking in the same mire. An evil heart of unbelief is to be found in many a breast where its existence is least suspected. But if we see the folly of others, will we not confess our own? Dare we commit what we condemn? Did you ever say of Job, "It was a pity that after all his patience, he spoke so bitterly, and cursed the day of his birth"? I wonder how many of us would have been any better than Job? I dare not hope that I should have been worthy to unloose the latches of his shoes. If I had been bereaved as he was, and tortured with like burning boils, and, worst of all, irritated by critics with their cruel candor and malignant sympathy, I could not have behaved so grandly as he did. Let us not severely judge others. They ought to believe, of course; they ought to be more cheerful; they ought not to let their burdens crush them so completely: but when we also are tempted shall we be so very much superior? I fear not. Let us see ourselves in the weakness of our brethren, and confess that the Saviour's words are true: we are "slow of heart to believe."

There is another point in which we are very slow of heart to believe, namely, that *we do believe, and yet do not believe*. We must be very slow of heart when we say "Yes, I believe that promise," and yet we do not expect it to be fulfilled. We are quick of mind to believe mentally, but we are slow of heart to believe practically. The very heart of our believing is

slow. Our dear friend, Mr. George Müller, whom may God long preserve, says that one of his objects in journeying about, at his advanced age, from church to church, is to try and lead God's people to real faith in the promises of God. He says, "As for fifty-seven years I have seen how very little *real* trust in the living God there is (generally speaking), even amongst true Christians, I have sought, in these my missionary tours particularly, to strengthen their faith; because, in the course of my pastoral labors, the blessed results of *real* confidence in God on the one hand have come to my knowledge, and the misery of distrusting him on the other." Mr. Müller's object is a very desirable one: but what fools we must be that this should be necessary! There are plenty of people who believe God after a superfine kind of fashion up there on the edge of the moon, or "at the back of the north wind"; but they do not believe the Lord in their shops, and on their beds, and in their kitchens: they cannot believe as to bread, and cheese, and house-rent, and raiment. They talk about believing in the Lord for eternity, but for this day and next week they are full of fear. True faith is every-day faith. The faith of the patriarchs was a faith which dwelt in tents, and fed sheep. We want a faith which will endure the wear and tear of life—a practical, realizing faith, which trusts in God from hour to hour. Oh, to be delivered from shams, and windbags, and to believe God as a woman believes her husband, or a child believes its father! I hear of writers of "the realistic school": we want believers of the realistic order. We need faith in which there are backbone and grit. We are sham believers, and so we lead sham lives. The promises of God speak to us as Jesus spake to his disciples when

he rose from the dead: each one cries "Handle me, and see." God's words are not chaff, but wheat; not wind, but bread. We are slow of heart because, while we think we are believing all that God saith to us, it often turns out that our believing is all a puff.

These two disciples must have been slow of heart to believe, again, because *they had enjoyed so much excellent teaching*, and they ought to have been solid believers. They had been for years with Jesus Christ himself as a tutor, and yet they had not learned the elements of simple faith. "Oh," say you, "they were very slow!" Are not you the same? How many years have you been with Jesus? Perhaps for even thirty years. He has himself taught you, has he not? Let me remind some of you of the remarkable events of your lives. What wonderful providences you have seen! What singular deliverances you have experienced! What divine upholdings you have enjoyed! What heavenly consolations you have received! If you doubt the Saviour, you may well be called "slow of heart to believe." After what you have experienced, my brother, the shadow of a doubt should never fall upon you! Have you not said many times, in the flush of your gratitude for some signal favor, "There, I can never doubt my Lord again"? You were foolish when you made that boastful observation; but you are more foolish still for running back from it. You have passed through the Red Sea, and with your timbrel in your hand you have sung unto the Lord; and yet, perhaps, after a short march, you have tasted the bitter waters of Marah, and opened your mouth in murmuring. God only is wise, and we are fools. He alone hath understanding, and we are "slow of heart."

Once more, these two disciples were very slow of heart to believe, because *there is so much in the Word which ought to have convinced them.* See how the Saviour puts it—"Slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken." What a mighty "all" that is! Brethren, are you half aware of the treasure hidden in the field of Scripture? Are you as familiar with your Bibles as you should be? If so, you will join with me in speaking of Scripture as having almost a redundance of confirmatory testimony. There is rock enough here for us to build upon. We have here, not only precept upon precept, but promise upon promise, and all these confirmed by pledge, and oath, and covenant of the Lord God Almighty. The teaching of Scripture is so full, so varied, so convincing, that we are, indeed, slow of heart if our faith is not firm and immovable. Brethren, a want of familiarity with the Word of God is very often the seed-plot of our doubts! Half our fears arise from neglect of the Bible. Our spirits sink for want of the heavenly food stored up in the inspired Volume. God forbid that you should fly to light literature to give your mind a fillip! Go to the solid literature of the promises, and be established with food more suitable for an immortal soul. Like Luther, say, "Come, let us sing a psalm, and drive away the devil." There is no enchantment for the casting out of evil spirits like a resort to the divine Word. When you see more of what God has revealed, you will rise out of your doubts and fears, and your slowness of heart to believe will depart from you.

Before I leave this point, I beg you to notice that the Saviour does not say that they were "hard of heart," but slow of heart. I like to notice that. When

he is most severe, he is still tenderly discriminating. "Slow of heart" we are, but there is no enmity in our heart towards him. It is slowness, and that is bad enough, but our Lord graciously helps our pace. Our face is in the right direction, and our feet are going the right way; but we are slow in heart, and lame in faith. As David spared Mephibosheth, and admitted him to his table, though lame in both his feet, so the Lord loves us, and communes with us, slow of heart though we are. It is bad to have a slow heart, very bad; but it would be much worse to have an unrenewed heart. With all our doubts and fears, we have no longer a heart of stone, but we have a heart of flesh, which mourns because of its sinful unbelief. The Lord knows the difference between the sin of hating the truth and the folly of doubting it. Strive against this slowness of heart, but still let not Satan come as an accuser, and condemn you as though you were not a child of God at all.

So there I leave it. There is the Master's gentle rebuke, not meant to discourage you, but to encourage you. He calls you foolish in order that you may be so no longer. Believe, and this shall be your wisdom.

Will the Lord's people kindly pray for me while I now speak *to the unconverted*? Ask that I may have God-speed while I try and speak to those who are seeking the Lord, and have not yet believed in him. I want to say to them just this: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe!" Some of you are really seeking the Lord, but you say that you cannot believe, though you long to believe. You are not like the spider, whose motto is, "I get everything out of my-

self." You do not hope to spin salvation out of your own bowels, but you own that salvation must be through faith in Christ. So far so good: but how is it that you do not at once believe? You say you cannot. How is it that you cannot believe in Jesus? He commands you to believe in him, and promises that you shall be saved. Trust him, and you shall live as surely as his Word is true.

Listen! This unbelief proves you to be foolish, and slow of heart, for *there are other parts of his Word which you easily believe*. If there is a threatening or a condemnation, you believe it. If there is a text that speaks of judgment to come, you believe it. You have a quick eye for anything which reads hard and looks dismal. Have I not seen you reading the Word, and stopping at a passage, and saying, "Alas! this makes my case hopeless. I have sinned the sin that is unto death"? You believe in more than God has said, for you read your own thoughts into God's Word, and make it say more than it means. You are ready enough to take in the hard things, but the gracious promises of the loving Christ you will not believe. How can you justify this? How foolish you are! The promises are in the same Book as the threatenings, and if you believe the one, believe the other. Certainly, the cheering words come from the same inspiration as the depressing ones: if you believe that which looks dark, believe that which looks bright.

Next, you are very foolish, because *your objections against believing are altogether poor and puerile*. I should think I have heard hundreds of them in my time, but out of all the objections raised by troubled souls against believing in Jesus, there is not one worthy of

serious discussion. One man cannot believe in Jesus because he does not feel humble enough; as if that affected Christ's power to save. If he felt more humbled, then he could believe in Jesus. Would not that be just believing in himself, and trusting in his own humility instead of trusting in Christ? One man cannot believe in Christ because he is not like a certain great saint. Does he expect that he is to be like a great saint when he first comes to Christ? Has not Christ come to save sinners? Another says he cannot believe because he has not felt the terrors of the law and the dread of hell. Does he think that his terrors are to save him? Would his dreads and horrors help Christ to save him? Would he not be trusting his terrors, and not Christ? The Lord Jesus says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The gospel is to be preached to every creature, and every creature that believes it shall be saved: but these people back out of it, and begin hammering out reasons for their own destruction. A sadly suicidal business is this! Let the devil invent reasons for my not being saved: it is not a business which can bring me any form of good. Nothing can stand against the promise of God: he commands me to believe on his Son Jesus, and I do believe, and I am saved, and shall be saved, despite all the objections which may be raised by carnal reason.

Though you find it so hard to believe Christ, *you have found it very easy to believe in yourself.* Not long ago you were everybody, and now you cannot believe that Christ is everybody. You thought you were very good; you were wonderfully easy in your own mind when you ought to have been afraid. What! Was it easy to believe your poor self, and can you not

believe the faithful word of a good and gracious Saviour who says that if you trust him you shall be saved?

Moreover, *you are very apt now to believe Satan* if he comes and says that the Bible is not true, or that Jesus will not accept you, or that you have sinned beyond hope, or that the grace of God cannot save you. Of course, you believe the father of lies, and you go mourning and moping, when you might at once go singing and dancing if you would believe your Saviour. Jesus bids you trust and live, and Satan says it is of no use your trusting; you believe Satan, and treat your Lord as if he had intended to deceive you. "O fools, and slow of heart!"

Then you know *how ready you are, you seekers, to stop short of Christ*. If you hear a sermon and get a little melted, and go home and pray a bit, you get quite easy and say, "Now I am on the road." Why, your meltings and your prayings are not the road to heaven: Jesus says, "I am the way." You are not on the way till you get to him. You have been in gracious company, and singing holy hymns; you feel quite good; and are highly pleased with yourselves. What right have you to be restful even for a moment? How dare you linger till you have reached the city of refuge, which is Jesus Christ? Till you believe in Christ, you have no right to a single moment's peace, or hope, or joy; and yet you do get a sort of peace and a kind of hope, which are only sparks of your own kindling which will die out in blackness. Because you are content to trust in something short of Christ, I say to you—Why not rest in Jesus? O fools, and slow of heart! Refuges of lies you fly to, but the true refuge of the finished work of Jesus Christ you do not accept! Why is this?

And then some of you are foolish and slow of heart because *you make such foolish demands upon God*. You would believe if you could hear a voice, if you could dream a dream, if some strange thing were to happen in your family. What! Is God to be tied to your fancies, that you will not believe him unless he does this and that extravagant thing? If he chooses to bring some to himself by extraordinary means, must he do the same with you, or else you prefer to be cast into hell? Surely you are mad. Who are you that you are to dictate to the Lord, and say he shall do this, or that, or else you will refuse to believe him? And so you will trample on the blood of Jesus, and turn your back upon the kingdom of heaven, unless an angel is sent to you, or you hear a voice from heaven! O fools, and slow of heart to make these irrational demands upon the ever-blessed God!

You are foolish and slow of heart because, to a great extent, *you ignore the word of God and its vitality to your case*. If a soul in distress will take down the Bible, and turn it over, he need not look long before he will light upon a passage which describes himself as the object of mercy. "The whole need not a physician, but those that are sick; I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Does not that fit you? "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Does not that fit you? "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Does not that apply to you? Why,

if you will but look through the Word, you shall find passages so pertinent to your condition that, as a key fits a lock, they will seem made for you! Those two disciples did not, for a while, see how the prophets met the case of a crucified and risen Christ; but as they did see it, their hearts burned within them. As you also see how God has provided for your condition in his Word, in his covenant, in his Son, your sadness will flee away.

I close with this one word of warning to those of you who are distressed in heart, and are falling into the habit of looking for reasons why you should *not* believe in Christ; I do pray you to leave off this silly practice. Before this evil becomes chronic with you, quit it as a deadly thing. People can reason themselves down, but they cannot reason themselves up again. If thou seest a door open, in God's name hasten in, for one of these days thou mayest be so blind as never to see an open door again. Seize this opportunity, and while Christ stands and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," come along with you. If you sit down to argue against Christ, he may allow your conclusions to stand to your own destruction. Those who are so foolish as to find twenty unhallowed reasons to-day will be foolish enough to find two hundred such reasons next year. A man may act the cripple till he grows hopelessly lame. Mind what you are at. You may lock a door, and open it again for many a year; but one of these days you may so hamper the lock that it will not open again. Oh, that you may at once believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life!

I have come to this pass myself—if I perish I will

perish believing in Jesus. If I must be lost, I will be lost clinging to his cross. Can any man be lost there? No, "fools and slow of heart" though we may be, we know that none shall perish who come to Christ, for that would greatly dishonor the Saviour's name. God bless you! Amen.

XV.

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR'S SYMPATHY.

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.”—HEBREWS ii. 18.

WE are told by the apostle in the fifth chapter that one special requisite in a high priest was that he could have compassion upon men. “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” You see God did not choose angels to be made high priests; because, however benevolent they might be in their wishes, they could not be sympathetic. They could not understand the peculiar wants and trials of the men with whom they had to deal. Ministers who of God are made to be a flame of fire could scarce commune familiarly with those who confess themselves to be as dust and ashes. But the high priest was one of themselves. However dignified his office, he was still a man. He was one of whom we read that he could lose his wife, that he could lose his sons. He had to eat and to drink, to be sick and to suffer, just as the rest of the people did. And all this was necessary that he might be able to enter into their feelings and represent those feelings before God, and that he might, when speaking to them for God, not speak as

a superior, looking down upon them, but as one who sat by their side, "a brother born for adversity," bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.

Now this is peculiarly so in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is sympathetic above all. There is none so tender as he. He has learnt it by his sufferings; but he proves it by his continual condescension towards his suffering people. My brethren, we that teach the gospel, you that teach it in the Sabbath-school—you will always find your greatest power to lie in love. There is more eloquence in love than in all the words that the most clever rhetorician can ever put together. We win upon men not so much by poetry and by artistic wording of sentences, as by the pouring out of a heart's love that makes them feel that we would save them, that we would bless them, that we would, because we belong to them, regard them as brethren, and play a brother's part, and lay ourselves out to benefit them. Now, as it should be in the under-shepherds, so is it in that Great Shepherd of the sheep. He abounds in tenderness, and though he has every other quality to make up a perfect high priest, though he is complete, and in nothing lacking, yet if I must mention one thing in which he far outshines us all, but in which we should all try to imitate him, it would be in his tender sympathy to those who are ignorant and out of the way, and to all those who are suffering and sorely distressed.

It is in the spirit of brotherly sympathy that I would endeavor to preach on this occasion as the Good Spirit shall help me. May I ask my brethren whose hearts are full of joy at this hour to be praying for others who have not that joy, and to be helping me in my endeavor now to speak words of conso-

lation to them? May the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, make every sentence to be as wine and oil to the wounds of those who are left half dead in the King's highway! We have not to look far for "them that are tempted," for they are all around us, and deserve the thoughtful regard of each one of us. Do not overlook them, my more happy brother, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

In my text I think I see two things very clearly. *Jesus suffering*: "He himself hath suffered being tempted." *Jesus succoring*. "He is able to succor them that are tempted." And then I think I see a third thing most certainly there, namely, *Jesus sought after*: because in the word which is translated "succor" there is a latent meaning of crying. He is able to hear the cry of them that are tempted. It is a word that signifies a mother's quickness to answer her child's cry: and Jesus is able to answer to our cry, therefore, we ought to lift up that cry when our soul is in distress. It shall be the best thing seen in this Tabernacle to-night if the third thing be seen, namely, Jesus sought after by every weary, heavy-laden spirit. Why should it not be? Come, Holy Spirit, and create in each mourner the spirit of prayer and the grace of supplication!

I. First, then, and to begin, here is JESUS SUFFERING.

I call your attention, first, to *the feeling* that is here expressed: "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted." Many persons are tempted, but do not suffer in being tempted. When ungodly men are tempted, the bait is to their taste, and they swallow it greedily. Temptation is a pleasure to them; indeed, they sometimes tempt the devil to tempt them. They

are drawn aside of their own lusts and enticed; so that temptation, instead of being suffering to them, becomes a horrible source of pleasure. But good men suffer when they are tempted, and the better they are the more they suffer. I know some children of God to whom temptation is their constant misery day and night. If it took the form of external affliction, they would bravely bear it; but it takes the shape of evil suggestions and profane insinuations, which leap into their minds without their will, and though they hate them with their whole heart. These suggestions continue to annoy some dear saints whom I know, not only daily, but nightly, and that month after month. These thoughts beset them as a man may be surrounded by swarms of midges or flies, from which he cannot get away. Such brethren are tempted, and they suffer being tempted. Our Lord Jesus Christ enters into this trying experience very fully; because his suffering through being tempted must have been much greater than any suffering that the purest-hearted believer can know, seeing that he is more pure than any one of us.

It was a trying thing to the Blessed Christ even to dwell here among men. He behaved himself with most condescending familiarity, but he must have been greatly sickened and saddened by what he saw in this world of sinners. They were no fit company for him, for their views of things and his were as different as possible, and they had no points of agreement in character with him. They were as much company for him as a patient may be to a surgeon; nay, not so much as an imbecile may be to his teacher, or as a madman to his keeper: they could not come much closer until his grace changed and renewed them. Our

Lord and Master had such a delicate sensitiveness of soul with regard to holiness, that the sight of sin must have torn him as a naked man would be torn by thorns, and thistles, and briars. There was no callousness about his nature. He had not made himself familiar with sin by the practice of it, as many have done; neither had he so associated with those who indulge in evil as to become himself lenient towards it. We inherit the customs of our ancestors, and do not raise questions about that which has been commonly done: we begin at an evil point, and start from a wrong point in morals: but it was not so with our Lord; he had no original, or inherited, or birth sin; neither did he learn evil in his bringing up. We also commit sin through a comparative ignorance of its evil, but he knew the horror of it: he felt within his soul the shame, the wrong, the inherent baseness of sin against a holy law and a loving God. His infinite knowledge helped him to understand and measure the heinousness and hell-desert of it; and hence, to be in contact with it must have been a perpetual sorrow to him. He suffered in being placed where he could be tempted.

When sin actually assailed him, and he was bidden to prove his Sonship by working a miracle to feed himself, thus anticipating his Father's providence by a hasty act of self-seeking, how he must have loathed the suggestion! When Satan bade him presumptuously cast himself down from the temple's pinnacle, how he must have smarted at the horrible proposal! When the tempter hissed into his ear that abominable offer, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," it must have grieved the holy heart of Jesus most intensely. He could not yield to temptation, but he did suffer from it. He did not suffer

from it morally, he was too pure for that; but he did suffer from it mentally, because of his purity. His mind was grieved, and vexed, and troubled by the temptation he had to bear. We specially see this when we find him in the garden. There he showed his grief when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. In many other ways he endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, such multiplied temptations, that it is said, and truly said, by the Holy Ghost in this verse, that he "suffered" being tempted.

Now, then, you poor creatures who can scarcely lift your heads because of shame as you tremble at the memory of your own thoughts, come hither, and meet with One who suffered being tempted! He knows how you are haunted by hell-dogs, go where you may: he knows that you cannot escape the presence of the tempter, and from his own experience he enters into your feelings to the full. He gives you a flood of sympathy in these deep distresses of your spirit, as you fight against Apollyon and agonize against temptation, for he suffered being tempted.

"Exposed to wounds most deep and sore,
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan's fiery darts he bore,
And did resist to blood."

Let us meditate for a while upon *the fact* that our Lord was tempted, and tempted up to a suffering point. I must not omit to mention the particular use here made by the Spirit of that word *himself*. It is not only in that *he* suffered being tempted, but you see that *he himself* hath suffered being tempted. That word is sometimes used to make passages emphatic. "Who

his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." We read again and again of Jesus Christ *himself*, as if to show that the matters referred to were really, truly, personally, actually his. He *himself* hath suffered. All that there was in him, that made up himself, suffered being tempted. Survey this fact carefully. Our Lord was tempted by his circumstances, just as you are; yea, more than many of you are; for he felt the woes of poverty, and poverty at times carried to the extreme. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." You are sometimes tempted with the thought that you will be out of house and home before long. Where will you find a nightly shelter? Jesus can sympathize with you. He also was weary with incessant labors. "Being wearied, he sat thus on the well." Weariness has its temptations. He that is weary is hardly in the condition to judge rightly of things. When we are weary, we are apt to be impatient, complaining, hasty. If you are weary and can scarcely keep your eyelids from dropping down, remember before you quite yield to fatigue that your Lord was weary too. Once "they took him even as he was into the ship"; and I think it must mean that he was too weary to go into the ship himself, so that they took him in his absolute exhaustion, and gently laid him down, in the hinder part of the ship, placing his head upon a pillow. Do not blame yourself for feeling tired in the house of prayer, if after long watching or hard working you feel more fit for a sleep than for a sermon. I shall not blame you, certainly, for I remember how little my Lord blamed the disciples when they fell asleep during his agony. He said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but

the flesh is weak"; and he never would have thought of so tender an excuse for their untender slumbers if his own flesh had not also been weak when he, too, was weary. So you see that the Lord knows from his own circumstances what are the temptations of poverty and of weariness. He himself was an hungered. He himself said, "I thirst." Everything round about him contributed to fulfil the tale of his trials. He himself was, above all, "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

And then he himself suffered from temptations arising from men. He endured sadly much from good men. It would seem that even his beloved mother tried him. His mother was with his brethren when we read that they were without, desiring to speak with him. Was it not at that time that they desired to take him, for they said, "He is beside himself"? The men of his own kindred thought that surely he was a man distraught, who ought to be put under restraint. "Neither did his brethren believe in him."

His disciples, though he loved them so intensely, yet each one tried him. Even John, the dearest of them all, must needs ask for places at the right and the left hand of his throne for himself and his brother James. Even Peter "took him and rebuked him." All the disciples were much of Peter's mind when he described himself as about to be crucified and slain. Their spirit was often so worldly, so selfish, so foolish, as greatly to grieve their Lord and Leader. While he was the Servant of all, they were seeking who should have the pre-eminence. While he was seeking the lost, they were for calling fire from heaven upon rebels. They spake unadvisedly with their lips, and committed their Master by their words. And you

know how, worst of all, he had to complain in utmost bitterness of spirit, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." So that from the circle of his own favored ones he gathered more thorns than roses. He received wounds in the house of his friends, even as you may have done. Herein you see his power to exhibit sympathy with us. He suffered just as we do. He "suffered being tempted" even by the failure of those whom he loved.

"If wounded love my bosom swell,
Deceived by those I prized so well,
He shall his pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer woe;
At once betrayed, denied, or fled
By those who shared his daily bread."

As for his enemies, need I speak about them? Did they not all tempt him? Herodians and Sadducees—the openly sceptical; Pharisees and Scribes—the professedly religious, were equally his fierce foes. Those to whom he was a benefactor took up stones again to stone him; and Jerusalem, over which he had wept, cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," and would not rest till he was slain. Ah, Lord! we have none of us such foes as thou hadst. However cruel our adversaries, they are not so numerous or so fierce as thine. Besides, they have some cause to hate *us*: but of thine enemies it is true that they hated thee without a cause. They could bring no true charge against him, and therefore they forged the cruellest of falsehoods, until their reproaches broke his heart. So you see how he was tempted, and how he suffered.

Moreover, it is a very wonderful fact—one could scarcely have imagined it—but the record is most clear—he was tempted of the devil: *he was* tempted

of the devil. He in whom all evil is personified dared to stand foot to foot in single duel with him in whom all goodness is concentrated. The fiend infernal dared to face the God incarnate. God in our mortal flesh encountered the devil in the wilderness of temptation. How could the fiend have ventured to assail our Lord? Truly Lucifer was lifted up to the extreme of pride when he dared thus to confront his Lord. But Christ was tempted of the devil early in his public career, and again near its close he exclaimed, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." He seemed to hear the dragon's wings as they beat the midnight air; and he cried, "The prince of this world cometh." Calmly he added, "And hath nothing in me"; yet his heart grew chill in the hideous presence of the great adversary. It was nothing less than an agony in Gethsemane—a painful wrestling between Jesus and the powers of darkness. You that are tempted of the devil; you that are troubled by mysterious whisperings in your ear; you that, when you sing or pray, have a blasphemy suggested to you; you that even in your dreams start with horror at the thoughts that cross your minds, be comforted, for your Lord knows all about temptation.

Some of you do not understand this, and I hope you never may; but I am speaking with a purpose to others, to whom this is a life's gloom. To you, I say, you can enter into fellowship with your Lord in his being tempted of the devil: that which is incomprehensible to others is plain enough to you. Be of good cheer, for in this respect your Lord himself has suffered being tempted.

"If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly wisdom's narrow way,

To fly the good I would pursue,
 Or do the sin I would not do,
 Still he, who felt temptation's power,
 Shall guard me in that dangerous hour."

Once again: our Lord knew those temptations which arise out of being deserted by God. There come times to certain of us when our soul is cast down within us, when faith becomes feeble, and joy languishes, because the light of the divine countenance is withdrawn. We cannot find our God. We enter into the language of Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat." We cry with David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" Nothing chills the marrow like an eclipse of the great Sun, whose presence makes our day. If the Lord withdraws from us, then the strong helpers faint.

"He frowns, and darkness veils the moon:
 The fainting sun grows dim at noon;
 The pillars of heaven's starry roof
 Tremble and start at his reproof."

In this great temptation our Lord has suffered his full share. He cried, "Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani." There was condensed into that dying cry an infinity of anguish such as we cannot conceive of. Some of us know what the surface of this Black Sea is like, but we have never descended into its utmost depths as he did; and, if we have done so, this is our comfort—that HE has been there. He has been to the very bottom of it. He has suffered being tempted even by that heaviest of all the trials which ever fall upon the sons of God. There is the fact.

I desire to go a step farther, to comfort you upon *the fruit* of all this; for though our Lord thus suffered being tempted, he suffered not in vain; for he was made perfect through his sufferings, and fitted for his solemn office of High Priest to his people. From that fact I want you to gather fruit, because our heavenly Father means to bless you also. We cannot comfort others if we have never been comforted ourselves. I have heard—and I am sure that it is so—that there is no comforter for a widow like one who has lost her husband. Those who have had no children, and have never lost a child, may talk very kindly, but they cannot enter into a mother's broken heart as she bows over yonder little coffin. If you have never known what temptations mean, you make poor work when attempting to succor the tempted. Our Lord obtained a blessing from suffering temptation; and you may do the same. Brother, the Lord means to make of you a man that shall be used like Barnabas to be a "son of consolation." He means to make a mother in Israel of you, my dear sister, that when you meet with others who are sorely cast down, you may know how to drop in a sweet word by which they shall be comforted. I think you will one day say, "It was worth while to go through that sorrow to be enabled to administer relief to that wounded heart." Will you not comfort others when you are delivered? I am sure you will. You will be ready and expert in the sacred surgery of consolation. Wherefore be content to suffer being tempted, and look for the comfortable fruit which all this shall produce in you.

So you have seen the feeling, and the fact, and the fruit. Now, what are the inferences to be drawn from this part of the subject? I must be short with them.

I want you that are tempted to draw the following inferences from the suffering and temptation of the Lord Jesus:—

First, that *temptation to sin is no sin*. It is no sin to be tempted; for in him was no sin, and yet he was tempted. “He suffered being tempted,” but there was no sin in that, because there was no sin in himself. You may be horribly tempted, and yet no blame whatever may attach to you, for it is no fault of yours that you are tempted. You need not repent of that which has no sin in it. If you yield to the temptation, therein is sin; but the mere fact that you are tempted, however horrible the temptation, is no sin of yours.

And, in the next place, *temptation does not show any displeasure on God's part*. He permitted his Only-begotten Son to be tempted: he was always the Son of his love, and yet he was tried. “This is my beloved Son,” said he at his baptism; and yet the next hour that Son was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. It does not even show displeasure on God's part that he permits you to be tempted; on the contrary, it may be consistent with the clearest manifestations of divine favor.

And again, *temptation really implies no doubt of your being a son of God*: for the Son of God was tempted, even the unquestioned Son of the Highest. The prime model and paragon of sonship, Christ himself, was tempted. Then why not you? Temptation is a mark of sonship rather than any reflection thereupon.

Note, next, that *temptation need not lead to any evil consequences in any case*. It did not in your Lord's case lead up to sin. The Lord Jesus was as innocent in temptation and after temptation as before it, and so may we be through his grace. It is written by the

beloved John concerning the man that is born of God, that, "He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Moreover, *do not make it any cause of complaint that you are tempted.* If your Lord was tempted, shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant above his Lord? If the Perfect One must endure temptation, why not you? Accept it, therefore, at the Lord's hands, and do not think it to be a disgrace or a dishonor. It did not disgrace or dishonor your Lord, and temptation will not disgrace or dishonor you. The Lord, who sends it, sends also with it a way of escape, and it will be to your honor and profit to escape by that way.

Far from your hearts be the idea that any temptation should lead you to despair. Jesus did not despair. Jesus triumphed, and so shall you; and therefore he cries, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." You are a member of his body; and when the Head wins the victory, the whole body shares the triumph. "Because I live," said he, "ye shall live also"; and so you shall: even in the poisonous atmosphere of temptation you shall be in health. They of old overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and you shall do the like. Wherefore comfort one another with these words, "He himself hath suffered being tempted": for you who have his life in you shall first suffer with him, and then reign with him.

That is the first part of our discourse; and it is rich with comfort, if the Spirit of God shall but apply it to the tempted heart. I feel such a poor bungler: I have ointment here, and soft linen wherewith to bind on the healing ointment; but perhaps I have put it on

too tightly, or too loosely, and if so, I may fail. O divine Comforter, undertake the work! It needs the pierced hand fitly to apply the sacred liniment.

II. But now I come, secondly and briefly, to notice JESUS SUCCORING. Jesus suffering, is preparatory to Jesus succoring. Observe, then, "He is able to succor them that are tempted." In this we note *his pity*, that he should give himself up to this business of succoring them that are tempted." Have you a tempted friend living in your house? If so, you have a daily cross to carry; for when we try to comfort mourners we often become cast down ourselves; and the temptation is for us to get rid of them, or keep out of their way. Has it never occurred to any friend here to say, "That good brother, who sits in the pew near me, is rather a burden to me. I have spoken to him several times, but he is so unhappy that he drags me down. I go out of another door now to get out of his way?" So might your Lord have done to the unhappy, and to you, if he had not been your Lord; but he is such a pitiful One that he seeks out those that are cast down; he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He lays himself out to succor them that are tempted, and therefore he does not hide himself from them, nor pass them by on the other side. What an example is this for us! He devotes himself to this divine business of comforting all such as mourn. He is Lord of all, yet makes himself the servant of the weakest. Whatever he may do with the strongest, he succors "them that are tempted." He does not throw up the business in disgust: he does not grow cross or angry with them because they are so foolish as to give way to idle fears. He does not tell them that it is all their nerves, and

that they are stupid and silly, and ought to shake themselves out of such nonsense. I have often heard people talk in that fashion, and I have half wished that they had felt a little twinge of depression themselves, just to put them into a more tender humor. The Lord Jesus never overdrives a lame sheep, but he sets the bone, and carries the sheep on his shoulders, so tenderly compassionate is he. Here is his pity.

The text, however, treats of *his fitness* also. He is just the very person to succor them that are tempted. I have been showing you this already. He has *the right*, acquired by his suffering, to enter in among sufferers, and deal with them. He is free of the company of mourners.

“When our heads are bowed with woe,
When our bitter tears o'erflow;
When we mourn the lost, the dear,
Then the Son of Man is near.

“Thou our throbbing flesh hast worn,
Thou our mortal griefs hast borne;
Thou hast shed the human tear,
Son of Man, to mourners dear.”

He has the right to succor them that are tempted, for they are his own, since he has bought them with his blood. The feeble, the weak, the trembling, the desponding are his care, committed to him by God. He said, “Fear not, little flock”; which shows that his flock is little and timid. He says, “Fear not, little flock,” because they have great tendency to fear, and because he does not like to see them thus troubled. He has bought them, and so he has the right to succor them, and preserve them to the end.

He has also *the disposition* to succor them. He obtained that tender temper through suffering, by being

himself tempted. The man that has seen affliction, when he is blessed of God, has the disposition to cheer those that are afflicted. I have heard speak of a lady who was out in the snow one night, and was so very cold that she cried out, "Oh, those poor people that have such a little money, how little firing they have, and how pinched they must be! I will send a hundredweight of coals to twenty families, at the least." But I have heard say that, when she reached her own parlor, there was a fine fire burning, and she sat there with her feet on the fender, and enjoyed an excellent tea, and she said to herself, "Well, it is not very cold, after all. I do not think that I shall send those coals; at any rate, not for the present." The sufferer thinks of the sufferer, even as the poor help the poor. The divine wonder is that this Lord of ours, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," and now takes a delight in succoring the poor. Having been tempted, he helps the tempted: his own trials make him desire to bless those who are tried.

And then he has the special *ability*. "He is able to succor them that are tempted." I know certain good brethren whom I am very pleased to see, and I am very happy in their company, when I am perfectly well; but I do not enjoy their presence when I am ill. Thank you: no, I would rather not have their visits multiplied when I am unwell. They walk heavily across the room; they have a way of leaving doors open, or banging them; and when they talk they talk so loudly and roughly that the poor head aches, and the sick man is worried. The things they say, though they are meant to be kind are the sort of remarks that pour vinegar into your wounds. They do not understand the condition of a sufferer, and so they say all

their words the wrong way upwards. If Christians are to be comforters, they must learn the art of comforting, by being themselves tried. They cannot learn it else. Our Blessed Master, having lived a life of suffering, understands the condition of a sufferer so well that he knows how to make a bed for him. "What a strange thing to say!" cries one of my audience. Not at all. David says, "thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." He would not have said that, if the Lord did not know how to make a bed. There is a dainty way of beating up a pillow, and a peculiar art in shaking up a bed when the sick man is lifted out of it; ay, and there is a way of putting on every piece of covering, so as to make it a comfort. By this figure we are taught that the Lord Jesus Christ knows how to deal with us in the weakness and pain of our affliction. He has become so good a Nurse, so divine a Physician, so tender a Sympathizer, because he has passed through our sorrows. "In all our affliction he was afflicted." "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."

He has a fitness for dealing with tempted ones.

Let me spend a minute or two in telling you *his methods* of succoring them that are tempted. He does it in many ways, and perhaps there may be many here who know more about those ways than I do.

Usually he succors the tempted by giving them a sense of his sympathy. They say, "Yes, my Lord is here. He feels for me." That is in itself a succor of no mean order.

Sometimes he succors them by suggesting to them

precious truths which are the sweet antidote for the poison of sorrow. There is in the Bible a remedy exactly fitted for your grief if you could only find it. Sometimes you lose the key of a drawer, and you must have it opened, and therefore you send for the white-smith, and he comes in with a great bunch of keys. Somewhere among them he has a key that will open your drawer. The Bible contains keys that will open the iron gates of your trouble, and give you freedom from your sorrow. The point is to find out the right promise; and the Spirit of God often helps us in that matter by bringing the words of the Lord Jesus to our remembrance. We had never known the richness of the Word of God if it had not been that in our varied distresses the Lord has shown us how he fore-saw all, and provided for all in the covenant of promise.

Sometimes the Lord succors his people by inwardly strengthening them. "Oh," one has said, "I am under a heavy trouble, but I do not know how it is, I can bear it much better than I thought I should." Yes, through grace, a secret divine energy is poured into the soul. We are treated, as Mr. Bunyan puts it, by secret supplies of grace imparted in a hidden manner. We are like yonder fire. One is throwing water on it, and yet it burns on. Behind the wall another is secretly pouring oil on the fire, so that it still keeps burning.

I have known the Lord bless his people by making them very weak. The next best thing to being strong in the Lord is to be extremely weak in yourself. They go together, but sometimes they are divided in experience. It is grand to feel, "I will not struggle any more. I will give all up, and lie passive in the Lord's

hand." Oh, it is the sweetest feeling, I think, outside heaven! You may think it strange for me to say so, but I believe that, as in the centre of a cyclone there is a little spot where there is perfect calm, and as it is said that in the centre of the greatest fire that ever burned there is a spot where no fire is raging, so there is in a deep sense of yielding up to God, in the very centre of your pain, and your grief, and your misery, and your depression, a place of perfect repose when you have once yielded yourself fully up unto God. I know this to be true, even though I may not be understood.

In these ways he that was tempted himself succors those who are tempted.

III. I will close by thinking of *JESUS SOUGHT AFTER*. Let us seek him. Come, ye weary, heavy-laden, come to him who is able to succor you. Do not stay away until you are a little comforted, but come in your despair. Do not wait until you have a little more faith, but come just as you are, and say to him, "Dear Lord, thou hast felt all this, and I lie down at thy dear feet! Do help me, I beseech thee!" Let these few thoughts help to bring you now in prayer, and trust, and hope, to the feet of this Great High Priest.

First, *where else can you go?* Who can help a soul like you? Come to him, then. Men are nothing: miserable comforters are they all. The cisterns are all broken: Come to the fountain. Come to my Lord. Every other door is shut, but yet you may not despair, for he says, "Behold I set before you an open door."

Where better can you go? Do you want to find a friend able to help you? Do you really want a comrade that can be a brother to you? To whom should

you go but unto your own Lord, the sympathizing Son of Man? To whom better can you go? Do you say that you are downcast? Do you tell me you are afraid you are no child of God? Never mind about that. Come as a sinner if you cannot come as a saint. Do you mourn that you have no good thoughts? Come and confess your bad ones. Do you lament that you are not broken-hearted for sin, as you ought to be? Come, then, to be broken-hearted. Do you mourn that you are unspeakably bad? Then, come at your worst. It is never a good thing if you want a surgeon, to say, "My bone is broken, but I shall not have it set until it begins to mend." Poor foolish thing! go while it is broken. O perishing sinner cry to the Saviour. Ask him now to save you. Are you of all men the worst? Then go to him who is the best. Remember he never did cast any one out. Never yet! Never one! I have declared this everywhere, and I have said, "If Jesus Christ casts any one of you out when you come to him, pray let me know; for I do not want to go up and down the country telling lies." Again I give the challenge. If my Lord does cast out one poor soul that comes to him, let me know it, and I will give up preaching. I should not have the face to come forward and preach Christ after that; for he himself has said it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" and he would be a false Christ if he acted contrary to his word. He cannot cast *you* out; why should he? "Oh, but then I am so bad." So much the less likely is he to refuse you, for there is the more room for his grace.

"I am lost," said Mr. Whitefield's brother to the Countess of Huntingdon. "I am delighted to hear it," said the Countess. "Oh," cried he, "what a dread-

ful thing to say!" "Nay," said she, "'for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;,' therefore I know he is come to save *you*." O sinner, it would be unreasonable to despair. The more broken thou art, the more ruined thou art, the more vile thou art in thine own esteem, so much the more room is there for the display of infinite mercy and power.

Come, then, just as you are, saint or sinner, whoever you may be. Have done with yourself, your good self, and your bad self too, and say, "If I perish I will trust in Jesus." Trust in Jesus, and you cannot perish. If you perish believing in Jesus, I must perish with you. I am in the same boat with you. You may be a very sea-sick passenger, and I may be an able-bodied seaman; but if you are drowned, I shall be, for I cannot swim any more than you can. I depend upon the sea-worthiness of this vessel of free grace in which we are embarked, and we must either reach the Fair Havens together, or sink together. You and I, poor broken-down one, oh, will we not sing when we get safe to land? Will we not sing? If we once get to heaven, will we not sing aloud, and clash the high-sounding cymbals with all our might? I will contend with you as to which shall praise God most. You say that you will. I say that I shall. Will we not vie with each other, and with all the blood-redeemed ones, to sing Hallelujah to God and the Lamb? If ever such sinners as you and I get inside the gates of heaven, we will give forth such outcries of holy joy and gladness as never came from angels' throats, but can only come from the lips of sinners bought with blood.

The Lord, who succoreth the tempted, himself bless and comfort you! Amen.

XVI.

THE CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS.

Sept. 25, 1887.

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”—ISAIAH I. 10.

SEE how the Lord inquires for his people. In every congregation he asks this question: “Who is among you that feareth the Lord?” These are the wheat upon the threshing-floor. As to the thoughtless, “What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.” The Lord’s heart is towards the hearts that fear him, and he makes enquiry concerning them, because he loves them, and cares for them, and helps them in their day of trouble.

Observe how clearly the Lord describes his own people. The description is brief, but remarkably full: “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant?” Holy reverence within the heart, and careful obedience manifested in the life, these are the two infallible marks of the true man of God. He fears his God, and therefore he obeys that heavenly messenger whom God has sent. No servant of God has such authority over us that we are bound to obey him in all things, except One, that *Servus servorum*, that Servant of servants, who was also *Rex regum*, the King of kings. It is the mark of the child

of God that he hath a holy awe of the Father, and that he pays gracious obedience to the Son of God. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and from that perfect knowledge he draws this short but sufficient outline of the character of his own. May holy fear and constant obedience be in us and abound!

Note that the Lord not only makes an enquiry for these people, but he takes note of their condition. He is not indifferent to their state. When they walk in darkness he is with them, and when they have no light he still beholds them. The Lord is very sensitive to the sorrows of his chosen, and very quick to help them. When he finds them walking in darkness he graciously counsels and advises them, that so he may most effectually help them. Thus saith the gracious Lord to the benighted one: "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." That same God who saith of his vineyard, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day," also spies out his children in the dark; and, looking upon them with an eye of tender love, he directs their course. This is the word of wisdom by which he directs each one of them through the darkness: "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

To come at once to the text without further preface, I shall notice, first, *what is this condition* in which some of God's people are found? They walk in darkness, and have no light. Secondly, *what is there to trust to when a man is in such a condition?* All is dark, and there is no light, and he is then bidden to trust. What is there to trust to? Thirdly, *why should we thus trust?* What is the warrant for trusting at such a time? And fourthly, *what will come of such a trust?* If

a man really exhibits confidence in God when he has no light, what will be the end of his confidence?

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS CONDITION INTO WHICH A CHILD OF GOD MAY COME? The person described is one that fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of his servant, yet "walketh in darkness and hath no light."

To many who know nothing of Christian experience *this condition might seem to be a surprising one.* Shall the child of light walk in darkness? The normal condition of a child of God is to walk in the light, as God is in the light, and to have fellowship with him; how comes he, then, to have no light? He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has passed from darkness to light, and he shall never come into condemnation; how, then, does he come into darkness? In the darkness of sin and ignorance we no longer walk; but with the darkness of trouble and perplexity we are sometimes surrounded. The Lord is our light and our salvation, and therefore we do not walk in that darkness wherein the prince of darkness rules supreme; but yet at times we are in the gloom of sadness, and we see no light of consolation. It is not always so. Many Christian people go on year after year in uninterrupted sunshine; and I do not see why we should not all look upon continued joy in the Lord as possible to ourselves. Why should not our peace flow on like an ever-widening river? Those of you who are always bright need not be afraid of your gladness. O Lord! we are now and then in the dark, but we do not wish others to be so. Spiritual darkness of any sort is to be avoided, and not desired; and yet, surprising as it may seem to be, it is a fact that some of the best of God's people frequently walk in darkness; ay, some of them are wrapt in a sevenfold gloom at times, and to them nei-

ther sun, nor moon, nor stars appear. As the pastor of a large church, I have to observe a great variety of experiences, and I note that some whom I greatly love and esteem, who are, in my judgment, among the very choicest of God's people, nevertheless, travel most of the way to heaven by night. They do not rejoice in the light of God's countenance, though they trust in the shadow of his wings. They are on the way to eternal light, and yet they walk in darkness. Heirs of a measureless estate of bliss, they are now without the small change and spending money of comfort which would make their present existence delightful. It is idle to attempt to judge a man's real character before God by his present state of feeling. You may be full of mirth, and yet it may be the crackling of thorns under a pot, which is noisy for the time, but is soon over. On the other hand, you may be bowed down with sorrow, and yet it may only be that "light affliction which is but for a moment," which worketh out for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We should have thought, judging after the manner of men, that the good were always happy, as one of our children's songs so positively declares. When first brought home to the great Father, we thought that henceforth it would be all music and dancing and fatted calf, world without end. But it is not so: we have heard the elder brother's ungenerous voice since then, and we have found out many things which we wish we could forget. We dreamed that the year would be summer throughout all its months: the time of the singing of birds was come, and we reckoned that it was to continue through the year. Alas! the birds have ceased their songs, and the swallows are pluming their wings to depart, and in a few days

we shall be walking among the falling leaves, and preparing our winter garments wherewith to meet the biting frosts. We have not found perfect bliss beneath the moon. If instead of judging by the sight of our eyes we had turned to the records of the family of God, we should long ago have been disabused of our ideal heaven below. It is written, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Between the head of the way and the Celestial City, the road is rough and the nights are long. They that go on pilgrimage tell us of the Delectable Mountains, and they dilate upon the glittering hill-tops of glory which they have seen from afar when gazing from Mount Clear; but they also warn us of the Hill Difficulty, and especially of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, through which all those must force their way who are resolved to go on pilgrimage to the City of God. Be not, therefore, surprised as though some strange thing had happened unto you, if you find yourself in darkness; for this text warns you of what you may expect. We may fear God and carefully obey his servant, and yet we may be out after dark and find the streets of daily life as foggy and obscure for us as for others.

This condition is a severe test of grace. Now we shall see how far the man's courage is of the right sort. Darkness is an evil that our soul does not love, and by it all our faculties are tried. If you are in your own house in the dark it does not matter, though children do not like to be put to bed in the dark even in their own little room: but if you are on a journey and you come to a wild moor, or a vast wood, or to terrible mountains, it appals you to find that the sun is setting, and that you will be abroad in the dark.

Darkness has a terrible power of causing fear: its mystery is an influence creating dread. It is not what we see that we dread, so much as that which we do not see, and therefore exaggerate. When darkness lowers down upon the believer's mind it is a great trial to his heart. He cries, "Where am I? and how came I here? If I be a child of God, why am I thus? Did I really repent and obtain light so as to escape the darkness of sin? If so, why am I conscious of this thick gloom? Did I really joy in Christ and think I had received the atonement? Why then has the sun of my joy gone down so hopelessly? Where are now the lovingkindnesses of the Lord?" The good man begins to question himself as to every point of his profession; for in the dark he cannot even judge his own self. What is worse, he sometimes questions the truth which he has aforesaid received, and doubts the very ground on which his foot is resting. Satan will come in with vile insinuations questioning everything, even as he questioned God's Word when he ruined our race in the garden. It is possible at such times even to question the existence of the God we love, though we still cling to him with desperate resolve. We undergo a life and death struggle while we hold on to the divine verities. We are at times sorely put to it, and scarce know what to do. Like the mariners with whom Paul sailed, we cast four anchors out of the stern, and look for the day. Oh, that we could be certain that we are the Lord's! Oh, that we could apprehend the sure promises of the Lord, and our portion in them! For a while the darkness is all around us, and we perceive no candle of the Lord, or spark of experimental light with which to break the gloom. This darkness is very trying to faith, trying to love,

trying to hope, trying to patience, trying to every grace of the spiritual man. Blessed is the man who can endure this test.

While it is thus trying, *it is also very sorrowful*. It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun, and a painful thing to be without it. We are in heaviness at such times. The darkness which is spoken of in the text includes providential trial of many sorts. At the present moment many of God's people are in the dark in reference to their temporal circumstances. Business used to prosper, and things went well with them, but everything runs the other way at this season. They were not ambitious to accumulate great riches, they were perfectly satisfied if they had bread to eat, and raiment to put on: but now even this seems to be denied them. They are out of situation, or business is gradually dying out, and their means of support will soon disappear. This is a new trial for those who have hitherto had abundance, and naturally it makes them walk in darkness. Oh, you that have a superfluity of this world's goods, you little know the darkness which comes over the hearts of God's servants when they are not able to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and are afraid that the Lord's name will be evil spoken of because they cannot meet their engagements. When parents look at their dear children, and wonder where the next meal of bread will come from, times are dark indeed. Still, mark you, this is not *the* darkness—the darkness which might be felt. Many of God's people, by reason of a strong faith, are happier in their adversity than they were in their prosperity. I have known them to ride on the crest of the wave which threatened to wreck them. They have rejoiced

in tribulations also, finding that in them the Lord blesses them with special favor.

The real darkness has come when our evidences of grace are no longer visible, and conscience pronounces an adverse verdict. As the Psalmist says, "We see not our signs." The marks of grace are hidden. Self-examination fails to reveal to the conscience the infallible marks of the Holy Spirit's work within the soul, and then the child of God feels that he is in an evil case. While I know I am the son of God I am undismayed; but when my sonship is in doubt I am distressed indeed. If a clear sense of God's love is also withdrawn from the soul, darkness follows. He that used to rejoice in that love which passeth knowledge now feels his heart to be as hard as a stone, without tender emotion, and almost without living desire. To be dull, and dead, and stupid, and unfeeling, is sad indeed to one who aforesaid could dance for joy. To have the life and energy of grace decline is a grievous matter; better to see the flock cut off from the fold than grace from the heart. At such times the Holy Ghost seems to suspend his comforting and quickening operations; and in that case the outward means are of small avail. We read the Bible, and we are not cheered by the promises; we attend public services, and the silver bells of the sanctuary seem to have lost their music. The rain does not fill the pools; and when the cisterns are empty, what is the good of them? The Holy Spirit is leaving us for a while, that we may know what poor things we are apart from him, and how useless are ordinances, without his divine presence in them. At such times Satan is sure, coward as he is, to avail himself of his opportunity. When he finds us in the dark lane, he falls upon us like a cut-

throat. When the Lord is manifestly with us, he skulks off; but when he sees that darkness is round about us, he seeks to drive us from our faith. "This is your hour," said Christ, "and the power of darkness"; and we have had to say the same. Satan makes earnest use of his hour, and it is no fault of his that we do not die in the dark, and utterly perish from the way. Let it be clearly known that some of us who can this day speak with fully assured confidence, have, in days gone by, been sorely shaken, and have cried unto the Lord out of the low dungeon. Every particle of the faith which I have this day in the Lord my God has passed through fire, and through water. This flaming torch of confidence which burns before you this day was lighted for me when I was in darkness. Though we joy before the Lord as with the joy of harvest, yet we look back upon the time when we went forth weeping, bearing precious seed. All are not equally made to sorrow; but many of us are familiar with the wine of astonishment. Surely, at some time or other, all the children of God walk in darkness.

Perhaps the worst feature of this darkness is, that *it is so bewildering*. You have to walk, and yet your way is hidden from your eyes. This is hard work. God will help his children, will he not? Ay, that he will, but we cannot see how! We look upward, and see no twinkling star; downward, and do not even find a glow-worm. Surely, we shall see a candle in some window! But no! we are lost in a dark wood. Have we not somewhere about us a match that we could strike? We fumble for it; we find it, it is damp, we have no light. The question that now chills the heart is—How can God deliver me? We do not see how he can make a way of escape. What simple-

tons we are to fancy that if *we* do not see a way of deliverance God does not see one either! If you have ever steamed up the Rhine, you have looked before you, and it has looked as if you could go no further; the river seemed to be a lake; great mountains and vast rocks blocked up all further advance. Suddenly there has been a turn in the stream, and at once a broad highway has been before you, inviting you to enter the heart of the country. Perhaps in Providence you are in one of those parts of the river of life where no progress appears possible. You are quite blocked up, and this causes you darkness of mind. Cease from this unbelieving bewilderment. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire.

Worse still is that bewilderment which comes upon us in the darkness as to what we ourselves ought to do. Men of God know, as a broad principle, that they are to do right; but the question is, what is right? Which of many courses should I take? We beg the Lord to make our path straight, but we cannot discover the road. We look for a sign-post which we had seen long ago, and it is gone: we hasten to a friend, but he is as much perplexed as we are. This suspense is the hardest part of the ordeal. Not to see our way, nay, not to see foothold for the next step, is a specially trying position. If we know what to do, or what to prepare for, we would gird our loins for the occasion; but knowing nothing, we are shut up, and cannot come forth.

Yet you notice in the text that *this does not absolve us from daily duty*. The text saith, "If he *walk* in darkness, and see no light." The walk has to be continued, though the light has departed. When it is

quite dark, it is safe to sit down till the day dawns. If I cannot sleep, at any rate I can quietly rest till the sun is up. He that believeth shall not make haste, and in the dark it is best to tarry till the day dawn and the shadows flee away. That was a grand word which the Lord gave to Moses, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." But what if you cannot stand still? What if you may not remain where you are? Something has to be done, and done at once; and thus you are compelled to walk on, though you cannot see an inch before you. What but a divine faith can do this? Here lies the stress of the difficulty: inaction might be simple, but activity in the dark, this must be the Lord's doing, and we must cry to him to work this work in us.

But enough of this. I have given you a picture which some of you will recognize as a portrait of yourselves. Personally I have often passed through this dark valley: there is a bog on the right hand, and a deep gulf on the left; and all along the murky way the howling of the dogs of hell, and the hissing of evil spirits, are never out of one's ears; and, worst of all, whisperings of the fiend make you think his vile suggestions to be your own thoughts. The sword in the hand becomes useless, for in the dark you do not know where to strike, and no weapon remains except that of All-prayer. To walk on all through the night, and not to see a step before you, is anxious work, and yet thousands of God's pilgrims who are now yonder among the shining ones, praising and blessing his holy name, have traversed this dreadful road. Lord, help us when we also penetrate its blackness!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to turn to a practical part of this matter—WHAT IS THERE TO TRUST

TO WHEN YOU ARE IN SUCH A CONDITION AS THAT? What is there to trust to? Well, says the text, "Let him trust in the name of the Lord," or, as it should be read, "in the name of Jehovah."

What is there to trust in *the name of Jehovah*? It is "*I Am*," and signifies his self-existence. This is a fine foundation for trust. Your friend is dead, but Jehovah is still living as the "I Am." Those who could have succored you have forsaken you, but he says, "I am with thee." Trust thou in him, for he is, and ever will be. He says to thee, "Be still, and know that I am God."

The name of the Lord contains within it immutability. The Lord calls himself, "I am that I am"—the unchanging God! Remember how he said, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." When you cannot see an inch before you, trust in him that is, that was, and is to come. He is our dwelling-place in all generations. He is the "same yesterday, to day, and forever," and hence our confidence in him should not abate. Here is a rock under your feet. If you trust in an unchanging God, whose love, and faithfulness, and power cannot be diminished, however dark your way may be, then you have a glorious object for your faith to rest upon.

But we understand by the name *the revealed character of God*. When thou canst not see thy way, then open this Book and try to find out what sort of God it is in whom thou dost trust. See what he did in the ages past; see what he has promised to do in all time present. Behold his infinite love in the gift of his dear Son. Think of all the immeasurable blessings which he hath prepared for them that love him, which he hath laid up for the golden age. As thou remember-

est what the Lord is, and how he deals with his people, thou wilt find light springing up in the midst of the thick darkness. What a joy it must have been to Moses when God proclaimed before him the name of the Lord! Moses had asked to see God's glory, and we read, "The Lord passed by before him: and proclaimed, 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." As you study the glorious character of the Lord God, whose mercy endureth for ever, I think you will find your spirit rising above the floods of your trouble, and floating joyously upon the waters even as the ark of Noah in the day of the deluge. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

By "the name of the Lord" is also meant *his dear Son*, for it is in Jesus Christ that Jehovah has proclaimed his name. Jesus says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." When it is dark around thee and within thee, then get to thy Saviour, and think of him, and all his sorrow and his victory. Picture him before thine eye bleeding his life away upon the cross for thee, offering himself up a glorious Sacrifice to put away thy sin; and as thou hearest his cries, and perceivest the flowing of his blood, thou wilt gain comfort and joy such as will turn thy darkness into day.

It is also good, dear friends, when you are thinking of the name of the Lord, to remember that to you it signifies *what you have seen of God in your own experience*. This is his memorial or name to you. A grand thing it is, when at present you have no consolation,

to recollect the consolation you enjoyed in years gone by. Oh the days when he did help us! when his arm was made bare on our behalf! I recollect that morning, you recollect it too, when the Lord brought you up out of the horrible pit. You said, "Blessed be his glorious name! What a deliverance I have had! I shall never doubt him again!" O poor stupid, you are doubting him now! But why? Do you not think that if you would revive those songs of the Red Sea, when you sang, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously," you would be ashamed to doubt the Lord to-day? Did not Israel pass through the sea on foot, even in the darkness of the night, when Pharaoh could not see his way? The Lord God himself in the pillar of fire was the light of his people, but apart from that they had no other light; and it is so with you. all other light is gone, but Jehovah is with you, wherefore be not afraid.

"His love in time past forbids us to think
He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer we have in review
Confirms his good pleasure to help us quite through."

"Let him trust in the name of the Lord."

But, furthermore, the text says, "Let him stay upon his God." Let him lean upon his God; make God his stay, his prop, his rest. This is a variation from the former sentence. He was to trust in the name of Jehovah, but now he is to *lean upon* "his God." You have taken God to be your God, have you not? If so, he has also taken you to be his own. There is a covenant between you: lean on that covenant. Treat it as a valid covenant in full force. Surely thou art not dealing with a liar. That covenant of the Lord which

was sealed and ratified by an oath—surely thou dost not think little of it? Well, now, lean wholly and fully upon him who is thy covenant God. Brethren, I am often brought to this pass, that I say to myself—Lord, if these Scriptures be not indeed a revelation of God, and inspired, then it is all over with me, for I have no other hope. But if this Book be a faithful record of what God has said to me—and I am sure it is—then I cannot too confidently rest in what he has here recorded. I will prove the truth of his gospel. I will lean upon his promise with all my might. I have never yet hung a weight upon God's promise too heavy for it to bear. I have never trusted God in prayer with a confidence beyond what I have known him to justify. Hitherto we have used tests innumerable and proofs superabundant, and we find the old Book to be true. As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, so have we found the promises and the covenant of God. Wherefore I say to you, in the language of the text, if you walk in darkness, and have no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay yourself upon your God.

III. Thirdly, and with great brevity, why SHOULD WE TRUST GOD AT SUCH TIMES? If the Lord has taken away the light, and is trying us so severely, why should we trust him now? I answer, *if you do not trust him now, you will have cause to suspect whether you ever did trust him at all.* When your children were about you, and you were healthy, honored, and prospering, you said, "I have faith in God." Was it faith if it departs from you now that your children are buried, and your home is desolate, and you yourself are sick, and old, and poor? Was it faith in God at all? Was it not a cheerfulness which arose out of your surround-

ings? If you cannot bear to be stripped as Job was, have you like precious faith with that man of God? Fair weather faith is a poor imitation of the real grace. I entreat you to play the man, and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"; for if you cannot do so, your strength is small, and your faith is questionable.

Thou art bound to trust in the Lord now in the time of darkness, because *his promises were made for dark time*. When a shipwright builds a vessel, does he build it to keep it upon the stocks? Nay, he builds it for the sea and the storm. When he was making it he thought of tempests and hurricanes: if he did not, he was a poor shipbuilder. When God made thee a believer he meant to try thee; and when he gave thee the promises, and bade thee trust them, he gave such promises as are suitable for times of tempest and tossing. Dost thou think God makes shams like some that have made belts for swimming, which were good to exhibit in a shop, but of no use in the sea? We have all heard of swords which were useless in war; and even of shoes which were made to sell, but were never meant to walk in. God's shoes are of iron and brass, and you can walk to heaven in them without their ever wearing out: and his life-belts, you may swim a thousand Atlantics upon them, and there will be no fear of your sinking. His word of promise is meant to be tried and proved. O man, I beseech you do not treat God's promises as if they were curiosities for a museum, but use them as every day sources of comfort. Trust the Lord whenever your time of need comes on.

Besides, notice that *here a permit is especially issued for you, to allow you to trust in God in darkness*. Thus

saith the Lord, "*Let him trust.*" Satan says he shall not trust, but the Lord says, "Let him trust;" and if the Lord gives us permission to trust we will not suffer the world, the flesh, or the devil to keep us back from our privilege. "Let him trust" is our divine warrant for reposing on the Lord; and we mean to use it. This is the pass-word which lets us through the gates of the promise into the royal chamber of rest.

More than this, *I understand this verse to be a command to trust in the name of the Lord.* It is an order to trust in our God up to the hilt, for it bids us *stay* ourselves upon our God. We are not fitfully to trust, and then to fear; but to come to a stay in God, even as ships enter a haven, cast their anchors, and then stay there till the tempest is over-past. Let us say, "This is my last dependence; this is my stay; and here will I remain for ever." O brothers and sisters, we often act very foolishly, for we try to get a stay within ourselves. Did you ever hear of a captain of a vessel driven about by rough winds who wanted anchorage and tried to find it on board his vessel? He desires to place his anchor somewhere on board the ship where it will prove a hold-fast. He hangs it at the prow, but still the ship drives: he exhibits the anchor upon deck, but that does not hold the vessel; at last he puts it down into the hold; but with no better success. Why, man alive, anchors do not hold as long as they are on board a ship. They must be thrown into the deep, and then they will get a grip of the sea-bottom, and hold the vessel against wind and tide. As long as ever you have confidence in yourselves, you are like a man who keeps his anchor on board his boat, and you will never come to a resting-place. Over with your faith into the great deeps of eternal love and

power, and trust in the infinitely faithful One. Then shall you be glad because your heart is quiet. Stay yourself upon your God, because he commands you so to do. Do not dare to hesitate.

Look, sirs! if you do not stay upon God in the dark, *it would seem as if, after all, you did not trust God, but were trusting to the light, or were relying on your own eyesight.* Too often we think we believe, and all the while we are miles off believing. Unless we trust in God alone, and in God wholly, we do not trust him at all. Faith is the opposite of sight. When a man seeth he hath no need of faith. Blessed is he to whom God himself is all the light he needs.

Do remember one thing more, that you and I, in times of darkness, may well trust in God that he will not fail us, for *our blessed Lord and Master was not spared the blackest midnight that ever fell on human mind.* He, too, cried out, "What shall I say?" Distraction seized upon his mind also, and he was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Dost thou expect that thou shalt be treated better than the Head of the house, the "firstborn among many brethren"? If he trusted in God and was delivered, do thou the same, and thou shalt follow in his footsteps into the brightness of the light, even as thou hast followed those footsteps into the blackness and the darkness.

IV. So I finish with this last point: WHAT WILL COME OF IT IF WE DO TRUST IN GOD IN THE DARK? Now, whether you are saint or sinner, I want you to lend me your ears for a minute or two while I try to show what will come of trusting in God when you have nothing else to trust to.

In the first place, *such a faith will glorify God.* It does not glorify God to trust him when you have a

thousand other props and assistances. No, we glorify him when we trust his bare arm. It honors God when in darkness, despondency, and despair we can bravely say, "Still I believe him. I take hold upon his strength in the midst of my feebleness. If I perish, I perish; but I know he will not let me perish trusting in him." The cherubim and seraphim glorify God with their endless songs, but not more than a poor downcast soul can do when in its distress it casts itself on God alone. See what thou canst do! Will not this argument move thee to trust, to trust even now, when all things seem to go awry? Some of you can sincerely say, "We would gladly do or suffer anything to glorify God." Well, do this: believe in the Lord, and in Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.

In the next place, it is true that very likely through this darkness of yours *you will be humbled*. Walking in darkness and seeing no light, you will form a very low idea of yourself, and this will be a choice blessing. We undervalue humility, but it is one of the most golden of the graces. Perhaps some of us need humbling more than any other operation of the Holy Spirit. I believe that those who despond and despair are all the happier when humility hath had her perfect work upon them. We are so great! So big! That letter "I"—there seems to be a kind of sarcasm in the form of it: it is such a straight, unbending letter, it never bows its knee or its back! Peradventure our darkness is sent to us to make our pride stoop towards the ground, while it gropes its way. Deliverance from pride will be a lasting gain to us. O my friend, thou art getting good by the painful process which reveals to thee thy littleness. Do not fret because thou now

seest thy folly, thy helplessness, thine emptiness : all this will be a mine of wealth to thee.

Next to that, if thou canst trust God in thy trial, *thou wilt prove and enjoy the power of prayer.* The man that has never needed to pray cannot tell whether there is anything in prayer or not. You that have always had your bread every morning, scarcely know the value of that request, "Give us this day our daily bread" : but there are poor people here at this hour to whom that petition is peculiarly sweet. He that has prayed for his breakfast values the providence which sent it. If thou wast never in thy life in any sort of trial, what knowest thou about prayer? Why, then, dost thou speak lightly of that which thou understandest not? He that has carried his need to the Lord—a great and urgent need which could not have been supplied by all the world besides—he, I say, who has gone with that need to his heavenly Father, and pleaded the promise, and obtained a heavenly reply, he is the man who can witness that verily there is a God that heareth prayer. Those philosophers that sneer at prayer, what do they know about it? They are strangers to prayer, and therefore unable to judge of its power. Suppose a dozen of them should swear that they have prayed, and that God has not heard their prayers, we should believe it ; and we should also come to the conclusion that prayers from men of their order ought not to be heard. Surely he that cometh to God must believe that he is ; and these gentlemen will not even accept that point as certain. But when we pray, and the Lord hears us, can any form of argument disprove a fact? A fact will stand against all reasoning : it is an unyielding rock, against which the waves of scepticism hurl themselves in vain.

Brethren, it is the prayer in the dark which brings us most light when we perceive that it is surely heard. How couldst thou pray, O man, if thou hadst all thy desire fulfilled without making request unto God? If thou hadst nothing to pray for, how couldst thou prove the efficacy of prayer? If thou art so wise, and good, and great that thou canst do without God, go and do without him if thou darest. But the poor and needy will still be glad to cry unto him. May God empty thee, and drive thee in agony to thy knees, then shalt thou be able to test whether he is a God that heareth prayer or not!

If in your darkness you will go to God and trust him, *you will become an established Christian*. Yours will not be that timid bulrush faith which bows before every wind: you will be rooted and grounded in assurance of faith. These trials of yours will help to root you fast in the good soil of confidence in God. In days to come you will bless God for the clouds and the darkness, since through them your tried faith grew into strong faith, and your strong faith ripened into full assurance. Doubtless faith will make our nights the fruitful mothers of brighter days.

And let me close by saying, that by-and-by—and perhaps much sooner than we think—*we shall come out into greater light than we have as yet hoped for*. Perhaps half-a-mile ahead you will find light springing up, even light which has so long ago been sown for the righteous. Your weeping is nearly over: joy cometh in the morning. You shall sit down and say, “I did not think the day would break so soon; but now the sun is up, I perceive that even in the night I have been preserved from a thousand dangers, and I have

passed safely where none but the Lord himself could have held me up."

Brethren, let us even now sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things. He has led the blind by a way that they knew not. He has given us treasures of darkness. He has turned our mourning into dancing. He has made us glad in his name. Praise to him for ever, yea, praise for evermore.

How loudly some of us will sing when once we get to heaven! When we leap ashore upon the golden strand how we will magnify that omnipotent love which kept us from ten thousand devouring waves! Surely in the heavenly choirs certain voices reach to higher notes than all others, for they have known the heights and depths of love divine. There will be a fulness, roundness, and sweetness of tone about certain voices which shall make them notable among the celestials, even as Heman, and Asaph, and Ethan were notable amongst the sweet singers of Israel in the temple below. Who are these, and whence came they? Surely the one answer will be, "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Wherefore be of good cheer, O ye people of God who walk in darkness; for you shall have a full reward.

And you, poor troubled ones, who have as yet no hope, and are afraid that God has cast you away for ever, come and rest in Jesus Christ this morning. Trust in Jesus, and defy the darkness and the devil who rules over it. So soon as you dare to trust in Christ Jesus our Lord your salvation is secured. Do but trust, and your Saviour is bound to answer to your trust, and make it good by saving you. The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

XVII.

MAN, WHOSE BREATH IS IN HIS NOSTRILS.

“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?”—ISAIAH ii. 22.

MAN, especially since the fall, is a very unspiritual creature. His animus is animal. He is made up, as the old writers used to say, of soul and soil. Alas, the soil terribly soils his soul! “My soul cleaveth to the dust,” might be the confession of every man in one sense or another. We bear the image of the first Adam, who was of the earth earthy: earthy enough are we.

One consequence of the prevailing materialism of our corrupt nature is our craving for something tangible, audible, visible, as the object of our confidence. We want something which can be touched, heard, seen, or felt: we cannot be content with that which appeals only to the soul or the spirit. It seems as if man is so unspiritual that he cannot believe in a spiritual God; and yet any other than a spiritual God is an absurdity. Man cannot see God; therefore he will not trust in him. He cannot hear his voice; therefore he will not attend to the movement of the Holy Spirit upon his soul. Humanity is carnal, sold under sin, infected with idolatry; and this fact remains true in a measure even of the regenerate. Their old nature is not other than it was, save that it is held in check by the new nature. So long as sin remaineth in us—and

this will be so long as we are in this body—our tendency will be to be weary of God, who is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. We seek after something to worship, something to love, something to rely upon, which is so near akin to the coarser part of our nature that we may commune with it through the senses. It is sad that it should be so, but it has ever been so throughout the history of man, and sad traces of it are to be seen even in the history of God's own church.

Man is by nature an idolater. Under the most favorable circumstances he flies to his idols, even as the dog seeks after carrion, or the vulture hastens to its prey. The Lord's people, Israel, were delivered out of Egypt with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, and by many signs and tokens God's presence among them was abundantly certified. This was a noble beginning. The circumstances which afterwards surrounded them were specially hopeful. They were placed in the wilderness, where, if they lived at all, they must live through the special protection and provision of God; for they reaped no harvests, and they gathered into no barns: the bread they ate fell from heaven, the water they drank came from a rock which had been smitten by command of God through the rod of Moses. All day long they were sheltered from the burning sun by a canopy of cloud, and at night the canvas city was made bright by that same canopy turned into a flame of fire. They were in the wilderness alone, and apart; shut out from the rest of the world, surrounded as it were by the Lord himself, who was a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in their midst. Nothing could have been more favorable for faith in God. Yet they must needs have a god that

they can see. "Make us gods to go before us," cried they with such furious clamor that Aaron yielded to their evil desires, and made them the image of an ox. Behold the people of God, whom he had brought out of Egypt, bowing before the image of an ox that eateth grass—an image which Moses in sarcasm styled a calf. They turned the glory of the invisible God into that of a brute beast, and said—"These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Then they degraded themselves, and laid their manhood prostrate on the ground in adoration of the image of a bull. How is humanity fallen!

For century after century this was always the tendency of Israel, the most spiritual race of men upon the face of the earth. This race, educated by miracle and instructed by revelation, continually went aside after the gods of the heathen. Abraham among his own descendants after the flesh had few who were like him in his high spiritual faith. The world of spiritual realities seems to be too bright, too holy for the best of such gross and carnal beings as we are.

The people of Isaiah's day were like the rest of their race: they showed their unspiritualness and their inability to walk in the light of the Lord by making their own *wealth* their chief confidence. We read at verse 7—"Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures"; and then it is added, "their land also is full of idols." Alas! this idolatry of wealth is common among God's people even at this day. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a prayer which falls far short of the general desires even of Christian people. Our demands are for luxuries, and plenty of them. Many would be coming down in the world very terribly if they had to receive

after that from-hand-to-mouth fashion—day by day their daily bread. Yet the Lord Jesus has put these words into our mouth. The providence of God is to some professing Christians a mere dream: they cannot rest till they have something more substantial to rely upon than the care of heaven. You think I am sarcastic; is it not true? See how your professed believers hunger to make sure of the main chance: as eagerly as the merest worldlings they scrape and they hoard. I have not a word to say against that Scriptural prudence which bids us, like the ant, lay by in store for wintry times; but I speak of the hunger to be rich, and of the selfish expenditure which forgets entirely that our substance is to be used for the glory of God, and that we are only stewards. I ask again, do not many slave, and hoard, and grasp as if there were no promise in the Scriptures of temporal provision from God's own right hand, and no exhortation to lay up our treasures in heaven? Are we liars? Do we say that all that we are and have is the Lord's, and do we after this live for ourselves, as if there were no redemption and no hereafter? That there should be need for the preacher to raise such questions is an indication that there is a common tendency to worship wealth, or at least to regard it as a substantial support.

Nations also, like the Israelitish people, are apt to idolize *power*; yes, even power in the form of brute force. We read—"Their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." Cavalry and war-chariots were as much in repute in that age on land as ironclads are at this day upon the sea; and Israel trusted to these. Jehovah was the guardian of his people, the Lord of hosts is his name. He alone was a match for Egypt and Babylon; but the kings

of Israel and Judah thought not so. They could not feel secure without great armies; they must needs multiply their horses and their chariots. They forgot that "a horse is a vain thing for safety"; they knew not that in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people. The like feeling crops up among God's people at this day. We pine for visible power, it may be physical or mental, as the case requires; but we thirst to have it available, embodied in some human form. We cannot rest upon God alone and feel that when we are weak we are strong. The Lord taketh not pleasure in the strength of the horse nor in the legs of a man, but his people often do. Eloquence, cleverness, intellect—these are still the idols which the church dotes upon: she has not yet understood the words, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Still we make too much of the instrument and too little of the Divine Worker; still is there more expected from music, architecture, and oratory, than from the simple gospel and the attendant working of the Holy Ghost. How hardly can men be brought to trust in the invisible God! Alas! it is still true, "Their land also is full of idols: the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself." O Church of God, how long will it be ere thou believest thy God?

These people, in the heat of their idolatry, set up *many idols*. They made anything into a God. He that was so impoverished that he could not make a God of silver would make an idol out of a tree which would not rot; and having carved and gilded it, he prostrated himself before it. To what a height of folly has a man come when he can do this! You tell me that this idolatry is confined to heathen countries.

Alas! it is not so; idolatry is common even here. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," is a text that needs still to be preached from—ay, to be preached in Christian congregations; for idols will intrude themselves into the sanctuary of the Lord. The forms and shapes of modern idols are many and crafty. We see no elephant-headed deity such as is the fear of the Hindoos, and no absurd fetish such as the African dreads; but more dangerous, because more subtle and secret, forms of idolatry are allowed to remain in our midst. Oh that the Lord would in his people fulfil the word, "The idols he shall utterly abolish"!

May we not easily make idols of *ourselves*? Almost before we are aware of it, we may be thus debased. What more degrading than for a man to worship himself! We read of some whose god is their belly; this is the grosser part of self. What heathen ever worshipped his own belly? Yet we all too much trust in ourselves at times—what is this but idolatry? Do we not seek ourselves in a measure—is not this idolatry? Do we not reverence our own achievements and attainments—in what does this differ from idolatry? Gods many and lords many have men made unto themselves. Like a child that must have a toy, man must have a visible trust and confidence. For this purpose, "he hath sought out many inventions." He will even worship reptiles of the river, and plants of the garden, rather than be without a visible deity. Alas, poor foolish creature!

I need not enlarge upon this. You all know how true it is that, one way or another, man gets away from the spiritual life which would make God everything to him, and he wanders into the sensual region,

where he either finds another god, or else allows some symbol or priest to stand between him and God. So sadly through sin is our nature twisted and biassed, that we seem to be under the witchery of idolatry.

As I have already said, there is nothing more absurd in the history of human nature than the fact that man is apt to trust in man. To worship something superior to myself is bad enough if it be not God; but to begin to put my dependence upon a man like myself or upon myself, and so to allow man, who at the best is a sorry creature, to take the place of God, is indeed a wantonness of evil. Do you wonder that God has pronounced a curse upon this provoking folly, this insult to his divine majesty? Hear ye the words of this anathema: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." The sin is none the less accursed because of its commonness. That which God blesses is blest indeed, and that which he curses is cursed with an emphasis. Concerning that sin so common and so accursed I have to speak at this time. May the Lord bless the word that we may be kept from the transgression! Here is the text: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

We will handle the text thus—First, *What is man?* Answer: "His breath is in his nostrils." Secondly, *What is to be our relation to man?* "Cease ye from man." And, thirdly, *Why should we cease from him?* It is answered by another question, *Wherein is he to be accounted of?* This puts the question, *What is there in him or about him that renders him a proper object of reverence or confidence?* May the Holy Spirit send us a profitable meditation!

Our first enquiry is, *WHAT IS MAN?* This question is

asked many times in Scripture, and it has been frequently answered with a copiousness of instruction. David even asks of heaven, "Lord, what is man?" I will not, however, go over all that wide expanse of thought which the Bible puts before us, but simply answer the enquiry from the point of view of our text.

What is man? *He is assuredly a very feeble creature.* He must be weak, for "his breath is in his nostrils." We measure the strength of a chain by its weakest link. If other links are strong, yet if one is ready to snap, we judge that the whole chain is far from strong, and is not to be depended upon. See, then, how weak man is, for he is weakness itself in a vital point. He has bones that may be hard and durable, and he has many a strong sinew, tough and wiry, as we sometimes say; but there is a weak point about him which is found in a matter on which his life depends, namely, his breath. And what is our breath? A vapor which we scarcely see ourselves—a thing so unsubstantial that when we have it we scarce see it, and yet when we lose it life is gone from us. Our earthly existence depends upon our breath, and that breath is mere wind. How feeble must that creature be whose vitality rests on a foundation so airy and unsubstantial as mere breath! A vapor is not more fleeting. We talk of strong men. Is any man strong? We speak of the strength of our constitutions: how is that strong which depends upon a puff of air? It is a marvel that so frail a life is not sooner ended. That we live is miraculous; that we die is but natural. Readily enough may that house fall which is built, not on sand, but on air. Dr. Watts has well said—

“ Our life contains a thousand springs,
 And fails if one be gone ;
 Strange that a harp of thousand strings
 Should keep in tune so long ! ”

Dust we are, and that dust hastens to dissolve, and so to return to the kindred dust of the earth. Under our feet are our graves, and above us are the stars which will soon look down upon our silent tombs. The trees cast their leaves, but they grow green again: we shed our life's glories once, and they return no more. Thus the trees outlive us, and beneath their shade we are reminded that man is far more frail than the tree which he fells with the axe. Yea, the very grass which he now mows outlives the mower. Man is a mere shadow: we have scarce time to say that he is before he is not. Are we not foolish if we place our reliance upon such a feeble creature, so weak that his breath, his unsubstantial breath, is essential to his life? Who art thou, O man, that trusteth in man? If thou hast half a grain of wisdom left, how canst thou quit the ever-living God and put thy reliance upon a poor creature who is as the grass, that to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven? Go, rest on a reed, or ride upon a moth, or build on a bubble; but rely not upon a man.

Moreover, *man is a frail creature*; for his strength must be measured by his fleeting breath, and that breath is in his nostrils. It seems as though his life in his breath stood at the gates, ready to be gone, since it is in his nostrils. The text says not that his breath is in his lungs, deep, hidden below, but in his nostrils—at the door, in the most exposed part of the face, at two open portals which can never be shut; as if it meant to secure an easy exit at any moment.

Brethren, there are ten thousand gates to death. One man is choked by a grape-stone, another dies through sleeping in a newly whitewashed room; one receives death as he passes by a reeking sewer, another finds it in the best kept house, or by a chill taken in a walk. Those who study neither to eat nor to drink anything unwholesome, nor go into quarters where the arrows of death are flying, yet pass away on a sudden, falling from their couch into a coffin, from their seat into the sepulchre. The other day one of our own brethren sat down in his chair to sleep a moment; but it was his last sleep. Another stumbled in his own room never again to rise; these were apparently in health. Life is never sure for an instant. How can we place our trust in a creature which is so soon gone. Shall we make the insect of an hour the object of our fond affection and our chief dependence? How can we be so foolish as to trust our treasure in a purse made of such a spider's web? The casket should be fit for the treasure; do you mean to trust your soul's confidence to a man that shall die—that may die in an hour? I asked, “What is man?” But before the question is answered I have to ask, “Where is he?” He is gone like a watch in the night. How can we make a dying man the object of a living trust? “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.”

Man is a weak and frail creature; *he is also a dying creature*. Need I further enlarge upon this? To our sorrow, many of us know that it is so. Some of you had fathers of your flesh, but they passed away and you were fatherless before you could earn your bread. Had not God preserved the orphan, you had been miserable indeed. Some of you once leaned upon a

manly arm and looked up into the smiling face of a husband; but the dear one has been laid in a grave wet with floods of tears: it is well for you that your Maker dies not. There are those here who once enjoyed dear friendships: these seemed essential to your lives, but ruthless death has torn Jonathan away from David. It has come closer, and stolen the child from its mother, and the wife from the husband. Man is ever dying while he lives. Oh, set not all thy love, or much of thy confidence, or any of thy worship upon a creature that will soon be worm's meat.

Contemplate the dead! What think you now of your idol? You who could sit down by the hour together and revel in the sight and company of your beloved object, what think you now of that which you doted on? If you could see it uncovered after a few days you would say, "Deliver me from this noisome smell, this horrible corruption, this dreadful mass of decay!" Wherefore, could you ever be so vain and foolish and bereft of reason as to make a thing that comes to this your trust and confidence? The prophet says, "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth." In this he rebukes our fears, but equally rebukes our carnal trusts.

But I think that the text also reminds us that *man is a very fickle creature*. His breath is in his "nostrils." That is where he wears his life, and this hints to us that he is sadly changeable. As his breath is affected by his health, so is he changed. To-day he loves, and to-morrow he hates; he promises fair, but he forgets his words. He swears that he will be faithful

unto death, and anon he betrays the confidence reposed in him. No dependence can be wisely placed in him. O man! O woman! Change is written on thy brow. The lapse of years alters thee, yea, the flight of days and hours suffices to transform thee! We may better trust the winds and waves than thee! David said in his haste, "All men are liars." That may not be quite true, and may bear the mark of hasty judgment; but it is a rough-hewn truth, which is far more accurate than flattering compliments. David might have deliberated, and then have said very much the same thing with great certainty. In some senses the broad verdict is correct as it stands; for if we make an arm of flesh our trust, to whomsoever that arm belongs, we shall find that we have rested on a broken reed. In the time of our calamity, when we most need help, we shall find that mortal assistance is either gone through falsehood, or is incompetent through feebleness. Then shall we know the curse of trusting in man, whose breath is in his nostrils. Who will stand by us when we are slandered? Does not that winter make all the swallows take to their wings? Who can help us when the soul is in despair? O my brothers! who can help us when our spirit is wounded, when the arrows of grief pierce the heart? Who can help us when we come to die? When the mysteries of eternity darken around us, and we quit the light of day, what friend or fond one can be at our side as we enter the unknown land? There are certain points of life in which every man must tread a lonely pathway. We then need God, and if we have made a god of any man, what shall we do? Ah me! what reason we have to look to him who is ever the same! Remember how he says, "I am the

Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

If you read the chapter through, you will also find that man is *a trembling creature*, a cowardly creature, a creature indeed who, if he were not cowardly, yet has abundant reason to fear. Read from the nineteenth verse: "They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Think of the days of divine wrath, and especially of the last dread day of Judgment, and of the dismay which will then seize upon many of the proud and the great. Are you going to make these your confidants? Are you going to give up Christ for the sake of the smile of these who will wail in terror when he comes? Is it so, that for the sake of some young man or woman who loves not God, and one day must quail before the coming Judge, you will let your Lord and Saviour go? It is concerning such a temptation as this that the text thunders at you: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," who will fear and fly and lose his breath in very dread at the appearing of the Lord. Cease to regard these as the fond objects of your love and trust, lest the curse of God should lie upon your soul throughout eternity. O my hearers, hearken to this!

So much concerning what man is, according to our

test. Is it not a powerful argument against placing man where God alone should be ?

II. Secondly, WHAT IS TO BE OUR RELATION TO MAN, OR what does the text mean when it says, "*Cease ye from man*" ?

It implies, does it not, that we very probably have too much to do with this poor creature man already ? We cannot "cease" from that with which we have nothing to do. The text implies that in all probability we have entered into connections with man which will need changing. We may even require to reverse our present conduct, break up unions, cancel alliances, and alter the whole tenor of our conduct.

"Cease ye from man" means, first, *cease to idolize him in your love*. Do any of you idolize any living person ? Answer honestly. It is very common to idolize children. A mother who had lost her babe fretted and rebelled about it. She happened to be in a meeting of the Society of Friends, and there was nothing spoken that morning except this word by one female Friend, who was moved, I doubt not, by the Spirit of God, to say, "Verily, I perceive that children are idols." She did not know the condition of that mourner's mind, but it was the right word, and she to whom God applied it knew how true it was. She submitted her rebellious will, and at once was comforted. Cease ye from these little men and women ; for, though you prize them so, they are of the race from which you are to cease. Cease ye from them, for their breath is in their nostrils, and indeed it is but feebly there in childhood. A proper and right love of children should be cultivated ; but to carry this beyond its due measure is to grieve the Spirit of God. If you make idols of children you have done the worst you

can for them, whether they live or die. Cease from such folly.

I will not go into the many instances in which men have been idolized politically, or idolized by a blind following of their teaching. You can idolize a minister, you can idolize a poet, you can idolize a patron; but in so doing you break the first and greatest of the commandments, and you anger the Most High. He declares himself to be a jealous God, and he will not yield his throne to another. Upon any who are thus erring, let me press the text home: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Next, "Cease ye from man": *cease to idolize him in your trust*. There is a measure of confidence that we may place in good and gracious men, for they are worthy of it; but a blind confidence in any man is altogether evil. I care not who he may be, you cannot read his heart; and some of the greatest deceptions that have ever been wrought in this world have been accomplished by persons who seemed to be self-evidently honest and sincere. I remember conversing with a person, who was concerned in one of the great speculations which brought loss and ruin to many, and as I looked into his honest face and heard his open-hearted talk, I said to myself, "This is not a man who is capable of robbery. He is a plain, blunt, farmer-like sort of a man, who might even be the victim of the confidence trick." I afterward learned that this is the usual style of a man who puffs a company, or betrays a trust. Of course if a man looks like a thief, you button up your pockets, and smile if he invites you to take shares; but you are off your guard when the man appears to be the embodiment of simple honesty.

The woman in the omnibus who picks your pocket looks like the last person to be capable of such a thing, and this is why she is able to do it. Transfer this knowledge to other matters, and it may save you sorrow. If you get trusting anybody with a blind confidence beyond what you ought to give, and especially if you trust your soul with any priest or preacher, whoever he may be, you are a fool, and your folly may turn out to be an everlasting mischief, which can never be undone. Hear you this, and learn what God would teach you. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Do not idolize man by laying yourself at his feet, or following him in the dark; for it will not only be in itself a folly, but it will bring you under the curse of my text.

Cease to idolize any man by giving him undue honor. There is an honor to be paid to all, for the apostle says, "Honor all men." A measure of courtesy and respect is to be paid to every person, and particularly to those whose offices demand it; therefore is it written, "Honor the king." Some also, by their character, deserve much respect from their fellow-men, and I trust we shall never refuse "honor to whom honor is due"; but there is a limit to this, or we shall become sycophants and slaves, and, what is worse, idolaters. It grieves one to see how certain persons dare not even think, much less speak, till they have asked how other people think. In some congregations there are weak people who do not know whether they have liked the sermon till they have asked a certain venerable critic to whom they act as echoes. The bulk of people are like a flock of sheep: there is a gap, and if one sheep goes through, all will follow. If the ringleader should

happen to be an infidel or a new-theology man, so much the worse; if he should happen to be orthodox, it is much better in some ways; but then it is a pity that people should follow the truth in so thoughtless a manner. Public opinion is a poor substitute for conscience, and is no substitute at all for righteousness and truth. Because the general opinion bids you bow down before this man or that, will you do so? Will you forget God, and conscience, and right, and truth, and ask another man to tell you when you may breathe? God's people should scorn such grovelling. If the Son shall make you free, you will be free indeed. Jesus loves that the soldiers in his host should own his supremacy; but once owning him as Lord, he would have them feel that no man or set of men shall draw them away from his word, either in doctrine or in precept. Worship is for God only: render it to him, and "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Equally does the text bid us *cease from the fear of man*. Oh, how many are kept from doing right through some man or some woman, wealthy relative, or influential friend! Are there not men in workshops who join with others in their ribaldry because they are afraid to speak out lest they should be laughed at and marked as hypocrites? Are there not persons in well-to-do circles who must attend a certain place of worship because all the respectable people go there? No matter which way conscience would take them, they are bound to follow the fashion: the fear of men is upon them. They do not want to be despised and remarked upon. But, my dear friends, if any of you are doing wrong under fear of men, do not excuse yourselves, but at once obey the word which says, "Cease

ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Who are you that you should set man before God? Is not this a grievous presumption? The fear of God ought so to be before your eyes that the fear of man will not weigh with you in the least. "I fear man," said one, "but I fear God infinitely more": this was near the mark. Our Lord said, "Fear not him that can kill the body, but afterwards hath no more that he can do; but fear him who can cast both body and soul into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." Dismiss the craven fear which would make you false to your convictions in any degree, and thus "cease from man."

Once more, *cease from being worried about men*. We ought to do all we can for our fellow-men to set them right and keep them right, both by teaching and by example; but certain folks think that everything must go according to their wishes, and if we cannot see eye to eye with them, they worry themselves and us. This is not right, and that is not right, and indeed nothing is right but what is hammered on their anvil. Let us please our neighbor for his good, for edification, but let us not become men-pleasers, nor grieve inordinately because unreasonable persons are not satisfied with us. To our own Master we stand or fall, and interfering brethren must be so good as to remember that we are not their servants, but we serve the Lord Christ.

Moreover, brethren, let us not be unduly cast down if we cannot set everybody right. Truly, the body politic, common society, and especially the church, may cause us great anxiety; but still the Lord reigneth, and we are not to let ourselves die of grief. After all, our Lord does not expect us to rectify everything, for he only requires of us what he enables us to do.

We are not magistrates, nor dictators, and when we have done our best and kept our own garments clean, and given earnest warning, and cried unto God by reason of the evil of the times, then this word comes in, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

"*But they say.*" What do they say? Let them say. It will not hurt you if you can only gird up the loins of your mind, and cease from man. "Oh, but they have accused me of this and that." Is it true? "No, sir, it is not true, and that is why it grieves me." That is why it should not grieve you. If it were true it ought to trouble you; but if it is not true let it alone. If an enemy has said anything against your character it will not always be worth while to answer him. Silence has both dignity and argument in it. Nine times out of ten if a boy makes a blot in his copy-book and borrows a knife to take it out, he makes the mess ten times worse; and as in your case there is no blot after all, you need not make one by attempting to remove what is not there. All the dirt that falls upon a good man will brush off when it is dry: but let him wait till it is dry, and not dirty his hands with wet mud. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Brethren in Christ, let us think more of God and less of man. Come, let the Lord our God fill the whole horizon of our thoughts. Let our love go forth to him; let us delight ourselves in him. Let us trust in him that liveth for ever, in him whose promise never faileth, in him who will be with us in life, and in death, and through eternity. Oh that we lived more in the society of Jesus, more in the sight of God! Let man go behind our back, and Satan too.

We cannot spend our lives in seeking the smiles of men, for pleasing God is the one object we pursue. Our hands, and our heads, and our hearts, and all that we have and are, find full occupation for the Lord, and therefore we must "Cease from man."

Cease ye from man because you have come to know the best of men, who is more than man, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and he has so fully become the beloved of your souls, that none can compare with him. Rest in Christ as to your sins, and cease from priests. Rest, also, in the great Father as to your providential cares; why rest in men when he careth for you? Rest in the Holy Spirit as to your spiritual needs; why need to depend on man? Yea, throw yourself wholly and entirely upon the God all-sufficient, El Shaddai, as Scripture calls him. Some read it, "the many-breasted God," who is able to supply from himself all the needs of his creatures. He will do for us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or even think. "O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," and cease ye from man. That was a wise and tender word of our Saviour to the woman who had washed his feet. He said to her, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" and then, as they began to cavil at her, and talk about the expense and the waste of the ointment, he added to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; *go in peace*": as much as to say, "They are going to have a discussion about you, but do you go out of earshot of it. They are going to criticise what you have done, do not tarry to hear them, but go home. I have accepted you, let that be enough for you; never mind *them*. Do not want to know their opinions." Oftentimes to a child of God it is the best advise that can be given—"Go in peace." Certain doubters are about to argue; let them argue

to themselves, but do you go in peace. Why do you want to know the last new doubt? Would you like to taste the last new poison? "Prove all things," but when it has been proved to be evil have done with it. Do not want to hear that which can only tend to stagger your faith and defile your conscience. You have heard enough of that stuff already; go in peace. When men begin to cavil at Christ and the doctrines of grace, cease from them. Steal away to Jesus in private prayer. Five minutes' communion with your Lord will be worth five years of this idle talk. Go in peace, and "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Do you hear that one professor declares that there is no God, and another that there is no providence, and another that there is no atoning sacrifice, and another that there is no hereafter? Now that we know that a mad dog is about, let us keep out of his way. It does not matter who he is; we have nothing to do with him. When a thief meets me, I need not stay even to say, "Good night" to him. Cease ye from such a man, for the very breath of his nostrils breathes death to that which is good.

III. We finish with that last question: WHY ARE WE TO CEASE FROM MAN? The answer is, *because he is nothing to be accounted of*. Begin, dear brethren, by ceasing from yourselves. Every man must cease from himself first, and then he must cease from all men, as his hope and his trust, because neither ourselves nor others are worthy of such confidence. "Wherein is he to be accounted of?" If his breath is in his nostrils, see how short his life is, wherein is he to be accounted of? If his breath is in his nostrils, see how weak he is, wherein is he to be accounted of? If his breath is in

his nostrils, see how fickle he is, wherein is he to be accounted of?

What figure shall I put down for man? Some men would wish to have themselves written down at a very high figure, but a cipher is quite sufficient. Write man is nothing, and you are somewhat above the mark. Wherein is he to be accounted of? Compared with God man is less than nothing and vanity. Reckon him so, and act upon the reckoning. If there were no men on the face of the earth, how would you live? If God alone filled all your thought and all your heart, how would you live? Live just so. Then if there be a thousand million men upon the face of the globe—and there are more—they will not sway you. If the city teems with them, and if the forum is distarbed with their noise, and if they ride up to the capitol in triumph, what is that? We have ceased from them, and we shall never have cause to regret it, for they will be no loss to us. If we try to reckon up what the loss might be if we lost their aid, it comes to nothing; for wherein are they to be accounted of. Cease from them and go straight on in the path of faith and duty, resting in God and believing in him. Care nothing for the vanity of vanities, but trust in the Verity of verities, even God himself.

This is a special subject, and some one will say, "Can such a text as this be useful for the ungodly?" Yes, it hits the nail on the head. Some of you have been trying to save yourselves. "Cease ye from man." You have been looking to your feelings; you have been looking to your works; you have been looking to this and that of your own; cease ye altogether from that evil man—yourself. Wherein are you to be accounted of? Some of you have kept back from Christ

because you have made much of this poor nobody that is crushed before the moth, this worm of the earth, this mere vapor. Now, rise above your dead selves and think more of God. Believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and may his Holy Spirit help you now to come and commit your souls into the hands of the risen Redeemer, even unto him who is able to save you and keep you to the end. God so help you for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.



