

SERMONS

VOLUME I



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Abiding in Christ

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"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." John 15:4

Have you ever considered the experience of the disciples when their Lord and Master was sojourning here below? To my mind, there is something very instructive, and, I may add, very encouraging in it.

On the one hand, observe how *ignorant* they were of the nature of Christ's kingdom! Two of the most eminent of them besought him that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his glory. What ignorance did that request imply of the nature of his spiritual kingdom, as if there were a right and a left hand there! Observe, too, their *unbelief*. How continually the Lord had to chide them! "Where is your faith?" and "O ye of little faith!" Remark also, their *carnality and worldly-mindedness*. How, on one occasion, two of them asked their Master that fire might come down from heaven to destroy his enemies! and how, at the very first onset of danger, "they all forsook him and fled!" It is, to my mind, very instructive and encouraging, thus to see their weakness, ignorance, and unbelief.

We have taken a hasty glance at the dark side of the question; we have traced out what they were in self. Let us now take another view of their character, and mark something of the Spirit's work upon their heart. For though they were, as I have shown, ignorant, unbelieving, weak, and worldly-minded; yet there were distinct marks of the Spirit's teaching in them. Observe, for instance, their *faith*. What said Peter, who spake in the name of them all? "We *believe* and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:69.) Observe, too,

their *love*. On one occasion, Thomas, the most unbelieving of them all, felt such love springing up in his soul towards the Redeemer that he said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go (with him into Judea) that we may die with him." (John 11:16.) Observe also, their *sincerity*. How they cleaved to the Lord through evil report and good report! turned their back upon the world, gave up everything that nature loves, and followed Jesus in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life! Observe also, their *patience*; as the Lord said to them, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." (Luke 22:28.)

I bring forward these two sides, because there are many of the Lord's family who are now precisely in the same state and stage of experience that the disciples were when Christ was upon earth. It is therefore most encouraging for them to see that they may have all the short-comings, infirmities, and weakness that the disciples had, and yet be true hearted and genuine followers of the Lamb.

Observe too, how the Lord dealt with them as a nursing father. It is true, there were occasions when he chid them! but how tenderly he chid them! how he led them on step by step from grace to grace! and how from time to time he opened up to them the treasures of his loving heart! On that night, that gloomy night, especially when the Lord was betrayed into the hands of sinful men, he spake to them all that was in his heart. He had hitherto called them "servants;" he would discard that title, and would for the future call them "friends;" and as his friends he would open up to them the secrets of his loving bosom.

In the chapter before us, he speaks of himself as the only Head of divine influence: "I am the true Vine." He tells them too, what *they* were in *him*, as well as what *he* was *to* them. "I am the Vine, and *ye are the branches*." And the same truth he declares in the words of the text, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

We may observe two things in the words before us. *First, the exhortation* that the Lord gives them, "Abide in me, and I in you." And *secondly, the reason* which the Lord lays before them that they should abide in him; for that only by doing so could they bear fruit to his glory.

I.—But before it can be said to any one, "*Abide in Christ,*" he must have standing in Christ. The very expression, "Abide in me," necessarily implies a union with Jesus. Now, of this union with Christ, we may observe three distinct features. There is, *first, the eternal union* which the church had with Christ before all worlds. There is, *secondly, the vital union* which takes place betwixt Christ and the believing soul, when the Holy Ghost raises up faith in the heart. And there is, *thirdly, communion* with the Lord Jesus Christ springing out of this vital union.

This is God's order, the order in which it lay in his eternal mind. But it is not so with respect to the way whereby we become acquainted with it. We do not see, first, our eternal union with Christ, next proceed to vital union by living faith, and end all with divine communion. But the way by which we are brought to receive these things is, first, to feel ourselves "without Christ," cut off by sin from all communion with him; next, by a work of grace upon the soul, to be brought to believe in his name, and thus receive a vital union with him; out of this vital union with him springs next living communion; and out of living communion arises last a knowledge of eternal union.

But it will be desirable to enter into these things a little more in detail. They are vital points of the deepest importance, therefore not to be hurried over, nor passed lightly by; for on them depends our eternal standing, as well as our evidence whether we be bound for heaven or hell.

What, then, is the Scriptural description? (for by the Scriptures we must always stand or fall)—what is the divinely inspired account of the state of a child of God before he is brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? "Dead in trespasses and sins."

"Without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:1, 12.) If this be the description which the Holy Ghost has given of the elect in a state of nature, (and the experience of every one divinely taught bears testimony that God the Holy Ghost, in thus describing their character, has penned it as with a ray of light), must not some mighty revolution take place in the soul before it is brought to believe in Christ, and thus to enjoy vital union with him? What are we by nature? Are we not closely riveted and glued to the world, to the things of time and sense, to our own righteousness, and to all that God hates with perfect hatred? Must there not, then, be a divorce from these first husbands, that we may be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we may bring forth fruit unto God? Must not the sharp sword of God's word cut asunder this close union with the world, with the things of time and sense, with our own righteousness, and with the law? Surely. Before we can be brought into a knowledge of, and any vital union with Christ, or any spiritual communion with his most gracious Majesty, the keen knife must pass between us and self, us and the law, us and our own righteousness, us and our own fleshly obedience; and thus separate us utterly from these things, in order to bring about a union to Christ, which we never can have so long as we cleave to those perishing things on which the eternal wrath of God rests. And is not this a painful operation? Can the keen knife pass between us and the world, us and our fleshly obedience, us and our own righteousness, us and that idol self which we so dearly love and pay such devout worship to, without leaving marks and scars upon our flesh, or without causing some keen and acute sensations? It cannot; and those who have experienced these things know it cannot. But how indispensable, how utterly indispensable, is this operation in the hands of the Spirit, to cut us off from self; that we may have union, living union, with the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ and self can never unite. Christ's righteousness and our own righteousness; the love of God and the love of the world; the worshipping of Jesus, and the worshipping of idols; admiring of ourselves, and admiring of him; can never sit upon the same

throne. Self must be laid in ruins before Jesus can be set up effectually in the heart. There must be a divorce, a thorough divorce, from everything that nature cleaves to, before a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ can be brought about. This is the reason why the Lord's people pass through such severe exercises, perplexities, conflicts, and trials, such powerful temptations, such varied feelings, such deep afflictions, to uproot them, to cut them clean off and clean out of self, that they may be brought by divine faith to have a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But is this sufficient? Something more is wanting. All our exercises, all our convictions, all our afflictions; all our trials, all our temptations—be they increased a thousand fold—cannot give us a living union with Christ. We find this daily manifested. We see many groaning and grieving under trials and afflictions, who yet seem to have no vital union with the Lamb of God. Another process is therefore necessary. The blessed Spirit must not only cut us off from self, but give us a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And how does he do this? By making him known to our souls; by unfolding to us something of his glory. Was not this the way by which the disciples had a living union with Christ? It was not Peter leaving his fishing-nets that gave him a vital union with Christ; it was not their coming out of the world that gave them a vital union with Christ; it was not their preaching the gospel, nor working miracles, that gave them a vital union with Christ. Did not Judas do all these things as well as the rest? But it was what the Apostle speaks of (John 1:14), "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It was this which gave them vital union with Christ. If we have never, by the eye of faith, seen Jesus, the Son of God, "and beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," and felt the actings of living faith in our bosom whereby that blessed Redeemer was laid hold of and embraced—whatever we may talk about our religion, however highly we may estimate it, or however highly other persons may esteem it in us, we have as yet no vital proof of union with Jesus.

Let these two things, then, be well weighed up in your

experience. May Satan not deceive us in this matter. Two processes are indispensably necessary to be passed through; the one, a separation from self, produced by the keen edge of God's word in the conscience; the other, a vital union with Jesus through the actings of that living faith which the Holy Ghost alone can raise up in the soul.

Now, out of this vital union with Christ springs *communion* with him. "Abide in me, and I in you." But we can have no abiding in Christ except we have first union with him. The Lord clearly presupposes that the disciples to whom he was speaking had this union with him. He says, "Abide in me," that is, 'ye are already in me, continue in me;' as he says, (verse 9,) "Continue ye in my love." But O, how many things there are that prevent this abiding in Christ! Let us consider a few.

1. *Unbelief, the power of unbelief*—what an enemy—what a desperate enemy is this to abiding in Christ! What is it that brings the soul near to Christ, that gives it vital union with Jesus, and makes him precious? Is it not living faith? Is not that the eye which sees Christ? Is not that the hand which takes hold of Christ, and brings him near? Is not that the ear that hears the voice of Christ? Surely. Unbelief then is that mortal foe which ever fights with desperate enmity against the life of faith in the soul. When, then, we are filled with little else but unbelief, is there any sensible abiding in Christ? We cannot at such moments realize even our union with him at all. He is so distant that we cannot get near unto, much less enjoy communion with him.

2. *The power of sin* is another thing that prevents the soul from acting up to this divine exhortation, "Abide in me." O how sin, in its workings within, in its mighty power, in its polluting defilements, separates our souls from the object of our heart's love! How it drives us, as I was speaking last Lord's day, to "the ends of the earth!" How it intercepts and cuts off communion with the Lord of life and glory!

3. *Darkness of mind*. O how the Lord's people have, for the most

part, to groan and lament under darkness of mind; and how continually this prevents communion with the Lord Jesus Christ! When we are in that state, as some of us doubtless often are, where "we see not our signs;" when night rests upon our soul; when we cannot find the way, nor that our feet are in the way; when we can scarcely trace one mark of divine teaching within; when Jesus is as little known to us as though there were no Jesus at all, and as though we had never seen him nor believed in his name—what power and prevalence this darkness of mind has to intercept communion with the Lord of life and glory!

4. *The cares and anxieties of the world* laying hold of the heart, stealing in upon the affections, burying the thoughts, and overwhelming the mind with a flood of carnal solicitude—who that knows the coming in of the world in this shape, does not know, painfully know, how it breaks in upon the communion with the Lord Jesus Christ!

5. *The temptations of Satan*; the fiery darts that he often casts into our carnal mind; and the workings, the hideous workings of evil, that are thence felt, deeply felt within—how these things all conspire to prevent a firm and believing abiding in Christ.

But if there were no such hindrances, if there were no such difficulties, would the Lord have said, "Abide in me?" He knew, well knew, there was everything in us to prevent abiding in him. That though, in rich grace, he had brought us near to himself; yet there was everything in self, everything in sin, and everything in the world, to intercept communion with him, and take us out of that sweet, blessed, and spiritual state, in which we feelingly and experimentally abide in him.

But I must not dwell upon one side of the question only, and merely shew the hindrances to felt union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at the other side of the picture, and see how we are enabled from time to time to abide in Jesus. Be this never forgotten, that if we have ever been brought near to the Lord Jesus Christ by the actings of living faith, there never

can be any final, actual separation from him. As far indeed as our feelings are concerned, there is many an interposition to communion with him, and fears too of final separation from him; but there is never actual separation. In the darkest moments, in the dreariest hours, under the most painful exercises, the most fiery temptations, there is, as with Jonah in the belly of hell, a looking again toward the holy temple. There is not an abandoning of all hope, a going into the world, a giving up of all we have felt in the Lord's name. There is sometimes a sigh, a cry, a groan, a breathing forth of the heart's desire to "know him, and the power of his resurrection;" that he would draw us near unto himself, and make himself precious to our souls. And these very cries and sighs, groanings and breathings, all prove that whatever darkness of mind, guilt of conscience, or unbelief we may feel, there is no real separation. It is in grace as it is in nature; the clouds do not blot out the sun; it is still in the sky, though they often intercept his bright rays. And so with the blessed Sun of Righteousness; our unbelief, our ignorance; our darkness of mind, our guilt of conscience, our many temptations—these do not blot out the Sun of Righteousness from the sky of grace. Though thick clouds come between him and us and make us feel as though he was blotted out, or at least as if we were blotted from his remembrance, yet, through mercy, where grace has begun the work, grace carries it on; "Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6.) Were it not so, there could be no revivings of faith, hope, or love. But, through mercy, infinite mercy, where the Lord has implanted his blessed graces of faith, hope, and love, he waters them from time to time with the dews of his grace; as he says, "In that day, sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isa. 27:2, 3.)

Now the blessed Spirit is the sole author of communion with the Lord. It is only under his secret operations and most divine influences, that we are ever brought to the footstool of Jesus; that our eyes are ever anointed with heavenly eye-salve to see

his beauty and glory; that our hearts ever pant after him as the hart after the water-brooks; or that we ever feel anything like union and communion with his most gracious Majesty.

But the blessed Spirit works by means. What are those means?

1. One means that he employs to bring about and keep alive this abiding in Christ is *faith*. It is through faith that, in the first instance, we have vital union with Christ; and it is through faith that we have communion with him. And the stronger the faith is, the more communion with his blessed Majesty there is. Now, the blessed Spirit after he is pleased, in the first instance, to raise up faith, waters his own grace in the soul, draws it forth into living act and exercise, and thus fixes that faith upon, and makes it centre in Jesus. Wherever faith is thus blessedly raised up and drawn forth, union is revived, and communion blessedly experienced.

2. The blessed Spirit makes use of the *word of life*. It is through the word that the soul in the first instance is cleansed. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.) It is by the word that the soul is begotten again unto eternal life. It is too by the word applied to the heart that the blessed Spirit from time to time keeps alive communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it not so in vital experience? Some passage of Scripture drops into the soul, some promise comes warm into the heart, and as it comes it makes way for itself. It enters the heart, breaks down the feelings, melts the soul, and draws forth living faith to flow unto and centre alone in the "altogether lovely." There are many times and seasons when the word of God is to us a dead letter; we see and feel no sweetness in it. But there are other times, through mercy, when the word of God is made sweet and precious to us; when we can say, with the prophet of old, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." (Jer. 15:16.) It was so in the case of David. He says, they are "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psa. 19:10.) When this is felt, the

sure effect is to bring the soul into communion with the Lord Jesus, who is the true word of God, and makes use of the written word to draw us near unto himself.

3. The blessed Spirit is pleased to make use also of *prayer*; raising up a spirit of grace and supplications, and interceding for us and in us "with groanings which cannot be uttered;" stirring us up, enabling us to pour out our heart at the footstool, and giving us power and inward strength whereby we plead with God, and wrestle with him as Jacob did of old, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." As the blessed Spirit is pleased to raise up these pantings and longings within, he strengthens faith in the heart, and there is a flowing forth of love to the Lord, whereby he is embraced in the arms of the tenderest affection.

4. The blessed Spirit sometimes also sheds abroad *love*; and love is a sweet seal of union and communion.

5. And lastly, not to mention others, the Spirit sometimes makes use of *conversation* with the Lord's family. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." (Mal. 3:16.) And as the disciples found in journeying to Emmaus, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32.)

And thus the blessed Spirit, in these various ways, maintains and keeps alive communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Abide in me." The Lord did not use these words as though there were any power in the creature to abide in him. But he was pleased to use them that they might be blessed to his people when the Holy Spirit applied them to the heart; for, he adds, "*And I in you.*" The one is the key to the other. If we abide in Christ, Christ abides in us. It is by Christ abiding in us, that we are enabled to abide in him. But how does Christ abide in us? By his Spirit. It is by his Spirit, he makes the bodies of his saints his temple; it is by his Spirit, that he comes and dwells in them. Though it is instrumentally by faith, as we read, "that Christ may

dwell in your hearts by faith:" yet it is through the communication of his Spirit to the soul, and the visits of his most gracious presence. Thus he bids us, encourages us, and influences us to abide in him by his abiding in us.

But his abiding in a child of God may be known by certain effects following. If he abide in you, he makes and keeps your *conscience tender*. It is sin that separates between you and him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that he may abide in you and make you abide in him, makes and keeps your conscience tender in his fear. And this keeps you from those sins which separate between you and him.

He may be known, then, to abide in you by the secret checks he gives you when temptation comes before your eyes, and you are all but gone; as one of old said, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped." (Psa. 73:2.) He is pleased to give a secret **eternal [internal?]** check and admonition; so that your cry is, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.) And if you go astray and turn from the Lord to your idols, as to our shame and sorrow we often do, he proves that he still abides in you by not giving you up to a reprobate mind, not suffering you to harden your heart against him; but by his reproofs, admonitions, and secret checks in your conscience—by the very lashings and scourgings which he inflicts upon you as a father upon his child, and his secret pleadings with you in the court of conscience—by all these things he makes it manifest that he still abides in you.

Now these two things are the grand vital points that all Christians should seek to be established in. The first is, Is he a believer in Christ? Has the blessed Spirit made Christ known to his soul? Has he embraced Jesus in the arms of living faith? The second point which he should seek to have established in his soul is—Does he abide in Christ? This he may know by having some testimony that Christ abides in him, and produces the fruits that flow out of this inward abiding. If Christ abide in him, his heart will not be like the nether millstone. He cannot rush greedily into sin; he will not

love the world, and the things of time and sense; he cannot happily love idols, or do those things which ungodly professors do without one check or pang. Jesus in the soul is a guest that will make himself known; yea, abiding there, he is King therein. He is Ruler in Zion, and when he comes into the heart, he comes as King. Being therefore, its rightful Sovereign, he sways the faculties of the soul, and makes it obedient to his sceptre; for "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" (Psa. 110:3.) "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." (Isa. 26:13.)

O search your hearts. God enable us in mercy to do so, and see whether we have any testimony that we abide in Christ, by knowing and feeling that Christ abides in us, and, depend upon it, if Christ abide in us, there will be some marks and fruits flowing out of that abiding; there will be some outward as well as inward evidences that we are of another spirit from those dead in sins or dead in profession. There will be humility, sincerity, godly simplicity, and filial fear; deadness to the world, separation from evil, lowly thoughts of ourselves, brokenness of heart, contrition of Spirit, and tenderness of conscience; a fleeing from all things here below to make our sweet abode in the bosom of a risen Lord. Can we find these things going on in our souls? If not, we may call ourselves believers, or Christians, or children of God, but we have little evidence that we are worthy of the name.

II.—But we pass on, as time is waning, to consider *what are the fruits* of thus abiding in Christ? "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Have you never seen in the winter the gardener pruning a vine? What a heap of branches lie at the foot of the tree after the keen knife has severed them. Will they ever bear fruit again? Is not this their destiny—to be swept into the dung-heap? And though I know that professors of religion never had that vital union with Christ which the branches had with the vine from which the pruning knife had severed them; yet the Lord says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh

away." (John 15:2.) There was not a vital union, I know; but there was an apparent union. Those whom the husbandman takes away, bore no fruit; they are gathered up, and their "end is to be burned." (Heb. 6:8.) But on the other hand, wherever the branch is left in the vine, it bears fruit; the object of the gardener is, that it should bear more fruit, and he prunes it for that very purpose.

But what is the source of all the fruitfulness in the branch? Is it in self? No, not in self, that we well know. It is the sap that flows out of the stem into the branch that makes the branch fruitful. It is so in nature; and the Lord has declared it is so with the true branches of the only true vine. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." The only way whereby we can bring forth fruit to God's honour and glory, is by abiding in the vine.

And is it not God's chief purpose in dealing with the souls of his people to bring forth fruit in them? "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (verse 8.) What are all God's chastenings, corrections, rebukes, and sharp trials for? Are they not that we may bring forth fruit to his honour and glory? But only in the same proportion as we abide in Christ can we bring forth fruit. God enable us to see whether we bring forth any!

Observe these two things. If you do not abide in Christ, you bring forth no fruit; if you do abide in Christ, you are bringing forth fruit. But what is the fruit that a branch brings forth by abiding in the Vine? Is it all *external* fruit? External fruit is good. "By their works ye shall know them." But there is *internal* fruit brought forth by the Spirit in the court of conscience, as well as external fruit brought forth in the life and conversation. For instance,

1. There is the fruit of *humility*. Is not that a precious fruit? "Be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. 5:5.) But we cannot bring forth the fruit of humility, real humility, except we have a vital union and communion with the Man of Sorrows. And if we know anything of union and communion with the Man of Sorrows, the bleeding

Lamb of God, there will be a transfusion of his humility into our souls. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5.) As we are led to look to Christ, believe in Christ, and our heart's affections are attracted and drawn forth to Christ, humility will flow into the soul, in the same way as the sap flows out of the stem into the branches.

2. There will also be *sincerity and godly simplicity*. What is my heart by nature but "a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?" (Jer. 17:9.) Can there be then any sincerity in the heart by nature? No *spiritual* sincerity: there may be *natural* sincerity; but that is no fruit of the Spirit. To be sincere Godward; sincere in all we do, think, or speak in his name; to have a single eye to his glory; to have the simplicity of a little child before his gracious Majesty—where shall I go? whither shall I look to find this precious grace of the Spirit? Oh, how I see continually, and that more and more, how men are led by base motives! Oh, how many men professing godliness, ministers and hearers, do I see led by ambition, pride, self-interest, or covetousness! How little do I see—I may say, how little do I feel in myself—of that singleness of eye to God's glory which is such a precious fruit of the Spirit in the soul!

3. *Godly fear, reverence of the great name of Jehovah*; a conscience made and kept tender by him, a sight and sense of evil, and a fleeing from it,—is not this another precious fruit that is brought forth in the heart through abiding in Christ?

4. *Faith in his blessed name, love towards his glorious Person, hope in his blood and righteousness; patience* under trials, afflictions, temptations, and all the painful things that we have to grapple with in this vale of tears; *perseverance* to the end, amidst a thousand inward conflicts and many outward foes—are not these, too, inward fruits of the Spirit brought about through abiding in Christ by living faith?

5. *Prayerfulness, watchfulness, self-denial*; brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, sorrow for sin; mourning over our weak and

wayward heart; panting and longing after his manifested presence; crucifixion of self in all its varied shapes and forms—are not these, too, inward fruits and graces that are brought forth by abiding in Christ?

Where these inward fruits are, there will be outward fruits; inward fruits first, outward fruits next; inward fruits before God, outward fruits before man. If we abide in Christ; if we have union and communion with him; if we live unto and live upon him, and he abide in us, we cannot have these choice blessings, and be like professors buried in carnality and covetousness. There will be, there must be, marks, outward marks, whereby we shall be, we must be, distinguished from them.

But all these fruits, whether inward or outward, spring from one source—union and communion with the lowly Lamb of God. Be this never forgotten. It is not my doing *this*, or my doing *that*—I may do a thousand things, and yet all spring from base motives, because they spring from selfish motives. But if the Lord is pleased to lead me, as a poor, ruined wretch, as a guilty, needy sinner, to the footstool of mercy, and there opens up to my heart and conscience the love and blood of the Lamb, give me union to Jesus, and maintain communion with him—every grace and fruit of the Spirit will be found in me, just in the same way as the strength of the stem is made manifest by the strength of the branch, and the strength of the branch is maintained by its abiding in the stem.

You may be tried, some of you, that you bear so little fruit. You look into your own heart, and see little or no fruit there; you look to your lives, and see little or no fruit there. But perhaps you are mistaken (and we are apt to be mistaken) as to the way whereby fruit is to be brought forth. You read, you pray, you strive, you do your best; and yet you always fail; and you will fail to the end. And a blessed thing it is to fail; for all these failures are meant to bring you into a fleeing away from self-righteousness in all its shapes and forms to a cleaving to the Son of God—to have no faith, no hope, no humility, no patience in yourselves; but that

the Lord may work in us to will and to do according to his own good pleasure, and bring forth those things which are well-pleasing in his sight. And this is the only way whereby we can bring forth divine fruit. The Apostle declares expressly, that we are divorced from our first husband, the law, and married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. And there is no other way whereby fruit can be brought forth for our good, and God's glory.

THE ABIDING COMFORTER

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, November 14th, 1858

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him: for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:16, 17

What an evening was that which preceded the memorable night in which the Lord of life and glory sweat great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane; that gloomy night which ushered in a still more gloomy day on which the Son of God was nailed to the accursed tree at Calvary! Could we roll back the tide of more than eighteen hundred years, and be transported in spirit to Jerusalem, what scenes that evening would there meet our astonished eye! We should see the streets of the city crowded with multitudes, not only of its own citizens, but of sojourners also from all parts of the neighbouring countries who had come up to keep the Passover; and we should view this vast assemblage surging and heaving like the troubled sea, as expecting some mighty event to take place. Some of them would be half believing that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah; but the greater part would be filled with enmity and prejudice against Him because He had not come as they expected, in all the power and pomp of kingly majesty, to put the abhorred Roman eagles to ignominious flight! We should see Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, sitting at his feast, amid the cups of flowing wine, little dreaming of the important part that he was to play in the great event of the morrow. We should view the chief priests, Scribes and Pharisees, all assembled in secret conclave, plotting the death of the innocent Lamb of God, and amongst them we might descry a dark form flitting to and fro, one doomed by the just sentence of God to eternal perdition, and condemned by the universal concurrence of men to everlasting

infamy—the traitor Judas, holding out his itching palm for the proffered reward of blood. But turning our eyes from these, and fixing them on a solitary spot, in an upper chamber, we should see the blessed Lord sitting in the midst of His eleven faithful disciples, addressing Himself to comfort their sorrowful hearts, and speaking in their ears those gracious words which have been preserved by the Holy Ghost through the pen of John, and which we have now before us for our instruction and consolation. It is true that we cannot transport ourselves thither in spirit; that we cannot see the Lord's face, or hear the Lord's voice; but we can, with God's help, listen with holy reverence and solemn attention to the words which fell from His lips on that memorable evening. And if the Lord the Spirit be pleased to touch my lips this morning with His unction and grace, and to anoint your ear and heart with the same divine power, I may speak and you may hear words that may profit, instruct, edify and comfort your souls.

The Lord Jesus Christ, from whose omniscience nothing was concealed, saw that His disciples' hearts were filled with sorrow. He had told them that He was about to leave them, and it broke their hearts to think of His departure. His presence with them had been so full of blessing; He had so comforted them in their various distresses, had been such a shield against all their enemies, had so revealed to them His grace and truth, and had so manifested His glory, that the very thought of His departure filled their hearts with grief, for in losing Him they felt that they should lose their all. They little thought how that departure would take place, and what a scene would present itself before their eyes on the coming day; for the deep mystery of the Cross was at that time hidden from them, and they saw in it for their Master nothing but agony and shame, and for themselves the total wreck of all their hopes. Addressing Himself then to console their sorrowing hearts, Jesus lays before them this grand truth, that it was expedient for them that He should go away; for that if He went not away, they could not have the promised Comforter, who was to abide with them for ever. As this is the chief point that presents itself in the words of our text, I now proceed, with God's blessing, to open it up. And in so doing, I shall direct your

attention:—

I. First, to the *Blessed Spirit of promise*, and I shall endeavour to show why He is called "the Comforter" and "the Spirit of truth."

II. Secondly, that *the world cannot receive this Comforter*, this Spirit of truth; and the reason, "because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him."

III. Thirdly, that *the saint of God does know Him*, and that by a personal work upon his heart and conscience.

IV. And fourthly, the sweet promise, that *He dwelleth with them, and shall be in them*.

I. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks here of the gift of the Spirit as being the first fruit of His intercession at the right hand of God: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." Observe the word "give" and the almost similar expression "send." "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will *send* in My Name." I do not hold that the blessed Spirit, or any one of His gifts and graces, was purchased by the atoning blood of the Lamb—an expression we frequently meet with—but that they were the fruits of His intercession. The gift of the Holy Spirit and His divine mission were as much a part of the covenant of grace as the gift and mission of the Son of God. Regeneration and sanctification are as indispensable to the soul's entering the courts of heaven as redemption and justification; and had these been left out of the eternal covenant, redemption would have been of no avail, for "without holiness no man can see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Is not, then, the Holy Ghost, as a Person in the Godhead, as much a party to the everlasting covenant as the Father and the Son? and would it be consistent with the dignity of His Person that He, with His gifts and graces, should have been purchased by the atoning blood of the Son? The gifts and graces of God the Holy Ghost were as much a part of the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," as the electing love of God the Father and the

redeeming blood of God the Son, and therefore stand upon the same foundation. But let me not be misunderstood. The sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ were the appointed channel through which the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost were to come. But for His death they could not have been given, for in the order of things redemption must precede sanctification. Sin must be put away before mercy can be revealed; the sacrifice must be offered before its merits and benefits can be applied; but that by no means implies that the one purchased the other, or that because the one precedes and is the foundation of the other, that it should be said to have bought it. The blood-shedding and sacrifice of the Son of God opened a way whereby God, consistently with all His perfections, could bestow upon His people the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. But I do not believe that there was any bargain, so to speak, between the Father and the Son, whereby these gifts and graces were bought and purchased by atoning blood. Most certainly they are spoken of in our text as a gift; and a gift excludes purchase. I view, therefore, the gift of the Comforter, and of everything implied by that expression, as the first fruits of the intercession of Jesus. "I will pray the Father."

But if enabled to look upwards, what a glorious view these words open before our eyes, introducing us, as it were, into the very courts of heaven, there to see an interceding High Priest at the right hand of God! This intercession was beautifully prefigured by what took place on the great day of atonement under the Levitical law. On that solemn day the high priest entered the most holy place with incense beaten small, which as he went in he scattered upon live coals taken from off the brazen altar. As then he entered the most holy place with the blood of the bullock and the goat, the fragrant steam of the incense filled the sanctuary as with a cloud; the coals typifying the wrath of God, and the incense beaten small the bruised humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the incense of Christ's work upon earth, of His blood and sufferings and obedience here below, fills the courts of heaven as if with an ever-rising, ever-enduring cloud, as the prophet in vision saw "the house of the Lord filled with smoke"

(Isa. 6:4). When, then, the blessed Lord said, "I will pray the Father," we need not necessarily attach such a meaning to the words as if they implied that He uses vocal prayer. His presence in heaven is prayer. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." And this intercession was typified by the act of Aaron, when he took the censer and put fire therein from off the altar and put on incense, and thus stood between the dead and the living (Num. 16:46-48). In this sense Jesus "prays the Father," and the first fruit of His intercession is the gift of the Comforter, as was first strikingly seen on the day of Pentecost, and is from time to time realised by every saint of God who receives the Spirit and is blessed by His presence and grace.

i. But let us, with God's blessing, examine a little more closely the words that the blessed Lord spoke, and whereby He brings before our eyes more distinctly who and what this promised Comforter is. The Lord Himself when here below was the Comforter of His people. Whilst He was with them, they needed no other; but when He left them they required one to supply His place. They wanted one who could be to them what Jesus had been. How plainly we gather from this the Deity and distinct personality of the Holy Ghost! When Jesus was present with them, it was His Person that comforted and shielded them. To supply His place was not therefore a Person needed? How short of this would fall an influence, an emanation, a virtue, or any other such inferior a consolation! Any person, too, that was not Divine and equal with Jesus could not fill His place, or be to them what Jesus had been. Let us, therefore, hold fast by the Deity and personality of the Holy Spirit. Those who deny them have neither part nor lot in His teachings or consolations, in His regeneration or His sanctification.

1. But what the disciples wanted all other true disciples of Jesus equally need—a Comforter who can speak peace to their hearts, who can relieve the various troubles and sorrows through which they are called upon to pass, and that by administering an inward consolation which shall be an effectual remedy. Here lies the vast difference between the comfort that the world bestows and that

which is communicated by the Holy Spirit. The world has to a certain extent its comforts to give; in fact, we are surrounded on every side by a vast number of earthly comforts; but these can speak no peace or pardon to a troubled conscience; these can take no load of guilt off a burdened soul; these can give no sweet anticipations of eternal joy when life comes to a close; these cannot smooth a dying pillow, rob death of its sting, or spoil the grave of its victory. Here everything falls short but the consolations of the blessed Spirit.

2. But besides this the saints of God are called upon for the most part to pass through many trials and afflictions in this vale of tears. Their very character, as determined by the mouth of God, is to be "an afflicted and poor people," as much as "to trust in the name of the Lord" (Zeph. 3:12). It is "through much tribulation that they are to enter the kingdom" (Acts 14:22). And as these afflictions and tribulations are chiefly internal, they need an internal Comforter to relieve and comfort them under their weight and pressure. Many of the Lord's family are pressed down exceedingly with guilt and distress of mind on account of their sins against a holy God. Can earthly comforts relieve these distressing pangs? Can they remove this heavy burden of guilt? Can they pour oil and wine into this bleeding conscience? No; they need a deliverance, a remedy, a consolation that can reach their case; and as this is beyond all human help, none but the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, can whisper it into their souls. Spiritual maladies lie too deep for any other remedy. The same hand which shot the arrow can alone extract it. A woe is pronounced against those who "heal the hurt of God's people slightly" (Jer. 6:14). Only He, then, who brings health and cure can reveal to the soul "the abundance of peace and truth" (Jer. 33:6).

3. But besides the affliction of a troubled mind and a guilty conscience that every saint of God is called upon to pass through at one time or other of his earthly pilgrimage, which above all other troubles makes a Comforter so needful, and when He comes so valued, there are few of the living family who have not

many trials and sorrows spread in their path. Circumstances arise in Providence as connected with their daily business or occupation which often deeply and acutely try their mind. Nor is it always with them as regards their families as they would have it to be. They may have, with David, to lament that their "house is not so with God," that is so favoured and blessed as he himself was (2 Sam. 23:5). They would fain see their children walking in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life, but rarely find a favour so great. As David had to mourn over the vile lust of Amnon and the rebellion of Absalom, so some of the saints of God have even to mourn over profligate or rebellious children, whom no discipline can control or kindness alter. Under these trials they need special support to reconcile their minds in submission to God's sovereignty. As Aaron held his peace when he saw his two sons consumed by fire from heaven at the very altar (Lev. 10:1, 2); as David had a blessed persuasion that the Lord had made with him an everlasting covenant, though his house was not with God as he could wish; so many of the most highly favoured saints have had to put their mouth into the dust before God in solemn silence, and to submit to His holy will. But can they do this without special grace? Do not they almost above all others need the Comforter to support them under such heartrending trials? Who else can silence the murmurs of their rebellious heart, and bend and bow it into submission to these heavy strokes?

4. Many, too, of the choicest of God's people have to drink the bitter cup of poverty, to labour hard for the bread that perisheth. But that bread is scanty, and their minds are often filled with anxiety as to the coming morrow, whence a fresh supply is to come. These also need an inward Comforter to stay their murmurings and fretfulness, and to set before their eyes how their Master "had not where to lay His head"; how He was "a Man of sorrows," and passed through this world as a poor, despised carpenter's son. Poverty is one of the greatest of earthly trials, and has a peculiar tendency to stir up unbelief, as well as fretfulness and envy against those who seem to be more favourably dealt with. But the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, can

subdue every murmuring thought, and can so bless the soul with inward consolation, that poverty and want lose their keen edge, and a crust with the Lord's blessing may become sweeter food than all the delicacies under which the tables of the wealthy groan.

5. Many, too, of the Lord's people are suffering under bodily disease. Their body is racked with pain, or their constitution is shattered with ailments of long standing, or their nerves are weak and trembling, or their general health broken by multiplied afflictions. This often causes inward murmuring, fretfulness, and rebellion, for few trials are heavier than continued ill health. Hence the need of a Comforter to support them under the pain and languor of an afflicted tabernacle; and whilst they are thus reminded that their time is but short and that life itself is held by a slender thread, so to manifest the power of His grace that as "the outward man perisheth, so the inward man may be renewed day by day."

6. But time will not suffice to enumerate a tenth of the numerous trials and afflictions that the Lord's people have to pass through. They have temptations also which in some respects are harder to bear and need more special help. Their own treacherous, unstable, and wicked heart is continually presenting snares in which their unwary feet are too readily caught, and they have to prove again and again, to their sorrow and shame, the truth of the word:

"Seldom do we see the snares
Before we feel the smart."

Satan, too, is continually tempting them to despair, or infidelity, it may be, even to suicide, and distressing their mind with many suggestions which, though groundless, appear at the time to have some solid foundation. Under these temptations they need that special relief and consolation which nothing short of the Spirit of God can communicate. For when sorely pressed down by the weight of temptation, they deeply feel that His inward

comforts alone can relieve their distress or speak a solid peace to their souls.

ii. But the Lord speaks of this blessed Comforter under another title: He calls Him the "Spirit of truth." We are surrounded with error, the carnal heart is full of it; for wherever truth is not, there error must be. A veil of ignorance is by nature spread thickly over the mind, through which not one ray of divine light penetrates. Men love error—I mean religious error—for God's own testimony is that they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19). They love to be deceived; they hate the hand which would rend the delusion asunder. Whilst then they are encompassed with the mists of error, how can they find the way to truth? The Lord the Spirit alone can dissipate these clouds, disperse these mists, and take away this veil of unbelief and ignorance spread over the heart; and this it is His sacred office to perform, for He is the "Spirit of truth."

1. But why we may ask, does He bear from the Lord's own lips this sacred title: "the Spirit of truth"? Because it is His prerogative to unfold truth to the soul, to engraft it into the heart, and to make the saints of God vitally and experimentally acquainted with it. I say vitally and experimentally, because we may know truth in the letter without the teaching of the Spirit. We may have a sound creed, a form of words perfectly consistent with the outward revelation of truth in the Scriptures; but this will neither sanctify nor save. Truth in the bare letter brings no deliverance from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin; brings not the soul near unto God, repels not Satan, sets not up the kingdom of God with power in the heart. We need a better teaching than this. We need "the Spirit of truth," whose especial office is to take the truth of God, and to open up, reveal, make known, apply, and seal it with His own gracious operation, divine influence, and holy power upon the heart and conscience. Do not you who fear His great name find at times darkness pervading your souls—an Egyptian darkness, a darkness that may be felt—so that there seems not a ray of divine light in your breast? Whence comes this dreary feeling, this sinking down of your

whole soul under the power of darkness, as the earth sinks under the power of the shades of night? Because the Spirit of truth has come into your heart to convince you of the darkness in which you were born, and to show you that it still hovers as deeply as ever over your carnal mind. Remember this, that as the carnal mind is ever "enmity against God," darkness wholly possesses it; for as love is light, enmity is darkness, and the light of life has no more penetrated the carnal mind than the love of God. It is light in your spiritual mind that makes you see this darkness; it is the teaching of God's Spirit in your soul that makes you groan and sigh beneath it. Now as you mourn and sigh under this darkness you feel the indispensable necessity of the Spirit of truth to open up, apply, reveal, and make known the truth of God to your soul, for you can no more give yourself light than give yourself faith or love. But, through rich and unspeakable mercy, there are times and seasons when a spiritual light seems to shine upon the sacred page. You read the Bible with enlightened eyes. Power and sweetness seem to stream, as it were, in rich unction through the Word of truth, and as you read it with softened heart and tearful eyes, the truth of God shines from it into your understanding as brightly and as clearly as the sun in the noonday sky. You wonder how anyone can doubt or deny the truth of God; it is so clear to you that you think he who runs may read. And why? Because the Spirit of truth is opening it up to your understanding and applying it with power to your heart. You wonder how any man who reads the Bible can deny the Deity of Christ, His eternal Sonship, the atoning blood, the justifying righteousness, the dying love of the Lord the Lamb. You wonder how any man can read the Bible and deny the covenant of grace, the electing love of God, the full salvation wrought out by His dear Son, and the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost. Why is the matter so clear to you? Because the Spirit of truth is illuminating your mind, radiating light from the Scriptures into your soul, and opening up the truth of God with divine power to your heart. This He does as the Spirit of truth, for as the Spirit of truth He makes the Word of God to be spirit and life to the soul.

2. But not only at times do you see the truth of God plainly and

clearly, but you believe as well as see. There is a divine movement in your soul, whereby your heart is brought under the holy influence and sacred impression of God's truth. As the wax to the seal, as the clay to the potter's hand, so your heart is softened and melted within you, and you receive God's truth stamped upon your heart with a heavenly hand. Does not this show that the Spirit of truth is not only enlightening your understanding, but quickening your conscience, renewing your heart, and spreading a divine influence through your soul? Truth by itself can only stand at the portal, or look in at the window; it cannot come within to regenerate or renew; but the Spirit of truth enters with truth in His mouth, and breathes it into the heart as a living breath, as the prophet saw in "the valley of vision," for till "the breath" came into the slain they did not live (Ezek. 37:10).

3. Under this sacred and spiritual influence there are times and seasons when your conscience seems in an especial manner wrought upon. The evil of sin is set before you as perhaps you have never seen it before. Your conscience bleeds with the guilt and weight of it. You see what an awful and an evil thing sin is, how loathsome, how detestable! You could almost weep tears of blood that you have been such a sinner. Your backslidings rise up to view as so many mountains of iniquity. The wickedness of your heart is laid bare, and you feel that there cannot be such another wretch on earth. Your corrupt nature is opened up in its filth and gore; you wonder how the long suffering of God could have borne with you so many years in the wilderness. And not only so, but tears flow down your cheek; sobs of contrition heave from your breast; you could almost weep your life away, because you have sinned so deeply against such love and against such blood. Why is this? The Spirit of truth is breathing upon your conscience, and the feeling of sin there is His work.

4. Then, again, there are times and seasons when your heart seems in a special manner lifted up to heavenly things. It is as if a live coal from off the altar touched your inmost affections. You see Jesus by the eye of faith at the right hand of the Father; your heart goes out after Him in love and affection; you feel that, be

you what you may, you do love Him with every faculty of your soul, and your desire is to live to His praise, and die in the sweet enjoyment of His love shed abroad in your heart. And yet you feel that you never can upon earth love Him as He is to be loved. You must have an immortal tongue to sing His praise, and a glorified soul to hold all that His love can bestow. Why is this? Because the Spirit of truth is love in your affections.

In this way, then, we have the Spirit of truth as light in the understanding, life in the heart, feeling in the conscience, and love in the affections; and by these four things He is made vitally and experimentally known to the saints of God as the Spirit of truth. Can the letter of truth, however clear or sound, do all this? Can a sound creed or a mere form of words effect a work in the least degree approaching to it? I feel sure they cannot, for words as words cannot reach beyond the surface; they cannot sink or penetrate into the very core of the heart's deepest feeling. It is therefore indispensably necessary that the Spirit of truth should put, as it were, a soul into the body of truth, or to speak more correctly, should Himself regenerate, renew and sanctify the saint of God that he may have a living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory; for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," and he becomes this when he is baptised by the Holy Ghost into that spiritual baptism which makes him a living member of the body of Christ.

II. But I pass on to show how the world thinks, speaks and acts with respect to this promised "Comforter," this "Spirit of truth." The Lord says, "Whom the world cannot receive." Aye, it stands as good now as it stood good then. The world cannot now receive the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, one whit more than it could receive Him then. And why cannot the world receive Him? It is too full of sin and self. If you have a pitcher filled with dirty water, is there room in it for clean water? If a vessel be filled with clay up to the very brim, is there room in it for gold and silver and precious stones? The world is full—full of pride, ignorance, prejudice, self-righteousness, unbelief and selfishness. Then what room is there for the Comforter, the Spirit of truth? "My Word,"

said the Lord to the Pharisees, "hath no place in you." They could not receive it, for their hearts were barred against it.

1. But the Lord Himself gives two reasons why the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth. The first is, "It seeth Him not;" the second is, "It knoweth Him not." The world—that is, the world dead in sin, and the world dead in profession, men generally destitute of the life and power of God—must have something that it can see. It cannot receive that which it sees not. Nature, sense, reason can never go beyond earthly things; thus, whilst men have no divine faith, they are under the entire influence of their natural minds; and, as heavenly things can only be seen by heavenly eyes, they cannot receive the things which are invisible. Things must be either presented to their natural eye, or be such as their rational understanding can grasp, or they cannot and will not receive them. Now this explains why a religion that presents itself with a degree of beauty and grandeur to the natural eye will always be received by the world, whilst a spiritual, internal, heartfelt and experimental religion will always be rejected. The world can receive a religion that consists of forms, rites, and ceremonies. These are things seen. Beautiful buildings, painted windows, pealing organs, melodious choirs, the pomp and parade of an earthly priesthood, and a whole apparatus of religious ceremony, carry with them something that the natural eye can see and admire. The world receives all this external worship because suitable to the natural mind and intelligible to the reasoning faculties. But the quiet, inward, experimental, divine religion, which presents no attractions to the outward eye, but is wrought in the heart by a divine operation, the world cannot receive this, because it presents nothing that the natural eye can rest upon with pleasure, or is adapted to gratify the general idea of what religion is or should be.

2. "Neither knoweth Him." The world knows nothing of divine consolation, because it knows nothing of spiritual grief and sorrow. Hardened in sin, careless in self-righteousness, or steeped up to the lips in an empty profession, what do men care to know about an inward Comforter? Their religion, such as it is,

has never cost them an hour's uneasiness or brought their heart down with trouble and distress. If, according to Paul's rule, "as the sufferings of Christ abound, so consolation aboundeth also by Christ" (2 Cor. 1:5), where there is no suffering, there can be no consolation. Not knowing, then, for themselves anything of the inward consolations of the Spirit, they cannot believe there is such a thing known to the saint of God. "Fanaticism, enthusiasm, stuff, madness, ridiculous nonsense, bigotry, a bad spirit," any term that can be used, any which comes the easiest to hand, will be launched with many an angry invective against that religion which mainly consists in the love and power of the Holy Ghost. And why? For this reason, because they do not themselves know the consolations bestowed upon the saints of God, nor are they acquainted with the work and witness of the Spirit of truth in their own heart and conscience. Marvel not, then, that worldly professors despise a religion wrought in the soul by the power of God. Be not surprised if even your own relatives think you almost insane when you speak of the consolations of the Spirit or of the teachings of God in your soul. They cannot receive these things, for they have no experience of them, and being such as are altogether opposed to the carnal mind, they reject them with enmity and scorn. It is surprising that men with the Bible in their hands, and read as it is so much in public and private, should set themselves so desperately against what is so plainly declared therein. Our Lord's own words, if they were not His, would be called by thousands "fanaticism" and "enthusiasm"; for the moment that they are opened up and brought forward as present realities, they arouse a very storm of indignation. Men can read them or bear to hear them read as long as they are merely in the Bible. The sword in the sheath is not dreaded, for it inflicts no wounds; but the naked sword cuts too deeply not to arouse enmity against its keen strokes. It was so when the Lord spake the words; it is so now when His words in the mouth of His servants have point and edge.

But if the Lord has given to any of you eyes to see and hearts to receive this divine Comforter, praise, bless, and adore your God and Father, and most merciful Benefactor, for His distinguishing

grace in giving you to know Him as your Comforter; and if He has ever dropped into your soul any of His sweet teachings, bless Him that you have received Him also as the Spirit of truth into your conscience. What but sovereign grace—rich, free and superabounding—has made the difference between you and them? But for His divine operations upon your soul, you would still be of the world, hardening your heart against everything good and godlike, walking on in the pride and ignorance of unbelief and self-righteousness, until you sank down into the chambers of death. O, it is a mercy if but one drop of heavenly consolation has ever been distilled into your soul; if ever you have felt or found any relief in your sorrows and distresses from the work and witness of the Holy Ghost; if you have ever gathered any solid comfort from any promise applied with power, from any text dropped into your heart with a sealing testimony, from any manifestation of the love and blood of Christ, or from any communication of liberty, joy, or peace, such as are produced by the operation and influence of the Spirit of God. It may have been but little, nor did it last long, but it has given you a taste of its blessedness, and made you long for another sip, another crumb, another visit. But look to it well, and examine carefully whether it be real, and whether, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, you have good ground for believing that what you received with such comfort to your soul was distilled into your heart by the Comforter, and that the truth which you have felt and believed, as well as professed, has been opened up to your conscience by the Spirit of truth. And this leads me to our third point, which is:

III. The difference that the Lord draws between His disciples, and by implication all the saints of God, and the world—*"But ye know Him."* The disciples of the Lord Jesus were very weak and ignorant. They closed their ears to the very last to the Lord's declarations as to His dying the death of the cross. And even when He died before their very eyes, they were as slow to believe in His promised resurrection. Considering the opportunities which they had of daily intercourse with Him and of instruction from His lips, we are tempted to wonder at their unbelief; and yet, with all

their weakness and ignorance, they knew something vitally and experimentally of the Spirit's work upon their hearts. It may be so with some of you. You may be very weak, very doubting, very fearing, very unbelieving. The natural, deep-seated unbelief of your heart may at times seem to have great power over you, and you may often have reason to say, "I would believe, but cannot." Still you may know, as the disciples knew, something, if not much, of the work of the Comforter, and something, if not much, of the teaching of the Spirit of truth. The Lord assured His disciples that there was a wide and fundamental difference between them and the world. "But ye know Him." May I say the same to you: "Ye know Him"? But if so, may I not further ask: What has that Comforter done for you as a Comforter? What has that Spirit of truth revealed and made manifest to you as the Spirit of truth? Let us examine for a few moments how He is made known to the family of God, and what He does by His power and grace in their heart and conscience.

1. First, He convinces of sin; that is His special office. He, opens up the law, discovers the curse attached to it, makes the soul feel its spirituality, its breadth, and length, and condemning authority. Do you know this Spirit as a Spirit of conviction in having convinced you of sin? Has He ever laid guilt upon your conscience by opening up the law, and condemning you as a transgressor against it, so that you have put your mouth in the dust and confessed you were guilty before God? If you have felt conviction of sin by the Holy Ghost, you know Him; if not as a Comforter, yet as preparing the way for comfort. You know Him in His killing, if not in His reviving; in His bringing down, if not in His raising up; in His discovering sin, if not in revealing salvation.

2. But He is known also as a Spirit of grace and of supplications. When the Lord is pleased to awaken the soul by His Spirit and grace, He gives Him as an internal intercessor to, intercede "with groanings that cannot be uttered." Was that ever given to you, so that upon your bended knees you besought the Lord with that earnestness, that sincerity, that pouring out of the heart before Him, with all that simplicity and brokenness, with those tears and

sighs, which mark and manifest His internal intercession, and distinguish it from mere formal prayer? If so, you have received Him as a Spirit of grace and of supplications; you "know Him."

3. But has He ever dropped an encouraging word into your heart? As you have sat to hear me or any other minister opening up the work of grace upon the soul, exalting the Lord the Lamb, speaking of His blood and righteousness, tracing out the sacred work of God upon the conscience, have you felt an internal testimony that these things you know for yourself in the depths of your own heart? Then you know Him, for it is He who has given you this encouraging testimony; it is He who blessed the Word with a witnessing power to your conscience.

4. Or have you ever had a revelation of Christ to your soul? Did you ever see Him by the eye of faith at the right hand of God? This can only be by the testimony of the Spirit, for it is His covenant office to take of the things of Christ and to reveal them to the soul. He glorifies Christ by manifesting Him. If you have seen Christ by the eye of faith, if you have had a manifestation of the Son of God and a revelation of Him with power to your soul, "you know Him," because it is He who gave you that most blessed manifestation, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man.

5. Has Jesus ever been made precious to your heart? Did you ever hold Him, as it were, in the arms of faith, as a mother clasps her babe to her bosom, and love Him with a pure heart fervently? Who kindled that love? Who touched your heart with that sacred flame? The Comforter, the Spirit of truth. Then you know Him; for "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost."

6. Have you ever experienced any of that spirituality of mind which is life and peace, any lifting up of your affections to things above, where Jesus sits at God's right hand, so that you felt that earth was no place for you; the things of time and sense you could tread under your feet; and your heart was so taken up with the blessed things of eternity, that they became the very element

in which your soul could bathe, the only happiness you knew below? Then "you know Him," because it was He, and He alone, who lifted up your heart and affections to these heavenly things.

7. Do you love the saints of God? Can you say, with all your darkness, and doubt, and fear, that you do love the image of Christ which you see in His people? that taking away all other evidences, this seems still to you so plain that you cannot deny it, and Satan cannot beat you out of it, that you do love those who love Jesus? Whence comes this love? From the Spirit of truth and love, who alone can enable us to love the saints as we love the Saviour, to love the members as we love the Head. Then "you know Him."

8. Has any deliverance ever come to you from the power of temptation? Have you had any manifestation of the sufferings of the Lord of life and glory; any solemn, heart-melting views of the garden of Gethsemane; any standing at the cross of Calvary; any view by the eye of faith of the blood that fell from the Redeemer's sacred brow as surcharged with sorrow in the garden, or crowned with thorns upon the cross; any sympathy, any union, any fellow-feeling with the Man of Sorrows? Whence came this? By the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter. Then "you know Him."

9. Has your heart ever felt true repentance for sin, any godly sorrow, any forsaking of your bosom lusts, any breaking to pieces of your fondest idols, any loosening of earthly ties, any willingness to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts? The Spirit of truth alone can accomplish this. Then "you know Him."

10. Has the fear of death ever been removed? Did you ever look that gaunt king of terrors in the face? Did you ever look beyond the narrow isthmus of time and the dark and dreary river which flows between you and eternity, and believe that when death came it would be a messenger from the Lord to take your soul into His bosom? Has the Lord ever been made so dear, near, and precious that you have felt as if you could gladly drop the body and mount on eagle's wings from earth to heaven? Then "you

know Him "; for who but He could deliver you from the fear of death, and make you, instead of shrinking from him with terror, even welcome the last enemy as your best friend? To have felt this, is it not to have known the Spirit as the Comforter?

And oh what a blessing it is also to have received the same gracious and heavenly Teacher as the Spirit of truth! If this be your happy case, you know the truth for yourself, and the truth is dear to your soul; it has been ingrafted by a divine witness in your heart, and inlaid by the power of God in your conscience. The truth as it is in Jesus is very, very precious to you. You cannot part with it; it is your very life. Sooner than part with God's truth and your interest therein, you would be willing in favoured moments to lay down your life itself. But what makes you love God's truth? What has given you a heart to embrace and delight in it; and when you have come to the house of prayer, it may be with a fainting body and a troubled mind, has yet supported your weary steps and brought you in; or when you have gone home from hearing the Word, has cheered your heart in the dark and gloomy night as you have lain upon your bed, and drawn your affections up to the Lord Jesus Christ? The Comforter, the Spirit of truth. He, and He alone, could give it so firm and enduring a place in your heart, conscience, and affections.

Then live that truth, as well as love it, and proclaim its power and efficacy in your life and conversation. If the Spirit has written His truth upon your heart, He will bring forth that truth in your lips and in your life. He will make it manifest that you are "children that cannot lie." You will show forth the power of truth, in the sincerity of your speech, in the uprightness of your movements, in your family, in the church, in your business, in your general character and deportment, and in everything which stamps the reality of religion and the power of vital godliness.

IV. I now pass on to our last point, which is the *reason why His people know Him*, and *the promise* the Lord gives: "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

That holy Comforter and most gracious Spirit does not take up a temporary abode in the heart of the Lord's people. Where He once takes up His dwelling, there He for ever dwells and lives. "He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." Oh the blessing! Where once that holy Dove has lighted, there that Dove abides. He does not visit the soul with His grace, and then leave it to perish under the wrath of God, or allow His work to wither, droop and die. But where He has once come into the soul with power, there He fixes His continual habitation, for He makes the bodies of the saints His temple. He consecrates them to the service of God. He takes up His dwelling in their heart; there He lives, there He moves, there He works, and sanctifies body and soul to the honour and glory of the Lord God Almighty.

But I think I can almost hear you say, "I believe it to be true; but how can He be in my heart when I am often so cold and lifeless; when I seem to be at times so exposed to the working of every sin, and subject to every vanity and temptation? How can this Comforter, the Spirit of truth, dwell with me, and I be what I am?" He may still be in you, and you may not be able, at all times and under all circumstances, to recognise His presence. He dwells in your heart, and yet sometimes He dwells out of sight and almost out of life. Forget not that you have a carnal mind, which is "enmity against God." Remember that "the flesh still lusts against the Spirit as well as the Spirit against the flesh, and that these two are contrary the one to the other." Believe the Lord's Word, which cannot lie, and not the reasonings and workings of your own unbelieving heart. Take this, then, as a most certain truth, that He for ever abides with that soul which He has once visited. For oh, what would be the consequences of His deserting it? Satan would enter in to fill it with his horrid blasphemies and wickedness, and the last state of that man would be worse than the first. No; the indwelling of the Spirit is needful to keep out the incoming of Satan; the indwelling of life to keep out death; the indwelling of holiness to keep out sin; the indwelling of the work and witness of the Holy Ghost to keep back the waves that would deluge the soul and the billows that would

sweep it into a never-ending hell. Therefore, blessed be the word that the Lord has spoken: "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Yes, He shall be in you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. If He has begun His work, He will carry it on and bring it to completion. If He has once blessed you, He will bless you again. He will never leave the soul to which He has ever made known the glory of God, but He will bring you, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to those glorious and blissful mansions "where tears are wiped from off all faces," and where you will see the Son of God as He is, be conformed to His image, and enjoy His ravishing presence to all eternity.

The Abounding of Love in Knowledge and Experience

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Oct. 11, 1863

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."
Philippians 1:9, 10, 11

Have you ever, in reading the Epistles of the New Testament, observed what a spirit of prayer dwelt in the breast of Paul for the various churches and individuals to whom he addressed his weighty and powerful letters? And have you also remarked that not only was it his practice to pour out his heart in continual prayer and supplication for those churches which he had himself planted, such as those of Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Thessalonica, and for those individuals, as Timothy and Philemon, to whom he was personally attached, and who might be considered his sons in the faith; but even those churches, such as that at Rome and at Colosse, which had never seen his face in the flesh, had as warm an interest in his Christian affection and as large a share in his petitions to God on their spiritual behalf? What an example for us! and it may be what a rebuke, when we compare our poor narrow heart with the large heart of this man of God, and our feeble and scanty petitions for the saints of the Most High with the flow of prayer and supplication that was ever gushing out of his breast.

But not only is there something very remarkable in the fact of Paul's earnestness before the throne for the spiritual edification of the churches of Christ, but the subject matter of his petitions is as noteworthy as his prayerful spirit itself. Have you ever examined with any degree of attention the prayers which the apostle put up for some of the churches, and which he was not

only inspired to offer on their behalf, but to put upon permanent record for our benefit and instruction? And have you ever compared your petitions for your own soul's growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with the prayers which this man of God was led by the Holy Ghost to put up for the saints to whom he wrote? But to put this point to a closer test, I will give you three prayers of the apostle, which you may at your leisure look over, on which you may meditate, and which you may compare with the petitions and desires which from time to time, in favoured moments, rise up in your own bosom. These three prayers shall be, first, the prayer recorded at the close of the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 1:15-23); the second shall be the prayer contained toward the end of the 3rd chapter of the same Epistle (Eph. 3:14-19); and the third shall be the prayer we find put up by the apostle in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians (Col. 1:9-12). My time will not admit of even touching on, far more of entering into, the subject matter of those prayers this morning. I wish I could do so, as they are full to overflowing of the richest, choicest spiritual matter; but you may consider them prayerfully and attentively at home, and thus seek to understand, feel, and realise what the mind of the Spirit is in them, and so be led to copy them, not in a cold, dry, formal manner, but from the communication of divine light and life through them to your soul.

In the words before us we have another prayer of this man of God, but which I shall not pass by as I have passed by the others; for it is my desire and intention this morning to lay its rich contents open before you, according to the ability which the Lord may give me.

You will bear in mind that the apostle is writing to the church at Philippi, which you will recollect was a large and important city in Macedonia, in the North of Greece, where Paul and Silas were thrust into the inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks, and where there was that signal conversion of the jailer. (Acts 16:12-40.)

We come, then, now to his prayer for these Philippian saints, in which, if I mistake not, you will find four distinct petitions; and yet, though distinct, a blessed thread running through the whole, connecting them together as with a ray of divine light, and thus reflecting the grace and glory of God upon them severally and collectively. These four petitions are

I.—*First*, that their "love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment."

II.—*Secondly*, that they "might approve things that are excellent," or, as we read in the margin, "try things that differ."

III.—*Thirdly*, that they "might be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

IV.—*Fourthly*, that they "might be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God."

I.—You will observe, first the *persons* to whom the epistle is written. This is of great importance, and for that reason I call your attention to it. If you will refer to the first verse of this chapter you will find that it is written to "all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." You see, therefore, that this epistle, like all the other epistles in the New Testament, was written to believers in Christ; that it was not addressed to the world at large, to the masses of the human race, to unbelieving Jew or unbelieving Gentile, but was specially addressed to saints and servants of the living God. Now though this church at Philippi has passed away, the Church of Christ has not passed away. There are still saints in Christ Jesus, and still Christian churches with their pastors and deacons. As, then, this epistle is a part of the inspired Scriptures, it still speaks to Christian churches, to believers in Christ Jesus, to the saints and servants of God. No truth can be more simple or more obvious than this; but how grossly has it been overlooked or perverted by applying to the world at large the doctrines and declarations, the

promises and precepts which are the peculiar inheritance of the believing church of God. When, then, we read this epistle from this point of view, and see how all the promises and all the precepts, all the instruction, reproof, or admonition contained in it belong exclusively to the church of Christ, then we at once perceive how every word falls into its place. To read the epistles otherwise is something like looking through the wrong end of a telescope; one seeing one's face in water with a ripple over the surface; or taking a view of our features in a broken mirror, or one which represents them upside down. In a similar way, if we read the Epistles as if they were written to all the world, all is distorted; we fall into the grossest mistakes, and completely misunderstand the meaning of the Spirit.

But now observe the important conclusion which arises from this simple and undeniable truth—that it necessarily follows that the apostle, in the prayer in our text, assumes that those to whom he wrote were partakers of the grace of God, and as such of that eminent grace, love. He does not pray that they might be put into possession of this heavenly gift and grace, as if they were destitute of it. On the contrary, he assumes that they were already in possession of it; for what would a saint in Christ Jesus be without love? A monster indeed. We hear sometimes of monsters in nature; of a lamb born with two heads, or six legs, or two hearts. So a Christian, a real Christian, without any love to Jesus Christ, or any love to the people of God, would be a monster in the Church of God. Grace has many painful, many lingering births; but the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, never brought forth a monster from her teeming womb. Does not the apostle say, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal"—things without life giving sound"? (1 Cor. 13:1), and therefore without love. And does he not add, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing"? (1 Cor. 13:2.) And if "nothing," I am no Christian—a cipher, a nonentity in the kingdom of God. If, then, there be no

love, there is no heavenly birth; but where love is, there is regeneration and the evidence of it, according to John's testimony: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.) A Christian, then, if such a person could exist, who had neither love to the Lord Jesus nor love to his brother would be a monster indeed—such an one as has never yet had birth or being in the kingdom of God.

But in the case of the Philippian saints, he not merely assumed that they were possessed of the Christian grace of love, but was assured of it from their "fellowship with him in the gospel," that is, their participation of the life and power, blessings and benefits of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the love that they manifested towards him. Being thus assured, then, that they were possessed of the Christian grace of love—love to the Lord and love to his people, for both are included here, he prays for them that this love of theirs might abound. He could not bear the thought that it should be diminished, that its strength and volume should be impaired, and that it should dwindle from a flowing brook into a slender rill, as we sometimes see in summer after a long course of drought; still less, that it should "vanish away and be consumed out of its place," like "the stream of brooks" that so disappointed "the troops of Tema and the companies of Sheba." (Job 6:15, 20.) Nor did he wish that it should continue even at the same level, but that it should increase yet more and more, and flow on in an increasingly bountiful and blessed course.

But he prays, and this is the point to which I shall chiefly draw your attention, that this love "might abound yet more and more in *knowledge* and in all *judgment*;" as if this love were like a river which ever wants feeding with fresh supplies of pure fresh water, to keep it ever running. A river, you know, however wide or deep, would soon run itself out unless it were continually fed. So the love in a Christian's breast toward the Lord Jesus Christ and his people would soon run out, and leave nothing behind but ooze and mud unless fresh supplies of grace were continually pouring into it.

But the apostle expressly mentions what I may, perhaps, without impropriety, call two main *feeders* of this Christian love, for as a river cannot be sustained without feeding streams, so love in the soul of a believer needs to be continually fed.

i. One of these feeders of Christian love named in our text is "*knowledge*": "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge." I shall therefore endeavour, as the Lord may enable, to show you how "knowledge" feeds love. But before I do so, in order to avoid all mistakes on my part and all misapprehensions of my meaning in yours, I must, at the very outset, draw a very important distinction between what is commonly called head knowledge and that spiritual, heavenly knowledge of which our text speaks. There is a knowledge of the things of God which a man may possess without a personal experience of the new birth; in fact, without any divine operation upon his soul whatever, or any participation of the grace of God. From reading the scriptures and hearing the preached Gospel, many attain to an intellectual knowledge of the truth who, as to any experimental, vital, saving acquaintance with it, are still in the very gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. A man may have the knowledge of an apostle and the worldliness of a Demas; be clear in head, and rotten in heart; may talk like an angel, and live like a devil; understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and be nothing but a hypocrite and an impostor. (1 Cor. 13:2.) In our day such characters abound in the churches. But distinct from this head knowledge, as distinct from it as heaven from hell, there is a most blessed spiritual knowledge of the things of God, with which the saints of God are favoured; and it is of this knowledge that the apostle speaks when he prays that their love might abound in knowledge; for you will find that the love of a Christian always abounds in proportion to his spiritual and experimental knowledge of the precious things which accompany salvation.

But observe further, that eternal life itself is intimately connected with the knowledge for which I am contending, and the nature of which I am endeavouring to explain. Did not our blessed Lord himself declare, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee

the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent?" (John 17:3.) Thus we see that eternal life itself is wrapped up in a spiritual knowledge of God and of his dear Son. And what is one of the leading promises of the new covenant, but that "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:11.) It would, then, be a sad mistake, just because a few poor deluded creatures are puffed up with a little head knowledge, for us to overlook or despise that gracious knowledge of the Lord himself which is life eternal. Blessed Lord, may it be our increasing desire to know thee more and more by thine own gracious manifestations to our soul! Wasn't this Paul's longing? "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. 3:10.)

But again, if we look at the subject a little more closely, we shall see how every grace of the Spirit is fed by knowledge. Look, for instance, at *faith*. Is it not, as Hart says?

"Faith is by knowledge fed,
And with obedience mixed."

If we have no knowledge of the Lord, how can we believe in him unto life eternal? Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1.) But how can I hope in things of which I know nothing, or have an evidence of the unseen realities of eternity if I am completely ignorant of them? This was not the faith of Abel who offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, for he knew a more acceptable way; nor of Enoch, who walked with God; nor of any of the ancient worthies who "saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." Does not Paul say, "I know whom I have believed?" (2 Tim. 1:12.) If, then, I know not the things that faith brings into my heart, how can I be said really and truly to believe in them?

So with *hope*. A good hope through grace is fed by knowledge, for as faith regards the present, so hope regards the future. Abraham believed God's promise, and against hope believed in

hope of its fulfilment. (Rom. 4:18.) But his hope as well as his faith was founded in his knowledge of God's faithfulness. So how can I hope in that which I know not? If I know not Christ, how can I hope in him? If I know not his grace, how hope in it? If I know not his love, how take anchor in it? for if my anchor is entered into that within the veil, I must know something of him who ever sitteth there.

But *love* is especially the effect of knowledge; for our love, according to our text, is to abound yet more and more in knowledge. Love, we know, is a fruit of the blessed Spirit. As then the Lord the Spirit is pleased to open up the precious truth of God to the soul, love embraces what the Holy Ghost reveals. Thus there is a knowledge of the only true God by the teaching of the Spirit. By this teaching he reveals himself to the soul; sheds abroad his love in the heart; brings his mercy near; discovers his grace; unfolds his faithfulness; shines forth gloriously in the Person and work of his dear Son, and thus makes himself effectually and experimentally known "from the least to the greatest" of them. (Jer. 31:31.) And the more we know him, the more we shall love him, for he himself is love, and to love him is but a reflection of his own image.

So with respect to our *blessed Lord*. The more we know him the more we shall love him. The more we know of his glorious Person as Immanuel, God with us, the more we shall love him as a suitable and all-sufficient Mediator; the more we know of his atoning blood as revealed to, and sprinkled upon a guilty conscience, the more we shall love him as having shed that precious blood to redeem us from the lowest hell; the more we know of his righteousness, the more we shall see how adapted it is to our needy, naked condition, and the more we shall love him for having suffered in our place and stead; the more we know of his dying love, the more we shall love him for the display of that love. Does not the apostle pray that we "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?" (Eph. 3:18, 19)

But I may add that the more we know also of *ourselves*, of our desperate case, of our ruined condition, of our miserable state as poor lost sinners; the more we know of the evils of our heart and what we deserve as having broken God's holy law, and as having so continually backslidden from him; and the more we see his forbearance and long-suffering, his loving-kindness and tender pity to us, in spite of all our base deserts and shameful requitals, the more we shall see in him to love. The more, too, we know of his grace, the more we shall value it; and the more we know of his glory, the more we shall fall in love with it. Thus as these precious things are opened up more and more clearly to our spiritual understanding, and sealed more powerfully by a divine witness upon our heart, the more warmly are they embraced in love, and the more is the soul conformed to the divine image; for "the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10); and "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) To behold this glory is the very blessedness of the gospel, and the choicest treasure which God can bestow: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.)

And as we love the Lord we shall love *his people*; for "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." (1 John 5:1.) Let us not, then, deceive ourselves. Where there is love to Jesus, there will be love to those who are his by redemption, his by regeneration, and his by personal possession. The more, too, that we see and the more that we know of the beauty and blessedness of the Lord of life and glory, the more we shall love his image as we behold it visibly marked in his dear people, and the more we shall cleave to them as being Christ's with tender affection. It is our dim, scanty, and imperfect knowledge of God the Father in his eternal love, and of the Lord Jesus Christ in his grace and glory, which leaves us so often cold, lifeless, and dead in our affections towards him; and with the declension of love towards the Head comes on decay of love

towards his members. If there were more blessed revelations to our soul of the Person and work, grace and glory, beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is impossible but that we should more and more warmly and tenderly fall in love with him; for he is the most glorious Object that the eyes of faith can see. He fills heaven with the resplendent beams of his glorious Majesty; and has ravished the hearts of thousands of his dear family upon earth by the manifestations of his bleeding, dying love. So that if we love him not, it is because we know him not. If, then, to those who know him he makes himself precious, it is evident that just in proportion to our personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of him will be our love to him.

ii. But the apostle tells us of another feeder, if I may use the expression, of this divine love; and that is "*judgment*," or, as the word properly means, "*feeling*." I shall adopt, therefore, the marginal reading, as giving not only the more literal but a more scriptural and experimental meaning than that in the text. It is there rendered "*sense*," that is, perception or feeling, or, to use a more comprehensive word, "*experience*." Thus our love is to abound not only in knowledge, which is the foundation of it, because, as I have already shown, if there is no knowledge of the Lord there can be no love to the Lord or his people, but also "in all feeling," in all sense, in all experience. Spiritual knowledge, therefore, and experimental feeling are the two feeders of Christian love; the two streams, as it were, that run side by side out of the very throne of the Most High, and meet and melt into that boundless river, love. It is, therefore, by this union of knowledge and experience, of divine light and heavenly life, of the Spirit's teaching and the Spirit's testimony, of truth in the understanding and of feeling in the affections, that love is maintained in the soul, and flows out towards the Lord and his people. Do you not see, therefore, now still more plainly how the spiritual knowledge for which I am contending differs so widely from that carnal, intellectual, barren head knowledge which I was condemning? The one is a flowing river, the other a stagnant pool; the one fertilises the heart, and makes it fruitful in every good word and work; the other leaves it a barren swamp, in

which creeps and crawls every hideous thing, and out of which ever rise miasma, disease, and death. See also how the union of knowledge and experience as sustaining love distinguishes the work of the Spirit from every imitation of it. Where there is the true work of the Spirit, there will be gracious knowledge and experimental feeling. You may have feeling without knowledge—that is wrong; you may have knowledge without feeling—and that is wrong. Feeling, as mere feeling, is no certain mark of real religion. Have the Catholics no feeling when they kiss and weep over their crucifix? Had the Jewish women no feeling who "sat weeping for Tammuz"—their beautiful god Adonis, whose untimely fate they thus mourned? (Ezek. 8:14.) Have Arminians no feeling when they are, as they say, "shaken over hell" one half hour, and burst forth into shouts of "Glory, glory," the next? What! no feeling in natural religion! Why, in feeling is much of its very life blood. To be melted by a funeral sermon is to some what being melted by a tragedy is to others; and the pulpit has its accomplished actors to stir the passions as well as the playhouse. Thus we see that feeling, as feeling, is no sure test of grace; for there are natural feelings in religion as well as spiritual—the repentance of Ahab as well as the repentance of Peter, the joy of the stony ground hearers as well as "joy in the Holy Ghost." But these feelings are worthless, nay worse, as being awfully delusive, when they have no foundation in grace or the true knowledge of God.

But now let me show you what is the experience, or, as the apostle calls it, "sense," which feeds and maintains the grace of love. To explain this more clearly, let me observe that there is a kind of analogy or resemblance between spiritual feeling and natural feeling, spiritual sense and natural sense, and this in a variety of ways.

1. There is first, then, a spiritual *sight* given to us at regeneration which is analogous to our natural sight. How full the Scriptures are of this new spiritual sense—this believing eye. "For judgment," said our gracious Lord, "I am come into this world, that they which see not might see." (John 9:39.) Paul was sent to

the Gentiles "to open their eyes" (Acts 26:18), according to the prophecy, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened." (Isai. 35:5.) So Paul prays, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." (Eph. 1:18.) But I need not multiply passages to prove what is so plain. Now just see what an inlet the eye is, not only to knowledge but to *feeling*. If we see some object to move our pity, how instantaneously the heart feels what the eye conveys. Love, we know, chiefly enters through the eye, and is so fed by sight that absence from the beloved object is almost its only cure. So in a spiritual sense, divine love enters through the eye, and is fed by repeated sight of the beloved Object. In this way we learn first to love our blessed Lord. It is now as in days of old, as John testified: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:5.) The light is still shining, but the darkness of men's natural minds comprehendeth, or receiveth it not. Why? Because "their minds are blinded." (2 Cor. 3:14.) But now see the difference in those that are "born of God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) Why did they behold his glory? Because the Lord had given them sight, and thus revealed himself to their believing eyes. And by those who believe, Jesus is still to be seen, for "by faith we see him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27.) This was beautifully unfolded by the Lord himself to his sorrowing disciples: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:18, 19.) And again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21.) Thus we see that it is by the manifestations of the Lord to the soul that he is seen and loved. And does not love, therefore, abound in proportion to the sense of sight, for the more he is seen the more he must be loved?

2. But again, there is in grace as well as in nature a spiritual *ear*. What an inlet is hearing to the acquisition of all natural knowledge. Look, for instance, at those who are born, as it is

called, deaf and dumb. They are not really dumb, though called so, for all their vocal organs are as perfect as ours. But they cannot use them so as to form intelligible language, for no sound has ever reached their mind; and what they have never heard they cannot imitate. We have our deaf-mutes in the religious as well as the natural world, who cannot speak the language of Canaan, for they have never heard it spoken into their heart; and we have those once deaf who now hear, and that by the power of an Almighty "Ephphatha." (Mark 7:34.) Thus there is a spiritual sense of hearing analogous to the natural sense of hearing. And does not Scripture confirm this? "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me." (Psa. 18:44.) "Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isa. 55:3.) "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17). As, too, the ear is an inlet of knowledge, so it is an awakener of feeling. If we hear any glad tidings, how the heart leaps for joy; if we hear any gloomy tidings, how the heart sinks in sorrow. So when the Lord speaks a word of reproof, the heart sinks in grief; when he gives a word of encouragement, it leaps with exultation. "My sheep," says Jesus, "hear my voice." (John 10:27.) But what feeds love more than the accents of his voice? How he speaks in the promises, the invitations, the exhortations, and the precepts of the Gospel; and how every word that he speaks is precious, for, as the Spouse says, "His mouth is most sweet;" and again, "It is the voice of my beloved" (Song 5:2-16); and once more: "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." (Song 8:13.) But what would that voice be to kindle and maintain love if there were no ear to hear it? How musical are the accents of those we love! How often they linger in the memory as melancholy echoes of the past!

3. In a similar way a spiritual *taste* is analogous to the natural taste. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:3); "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psa. 34:3); "How sweet are thy words to my taste," yea, "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." (Psa. 119:103; 19:10.) There is a tasting of the milk and honey of the gospel, and it is by tasting the sweetness of this milk and honey that we know its preciousness. What would

even our natural food be if there were no taste? But how savoury it becomes when taste comes in to share the feast as well as appetite for the food. Be hungry for the bread of life; be amongst those whom our Lord has pronounced blessed as hungering and thirsting after righteousness, then how sweet the bread; how precious the milk; how savoury the meat spread on the Gospel table! Then we can respond to the Lord's gracious invitation: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song 5:1.) Does not, then, a spiritual taste feed love both to the banquet and to the Lord of the banquet? Be assured that the reason why the word of God is often so tasteless, is because we have either no appetite or a depraved one.

4. But again, there is a spiritual *handling* analogous to the natural sense of touch. This, we know, is eminently the sense of *feeling*, as distinguished from the other senses. How do we naturally know whether objects are hot or cold? By the sense of touch. So it is in grace: there is a handling of the Word of life, as John speaks in that remarkable passage, where he mentions in the compass of one verse three of the spiritual senses which I am seeking to explain. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life." So the Lord said to his disciples, "Handle me and see" (Luke 24:39); and still invites us by the prophet, "Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." (Isa. 27:5.) Did not the woman with the issue of blood touch the hem of Jesus's garment, and was she not at once made whole? So "the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him and healed them all." (Luke 8:47; 6:19.) Does not embracing feed love? How the fond mother embraces her babe! After a long absence how lovers embrace each other; and how every embrace renews affection! How the women at the sepulchre "held Jesus by the feet," as if they could not, would not let him go! And so says the Bride: "I held him and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house." (Song 3:4.) Truly here is feeling, and love abounding in feeling in every sense of the word.

5. Again, there is the spiritual *smell*, for as all the senses have their analogy in grace, there is the spiritual smell to correspond with the natural organ. Do we not read: "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is an ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee." (Song 1:3.) But how could the virgins smell the savour of his good ointments, unless they had a spiritual nose? Isaac knew something of this spiritual sense when he said "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed." (Gen. 27:27.) Is it not said also of our gracious Lord? "All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia" (Psal. 45:8); and when he gave himself for us it was "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." (Eph. 5:2.) But how can we smell the sweet-smelling myrrh that drops from his lips if we have no spiritual smell? (Song 5:13.)

Thus we see how all these spiritual senses—sight, hearing, tasting, feeling, and smelling feed love; and therefore the apostle prays that it may abound yet more and more, not in knowledge only, but in all those spiritual senses which are exercised to discern both good and evil. If I see the Lord, I shall love him; if I hear the Lord, I shall love him; if I taste the Lord, I shall love him; if I feel the Lord, I shall love him; if I smell the good ointments of the Lord, I shall love him; and that in proportion to the keenness of my sight, my hearing, my taste, my touch, and my smell.

This, then, is the peculiar blessedness of living experience, that it goes hand in hand with gracious knowledge to sustain heavenly love; and that Christ is the end and Object of both; the end and Object of all saving knowledge, and the end and Object of all true experience; for in this as in every thing else, he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

II.—But I pass on to consider the next petition of the apostle for his Philippian brethren, which indeed is closely connected with that already handled: "*That ye may approve things that are excellent,*" or, as the margin reads, "*try thing that differ.*"

I shall adopt both readings, and take the latter first. "That ye may try things that differ."

i. A Christian in walking through this world has many things upon which he is continually called to exercise his spiritual judgment. He is not to be led blindfold by others, even by his best friends or most trustworthy counsellors; nor must he trust to himself for wisdom and direction; still less must he be altogether heedless of the steps that he takes. Sin and Satan are continually laying snares for his feet; and therefore he is to walk circumspectly and cautiously lest he be entangled in them. He will find too that the more he desires to walk in the fear of the Lord, the more will a great variety of cases ever come before his mind, of which, unless he try them, he cannot ascertain the real worth or value. Now these ever-varying circumstances are spoken of in the margin "as things that differ."

Sometimes we have to try our *own experience*. We know that there is a false experience; a natural faith, a delusive hope, and a pretended love; for we see an abundance of these deceptions everywhere around us. We have, then, to try our own faith, hope, and love to see if they be genuine. Does my experience bear marks of a divine character? Is my faith the gift of God? Is my hope a good hope through grace? Is my love the fruit of the Spirit, or sparks of my own kindling? Do I love in word or in tongue, or in deed and in truth? What has the Lord communicated to my soul? Does my religion bear marks and evidences of being the fruit of his own grace? This is trying things that differ, for we know what a wide difference there is between a true experience and a false one.

Again, my *motives* at different times greatly differ: they are then to be tried. Some motives are good, others bad; some natural, others spiritual: some will bear the light, others will not. I must try my motives, then, for the value of actions depends almost wholly on their secret springs.

My *words*, too. As a preacher, I must try my words, whether they are like Naphtali's, "goodly words" (Gen. 49:21); whether they are consistent with the truth revealed in the word: whether they are agreeable to the experience of God's saints. So our words in private; we have to try them over. Were they spoken in the fear of the Lord? Were they light and trifling, or words of gravity, sobriety, and consistency?

So our *thoughts*: we have to try them, whether they are evil or good, carnal or spiritual, gracious or ungodly.

So our *spirit*: for we must try our own spirit as well as that of others. Is it the spirit of a Christian, or the spirit of the world? Is it a meek spirit or a proud spirit? a godly spirit or an ungodly spirit? a forgiving spirit or an unforgiving spirit? a becoming spirit or an unbecoming spirit? We have to try our spirits in this way, or we shall make sad mistakes, perhaps disgrace our Christian profession, or wound our own conscience and the conscience of others. I cannot do with a reckless Antinomian spirit, or that spirit of levity and frivolity, hardness and audacity, which in our day passes off both in pulpit and pew for strong assurance, but which I call strong delusion or daring presumption.

In a similar manner we have to try our *ways* generally, whether they are consistent with the gospel; whether our life, conduct, and conversation become our profession, and whether we are living to the glory of God. It is awful work to be so blinded and hardened by the devil, as never to weigh up matters how they stand in the sight of God, the great Searcher of hearts. But what is our standard, for we must have one to judge righteous judgment? We have two: the one is the infallible word of God which tries all things, and must be the grand court of appeal; the other is our own experience; the dealings of God with our soul, the teachings of God in our own breast. And by these two things—the word of God externally, and the life of God internally, we have to "try things that differ." Now if our words and works, spirit and conduct, will not bear these two tests, they are unsound; and how then will they stand the heart-searching eye of

him with whom we have to do?

But now see the connection between this and the first petition. As our love abounds in knowledge and all sense, we are put into a position to try things that differ; for love is very keen sighted. What sharp eyes it has! How it reads people's faces; how it interprets looks; what significations it puts upon little actions; and how quick-sighted to gather information from a glance of the eye or a curl of the lip. And love has something very tender and feeling about it. There must be feeling where there is love, for as it is a passion that takes such entire possession of the breast, and is so very sensitive, it is anxious to try what makes for or against it. So it is in divine love. It will take and weigh matters as God would have them weighed by trying things that differ; for love's keen eyes will soon see what God approves of, and what he disapproves. Now as this spiritual judgment is exercised, there will follow upon the decision which love gives an *"approving of things that are excellent."*

ii. This necessarily follows upon trying things that differ, and coming to a right decision upon them; for both an enlightened judgment and a loving heart concur in this approval. When, then, we have tried contending circumstances in these two balances, then we cannot only stamp upon that which is good the mark of excellence, but can seal it as such with our loving approval. There is a seeing the light and hating it, as Milton represents Satan telling the Sun how he hated his beams; and there are those of whom we read that "they rebel against the light." (Job 24:13.) But love approves of all that shines in the light of God's testimony. Whatever God has revealed in the word, whatever he has planted by his own hand in the soul, bears the stamp of its great Author. As, then, we are favoured with spiritual knowledge, and blessed with spiritual sense, we approve things that are excellent because they are of God. There is no mark of depravity greater than putting good for evil and evil for good, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. It is the last issue of human wickedness, first to confound good and evil, and then deliberately prefer the latter. This was the climax of the sins of the Gentile

world, that "knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." As distinct, then, from these awful characters the saint of God will approve things that are excellent. Let us see some of these excellent things of which he deliberately approves.

1. The *love of God* in the gift of his dear Son, is the most excellent of all his adorable attributes in the estimation of love. "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God," said one of old. (Psa. 36:7.)

2. Nor less excellent is the *grace* of love in the heart which flows from the manifestation of the loving kindness of God. The apostle, therefore, says to the Corinthians: "And yet I show unto you a more excellent way"—the way of "charity," or love. (1 Cor. 12:31.)

3. *Grace* in its sovereignty, fulness, blessedness, and superaboundings over the aboundings of sin, is so excellent in itself as glorious to God, and so excellent to us as suitable to man, and adapted to every want and woe of the sinner, that it is worthy of our warmest approval. But when shall I really approve of the excellency of gospel grace? When I know it, and when I feel it; for then my love will abound in knowledge and in all sense. Then I really understand its blessedness; then I not only feel its sweetness, but I try the things that differ, salvation by grace and salvation by works. I see the excellency of the former; I see the delusion of the latter, and I approve of that which is excellent.

4. By the same "knowledge" and the same "sense," I look at *the saints* of God, and I find them to be what the Lord has himself pronounced them, "the excellent of the earth." (Psa. 16:2, 3.) But how few there are who really approve of the saints of God, as the excellent of the earth, or believe them to be what the Lord calls them, "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:3), to preserve it from putrefaction, and "the pillars of the earth," upon which the Lord "hath set the world," that it might not fall into ruin. (1 Sam. 2:8.)

Instead of approving of and delighting in them, how most despise, hate, and persecute them. And why? Because their eyes are not illuminated by a ray of divine light to see their excellency, nor their hearts touched by divine grace to love it. For what is their excellency? Not in the creature: there is no excellency there. But this is their excellency, that they have the mind and image of Christ. This is their excellency, that Jesus is seen in them. We have seen the excellency of Jesus; we have admired his beauty, fallen in love with his grace, and been delighted with his glory. Now when we see the image of Jesus reflected in the hearts of his people, we must approve of it as well as love it because it resembles him. When you see a real Christian, one who is meek and humble, tender, broken, and contrite, with a heart full of faith, hope, and love, walking in the fear of God; desirous to know his will and do it; submissive under affliction; spiritually minded, and adorning the doctrine by a godly life, don't you approve of that man as one of the excellent of the earth? And when you see a man in a profession of religion proud and obstinate, worldly and covetous, boasting and presumptuous, full of self-exaltation and self-conceit, light and trifling, carnal and earthly minded, in adversity unsubmissive to the will of God, in prosperity determined to have his own will and way, don't you disapprove of that man and what you see in him, as being contrary to the mind of Christ and the image of the suffering Son of God? It must be so, if you have a right understanding of the things of God. If divine light has enlightened your mind, divine life quickened your heart, and you love the Lord and his people, you must approve of the things that are excellent. For they are so commended to your conscience that you can no more do otherwise than you can tell a deliberate lie, or call black white. And as you approve of them, you will disapprove of every thing which is contrary to, or falls short of this excellency. Now this is what distinguishes us from the world and the spirit of it and from all whose eyes are blinded by the god of this world—that whilst they approve of the things God abhors, we approve of the things that God loves. Here is the mind of Christ; here is the teaching of the Spirit giving us in some measure to see as Christ sees, to feel as Christ feels, to love as Christ loves, and to approve as Christ

approves. We shall never go far wrong so long as we are approving the things that are excellent, and seeking, as the Lord may enable, to know the will of God and do it. But directly that we lose sight of this spiritual standard and set up the opinion of men, then our eyes get blinded, our hearts hardened, our consciences benumbed, and instead of approving the things that are excellent, we may gradually and insensibly drift into the very spirit of ungodliness.

III.—But now comes our next and third petition, "that ye may *be sincere and without offence* till the day of Christ." Sincerity is the very life-breath of a Christian. If he is not sincere, he is nothing. I was speaking just now of a monster in Christianity, and I said that a Christian without love was a monster indeed. But I may go farther, and say that a Christian without sincerity could not exist.

i. But what kind of sincerity does our text mean? A man may be sincere, that is naturally sincere, and yet be altogether out of the secret of divine teaching. Was not Paul sincere when he went to Damascus, breathing threatenings and slaughter against the saints of God? But he was sincerely wrong. The only sincerity worth the name is what the apostle calls "godly sincerity" (2 Cor.1:12), that is, a sincerity wrought in the heart by the power of God. The original word in our text is very striking: it signifies a sincerity which may be judged or examined by the light of the sun, as distinguished from that insincerity and deceitfulness which, like the bat and the owl, creep into the dark corners. Christian sincerity will bear the light of the sun, and in fact it is a ray out of the Sun of righteousness which creates it. A man cannot be really and truly sincere in the sight of God who has not divine life in his breast. It is the light of life in his soul that makes him sincere in a spiritual sense before God.

But now see the connection of this petition with the preceding. So far as we are sincere, we shall try things that differ and approve things that are excellent. We shall be able to bring our religion out to the test, as we hold up a piece of cloth to the light that the sun may shine upon it and show us if there are any moth-holes,

any thin, worn-out places, any fraudulent material. This is not like keeping damaged goods in the back shop; or drawing customers into some dark corner of the counter to pass Yorkshire shoddy off for West of England broadcloth. We should be able to bring our religion out of our heart in all its length and breadth, and hold it up to the beams of the sun to see ourselves and let others see too whether the material of which it is made be sound or rotten. It may have a very good surface, be nicely smoothed over, and yet the material be as rotten as Jeremiah's "old cast clouts," or the worn-out clothes of the Gibeonites. (Jer. 38:2; Josh.9:5.) O, to be truly sincere and have the heart made honest in the fear of God, that we may appeal to him, "Thou God seest me," and with the Psalmist, "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me." (Gen. 16:13; Psa. 139:1.) This religion will stand the light, as our gracious Lord said: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." (John 3:20, 21.)

ii. But the apostle adds, "and *without offence* till the day of Christ." The word means literally to cause any to stumble over our crooked ways, words, or works, and thus conceive a prejudice against the religion we profess. It is a sad thing to put a stumbling-block in the way of any person, especially an inquirer after truth, or open the mouth of an enemy. There was an express prohibition in the Levitical law against putting a stumbling-block in the way of the blind. (Lev. 19:14.) And O what a solemn thing it is for a Christian so to act as to put a stumbling-block before those who are naturally blinded by prejudice against the doctrines of grace. Our blessed Lord pronounced against such a solemn woe: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matt. 18:7.) The desire, therefore, of the Christian is to be "without offence," that is, without causing any justly to stumble at his words, ways, or work; but to live before God and man with that uprightness, tenderness, consistency, and general conduct becoming the gospel, that none shall take real

cause of offence against the truth of God by seeing in him practice unworthy of his profession. We shall not indeed be able to avoid giving offence in the usual sense of the word, for nothing is more offensive to the world than vital godliness; and the Lord warned us that we should be hated of all men for his name's sake. But the meaning of the word is not to give legitimate cause of offence so as to stumble sinners or stumble saints, and bring a reproach upon our holy religion by words or works unbecoming our Christian profession; and that "until the day of Christ," when the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed. When I am gone I hope that no one when he sees my tomb in the Cemetery may be able to kick his foot against my gravestone, and say, "Here lies a drunkard; here lies an Antinomian; here lies a covetous wretch; a bad husband, a bad father, and a treacherous friend; a pretended minister, who preached one thing and practised another, and disgraced instead of adorning his profession of the Gospel."

IV.—The last petition, on which I must be very brief, falls in well with the three preceding: "Being filled with *the fruits of righteousness*, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The apostle desired that they might be trees well loaded with Gospel fruit. You will bear in mind that it was a prayer for them; he does not say that they were thus abundantly fruitful; but it was his desire that they might be. As a gardener, when he walks in his garden in the autumn and looks at his trees, examines them chiefly with a view to their fruit; and if among them he sees one with scarcely any crop, says, with a sigh, "Ah, how few pears or plums there are this year upon this tree of mine!" But if he pass on to the next and see it well loaded, it gladdens his heart. So to go into the garden of the Church and see on one tree only two or three berries upon the top of the uppermost bough, on another mildewed leaves or withered branches, and only a wizened plum or a half-ripe pear here and there—this is not a pleasant sight to the spiritual gardener. But to see the trees of the Lord's own planting "filled with the fruits of righteousness," and every grace and fruit of the Spirit brought forth into a blessed exercise—this is a sight indeed to cheer and comfort his

heart. This is the sight the apostle longed to have his eyes gladdened with, that when he came again to Philippi to visit the church planted there by his instrumentality, he might see all the members with the elders and deacons filled with the fruits of righteousness—internal, such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, and every external fruit of the Spirit adorning their life and conversation. He would gladly see their leaf fresh and verdant, their stem healthy and strong, their branches free from blight or mildew, and a blessed crop loading every bough. And all this he knew would be "by Jesus Christ," by his presence and power, his Spirit and grace, and all would redound "unto the glory and praise of God;" as the Lord himself said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (John 15:8.)

Now can we find anything in our soul corresponding with the desires thus beautifully expressed for the Philippian Church by the pen of the man of God? But bear in mind that the Philippians were not necessarily all the apostle prayed they might be. Grace, indeed, could make them so; and as far as they were under its power and influence, their desires for themselves would be the same as those here expressed for them. But can you join heart and hand with these earnest petitions, and first, from the bottom of your heart, desire your love to abound more and more in divine knowledge and gracious experience? This will form a solid foundation for the other petitions, and for an earnest request to the Lord of all grace that he would drop every one of these rich blessings into your soul. Then you certainly have already the fulfilment of the second petition, if not of all the rest; for you "approve things that are excellent." If you seem to fall short, and we all fall short of being "filled with the fruits of righteousness," yet so far as we are Christians at all, there is a being "sincere," and a desire to give no just cause of offence to friend or foe. At any rate, we feel that there is no wilful turning away the ear, nor hardening the heart, nor stifling the conscience against the power of the word. These things may encourage us still to present our petitions before the throne, ever bearing in mind that the Lord is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,

and by granting our desires and manifesting himself to our souls, can even in this time state fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

AN ACCEPTABLE PRESENT TO THE LORD OF HOSTS

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, in 1843

"In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto: a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." Isa 18:7

When presents are made to earthly monarchs, they are almost always of a costly and valuable nature. In fact, it would seem an insult to offer to an earthly monarch any present that did not, in some degree, correspond to the exalted situation, which he occupies. But "Gods thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9)

"The present" that is "brought unto the Lord of Hosts," spoken of in the text, is of a very different character from what is usually offered to earthly sovereigns. A nation flourishing in arts and arms, occupying a fertile and extensive territory, carrying on a wide and lucrative commerce, and sending its fleets and armies all over the globe—such a people might well be a present acceptable to an earthly monarch. But when we look at the text, and see what sort of people is presented to the Lord of Hosts, we find a nation of a very different character brought unto him. We read there of a people "scattered and peeled," of a nation "meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled;" and that this broken, and, as they might naturally be called, useless people, are brought "to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion," as an acceptable offering to him who lives and reigns there.

Now, reason would dictate, and, indeed, it is the prevalent religion of the day, that an offering, which is to be made to the Lord of Hosts, should be such a one as agrees with his holy and righteous character. We find, therefore, the generality of ministers exhorting everybody to give to the Lord the prime of their life, their strongest affections, their noblest mental and bodily faculties, with all the piety, zeal, diligence, and holiness that they can muster, and to lay them down at the feet of the Lord of Hosts as an offering acceptable in his sight. And though this never is done, and, from the utterly fallen state of man, never can be done, we find the preachers no less constantly exhorting, and the people no less perpetually approving of this as the only excellent way.

But when we look at the text **(and we must adhere to the word of God, however contrary to our carnal reason)** we find that "the present which is to be brought to the Lord of Hosts," is not of a righteous people, a people zealous, and diligent, a people active in good words and works, "but people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." Without further preface then, I shall, from these words, endeavour, with Gods blessing, to describe what the character, the experimental character I mean, of that people is which is "brought as a present unto the Lord of Hosts."

But we must bear in mind that the people of God are always to be looked at in two points of view. First, as standing in the Son of God, their eternal Covenant Head; and, secondly, as standing in Adam, their temporal covenant head. Viewed in Christ, they stand accepted in him "without spot or blemish, or any such thing." The church, as an unspotted, lovely bride, was betrothed unto Christ in eternity before ever she fell in Adam. Thus in this sense therefore, the church, as the spotless wife of the Lamb, is a present fit for the Lord of Hosts, for she stands righteous in Christs righteousness, holy in Christs holiness, comely in Christs

comeliness, and perfect in Christs perfection. But, viewed in fallen Adam, as a partaker of his depraved nature, and viewed experimentally when brought to know the plague of her heart, she stands "full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores."

The people spoken of in the text, as presented to the Lord of Hosts, correspond to the church in this latter point of view. We will, therefore, with Gods blessing, examine in detail the description here given of them; and I think we shall find six distinct marks stamped upon them by the blessed Spirit. These six marks are, that they are "scattered," "peeled," "terrible," "meted out," "trodden under foot," and their land one which "the rivers have spoiled." Every one of these striking epithets deserves, and, therefore, demands a distinct and separate examination.

The Holy Ghost, then, has stamped the people of God in the text with these peculiar marks; for I do not consider that, experimentally viewed, a particular section, a distinct part of Gods people, are here intended, as though some experience were described in the text which a few only of the living family are acquainted with. But I view the text as descriptive of **all the family** of God, and that the marks stamped upon them here are such as are universally affixed to all the manifested election of grace.

I. The first mark stamped upon the people of God is that they are a "**scattered**" people. Considered even locally, as far as their earthly habitations are concerned, we find this "scattered" condition of Gods people to be a matter of fact, a thing of daily and universal experience. Wherever we go we find that the people of God are a scattered family. It was so in times of old. The church at Jerusalem was speedily "scattered" abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). James writes "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1); and Peter to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus..." (1Peter 1:1). Thus now we do not find whole towns and villages of Gods people, but dispersed by twos and threes through the

country; a few in one town, and a few in another; one or two in this village, and one or two in that; generally the butt and scoff of all the rest; abhorred by a world lying dead in sin. And, indeed, when we consider how few in number Gods quickened people are, it must needs be so. The world at large "lieth in wickedness," while the elect are but "one of a city, and two of a family" (**the subdivision of a tribe**) (Jeremiah 3:14), "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof."

But the word "scattered" not merely implies their dispersion, locally considered—that they are a scanty, and, therefore, a scattered people, but it also has reference to the work of the blessed Spirit in their souls, as making them to be internally, what they are externally—scattered in feelings as well as in persons.

When the Holy Ghost takes a vessel of mercy in hand, his first work is to scatter. He moves in that track which he gave to Jeremiah when he commissioned him "to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down," as well as "to build, and to plant." This divine work was known experimentally by Hannah when she said, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up: The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up" (1Samuel 2:6,7). The first work, then, of the Spirit of God in the heart is to scatter to the four winds of heaven everything in self that is comely and pleasing to the flesh. All a mans self-righteousness when the Lord lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet is broken to pieces. We may, indeed, with much pains, great diligence, and severe labour, gather together the broken fragments: but no sooner have we got together what the Spirit has dispersed than the Lord blows upon them again and scatters them once more to the four corners of the earth.

Nor is his **self-righteousness**, his legal obedience, and his hope of heaven founded thereon, scattered only, but that also which wears an **evangelical garb**, such as all his holiness and all his

attempts to make himself spiritual, all his diligence to recommend himself to the favour of God by laying hold of the gospel, with all his anxiety to read, understand, and experimentally enjoy the word of God, all that he would thus heap up, and fain persuade himself that by so doing he was a believer in Christ, is scattered and dispersed: so that when he looks at his religion he finds it a thorough wreck. His religion now no longer resembles a ship in harbour, with all her masts, and yards, and rigging perfect, just ready to ride proudly over the wide waste of waters, but it rather resembles the same ship driven by a storm upon the rocks, with the waves beating over her, and just about to part asunder.

The Spirit of the Lord is compared in Scripture to the north wind (**"Awake, O north wind,"**) (Song 4:16), which is rough and searching, and blows away the chaff from the threshing floors. It is the blowing of this north wind, which tries the living family before they are led to see what the mind of the Spirit is in thus acting. They try sometimes, for instance, to collect their thoughts in prayer, and fix their affections upon God: but all is scattered in a moment. They look at their evidences, try to bring them together, and out of them to make a good hope through grace: but when they come to weigh them up singly one by one, a gust of conviction or of doubt springs up which so scatters all these evidences that there seems to be scarcely one left. They seek after spirituality of mind, and to have their affections set on things above, not on things on the earth. But no sooner do they feel their hearts and affections mounting upwards, than some vile thought rushes in, which brings a train of others, like a troop of unclean birds falling upon a sacrifice. When they come to a place of worship they beg, perhaps, with some earnestness on the road, that the word may come to their souls with power from God himself: but no sooner does the preacher begin his prayer or sermon than something carnal, sensual, or devilish rushes into their minds, or some gust of unbelief or infidelity blows across them which scatters all their thoughts, and leaves them no collectedness, fixedness, or attention. Thus, to their dismay, instead of being able to get together a religion in which they may stand firm; instead of amassing a store of hopes and evidences to

which they may confidently look as a safe and happy passport into eternity, the more they look the less religion they find; and all that they have gathered together becomes one mass of confusion. This was the case with Job when the Lord had scattered his religion, when, as Elihu said, "God thrusteth him down, not man" (Job 32:13), and he poured forth that bitter lamentation, "I am full of confusion."

II. But we will go on to consider another mark stamped upon them—"peeled." In order to get at the spiritual meaning of this expression, I must call your attention to what is written in (Ezekiel 29:18), where the Lord said to his prophet—"Son of Man, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and **every shoulder was peeled.**" But what made their shoulders peel? The burdens which they bore. The soldiers in Nebuchadnezzar's army had to carry the mattock and spade, to throw up the fortifications against Tyre. The soldiers in ancient times wore very heavy armour, and carried upon their shoulders spears and other weapons of war, by the continual pressure of which the skin was often literally peeled off. Thus, when the nation spoken of in the text is said to be "**peeled,**" it implies that they are a burdened people, nay, more, that they are a **continually** burdened people. It was not one day's service before Tyre that made the shoulders of Nebuchadnezzar's army peel, but the continued labours which they were called to perform, the unceasing burdens which they had to bear. And thus the expression in the text implies that the people of God are not burdened merely once or twice in their lives; but that theirs is an unceasing warfare, a succession of burdens, and that they can never put their armour off, or lay the weapons of their spiritual warfare aside, but that they must continue to watch and fight, toil and suffer to the end of their days as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

This mark, then, demolishes at a blow all those crude fancies and visionary ideas of men, who assert that the child of God never has but one spiritual burden in his life, that of sin under the law,

when first quickened into spiritual life; and that, when relieved of that load by a gospel deliverance, he never more groans under the weight of sin, but rejoices and triumphs in Christ over death, sin, and hell, until he changes time for eternity. One would think that the testimony of Paul was sufficient to disprove this when he said, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened" (2Corinthians 5:4); and again, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But I think that the simple expression of the text, that the people who are brought as a present to the Lord of Hosts are "a **peeled** people," is sufficient to shew that the family of God are appointed to wear upon their shoulders continual burdens.

But what are these burdens? The burden of **sin** is one which the children of God more especially labour under in the first teachings of the Spirit; and this at that time not so much from the workings of their corrupt nature, into the desperate depravity of which they are not at first usually led, but from the guilt of **actual sin** committed by them. But there is also the **burden of temptation**, which never seizes a man so powerfully as after he has known something of the power of atoning blood. And thus the people of God who, in their first exercises, have to bear heavy burdens of guilt and convictions of sin, after they have received some manifestations of Gods favour, have to bear the burden of temptation. Indeed Gods children could not bear the heavy burdens of temptation at first. The raw recruit, who is learning his drill on the common, is not sent into battle immediately. He has to be taught how to handle and use his arms and all the exercises needful to make him into a soldier, before he can endure actual service. So the child of God is not sent to fight Gods battles when merely learning his drill. But when he is, in some degree, inured in service, then he is sent to undergo the actual hardship of war.

Unless a living soul has some standing ground in Christ, he cannot endure the burden of temptation. If the powerful blasts of temptation came upon one who had no standing in the divine life, they would sweep him away. But when the Lord has given the soul some standing in Christ, through some knowledge of him, it

is founded upon a rock, so that however assaulted and apparently overwhelmed, it is not carried away by the floods of temptation that come out of the dragon. Infancy, naturally, is not the season for hard labour. On whom do we lay the heaviest burdens? The child or the man? Who are selected to carry the greatest weights? The weak or the strong? Is it not in grace as it is in nature that the stronger the man the heavier the burden? the broader the shoulders the weightier the load? How unscriptural, then, as well as how contrary to the teachings of the Spirit in exercised souls, is that vain idea that a man, after his first convictions and deliverance, is to slumber in his arm chair for the rest of his life, as a pensioner who has obtained his discharge, never again to see the flash of the sabre, or hear the thunder of the artillery. Such a doctrine as this is contradicted by the experience of the saints in all ages. These have ever found that the stronger a man is in Christ the heavier are his burdens; the richer his enjoyment of the love of God, the more powerful are his temptations: the firmer his standing in the Son of God, the more fellowship has he with Christ in his sufferings.

But the leading and special idea contained in the expression "**peeled,**" is a feeling of soreness and rawness. The skin peeled off makes the shoulder additionally pained by the burdens laid upon it. Thus the consciences of Gods living family are tender, and very susceptible of impressions. And herein they mainly differ from dead, hardened professors. Temptations are no burden to a seared conscience. The internal enmity of the human heart against God, the foul obscenities and daring blasphemies that the prince of darkness breathes into the carnal mind, are no burden to a man dead in a profession: nor, usually speaking, are they acquainted with the one, or assaulted by the other.

But when the conscience is made and kept alive before God, and the heart is tender and contrite so as to feel the impression of the divine fingers, when it is thus tremblingly and shrinkingly alive to the slightest touch of the heavenly hand, it is in an equal and similar degree sensitive also to temptation. And the more tender the conscience is, the more poignantly, for the most part, will

temptations be felt. The more alive that the fear of God is in the heart, the more clearly will sin be perceived, and the more will it be hated and abhorred. You may depend upon it, that no persons are further from God than those who are really Antinomians. I say **really** such, for the name is often falsely applied to such as believe and preach a free-grace gospel, and walk in the fear of the Lord. But I mean such characters in the professing church as "continue in sin, that grace may abound," and, under shelter of the doctrines of grace, live and act contrary to the precepts of the gospel. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." I would as soon think of uniting with notorious drunkards and libertines as with high professing Calvinists who, by their loose talk and conversation, cause the truth to be evil spoken of.

III. The third mark given of this people is that they are "from a people **terrible** from their beginning hitherto," that is, up to the time when the present was made. There is a little difficulty in the language of the text here; it says, "and **from** a people terrible from their beginning hitherto;" as though the people scattered and peeled, were to be taken **out of another** people who were terrible. This need not, however, create, I think, an insuperable obstacle. The word "from" seems to have reference to the word "present:" and as we read that the present is to be made "**of** a people scattered and peeled," so the present "**from** a people terrible from their beginning," appears simply to mean that the people who are terrible are made a present of to the Lord. This seems to harmonize best with the general drift of the text. This expression **terrible** seems to my mind to carry with it two ideas. First, that they were spiritually acquainted with the terrors of God: and, secondly, that they were a terror to others. Now all the family of God, each in his measure (**though we can lay down no standard of depth or duration**) must know something of Jehovah as terrible in majesty: must have a sense in their souls of his inflexible justice, his hatred of evil, his eternal purity, and spotless holiness.

I am not going to define—I think it impossible to define, as I just now hinted—how deep those convictions shall be, or how long they shall last; but I believe every living soul, before it passes from time into eternity, must see something of Gods countenance as of purer eyes than to behold evil, and thus come before him with "reverence and godly fear." It would appear that the people here spoken of were "terrible from their beginning hitherto," that is, that they knew more or less of the Lord as terrible in majesty all through the stages of their spiritual life up to the moment of which the text speaks—till they were presented to the Lord of Hosts. Not that they knew him as such always, that is, continually, prolongedly as such; but that from time to time there were flashes in their conscience, whereby God was made known to them as terrible in majesty.

For instance, if they were overtaken by any backsliding, the terrors of God were arrayed against them. If they gave way to base lusts, the terrors of Gods holy countenance were made manifest in their souls. If they were caught by idolatrous affections, or entangled in the base workings of their carnal mind, they could not cloak these things over before the eyes of him with whom they had to do. They could not treat sin as a light matter, or say, "my sins are all washed away, and now sin and I have shaken hands and become good friends. It can do me no harm, nor destroy my soul." The living family, whose consciences have been made tender, cannot indulge such presumptuous notions, for they feel the flashes of Gods anger against sin in their consciences: and whatever sweet sense they may have had of the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ, sin will be ever a terror to them. Though there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, yet there will always be, as the case of David sufficiently proves, anger in the mind of God against the sin of his people.

But there is another sense in which we may take the word **terrible**, and that is, that the people of God are a terror to others. We find this intimated in the two witnesses mentioned in (Revelation 11:1). We read there of two witnesses who were to

"prophecy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth," and were "the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (Revelation 11:3,4). I believe that these two witnesses, primarily and chiefly, signify the ministers of Gods truth; and that they are two in number, agreeably to that word—"In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." But, in a secondary sense, every manifested child of God is a witness for God and his truth. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God" (Isaiah 43:12).

Now it is said of these witnesses that they "tormented them that dwelt on the earth;" and, therefore, when they were slain, those "that dwelt upon the earth rejoiced over them, and made merry, and sent gifts one to another;" so glad were they to get rid of them. Thus not only every faithful minister of Gods truth, but every quickened child of God also torments those that dwell upon the earth, that is, the carnal, who make the earth their paradise and home, and all whose affections are earthly and sensual. Every one in whose heart is the fear of the Lord, is, in a measure, a terror to the carnal. Paul made Felix tremble; and John Knox struck terror into the heart of Mary, Queen of Scots. There is an indescribable something in a child of God, which carries conviction even to those who are enemies to vital godliness. Their very principles are a terror to them. The doctrines of grace, for instance, which they hold, torment, and are a terror to Arminians, and their godly and consistent life makes them terrible to Antinomians. As, when Moses came down from the mount, his face shone, and the people "were afraid to come nigh him" (Exodus 34:30), the beams of divine communion visible in him striking a secret awe into their consciences, so "the divine nature" of which the people of God are "partakers" (2Peter 1:4), that is "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." strikes a secret terror into the ungodly. Their very presence infuses a secret awe.

Let, for instance, any one of you who is known to be one of the sect everywhere spoken against, go into a chapel where there is

a dead minister in the pulpit, you strike him with more awe than a thousand of his usual congregation. He hates you and yet he fears you: for he knows you are a witness against him. Thus the people of God are a terror to the carnal; and God means them to be such. When they cease to be a terror to others, when they cease to torment them that dwell upon the earth, they cease to deliver a faithful testimony. O may I be a terror to Gods enemies! O may God so endue me with the Holy Ghost that I may so take forth the precious from the vile, and preach his word with such faithfulness and power, as to make myself terrible to all his enemies; whether they are despisers of grace, or pretenders to grace; whether they grovel in the sink hole of Arminianism, or are towering on the barren heights of dead Calvinism. And terrible "from their beginning" too.

From the first day that the people of God are quickened to fear his great name, they are terrible to the carnal, and sometimes, perhaps, more then, in the early warmth of their zeal and boldness, than afterwards. We may, in some degree, measure the strength and activity of the divine life in our souls by this test; for directly we turn aside unto evil, and the power of that holy anointing is diminished which makes us a terror to others, we fall from the position in which God has placed us; and from our high standing as witnesses of the truth as it is in Jesus. Samson, with his locks cut, struck no terror into the Philistines.

IV. But to pass on. The next mark of this peculiar people is, that they are "meted out." The word "**mete**," is the old English word for "measure." "With what measure ye **mete**, it shall be measured to you again." This people, then, that are to be presented to the Lord of Hosts are a nation "**meted out**," that is, measured up. This expression points not so much to their persons as to their religion; and declares that their faith is tried in the furnace. Their experience is measured by Gods standard, and thus judgment is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet in their souls.

Most certainly wherever God the Holy Ghost begins and carries on a work of grace in the heart, he will weigh up, and mete out, from time to time, all a mans religion, and try every inch of the way whether it lies straight and level with the word and will of God. Depend upon it that the Lord who "weigheth the spirits" (Proverbs 16:2), and by whom "actions are weighed" (1Samuel 2:3), will put into his righteous and unerring scales both nature and grace, both human and divine teaching, and make us know which is full weight in heavens court.

The religion of the present day is too much to confuse everything of an experimental nature; to cover and obscure the work of grace in the heart. There is even among those who are sound in the doctrines of truth little or no discrimination of character, no appealing to conscience, no tracing out the lines of distinction between grace and nature, no exposing the awful delusions of Satan as an angel of light, no pointing out the dreadful deceitfulness and hypocrisy of our fallen nature. But the generally approved and well nigh universally followed system is to throw around all professors, whose creed is sound and life consistent, a mantle of universal charity, and ask them no inconvenient questions. But there can be no question that God will never suffer our religion, if, indeed, he has mercifully taken us in hand, to be huddled up in this confused way; but he will measure it all by his standard, and refine it in his crucible. It is in this way that we learn the reality and genuineness of his work. Thus, if he give faith, he will bring that faith to the touchstone, and prove it with heavy trials.

It is in grace as in nature. When we would ascertain the exact weight of a thing, we put it into one scale, and a standard weight into the other, till the scales are even. So when the Lord puts faith in one scale, he puts a burden in the other to try whether it is standard weight. And the greater the faith the heavier the trial. The father of the faithful had to slay his own son. If he communicate a measure of hope, there will be many things that cause despondency to be put into the opposite scale, that despondency and hope may be well balanced. If the love of God

be shed abroad in the soul, there will be trials and temptations to prove it. Thus the child of God learns the meaning of the words. "Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope" (1Thessalonians 1:3). Every token for good, every sip of mercy, every manifestation of love is examined and searched into, weighed up and balanced in the court of conscience, to know whether it is full weight or not. And in this nice and accurate scrutiny not only is religion weighed up, but also that which is **not** religion. Sins, open and secret, backslidings, idolatrous affections, covetous desires, presumptuous confidences, rotten hopes, and vain props—all are weighed up in the balances of the sanctuary. And as that which is received from God, when put into the balances, will be found sterling and genuine; so all that did not come from God, all that sprang from nature and the flesh, all vain confidence, bold claims, and presumptuous notions, when put into the scales, will have **tekel** stamped upon them—"Weighed in the balances, and found wanting."

It is thus that "the dross is taken away from the silver, and there comes forth a vessel for the finer." This is the trial of faith, which is to be "found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Peter 1:7). This is the rod upon the lot of the children; for "judgment must begin at the house of God; the righteous scarcely be saved;" and the Lord "sits as a refiner and purifier of silver to purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto him an offering in righteousness."

And now tell me, soul, what is thy case? Do you know anything of this measuring work? Is your religion, more or less, daily and weekly weighed in the unerring balances of the sanctuary? And do you find a secret hand in your conscience, that from time to time, as it were, takes your religion and measures it before your eyes, stamping some as genuine, and some as false; some as from God and some as from Satan; some as the fruit of heavenly teaching, and some as springing from a deceitful and hypocritical heart? Be assured, if you are a people to be presented to the Lord of Hosts, in the day when he maketh up his jewels, your religion

must be weighed in Gods balances, and stamped by him as genuine before you close your eyes in death.

V. A fifth mark given in the text of this accepted people is, that they are "**trodden under foot.**"

This expression seems to indicate two things—firstly, the treatment they receive from a world lying dead in sin and dead in a profession: and secondly, the feelings that pass through their own hearts. If God has made your hearts honest before him, if he has communicated spiritual life to your souls, you will be "trodden under foot." The world, dead in sin, will trample you beneath their proud hoofs; and the world, dead in profession, will make your body as the ground, and as the street that they may go over. The laws of our land may, indeed, prevent any such literal treatment of our persons: but do they spare what is equally, in our right minds, dear to us? Does not the self-righteous Arminian tread under foot the doctrines we dearly love? Does he not call them doctrines, which lead to licentiousness, and say that they are the invention of men, the fruit of a heated brain, and not to be found in the Scripture? Nay, have not some, in the height of their zeal for freewill, gone so far as to call them "doctrines of devils," and "damnable doctrines," awful speeches indeed to come from the mouths of professing men.

And as the Arminian, on the one side, will trample down the doctrines, so will the notional Calvinist, on the other, tread under foot your experience, and stamp his iron-bound heel upon all the convictions of your burdened spirit, and the trials of your troubled soul. Those who are at ease in Zion, dwelling "careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure" (Judges 18:7), who are never exercised or tempted, but "lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall," and, therefore, "are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos 6:4, 6), will trample under foot the exercises, temptations, and burdens of living souls. And of all professors, none, I believe, will trample under foot the living family more than conscience-seared

Antinomians. The godly fear, the tenderness of conscience, the respect to the Lords ordinances, and the obedience to his precepts which the regenerated family manifest, provoke the contempt and enmity of those who have a scheme of doctrines clear in their brain, but whose hearts are rotten as touchwood. Nor will they shew less contempt of your rising hopes and tender affections, and all the ebbings and flowings of divine life in your soul: despising and treading under foot everything short of or different from, the presumptuous confidence in which they stand themselves.

Expect, if you are a people whom God has formed for himself to shew forth his praise, to be trodden under foot: to have your motives misrepresented, your words to be the butt of calumny, and your actions to become food for the lying tongue to propagate its malicious falsehoods. To be despised and contemned of all men, and yet to be beloved and blessed by their God is the universal lot of all the living in Jerusalem.

But there is another sense in which we may understand the expression, "trodden under foot," and that is, as I have hinted before, in the feelings of their own hearts. In this sense they may be said to tread **themselves** under foot. In my right mind, I seem to care little to be trodden under foot by the contempt of professor and profane. I have, indeed, even felt pleasure at being counted worthy to suffer reproach for Christs sake. But to be trodden under foot by myself; to feel that I deserve to be trodden under the righteous feet of Jehovah into a never-ending hell, and on account of my numerous and base iniquities to merit to be trodden under foot by the saints of God—this, this cuts deep.

And not only so, but to have myself to trample down all that I once thought was religion, my holiness, piety, and consistency, zeal, knowledge, and devotedness, to have to take them with my own hands, and cast them on the stones, and trample them under feet—this cuts deeper still. But the Lord will bring us to this spot, to tread under foot all creature-righteousness, and natural piety, as well as all the zeal, activity, and restless diligence that

springs from, and feeds the flesh. As Babylons children, they must be taken and dashed against the stones (Psalm 137:9). God will teach us, sooner or later, to trample under foot everything but the blood and righteousness of the Lamb as our salvation and justification: and to reject all wisdom that does not spring out of himself.

VI. The last mark which is given in the text of this peculiar people is, "Whose land the rivers have spoiled." This people, then, had once a land: yea, what they thought was a goodly land, one rich in natural gifts, and teeming with everything bright to the eye, and alluring to the senses. This is the land of our nativity, our "Ur of the Chaldees," our Egypt. What a fair and bright land was this in the days of our romantic youth! And have we not in those days, stood, as it were, upon some lofty height, and looked with eager delight upon the scene of happiness that we fancied lay outstretched before us, promising to ourselves days of health, and wealth, and comfort in this world? But the rivers have spoiled the land. The waters of Gods providential dispensations have flowed over it, and utterly marred it. Instead of being now a fair land, it has become a sandbank. We were looking for happiness in the things of time and sense. Some bosom idol, some bright prospect, some well-planned scheme, some dream of love or ambition was to be our paradise; not knowing that the sword of the cherubim, which turned every way, was planted at the gate. Rivers have burst forth from unexpected quarters, and forever spoiled that land for our resting place.

But, again, there is another land, which we once fancied to be fair and beautiful—the land of natural religion. We cultivated with much pains and diligence the soil of our own hearts—we toiled, dug, and planted; but reaped not; sowed, but gathered no crop into the garner. The rivers of conviction, flowing out of the sanctuary, spoiled the land. Have you not found, that when you were cultivating piety, a flood of conviction broke out and spoiled all the crop? Or when you had ploughed, and sowed, and harrowed the field, and were looking forward to the growth of diligence, zeal, prayer, praise, faith, hope and love, instead of

finding a harvest to reap, a flood of doubt and fear, conviction and distress, burst forth, and carried away not only the crop, but well nigh the cultivator himself. And yet, perhaps, when the flood had gone off, and the rivers a little ceased from the land, you began to cultivate it again. After the crop was swept away, you tried hard after another; but no sooner did you begin to work, and get the seed sown, and the field in a husband-like order, than the rivers flowed over it, and spoiled it again.

But there is another sense in which the words may be taken; and that is as indicating the rivers of mercy and peace that flow out of the love of God through the channel of the Saviours blood. What is this world? It is polluted. It is not our rest. It is defiled by sin, and marred by sorrow, so that a child of God can here find no abiding city. Rivers of conviction out of God as a God of justice, and of mercy out of God as a God of love, flowing in different channels, but tending to the same purpose, have spoiled the land: and it is a fair and goodly land no more.

Here, then, is a description of the people of God, of those that are to be presented to the Lord of Hosts. Does it not seem a singular description? It is not, indeed, generally received by the professors of the day, but that does not alter its reality or its truth. But there is a certain period spoken of in the text when they are to be presented, for it says, "**In that time** shall the present be brought unto the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." And what time is this but that which is described in the preceding verses? "For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches."

"**In that time,** " when it seems fit for nothing, but to be stubbed and burnt as a useless stump. When it is fit for nobody, and apparently still less fit for God, is the present to be made to the

Lord of Hosts. Then will this people, scattered and peeled, be brought by the Holy Ghost, an acceptable offering unto God, as being washed in the blood of his Son, and clothed in his spotless righteousness. And observe **where** they are to be brought, the spot where the offering is to be made, "to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." And what is Zion, but the place "where God has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore?" Brought to Zion where Jehovah reigns in the hearts of his redeemed, and where the "blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel." Brought to see its solemnities, to be enriched with its treasures, and rejoice in its glory.

Thus if we are brought as a present to the Lord of Hosts, we shall come to Mount Zion—to the city of the living God, to banquet upon the Gospel feast, to eat and drink Gospel wine and milk, without money and without price. And by what road, and through what teaching? As having been pious from youth? As having been educated religiously in the Sunday School? As having said so many prayers, and having performed so many pious exercises? As having mastered our besetting sins and fiery passions? As being better than others, holier than others, more religious than others? If we come so, we come not as the text speaks. Such qualifications will not render us an acceptable gift to the Lord of Israel.

The nation that is presented to him is "scattered" upon the mountains without a Shepherd: "peeled" under the heavy weight of trials and temptations; "terrible" to themselves and to others, from the work of God in their hearts; "meted out" by the Spirit of the Lord putting a standard in their conscience, to bring all that they are and have to the test; "trodden under feet" by men, and by themselves; without a country, without a home; for "their land the rivers have spoiled." But in this abject state of destitution, poverty, nakedness, and necessity, brought as an acceptable present to the Lord of Hosts—to the place where he hath recorded his name—even to Zion, where he lives and reigns, as the God of all grace.

If this is true, and who can gainsay it? If these are the works of God, and who can deny that they are? then, only, so far as we have some divine and experimental acquaintance with these things in our souls, have we any Scriptural testimony, that we are either come to, or are on our way towards Zion.

And, may I not add, if you live and die without knowing somewhat of this experience, you will never enter the gates of glory, but be among those to whom the Lord will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

AN ACCEPTABLE PRESENT TO THE LORD OF HOSTS

Preached at Providence Chapel, Cranbrook, Kent, on Wednesday Evening, August 19, 1846.

"In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto: a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion." Isaiah 18:7

When presents are made, there is usually a correspondence between the present and the person to whom it is given. An ample present for a beggar would be an insult to a nobleman. But especially when presents are made to kings, must the offering be worthy of the royal personage to whom the gift is made; otherwise he would consider it an affront rather than a present. And this more particularly in ancient times and eastern climates, where no one ever thinks of approaching a sovereign or man in power, without laying at his feet a suitable present. Thus the queen of Sheba, when she came to see and consult Solomon, brought the richest presents her country could produce.

The Lord of hosts is said in the text to have a present: "In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts." And what present shall he have? Shall it be gold and silver, that object of almost universal idolatrous worship? Shall it be diamonds, and pearls, and precious stones? Shall it be noble buildings, and fretted aisles, and pealing organs, and chanting voices, and the fumes of incense? He that was born in a stable and cradled in a manger, can never look with acceptance upon such offerings as these. Shall it be then the best that nature can present? Shall it be such as the heart of man can lay at his feet as its primest offering? Shall it be creature piety? Shall it be natural religion? Shall it be human righteousness? Shall it be anything or everything that the creature may produce? The eye of eternal purity can never look upon the works or the words of

man, except with abhorrence, for all, all are tainted, polluted, and deeply stained with original sin; and therefore, an offering entirely unacceptable in the eyes of infinite purity.

What shall he then have? What offering is fit for him, for his worth? The text tells us what the present is, that is to be brought to the Lord of hosts; what that offering is, which he will look upon with acceptance, and which he will graciously receive. "In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion."

With God's blessing, this evening, and looking up to him, as I am compelled, from time to time, from real soul necessity, that he would inspire thoughts, and dictate words, and crown with power what shall be spoken—I shall, in considering the subject, treat it under two heads.

I.—First, show the nature of the present which is made to the Lord of hosts;

II.—The place to which the present is brought, and the way in which the present is received.

I.—If we look at the present made to the Lord of hosts, it is declared by the Holy Ghost in our text to be "a **people**:. In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of a **people**." You will observe, that the "people" is the present which is brought to the Lord of hosts. But what "people" is this? It is the elect people of God—those that were chosen in Christ before all worlds; as the Lord speaks so clearly and emphatically (John 17:6), "Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me." "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." (John 17:10) The people, then, who are to be brought as a present to the Lord of hosts, are the elect of God; that people for whom

Christ died; that people whom he hath formed for himself, and in whom he will show forth his praise.

But the Holy Ghost in the text describes **the character** of the people who are thus brought. The text does not speak of the people of God merely as elect, merely as redeemed, merely as quickened by the blessed Spirit; but the Holy Ghost has selected certain marks, which are stamped upon this people, and which distinguish them from all other people upon the face of the earth. And here we see much beauty and much wisdom. If there were no description in the word of truth of the characters of God's people, many of the Lord's family would want evidences and testimonies that they belong to the election of grace.

Many of the Lord's people fully and firmly believe that there is an election of grace, but they are often tried in their minds as to whether they are personally interested in this election. They do not cavil and fight against God's sovereignty, and the doctrines of grace as revealed in the word of truth; their minds are bowed down to receive them, and they firmly believe them to be "the truth as it is in Jesus."

But the trying point with many—shall I say, the majority? of the Lord's people is,—their own personal, individual interest in these precious doctrines. These are the points which often try their minds; not whether God has an elect people, but whether **their** names, as individuals, are in the Book of Life. And therefore, that we may be able to distinguish them, and that they may be able, as the blessed Spirit shines upon their evidences, to trace out in their own hearts some decisive marks that they are of the Lord's family, the Holy Ghost has described their character, and pointed out those peculiar things which are to be found in them, and in them alone. These we shall, this evening, with God's blessing, endeavour more fully to enter into.

1. The **first** mark given of this people who are brought as a present to the Lord of hosts is, that they are **scattered**. Now, if we look at the election of grace generally, this word is most true

of them. They are a scattered people. Look at this present congregation. Is it not made up of people from many different towns and villages? Cranbrook alone has not contributed its population to the large assembly that fills this chapel. It is then **literally** true, that the Lord's people are a scattered people; dispersed far and wide; dwelling in the towns and villages where God has placed them, that they may be so many living testimonies for God's truth, and witnesses of God's grace. But there is something deeper than that. The Lord's people are not merely scattered as regards their local habitation, but they are scattered in an **experimental** sense; and this we shall see better, by viewing their state as contrasted with the case of formal, dead professors. **Their** religion lies altogether; their piety, their holiness, their goodness, their strength, and their wisdom lie all in one heap; and the more they accumulate, and the more they get together, the more collected and compact is their strength, their wisdom and their righteousness.

But not so with the Lord's family. God's children differ completely from them in this point, that they are scattered **internally**, as to their own feelings, and as to the experience of their own hearts, just as much as they are scattered **locally** up and down this ungodly world. They are "strangers, dispersed" in their feelings, as well as strangers dispersed in the midst of a wicked and crooked generation. (James 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2)

Whence springs this scattering? Have you not seen sometimes on a barn floor the wheat and chaff lying together in one confused heap; but the barn doors are thrown open, a strong wind blows through, and what is the immediate consequence? A **scattering**: the strong breeze blowing through begins to scatter what before lay together in one confused heap. Is not this true spiritually and experimentally in the hearts of God's people, through the gales of the Spirit? The Lord himself compares the operations of the Spirit to the wind.

When these breezes blow upon the heart, is not their effect immediately to scatter? Here was a man, before the Lord was

pleased to work upon his soul with power, dead in sin or dead in a profession. There was no scattering **then** going on in his heart; there was no separation **then** in his soul of that which was of God and that which was of man, that which was of flesh and that which was of the Spirit. But when the Lord the Spirit begins to blow upon a man's heart, immediately a scattering takes place. His **righteousness**, which before he had got together with great pains, and looked upon in the same way as a miser often views his accumulated treasure—when the anger of God was made manifest in his conscience, and the breadth and spirituality of his holy law were revealed with power, this righteousness which he had so painfully and so laboriously accumulated was scattered to the four winds of heaven.

His **wisdom**, in which he once so gloried over other men; his clear knowledge of the doctrines in the letter, his acquaintance with God's word, and the good opinion that he had of himself as a wise and understanding man—no sooner does the breath of the Lord begin to blow upon the sinner's conscience, than all this wisdom is scattered before the wind; all his head knowledge, all his empty profession, all the vain confidence which he once got together, and once could build upon, are scattered and dispersed, and he stands before God a perfect fool.

His **prayers** which once he could repeat so collectedly, his **thoughts** which were so little confused, and his **hearing** which from time to time he could give with such attention, when the breath of the Lord begins to blow upon the heart, all become scattered. His **prayers**, instead of being collected forms, are now broken fragments of sighs and cries; his **hearing**, instead of being a matter of criticism, becomes this, 'O that the Lord would apply one word to my poor heart!' His **strength** which once he could bring forward to support himself against temptation, to overcome sin, and to crucify the flesh—when the breath of the Lord begins to blow upon the soul, he finds to be perfect weakness.

The **vain hopes**, which once he could gather together, all are scattered when the wrath of God is made known in his conscience, and the purity of Jehovah is revealed in his soul; and all his **confident expectations** are dispersed when the breath of the Lord blows upon his heart, and scatters them to a thousand pieces.

So that the Lord's people who are brought as a present, and laid at the feet of Jesus, the Lord of hosts, are not merely a scattered people as regards their **habitations**, dwelling separate from the world, separate from professors, and separate from evil, as God the Spirit enables them; but in their **feelings**, in their **experience** before God are they thus scattered and divided, so as to be unable to get anything together that they can look upon with pleasure and admiration.

2. The next mark that is given of this people that are brought as a present to the Lord of hosts, is, that it is a **"peeled"** people. There is one text in the Scripture which I think is a key to this expression. Some of you will, perhaps, remember the promise made to Nebuchadnezzar by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 29:18), where the Lord tells him that he would give him Egypt in recompense for the hard service he served at Tyre, when "every head was made bald, and **every shoulder peeled;**" that is to say, his soldiers had been so long engaged in the siege of Tyre that their very heads had become bald through the number of years, and they carried such heavy burdens upon their shoulders, they so wielded the mattock and shouldered the spade, that the very flesh of their shoulders peeled off and became raw.

This, I think, is the Scripture key to the expression in the text, "of a people being peeled." It is as if the blessed Spirit would bring before us a heavily burdened people. If you were to carry a burden a considerable distance upon your shoulder with a stick, would not your shoulder soon become raw, and the flesh peel off? Thus the expression seems to point out the burdens which the

Lord's people have to carry, so heavy and so long, that their very flesh peels off through the load. For instance,

There is the burden of **sin**; and wherever the Lord takes a soul in hand, he makes it feel more or less of the burden of sin. There is also the burden of **unbelief** and **infidelity**, that many of the Lord's people have so long and so much to groan under. There is the burden too of a **hard heart**—dark, stupid, stony, unfeeling heart, that will not relent and melt down at the footstool of mercy. There are also many **temporal**, as well as spiritual burdens which the Lord's people have to carry; afflictions in providence, afflictions in body, afflictions in circumstances, afflictions in family. All these make up so many burdens that they have to bear upon their shoulders.

But the word "peeled" directs us to this idea—not merely that they have burdens, for we may carry a burden upon our shoulders for a time, and that burden not peel the skin off; but it points to the length of time during which it is carried. A little burden, comparatively speaking, carried on the shoulder for a long time, will cause the skin to peel. And thus the Spirit seems to guide our thoughts to the duration of time during which the Lord's people are burdened; that they have to carry them so far, and have to carry them so long, that spiritually they are, as a man is naturally, "peeled" by the weight they endure, and the time they carry it.

How many burdens have you had to carry during the time you have made a profession of godliness? If they are heavy, and you have carried them long, they have produced a peeled shoulder. The Lord aims, by laying burdens on, to bring us to his feet.

I have thought sometimes spiritually of an old punishment, which was in force in this country. If a prisoner refused to plead guilty, he was taken to a dungeon and stripped, he was fastened down on his back, and a weight was placed upon his chest. If he still continued obstinate, the next day an additional weight was placed. If on the third day he continued perverse, and the plea of

"guilty" still refused to escape from his lips, an additional burden was put upon him; until at last, if he persevered in his obduracy, burdens were added till his chest was crushed to pieces.

This may show, in a spiritual point of view, how the Lord deals with his people. He puts a burden upon them: **that burden** does not at first bring them down. He puts on another: **that** they carry for some time in their own strength. But the Lord's purpose is to bring them down, to force the plea of 'Guilty, guilty!' out of their lips. And thus the Lord brings our sins to mind; lays upon our consciences, from time to time, our secret iniquities; suffers powerful temptations to seize, harass, and distress our souls; all to bring us to this point, by putting burden upon burden, at last to force the cry and plea of 'Guilty, guilty!' out of our lips.

When once that cry comes out of our heart, then the Lord puts forth his hand, and takes the burden off the breast. But until that cry comes out of the very depths of a broken heart—until it comes with simplicity, humility, and godly sincerity from a contrite spirit—burdens will be put on, until at last the soul cries, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'

Some of the Lord's people seem to require heavier burdens than others. There is in some, an unyielding spirit; in others, a self-justifying temper; in a third, a proud, rebellious, perverse disposition; in a fourth, lightness and frivolity of mind; so that, some of the Lord's people seem to require heavier burdens than others. But whether we require heavier burdens or lighter, to one spot, to one point, must every child of God come—to bow down, as a poor guilty sinner, at the footstool of mercy, there to receive the manifestations of mercy to his soul. As we read, "He brought down their heart with labour: they fell down; and there was none to help." Now comes the effect—"then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." (Ps. 107:12, 13.)

3. The next thing said of this people is, that it is **"from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto."** The word "from"

means, I think, the same thing as the word "of;" as though it ran thus: "In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts **of** a people scattered and peeled, and **of** a people terrible from their beginning hitherto." In other words, it is a mere repetition of the preceding preposition "of." And that this is the meaning of the expression, seems to me clear from the second verse of the chapter—"Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto." Not a people taken out of a people, but this being the character of **all that** people.

But in what sense is this peculiar people, thus brought as a present to the Lord of hosts, "terrible from their beginning hitherto?" The words seem to my mind to bear this spiritual meaning—the Lord's people who have clearly a work of grace upon their souls are a terror to their neighbours. The very world can see something in them which distinguishes them from the great mass of mankind. The very professor can see something in them which distinguishes them from others. And though they hate the image of Christ in them, though they abhor to see the features of grace, yet there is that in them which makes them terrible to empty professors, because of the conviction in their conscience, that they are destitute of those things which they see in them.

Those that are dead in sin, and those that are dead in a profession, are no terror to their neighbours. A man may have the soundest doctrines in his head, but if his life be worldly, inconsistent, and ungodly, he is a terror to nobody; the Lord's people justly shun him, the world deservedly scorn him, and professors cast out his name as evil. But wherever there is a real work of grace upon the heart; wherever the blessed Spirit has touched the conscience with his almighty finger, and planted the fear of God as a living principle within; wherever there is a separation from the world buried in sin or in profession, a living in the fear of the Lord, in uprightness of heart, simplicity, and godly sincerity—every such man, be he in a town or be he in a village,

is a secret terror to all, and more especially to those who have a name to live while dead.

If you can be as the great majority of professors are; if you have a Sunday religion, that you can put on when you take your Sunday clothes from the coffer, no one will be afraid of you. But if you have a religion in your heart, lip, and life, carried out in your walk and conversation, you will be one of those people who have been "terrible from their beginning hitherto." The Lord points this out as a characteristic mark of his people, distinguishing them from those who have the form without the power—that "from their beginning," from the very first implantation of divine life in their soul, from their first convictions, from their first cry and sigh, from their first separation from the world, from their first profession of the truth in the power of it, they were a terror.

And not only so, but "hitherto," up to the very time when they are brought to the footstool of mercy as a present to the Lord. They are terrible in conviction, and they are terrible in consolation. They are terrible when under the law, and they are terrible when under the gospel. They are terrible when almost a terror to themselves, and more terrible when the image of Christ is seen more clearly and distinctly in them.

Let them speak of convictions; their very convictions carry with them a weight of evidence which is a terror to those who have never felt convictions. Let them speak of consolations; their very speech, thus "seasoned with salt," is a terror to those who have never felt any genuine consolation. Let them speak of their trials, exercises, fears, doubts, sinkings, and misgivings; they are a terror, if they are on this dark side. Let them speak of the whispers of lovingkindness and tender mercy; let them speak of smiles from the Lord, and the manifestations of his favour; they are a greater terror on the bright side than they were on the dark. And thus the Lord's people have this mark stamped upon them, that they are terrible from their beginning hitherto.

4. Another mark stamped upon them is, that they are "**a nation meted out.**" The word "meted" means **measured**. "With what

measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you again." (Matt. 7:3) The present brought to the Lord in the text, is a people inwardly "meted out" in their hearts. How are they measured? Is it not by the Lord himself setting up a just balance in their souls? Are not the Lord's people measured out in their own experience before God.? Depend upon it, if we have never been measured up in our feelings before God, the Lord himself has not put a just balance into our soul.

But what is this meting out? It is when the Lord is pleased to bring us to the bar of judgment; then are we measured. It is when the Lord is pleased to send home some powerful passage of his word to the heart; then there is a meting out. When we hear the experience of God's people and find our own fall short of it; then there is a meting out. When we see our deficiencies, feel our shortcomings, have a sense of our imperfections, remember our backslidings, and mourn over our continual idolatries; then there is a meting out. When we look at what the Lord does for others—the sweet smiles, the heavenly testimonies he bestows upon his people, and feel ourselves to come short in these things; then there is a meting out. When we see some of the Lord's people walking closely with God, having much of his manifested favour, living a consistent life, a life of devotedness to the Son of God, and putting us to shame by their uprightness, consistency, and inward close communion with Jesus; then there is meting out.

And this ever will be the verdict of a tender conscience. A man who has nothing but a name to live while dead—the doctrines of grace in his head without any tender feeling in his soul—is never measured up, never meted out. He has no tender conscience, no godly fear, no sense of God's purity and holiness, no trembling at God's word, no discovery of God's holy law, no knowledge of his own wickedness and sinfulness before him.

But the Lord's people carry in their bosom that fear of God which is "the beginning of wisdom." The Lord's people have in their breast a conscience made tender and alive. And this conscience that the Lord's people have, falls under the power of truth, bends

before the word of God, submits to that which is commended to their heart and comes with divine weight, authority, and power attending it.

Thus the Lord's people, from time to time, are "meted out," by having their experience brought forth and tested by God's unerring word; by having, from time to time, deep exercises whether what they hope God has done for their souls is in strict consistency with the experience of the saints, whether their hopes and expectations are really such as will meet with the divine approval.

And this is the intent, and this is the profit, of a heart-searching ministry. God from time to time send such ministers among you! The child of God, whose conscience is tender, when he hears a heart-searching ministry, does not sit in criticising judgment. He looks inward. He wants to know whether the sentence of conscience is in his favour; whether he has a sweet testimony, that he himself has passed through these vital things in his soul. Where he falls short, he desires the Lord will accomplish what he has not fully experienced. What he has experienced, he blesses God for; where he is a deficient, he cries, "What I know not, teach thou me."

Thus under a heart-searching ministry, he bares his bosom, and compares the work of God as traced out in the ministry with what God has done for him. Where it is lacking, he feels a fear; where there is a mark, he feels a sweet hope. So that the Lord's people are distinguished from all people on the face of the globe, by being thus experimentally "meted out" by the Spirit of God shining with divine light into their heart, and holding up this balance, in which are weighed up their thoughts, words, and actions, their profession and possession, in the court of conscience.

But those that are dead in sin, or dead in a profession, know nothing of this weighing up. They are offended by an honest testimony. They rise up in resentment and rebellion against those

who "take forth the precious from the vile." They cannot bear to hear the teachings and operations of God the Spirit upon the heart set forth, for they are condemned thereby. One whose conscience is made tender in God's fear, desires to hear the operations of the Spirit traced out, that he may have some testimony that God is with him of a truth. And if he can find his experience sweetly unfolded, if light be cast upon his path, blessed sensations spring up in his heart of thankfulness to God, that such feelings have passed through his soul, and he praises God, that ever he has looked upon him in mercy and love.

But all others resent it; they cannot bear to hear the life-giving power of the Spirit insisted upon, because it unmasks their hypocrisy, and shows the emptiness of their profession.

5. **"And trodden under foot."** This is another mark of the Lord's people, who are brought as a present to the Lord of hosts—they are "trodden under foot." How scorned, despised, and contemned are the Lord's people! This is the mark and stamp the Lord the Spirit has fixed upon them. By this they are known from others—they are "trodden under foot," despised by men, rejected and cast out, as their Master was before them; "trodden under foot," as too contemptible to be thought of, as though they were the very dung and off-scouring of the earth. Let a man be ever so respectable, as it is termed, in life, if he has the grace of God in his soul, he will be "trodden under foot".

Let a minister only contend for the teachings and operations of the Spirit upon the heart, he will be "trodden under foot." Let a child of God come forward, in simplicity and honesty of soul, to speak of the Lord's dealings with him, he will be "trodden under foot." All will despise him, except the people of God, who will feel sweet communion with him. All will pour contempt upon him, scorn his profession, and hate his religion, because he makes the creature nothing, and makes God all in all; because he feels and says, that he has nothing but what God gives, knows nothing but what God teaches, feels nothing but what God inspires, and brings forth nothing but what God creates.

This is a sound most irksome to human ears. They can listen with approbation to the dignity of man and the doings of the creature. But the dealings of the Holy Spirit with broken hearts and contrite souls, the riches of Christ's grace to the poor and needy, they despise, and ever will despise; and the more a man has of the likeness and image of Christ in his soul, and the more he is manifested as one of God's own family, the more will he be "trodden under foot".

But this is not all—there is a keener stroke than this. You and I can bear the contempt of man, if we have the solemn approbation of God in our soul. We can bear the sneer, jeer, and scorn of mortal worms, who shall die, and whose breath is in their nostrils, if we have a testimony in our souls that the Lord is our God.

But to come to this painful point—to be "trodden under foot" of **ourselves**; not merely to be "trodden under foot" of men—**that** we can bear; but to be "trodden under foot" of **ourselves**; to see and feel ourselves to be beyond description, the vilest of the vile, the filthiest of the filthy; to feel ourselves dung indeed before God, the off-scouring of all things, everything hateful and loathsome before his pure and holy eyes—**this** is trying.

But it is these feelings that make us also tread upon all that nature so highly prized before. We tread upon our own wisdom, our own strength, our own attainments, our own qualifications; we tread upon them all, as mean and despicable in the eyes of a heart-searching God.

But what is more cutting still, many of the Lord's people have to fear, deeply and painfully to fear, lest they should be also "trodden under foot" **of God**; feeling themselves so vile, base, abject, and despicable, as to fear lest the divine foot should trample them into hell.

Thus there is a three-fold meaning in this "trodden under foot"—"trodden under foot" of **men**—"trodden under foot" of **ourselves**—and sometimes fearing lest we should be "trodden under foot" of **God**—and the last the keenest and most cutting stroke of all.

6. "**Whose land the rivers have spoiled.**" They had a land then once, and a beautiful land it was—if not in reality, at least in imagination. Upon this land they could look, as a wealthy land-owner sometimes walks up and down the length and breadth of his estate; or as Nebuchadnezzar contemplated the city he had built for himself with self-complacent admiration.

Who of us has not had a land that he has admired and idolized as his own estate? his property, his children, his reputation, his worldly prospects, his fancied paradise, the little Eden set up in imagination, though he never had it in possession? But this "land the rivers have spoiled".

We cannot enter into the full force of this expression, because the rivers in our country are so different from the rivers in Palestine. There torrents rush with violence from the mountains, and carry devastation before them. The rivers in our level country rather fertilize than destroy; but in that mountainous country they come down with such force, and bring with them such a series of stones, mud, and earth, that instead of fertilizing, they spoil the land over which they rush. This, then, is the figure the Spirit has used—"whose land the rivers have spoiled"; that is, these unexpected mountain streams (**for they come down suddenly**) rush upon the land, and spoil its smiling produce, so laboriously and assiduously cultivated. The fields were expected to bring forth a rich harvest, but now the rivers have spoiled them.

Has it not been so with the land in which you once so delighted? When you were young, you looked forward to a life of happiness; you were to be married, and you and your family were to enjoy an imaginary paradise. But your land the rivers have spoiled. Some dear object of creature affection has been torn from your

embrace; and thus the land that once smiled like the garden of Eden has been spoiled by the sudden rolling down of a mountain river.

Perhaps you had been calculating how you would get on in life, laying your plans, and drawing your schemes, expecting to be very comfortable and respectable in worldly circumstances. Alas, the river has rushed down, and spoiled and desolated the land!

When, too, you began to think about religion, you thought you would cultivate your heart, bring forth faith, hope, and love, and all the fruits of the Spirit, by due attendance on the means of grace. But this land also the rivers have spoiled. Look at your worldly schemes **now**—look at your heart, and the image it presents **now**. The once fancied fertile land—the mountain rivers and torrents have flowed over it, and covered it with earth, dirt and stones. Has it not been so? Have you not felt that the rivers have spoiled it? that your earthly paradise, your fancied Eden, is devastated? Are you not now distressed in soul, cast down in spirit, tempted by Satan; and those very things from which you expected to reap a rich harvest of joy and consolation have now become a plague and torment to you?

Who would have thought that such a people as this should be presented to the Lord of hosts—a people that nobody else would take? Who would not have thought, viewing the subject in a natural light, that the Lord would take the rich, the noble, the learned, the respectable, the well-educated, the pious, the religious, and the holy; those who have never sinned against him, like the elder son in the 'Prodigal'? Who would not think, that if the Lord looked upon any people at all, he would look upon such? But the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. The people whom he takes as a present to himself, are a people universally despised and hated, and by none so much despised and hated as by themselves.

My friends, can any of you find these marks meeting in your soul's experience? Here we have the inspired word of God giving

us a spiritual description of the people who are to be brought as a present to the Lord of hosts. Let me read once more their character: "In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto: a nation meted out, and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled."

As I have gone through the text, so far as the Lord has enabled me to trace out the marks the blessed Spirit has given, has there been a solemn echo in your soul? has there been a secret "Amen" in your heart's experience that you, through mercy, are one of the people thus experimentally described?

II.—As these, then, are to be brought as a present unto the Lord of hosts, **where** is this present to be received?—"**to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.**" **There** it is the present is to be brought; and this casts a light upon the reason why the Lord accepts this people. It is only in mount Zion that they can be accepted; that is, in the gospel, which mount Zion signifies.

It is out of Zion that the law was to go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; it was in Zion that the Lord commanded the blessing. Here her saints shout aloud for joy; here the great mystery is unravelled; here the enigma is solved. The holy God could not look upon this people with acceptance viewed as they are in nature's rags and ruin. But when the blessed Spirit brings this people, with all their guilt and wretchedness to mount Zion (as the Apostle says), "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven,"—when (Heb. 12:22) the blessed Spirit brings this people described by these characters, "scattered, peeled, meted out, and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled"—brings them all poor and needy, brings them all tatters and rags, brings them all wretchedness and ruin to mount Zion, there they receive a precious Jesus into their heart, in the sweet, unctuous teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Thus coming to mount Zion, God can receive them as a present, all broken and shattered though they are, because he receives them in the Person, love, blood, and righteousness of his dear Son. And this solves the mystery. How could you and I, all filthy and defiled as we feel ourselves to be—how could we dare to present ourselves before the footstool of omniscient purity in our native rags and creature ruin? We cannot; we dare not. But when there is a spiritual discovery to the conscience of "the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus," faith receives the atonement; the soul feels Jesus near, dear, and precious; there is a sweet melting sensation under the dewy teachings of the blessed Spirit whereby he is received into the heart and affections as "of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption".

And thus the Father indeed can smile upon this wretched people, and thus indeed can the present be acceptably brought to the feet of the Lord of hosts at mount Zion. Jesus presents them to his Father, clothed with his righteousness, washed in his blood, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing.

Thus have I, however feebly, endeavoured this evening to describe the character of the Lord's people as a present made, and the way in which this present is received.

What are we presenting from time to time when we come before the footstool of mercy? When we visit a throne of grace, what do we lay down there? Our own righteousness? our promises? our vows? our resolutions? what we have been? what we intend to be? Can we insult the Majesty of heaven by going to his feet, and offering him this? No; we cannot; we dare not.

If we have a discovery of God's holy character; if we have a sense of our guilt and ruin before him—as the text describes God's people—we shall come poor and needy, having nothing and being nothing, lying low at the footstool of mercy, deserving God's eternal displeasure, and yet looking up to the Mediator

between God and man, and embracing, as the Spirit gives faith and power, the crucified Jesus, as all our salvation and all our desire.

But how different this is from the ways and works of man! "Make yourselves better, reform your lives, lop off the branches of sin, give up bad habits, forsake old companions, make yourselves new hearts." Is not this the language of the day? Do not these words sound from a thousand pulpits? And what is the fruit of all this lip labour? To make the proud prouder, and the hard harder; to drive farther from God those who are already far from him.

The Lord the Spirit does not teach his people thus. He teaches the people of God what they are; he leads them to the hole of the pit whence they were digged, makes them feel their ruin and wretchedness, and shows them, and that effectually, what they are—guilty, vile, lost, perishing, and undone. Thus he opens a way to receive Jesus, as of God made unto them all he is to the church.

When I feel my helplessness, it makes me come unto him on whom help is laid. When I feel my poverty, if I see his boundless riches, it makes me highly prize them. If I feel my guilt, and the blessed Spirit reveal his blood, how suitable to my guilty conscience! If I see my nakedness, how suitable is his glorious righteousness! If I feel sinking, how suitable to have the everlasting arms upholding my drooping soul! These are the qualifications that the blessed Spirit works in the hearts of God's people; which are not required once only, but are continually needful; for only so far as these qualifications are wrought and brought forth in our hearts, can we see any glory, any beauty, any preciousness, or any suitability in Jesus.

Have then you and I ever felt him precious? I hope I have at times felt him precious to my soul. But when has it been? When we have been wise, holy, righteous, religious, and doing something for him? No; not so. When we were poor and needy; when smitten with guilt and shame; when bowed down with the

guilt of sin; when sunk into the ruins of self; when we had nothing and were nothing but rags and wretchedness. Then it is that the Lord of life and glory makes himself precious to the perishing sinner by opening up the riches of his dying love to the broken and contrite heart. This is the way, the only way, to grow up as he is; and this is the way, the only way, to grow up into Christ when received.

My friends, your own wisdom, your own strength, your own righteousness, your own religion—away with it! It is not worth a straw in the things of God. But the deeper you feel your need, the more suitable Jesus is. The more empty, the more room to be filled; the more stripped, the more room to be clothed; the more cast down, the more room to be raised up.

And thus, when opened up in the Spirit's light, we see what a suitable present this is for the Lord. Is it not a monarch's highest boast and prerogative to be free and bountiful? Is not this glorifying to the regal dignity of the Son of God—to receive nothing, but to bestow everything? What! shall I give him my righteousness as an equivalent? Shall I present him my good and holy life to purchase his dying love? It is worthless. But when I come as having nothing and being nothing but a mass of depravity and rags, and he is pleased to discover to my needy, naked soul his suitability and preciousness, what a sweet union there is between a poor sinner and a complete Saviour, betwixt a broken heart and a precious Jesus, betwixt a soul in its feelings of guilt and shame and him who is mighty to save, "God over all, blessed for ever."

Do you hope—do any of you hope—that you will one day face to face see the Lord as he is? that you are among this present which is to be brought to the Lord of hosts, to appear on mount Zion, with eternal glory on your heads, when sorrow and sighing flee away? Is this your hope? Do you look up sometimes with a good expectation that you will one day be safe before the throne? But can you find any mark I have described in your experience? To know this, is to know the whole case: for if you are received and

presented on mount Zion here below, you will be presented hereafter and stand on mount Zion above.

It is a mercy to feel any marks of grace written by the finger of God upon your heart and conscience. It is not because you are very holy, very spiritual, very consistent, though these are good when they come from the work of the Holy Spirit, and are his blessed fruits and graces. But we are not to bring these things, and lay them at the footstool of mercy, as though we could exchange **them** for "gold tried in the fire." No, the Lord will teach us that we are indeed poor and needy; that we are nothing and have nothing; that what we have is his gift, and what we are is his work.

Have I then had this evening a witness in some hearts, that they do know these things by vital experience? However tried, tempted, and cast down they may be, may God give them this sweet consolation that all their trials and exercises are for this one purpose—to lay them low and keep them low—to bring them a present to the Lord of hosts, and to endear him to their hearts in his covenant grace and dying love.

The Accuser of the Brethren Cast Down and Overcome

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, May 27, 1860

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death." Rev. 12:10, 11

Unfulfilled prophecy has occupied the thoughts and been the subject of much attention on the part of many preachers and writers in this day of widespread profession. And I must confess myself that I think it is scarcely possible for a person with an enlightened eye to read the Old Testament prophecies without seeing that many glorious things spoken therein concerning the Church of God have not yet had their strict and entire fulfilment. There was a time, indeed, in years gone by, when my mind seemed drawn to this subject, and when I took some pleasure in paying attention to it. But for the last four or five and twenty years I have felt my mind drawn from such matters by several considerations, which have weighed with some power upon my conscience. First, I have seen that the exercised family of God, especially the poor of the flock, have paid little attention to subjects of this nature; that they have not formed a part of their teaching from above, or been wrought in their experience by the power of God. I have seen also that when ministers have pursued these subjects with any degree of earnestness—and they are very attractive to certain minds not weighted by trials and afflictions—they have been drawn aside from the firm, solid ground of experimental truth to deal more in matters of speculation, and have thus left the power for the form, and the Spirit for the letter. I have moreover seen and felt that these subjects, though in themselves very great and glorious, are little adapted to a time of

sickness and affliction; that what we then want is the presence of God felt in our soul, the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our conscience, the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost, and clear testimonies and bright, indubitable evidences of our own interest in the finished work of the Son of God. As, then, these matters of gracious experience, in which not only all the life and power of vital godliness, but all hope of salvation itself depends and centres, press with weight and force upon the conscience, we are led to pay to them more undivided attention, and to feel that they must be our all in all. If a person were to offer me two bags, and say, "Here is a bag of silver for you and here is a bag of gold," I might not despise the silver; I might say, "I thank you very kindly for the offer of the silver bag: it is good coin; but I prefer the gold, though not a quarter the size, for there is more weight, substance, and, above all, more value in it." Thus, though I do not disregard and cast utterly out such subjects as are spoken of in the prophets and the Book of Revelation, which I see looming in the distant future, and to have, as such, a glory of their own, yet I want, for my own soul's need, something closer, nearer, more wrought into my very heart; a vital, personal, individual experience of love and blood, grace and truth, presence and power, manifestation and revelation; in a word, of Christ and his salvation, tasted, handled, felt, and enjoyed. At such seasons, which may come soon, and which must come sooner or later, I shall not want my thoughts occupied with subjects that I might understand merely with my brain and speculate upon as pure matters of opinion, but those vital realities and heaven-sent blessings which shall support my soul in sinking moments, and bear me safe through the swellings of Jordan.

But, apart from these thoughts and feelings which embody the result of my own experience on this subject, in reading the Prophets, I see not merely glorious things spoken of the Church of God which will no doubt have their fulfilment at the appointed time, such as the conversion of the Jews and the millennial reign of peace; but I realise in these very unfulfilled prophecies an experimental meaning. I feel that the Church of God is already in a spiritual possession of the very blessings predicted; for I have

no idea of a carnal millennium; of a peace distinct from the peace of God which "passeth all understanding;" or of a prosperity in which the soul does not live under his smile. I cannot here enlarge, but simply throw this out that you may see that I am not one of those interpreters of the word, who see in it visions of future glory distinct from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and a dispensation of blessings different from such as are now communicated to the church by the Holy Ghost. So without professing any large or peculiar measure of divine light, I can also see experimental things couched in the descriptions given in the Prophets both of the future sufferings and the future deliverances of the church of God. Take, for instance, the words before us. I have no doubt that as written by the pen of John through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, there was some prospective reference in them to events which certainly then had not taken place; say, for instance, the sufferings of the martyrs under the Roman emperors. This, then, when written, was unfulfilled prophecy, and was fulfilled when the martyrs overcame all accusations and all sufferings by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. But under this external surface, inside this shell (shall I call it?) of once unfulfilled prophecy, I find something experimental, suitable, sweet, and precious not only then but now; not only for the outward martyrs but for the inward martyrs: not only for the fighters and conquerors of the second and third centuries, but of the nineteenth, and till time itself shall be no more. And in this way, with God's blessing, I shall treat our subject this morning: neglecting,—not despising, but for a moment neglecting the more literal explanation of it as indicative of a then unfulfilled event, and preferring, as more suitable and profitable, to dwell upon those personal and experimental matters that seem to my mind to spring up directly from the words of the text. In so doing let me call your attention to three main features which seem to me to stand forward very prominently in it:

I.—First, the description that God has given of the "*accuser of the brethren,*" and especially as stamping upon him this character, that he "*accused them before our God day and night.*"

II.—Secondly, that this accuser of the brethren was *cast down and overcome*, the Holy Ghost blessedly adding the three ways by which the brethren were enabled to come off more than conquerors: *the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and their martyr spirit*, the last weapon being indicated by the words that "*they loved not their lives unto the death.*"

III.—Thirdly, *the shout of triumph*, heard in consequence in the very courts of heaven, "*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.*"

I.—The "accuser of the brethren," beyond all doubt, is Satan. We find him thus introduced in various parts of God's word, as, for instance, in the opening of the book of Job, where he comes to accuse Job before God as serving the Lord merely for the temporal benefits that had been bestowed upon him, and insinuating that if God put forth his hand and touched his substance or touched his person, he would manifest that he was not what he was generally taken to be, one who feared him above all other men, but that he would curse God to his face. Now, as regards this personal accusation of the saints represented in our text by the words "before our God," we can hardly think that Satan has admission into the very courts of bliss, there in the highest heavens to accuse personally the saints; for we read of "the celestial city which descended out of heaven from God" that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (Rev. 21:10, 27.) How, then, can the worker of all abomination, the great lover and maker of lies, find access into the courts of heaven? If nothing can enter there which defileth, how can the head defiler, the defiler in chief, the foul fiend of all iniquity, who is ever seeking to defile the imagination, pollute the lips, and stain the life of the saints of God, and to fill the world with blood and crime, obtain access there? How can we believe for a single moment that he can pass the borders of heaven and come into the immediate presence of God, who is holiness itself? But you will say that it is so represented in Job and the last

chapter of 1 Kings. I quite admit that; but I believe that it is represented so to our faith; it is to bring the subject more clearly and vividly before our mind, and impress it with greater power upon our soul. Thus, in our text, the accuser of the brethren is spoken of as accusing them before God: not that he went into the very presence of God, into heaven itself, where Jesus now rules and reigns at the right hand of the Father; that *there* he stood before the throne of God and the Lamb, and *there*, pointing his finger to the saints of God upon earth, kept accusing them day and night, as if he himself were always in heaven seeing the face of Jehovah, of the various crimes he could lay to their charge. Surely, amidst the music of saints and the songs of angels, there is not heard the screech of devils. I can no more believe this than I can believe there will be heard in heaven in the day of the grand jubilee, the blasphemies of the lost mingling with the praises of the saved. But in accusing them before God, Satan is represented mystically, this being above all others a mystical book and full of figures and emblems, as accusing them where the presence of God is especially felt, and where everything lies naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. In this sense he accuses them "before" or in the presence of God. And as the conscience is the place where the presence of God is peculiarly felt in the matter of accusation, it is in the court of conscience that the accuser of the brethren accuses them before God day and night. Thus, as the Lord searches the heart by his Spirit and grace, lays open and bare before his eye every secret crevice and corner, and this is, so to speak, the battle-field where the grand contest, the fight of faith for eternal life, is fought and won, we may say that in accusing them before our God day and night, it is in the court of conscience, in that place where the presence and power of God are sensibly felt, that this accuser of the brethren lays his weighty charges.

1. But this accuser of the brethren must have some real and substantial, some true and well-grounded, accusations to bring, or his charges would fall to the ground at once, or after a short investigation. If I were to accuse a man of any crime, unless there were some foundation for my accusation, it would fall back

upon my own head, and I should be branded as a base calumniator of an innocent person. So if Satan had no ground to go upon, his accusations would at once fall back upon his own head; he would have no place on which he could stand, but be at once put out of court. That which gives Satan such power as an accuser in our conscience, and makes his accusations to be so telling is, that there is truth in them; and our conscience, so far as it is made and kept alive and tender in the fear of God, is compelled, necessarily compelled, to fall under the accusations laid to our charge. To bring the matter more clearly and vividly before your eyes, let me represent how the believing soul, under divine teaching, stands before God in prayer and supplication in its solemn approaches to the throne. Now as in the book of Zechariah (3:1), when Joshua stood before the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him; so sometimes in a measure it is in our approaches to the throne of grace. Satan stands at our right hand to resist us; and the way he resists us is by bringing accusations, which sometimes from the reality, and sometimes from the appearance of truth, we in our own strength have no power to repel. When, for instance, he accused Joshua of being "clothed in filthy garments," Joshua could not deny the charge: the filthy garments were actually at that very moment upon him. He had but to look down, and the garments themselves hung all round him as so many undeniable present witnesses to the truth of the charge. So if Satan brings against you, in the court of conscience, such and such sins, such and such slips and falls, such and such backslidings as committed by you, your own conscience bears witness to the truth of the charge; and it is this which gives the accusation such power and such pungency. Or take a child of grace under the first teachings of God, drawing near to the throne under a feeling sense of guilt; the dreadful curse of the law raging as a fire in his bones; the anger of God reflected upon his conscience as a consuming fire; the terrors of hell setting themselves in array against him, and the fears of death, the very king of terrors, standing up before his eye as so many gaunt spectres to usher in his fearful doom. But how, it may be asked, does Satan accuse this trembling sinner, and how are we to distinguish between his accusations and those of the

law and of conscience? That he does accuse him is most certainly true, for he accuses day and night, that is, continually. But the way in which he accuses is this. He adds to all the weight and force of a condemning law and an accusing conscience, by representing in the blackest light the sins and crimes of which that trembling one has been guilty. He makes the case out to be as bad, as desperate, and as hopeless as he possibly can. And in the old state trials, before England had won her present liberties, the counsel for the crown always stated the case against the prisoner in the strongest language and painted his imputed treason in the blackest colours, endeavouring, by force or fraud, to secure his conviction; so Satan, as the accuser of the brethren, in seeking to condemn a guilty soul, will ever bring forward the blackest facts and represent them before the eyes in the darkest colours. All the sins that you may have committed from infancy upward; every crime that you may have been guilty of before you were called by grace, and every slip and fall that you may have made since; all these he will bring before your eyes and accuse you with as utterly unpardonable, so that it shall seem at times as though you must sink under their dreadful guilt and burden, and scarcely lift up your eyes to heaven to beg for mercy. And not only whilst under the law, when there is nothing before the eyes but death and terror, but even after the Lord has been pleased to favour the soul with some good hope in his mercy, or with some manifestation of his pardoning love and grace, and some inward testimony of a personal interest in the blood of the Lamb, Satan will not even then cease his accusations. He will accuse of hypocrisy, of insincerity, of deceit; that what the soul felt and handled and tasted in these seasons was not of God, was merely an ebullition of nature, arose from excitement, or delusion, or something that was not a divine reality. And if in an hour of temptation, we have been betrayed into any slip or fall; if Satan, by spreading a suitable snare, has gained the victory over us, and we have had to fall down before God with a cry in our heart, "Unclean, unclean! guilty, guilty, before thee!" how then will he add all the weight of his charges and accusations, and how the accuser of the brethren, who knows neither mercy nor pity, will press home the charge that he may sink the soul into utter

despair.

2. But he is said to accuse them "before our God *day and night*;" that is, incessantly, and more by night than by day; for it is in the night season, when all is still and solemn, that Satan seems to have special access to the mind. In the day, the distractions of business, or worldly occupation, may seem for a time to draw the mind away from the things of God, and then Satan has not the same power as in those seasons when the world has for a time dropped its hold upon the attention, and business and occupation no longer press. Have you not sometimes waked up in the middle of the night with such gloom over your mind, such distress in your soul, such doubt, and guilt, and fear, that you could scarcely explain or account for; it may be terrified with horrid dreams, in one of which you have, as you dreamt, committed some dreadful sin, and wake up in guilt and alarm under its pressure? This Job felt, ascribing his dreams to God, as not seeing they came from Satan. "When I say, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions, so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life." (Job 7:13, 14, 15.) How Satan in these dark seasons, when night and silence thicken the gloom, will press home his charges, accusing of insincerity, hypocrisy, deceit, and delusion, and of anything and everything but what he knows to be true. For he, as the unwearied adversary, as the great accuser of the brethren, has false charges to bring as well as real. He can accuse of hypocrisy, when the heart is hating the very thought of it; of insincerity, when God has planted his fear deep within for the very purpose of making it right before him; of infidelity, blasphemy, of sinning against the Holy Ghost—sins which of all others the regenerated soul most abhors and from which it is really most free. But as the seeds of all these sins are in us and their workings felt, Satan acts on these seeds and these workings, warming them as it were into life as the serpent's eggs, and then fathers these crawling reptiles on our regenerate heart. He thus accuses us of all these sins, as though, by feeling them, we had consented to them, and as if they spontaneously emanated from us, as our own cherished and indulged children,

when all the while they are but hatched on the dunghill of our nature by his own infernal breath, and might scarcely have life to crawl, bite, or sting, unless he had brooded over them to hatch them from the egg. Thus sometimes, by true charges and sometimes by false; sometimes by taking advantage of us in the hour of temptation to cast down into a snare, and sometimes embracing the opportunity of the guilt and despondency gendered by the slipping into it, to press the accusation of the very evil that he has led us into, does this accuser of the brethren accuse the saint before the throne of God day and night? You may indeed not have been able to trace whence these accusations came; and in fact it is very difficult to distinguish between the accusations of the law, of your own conscience, of the wrath of God, of the witness within of your own guilt and shame, and those accusations that Satan brings as the accuser of the brethren. As in a crowd, where there is a hubbub of voices, it is hard to distinguish one voice from another; so in the confusion that sometimes takes place in the mind, (as Job says, "I am full of confusion,") it is very difficult to distinguish the accusing voice of Satan from the accusing voice of conscience; the despondency that Satan creates by his false charges from that created by the rebukes and frowns of God. So what with the confusion into which the mind is thrown, rendering it unable to distinguish the false from the real, and the force and pungency of those accusations which are true, the accused soul hardly knows what to say or do, for that which gives the accuser of the brethren such great power, is that he has a witness against us in our own bosom.

II.—But I pass on to show that though the brethren in our text were accused by Satan day and night, and though there were many things in them which gave power and pungency to his accusations, yet the accuser did not prove the victor: *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."* Victory is certain for all the saints of God. They are made more than conquerors through him that loved them. They will come triumphantly out of all charges. The conflict may be fierce, the

fight severe and long, but victory is sure in the end.

I. But observe *how* the brethren met the charges. If a man is accused of a crime, the best way to deliver himself from the accusation is clearly to prove his innocence. But what is a man to do if his own conscience be against him, if he be really guilty of the crime laid to his charge? How is he, then, able to prove his innocency? He must then do one of these two things, either confess his crime and cry for free pardon, or he must find an advocate who can undertake his cause, and bring him off in spite of the accusations of his adversary and the condemnation of his own conscience. Now the brethren who were accused by Satan night and day never attempted for a moment to take the first course. They never thought of trying to establish their own righteousness, or to prove their own innocence. They knew well that such a plea would not be available; but any attempt to make it would only cover them with shame; that Satan would in a moment pierce through such armour; that such a sword would be struck out of their hands at the very first blow; that the very judge himself would refuse to receive such a plea; and that every one in court would cry shame upon the criminal if he attempted to make it. They must, therefore, they knew, turn their eyes in another direction and seek help from another quarter. But looking up, as if in despair of help, they caught a view of the bleeding Lamb, as the Lord Jesus Christ is represented in this very book: "And I beheld and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6); and as they thus by faith looked up to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, they viewed the atoning blood as it fell from his hands and feet and side, and every drop of that blood they saw was infinitely precious, for it had the value and validity of Godhead stamped upon it. Thus viewing the atoning blood of the Lamb, and finding and feeling its efficacy to purge their conscience from guilt, sin, and shame, they pleaded, as though they would say each for himself, "I am guilty, guilty, guilty; in myself I have nothing to plead as being innocent of these heavy charges; so far from that, I freely acknowledge that I deserve to be taken away, bound hand and

foot, and cast into outer darkness. The accuser of the brethren has brought for the most part accusations against me which I cannot answer, and though he may have aggravated them or mixed false charges with them, yet in substance they are true. But I turn my eyes away from all hope and help in self, and I view with the eyes of faith the atoning blood of the Lord the Lamb, and there I build my hope. This, then, is my plea—the blood of the Lamb. I have, I wish to have no other." Now this was a plea that Satan could not answer. He knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and God. He knew that it had been hung over his head as a declaration against him from the lips of him who cannot lie, when he was in the form of a serpent in the garden of Eden, that "the seed of the woman should bruise his head." He knew that the Son of God was to assume human nature into union with his divine Person, for how else could the seed of the woman, whom he had so easily beguiled and overcome, crush his head into the dust? And he also well knew, if not before yet certainly after the resurrection, that this was the way of salvation that God had purposed in his dear Son becoming man; and that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin when believingly viewed and experimentally made known. When, therefore, the blood of the Lamb was looked unto and presented before his eyes as an available plea, Satan felt that his accusations must fall to the ground, for here was God's own declaration of justification—the pardon of all the sins alleged against the criminal. In our earthly courts, if the sovereign steps in with a free pardon, the accused is at once released. This, before tyrannical and arbitrary sovereigns abused the privilege and were therefore stripped of it, was frequently the case in this country. But monarchs are but men, and we are therefore compelled to tie their hands lest power should defeat justice, and favouritism shut out merit. But the King of kings does not rule by human laws, and therefore freely pardons all whom he serves.

Still, there was *one thing* wanting. He might say, and does say, as an accuser in the conscience, "It is true, perfectly true, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; it is true, beyond all doubt and question, that the saints of God are washed in that

blood, and that by his righteousness they are all freely justified from all their sins;" for Satan, to serve his purpose, can preach truth as well as error; can point out the hopeless glories of heaven to desponding saints as well as hide the flames of hell from presumptuous sinners. "But," adds he, "true, most certainly as all this is, has that blood washed, has that glorious righteousness justified *you*? Are *you* a saint of God? If you were, would you have such a heart as you have? so filthy and unclean; so proud, rebellious, and unbelieving? Could you be continually imagining to yourself, and even indulge those thoughts and feelings, those desires and lusts, of which I accuse you to your face, and which you cannot deny? Would you have slipped and fallen as you have done on this or that occasion? Would you have been betrayed so easily, so that instead of sin tempting you, you rather tempted sin; and instead of my spreading the snare for you, you rather laid it down before your own feet? Would a child of God have acted so? And besides all these marks and evidences against you, what marks have you for you?" Thus, though the child of grace may appeal to atoning blood, yet Satan can meet that plea by saying, "It is true that the blood of Christ cleanses all the saints of God from all sin; but unless you are a saint of God, that blood is of no avail to you. That plea, therefore, cannot save you from my accusations and the wrath of God due for your sins." You see, then, that you want something more than your first plea. You want an evidence in your own bosom that you are a saint of God. Satan keeps telling you that you are a sinner—a sinner doomed to die, whom he will drag to hell, whom he will torment when he has got you there for ever and ever. You have to prove the accusation false, that you are not a lost sinner, but a saved saint. But you must have a witness in the same place where the accusation is; you must have a testimony in your conscience that you are a saint as well as that you are a sinner. Of that you want a clear evidence; and if the Lord is pleased to shed abroad his love in your heart, or sprinkle upon your conscience the atoning blood, or even, without any powerful manifestation, give you a considerable measure of faith, or raise up a sweet hope, or apply a precious word of promise to your heart, this gives you an evidence that though you are a sinner

and as such freely own the truth of Satan's accusations, yet you are a saint of God's own making, and that is so far an answer to his charge.

But there is something wanting still: *you must have the blood applied*. As the high priest took the blood of the bullock and goat and sprinkled it on and before the mercy seat; so the blood of sprinkling must be applied to the conscience, for it speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, which cried to God for vengeance, but this cries to God for mercy. In purging the conscience from guilt, the blood of sprinkling purges it from the accusations of Satan, for they cannot remain when guilt is gone. Nor is there any other way whereby the inward accusation of Satan can be overcome than by a sweet assurance of a personal interest in the atoning blood of Christ, through the precious blood being applied to the conscience and sprinkled by the Holy Ghost upon the heart.

ii. But they had another weapon whereby they fought Satan and overcame him: this was, *"the word of their testimony."* I understand by this expression two different things. 1, The testimony which the word bears to them; 2, The testimony which they bear to the word. The first is the testimony *from* the word; the second is the testimony *to* the word. Let us examine both:—

1. The word of God, not in the bare letter but as a living testimony from God, had been made life and power to their soul; as the Lord himself speaks, "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63.) It is called elsewhere "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." Now when the Lord is pleased to apply his word with power to the soul, it becomes "the word of our testimony;" or as it may be rendered, the word of our witness; that is to say, it bears a certain witness for God in the heart. When the sword is put by the power of God into our hands, then we can wield that weapon as given to us by the King of battles, who teacheth our hands to war and our fingers to fight. If ever the Lord has been pleased to apply a promise, bring home a

passage of Scripture, seal upon your heart any word of truth, he has made that portion of his word yours. As in ancient days, when the youthful warrior went into the field, the father took his own sword down from where it hung, and as he put it into his hand, said, "Go forth, my son, with this sword wherewith I once carved my way to victory. It is a true Damascus blade, which will neither break nor bend;" so when the Lord applies a passage to the soul, and brings a passage home with divine power to the heart, he puts the sword of the Spirit into the believer's hand, and by this sword of the Spirit he is enabled to fight with Satan. If there is power put into the word of God when applied to the heart, it becomes ours by the surest and best of all donations, for God has given it to us. We see how the blessed Lord, when tempted of Satan, answered again and again, "It is written! it is written! it is written!" And were not those words given him by his heavenly Father, as he himself speaks, "I have given them the words which thou hast given me?" (John 17:8.) Satan felt the keen edge of that sword and slunk away discomfited. We must follow, as far as enabled, this blessed example. There is no use reasoning with the devil, attempting to outface him and outwit him by carnal argument: he is too great a master of logic to be overcome by such weapons. The word of truth commended to your conscience, the word of God applied to your heart, your having a living faith in it, making a spiritual use of it, holding it up against Satan, sometimes to parry his attacks and sometimes to make him feel the point and edge of that keen sword; thus resist the devil, and he will flee from you. The word of God has wondrous power when it is divinely felt in all trials and conflicts, but in none more than in repelling the assaults of the wicked one. There is no better weapon, for instance, whereby we can meet the accusations of Satan, as referred to in our text, but the word of truth as made life and power to the soul. If God has ever spoken with power to your soul a word like this, "Go in peace: thy sins are all forgiven thee;" or if he has ever said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;" or if ever he has manifested mercy to your soul by the application of any promise to your heart, and in the hour of temptation and accusation brings to mind and memory what he

spake in days past, and enables you to take up the sword of the Spirit that may have lain in the scabbard for a while, but which now you are enabled to draw by the hand of faith: then you may engage Satan hand to hand and foot to foot. For this is "the word of your testimony" as being the witness from God in your conscience that he is on your side. Thus, these ancient saints, these blessed martyrs (for of them the Holy Ghost here chiefly speaks), when Satan accused them before God day and night, did not attempt vain reasonings, nor carnal arguments, nor to encounter him by his own weapons of logic and wisdom. They simply used the word of God's grace, the power of which they had felt in their own heart, which they knew had come from God by feeling its effects; and they cut Satan down with the sword of the Spirit, which God had put into their hands—the only weapon that Satan really feels or fears.

2. It thus became the word of their testimony *for* God as it had been made the word of their testimony *from* God. They could now testify to the mercy of God as felt, to his love as experienced, to his grace as made known, to his power as realised, and to his faithfulness as proved; and by testifying for God what they had received from God, they repelled the accusations of Satan by proving to his face that their Sovereign Judge before whom he accused them was their Father and their Friend.

iii. But there was a third weapon wherewith they fought and whereby they conquered, which I have briefly characterised as a *martyr spirit*, indicated by the words, "*and they loved not their lives unto the death.*" We do not hear of martyrs dragged to the stake in England now as in the days when Popery prevailed. The persecuting spirit smoulders in many breasts, but it has not yet relighted the fires of Smithfield. In foreign climes, however, as in Turkey, Spain, and in Italy, till late events snapped the yoke of king and priest, pope and prelate asunder, persecution drags the witnesses for Christ to loathsome prisons and deprives them if not of life, of life's chief treasure—liberty. But in our country, in this favoured isle, persecution in these open violent forms has ceased for many years, and we freely enjoy those civil and

religious liberties, for they stand or fall together, which our suffering forefathers won. But, though outward martyrdom has ceased, there are inward martyrs. Stake and bonfire, hot pincers and thumbscrews, rack and torture are not used now; and fines and imprisonment for religious belief the spirit of the times will not suffer. The scourge of the tongue is now wielded instead of the scourge on the back, the character is branded instead of the forehead, and they cut off reputations instead of cutting off ears. But there are other martyrs besides those who have died at the stake and languished in prisons. Hart beautifully says:—

"See the suffering Church of Christ,
Gathered from all quarters:
All contained in that red list,
Were not murdered martyrs."

There is an inward as well as an outward martyrdom—a torture of soul as well as a torture of the body; and in this sense all the people of God are martyrs. Nor has the martyr spirit ceased, any more than the martyr feeling. And if we are to have our portion among the martyrs who yielded up their lives at the stake, and died in earthly torment, we must carry in our bosom a martyr spirit, and have the same feeling though we have not to endure the same fate. This martyr spirit is expressed by the words "They loved not their lives unto the death." They freely parted with their lives sooner than deny the blessed Lord, or yield to the accusations and suggestions of Satan. Naturally they loved their lives as men must love them. But they did not love their lives so as to love them more than salvation, more than grace, more than the gospel for which they bled, and more than the Lord who died for them. When death presented itself in its most terrible and appalling forms they did not say, "I must, I will save my life. O death, I fear thee! Sooner than die by cruel tortures, I will betray my Lord, and give up all my religion. Life is so sweet to me and death so terrible, that sooner than die I will renounce all I have professed to believe, and will say, do, and be anything you wish." The martyr spirit in their bosom prevented such a betraying of Christ as that, whatever might await them in the shape of death.

Then you must have the same martyr spirit in your heart, though not displayed in the same way, be willing to suffer for Christ's sake, though not to be thrown to the wild beasts like the ancient Christians, or die at the stake as our English martyrs. Come what will, come what may, to feel a holy determination in Christ's strength, not your own, never to give up the truth of God; but feeling it dear to your soul, to hold it with all the power that God may give, so that nothing shall ever tear it away from your breast, even though life itself be at stake. If a man has ever felt the truth of God in his heart as a heavenly blessing; if the mercy, grace, love, presence, and power of God have ever been experienced in his conscience, he will hold these divine realities to be dearer to him than anything else—than wife, or children, or land, or house, or possessions, or name, or fame, or reputation, or character. In favoured moments, when the Lord Jesus Christ is made precious to his soul, and his truth comes with liberating, sanctifying power into his heart, nothing is so dear to him as the truth of God. Now apply this to Satan's accusations, and see how this martyr spirit of not loving our lives unto the death meets them. It may be that he has accused you, among his other charges, of insincerity and hypocrisy, of delusion, deception; that what you know you merely know in the letter; that what you have felt has been felt only in the flesh; and that what you have received has not been received by the power of God into a believing heart, but naturally and notionally into an enlightened judgment. These insinuations and accusations are very staggering, for there is a measure of truth in them, our carnal mind being really and truly all that Satan accuses us of. But in spite of all this, where the grace of God is in the heart there is an inward determination not to yield to these accusations, but to hold fast by the truth of God and what we have felt of its power, come what will. This is the martyr spirit; for as the martyrs would not give up what they believed at the command of their persecutors, so we will not, and cannot give up what we have believed and felt at the accusations of Satan. This was the martyrs' last stand; here they fought for eternal life; here they resisted unto blood; here they yielded up their breath sooner than deny Christ; and here by dying for Christ they won Christ,

for here they proved the truth of his own words, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:25.) In the same spirit must we resist, and by resisting overcome the accusations of Satan. "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown," must be our motto and watchword. Have you not at times felt in your bosom that, come what will, you never can forget and never can give up what the Lord has sealed upon your breast with power; that his truth has been at various times made very precious to you; that a measure of his love has been shed abroad in your heart; and that Christ has discovered himself to your soul as "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely?" To this felt experience of the power and truth of God, you look in life and death; upon this blessed Jesus as revealed to your soul you hang your only hope; from this discovery of salvation through his blood and love, you derive your chief consolation in this vale of tears, and in the strength of it, and in the renewed manifestation of it, you hope and wish to die. Christ at hand, not far off; salvation in your soul, not in the bare letter of the word; the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in your conscience, not in the Scriptures only; the presence, the smiles, the pardoning love of God inwardly enjoyed; these divine realities will alone make your death-bed happy. How, then, can you surrender at Satan's call what you have felt, tasted, and handled for yourself of the word of life? Armed in this armour of proof, you can stand against the wiles of the devil. Satan, with all his accusations of slips and falls, darkness, coldness, rebellion, ingratitude, unbelief, and his numerous other pleas, whether true or false, cannot really sustain a single charge against a saint whose heart God has made true and honest, and in whose soul he has wrought by his holy Spirit any measure of gracious, living experience; for he, having the martyr spirit, loves the truth, from what he has known and felt of its power, above everything. And sooner than part with that he will part with his natural life.

Just observe, then, how the saint of God meets Satan when he accuses him before God day and night. Look at the three weapons that God has given him wherewith to fight the accuser

of the brethren, and see how, by the use of these three weapons, he comes off more than conqueror. First, he looks to the atoning blood of the Lamb, as shed upon Calvary's tree, revealed to his soul by the power of God as cleansing from all sin, and sprinkled upon his conscience by a divine operation. He looks to that atoning blood as his chief, his only hope, and under a believing view of it, can say, "Satan, I acknowledge I am a sinner, and one of the worst and vilest, yea, of sinners the very chief; but here I build my hope. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. I am baser and blacker than you have represented or can represent me, but washed in that precious blood I can stand before God accepted in the beloved." Then he can say, as favoured with faith to employ the second weapon, "Here is the word of God's testimony, the power of which I have felt in my heart. It is God's word, and what God has said must be fulfilled. If God has declared that he has loved me with an everlasting love, that word will stand. If God has assured me, or gives me any sweet evidence, that I am one of his children, his testimony will stand in spite of all your accusations. If the Lord has loved me, has given Himself for me, and has drawn me with cords of love because he has so loved me, his love will stand firm and fast, for those whom he loveth he loveth unto the end, whatever charges may be brought against me of what I am and have been in myself. And as to all else, let all go except what God has done for my soul. Let health, let strength, let property, let substance, let name and fame and character and reputation all go: they are not my life, they are not my hope, they are not my all. Sooner than part with the Lord Jesus Christ, give up my hope and sink in despair,—sooner than do that, I will make my last sacrifice, I will yield up my natural life." Thus by looking to the atoning blood of the Lamb, holding fast the word of God's testimony, and being possessed of a martyr spirit to hold to Christ even though death itself were to ensue,—by these three weapons the saints whom Satan accused before God day and night were able to overcome him; and by these three weapons and the right use of them do the saints overcome him now.

III.—And now, to come to our third and last point, as these

martyrs thus spoke and acted, the approbation of God himself sounded from above, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven"—as though God himself, witnessing the bloody conflict here below, hearing Satan's accusations and how the saints of God were able to meet and overcome them, spoke from heaven itself with his own approving voice, "*Now is come salvation, and strength*, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Whilst they were engaged in the conflict; whilst Satan was accusing and pressing his charges, and they were only just able to meet him with the weapons put into their hand, fighting and struggling as dying men, saving thereby their lives as they were losing them, salvation had not come in all its blessedness, fulness, and power. But when the accuser was cast down; when baffled and defeated and driven out of his attempted conquest he slunk away as a conquered foe, then salvation began to open itself in all its blessed reality, in all its fulness, its certainty, and its glory. It is after temptations, battles, conflicts, and God enabling us to get the victory over them, that the fulness and blessedness of God's salvation are seen. Salvation then becomes a reality—not a mere truth in God's inspired word; not a mere doctrine floating in the brain, or an article of a sound creed written down in the church book; but a solid reality as revealed to the soul by the power of God.

1. "*Now is come salvation:*" as though the believing soul should now say, "Before this conflict, this struggle for life, this fight with Satan, I saw salvation at a distance; but now, O now, salvation is come! It has come into my heart as a blessed reality. I now know that I am saved by the power of God; for Satan, who has been accusing me before the throne day and night in my guilty conscience, in my troubled, labouring breast, is cast down and cast out; he no longer exercises the same influence and power to harass and distress my soul; my conscience no longer bleeds under his accusations. I have gained the victory through the blood of the Lamb, and now is come salvation in all its blessedness." See, then, the profit you have reaped from these

accusations. Not only have they sifted you out of all your false religion and winnowed away the chaff and dust of a mere profession, but, no thanks to Satan, they have been followed with the richest blessing. But for the conflict there would have been no victory, but for the battle no triumph, but for the defeated, flying enemy no erecting of the trophy on the battlefield. It may seem hard to you to have been forced against your will into the battlefield, and have Satan accusing you day and night; but what lessons you have there learnt, lessons to be learnt in no other way! Before, you were a volunteer, learning the goose-step or firing at a target. Now you are a soldier shouting victory over the invading foe. As naturally, so spiritually, how can there be a victory without a battle? But in the spiritual battle we do not fight in our own strength, but in the Lord's; and if this be the case, what can a man know of strength—the strength of Christ made perfect in weakness—who has not been engaged in the battlefield? When Satan accuses, then is felt our weakness, weakness to answer his charges, weakness to fight in this bloody field, and the soul is ready to sink and fall beneath the weight of the accusations. But when the Lord strengthens us to look to the blood of the Lamb, to wield the sword of the Spirit, and endues us with a martyr spirit, then strength comes, strength to fight and strength to win the victory; strength to baffle Satan's accusations, and strength to shout triumph over the retreating foe.

2. *"And the kingdom of our God,"* which is the kingdom of Christ set up in the heart, and righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; for Christ then reigns and rules in the soul. When he has cast down Satan, when he has answered his charges, when he has won the victory and defeated the enemy, then "the kingdom of God "comes, as set up in the heart by divine power; that kingdom which is to be erected upon the ruins of all other kingdoms; that kingdom of grace here which will issue in the kingdom of glory hereafter. Must not Christ now be King? Who so fit, who so worthy to reign? Who so worthy to wear the crown of glory? But whilst Satan still accused, the kingdom of Christ though begun was not fully come. Till the stone cut out of the

mountain without hands smites the image and makes it like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, it does not become a great mountain to fill the whole earth. (Dan. 2:34, 35.) So till Satan is cast down in the soul as well as in the world the kingdom of Christ is not fully come.

3. And then comes "*the power of his Christ,*" or of his anointed one. Christ has received power at God's right hand to fight our battles and plead our cause; for "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18.) And when this power is experimentally put forth to deliver the soul from the accusations of Satan, the shout from heaven is heard, "Now is come the power of his Christ—his power as the anointed King of Zion." Then is felt the power of his blood to cleanse a guilty conscience; the power of his righteousness to justify a needy, naked soul; the power of his love to bring it off more than conqueror; the power of his Spirit to testify within to its adoption and its acceptance. "The power of his Christ" is then experimentally felt when salvation and strength and the kingdom of God are fully come. And all these are fully come when the accuser is cast down and victory obtained by the blood of the Lamb.

It is, then, through these trials, temptations, and conflicts that we come into the experience and drink into the spirit of vital godliness. As long as you are unexercised in your soul, have no accusations of Satan, no temptations without or conflicts within, you do not experimentally know the weight and power of vital godliness, the realities of true religion, and the treasures of love and grace locked up in the Person and work of the Son of God, and revealed in the gospel of his grace. But put you in the battle-field; let your soul hang trembling in the balance; let Satan come in as the accuser of the brethren, and you sink into guilt, fear, and despondency: then you will want something more than a notional, natural faith and a little outside, superficial coat of religion. You will want salvation spoken to your heart, strength communicated to your soul, the kingdom of God set up in your breast, and the power of his Christ made known in your conscience. And if favoured with the enjoyment of these divine

realities after a season of anxiety and sorrow, you will see the goodness of God in putting you into the furnace, in suffering Satan to accuse you day and night, that when he is cast down and overcome, the kingdom of God might come in its blessed fulness, and be set up and established with more power and life and unction in your heart. It seems very discouraging to many a dear child of God to be exercised with guilt and temptation, and to have Satan whispering these horrible charges. But when the soul is enabled by the power of God to fight him with the weapons that God has appointed, and which he puts into his hand; and when through his all-sufficient and all-conquering grace, victory is gained, and salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ are come, then there is felt to be a solemn reality in true religion that no heart before could conceive or tongue express. Thus the favoured among you in this congregation are not those who are at ease in Zion. It is not those who are at peace with sin and Satan that are the highly favoured, but those in the battle-field, fighting hand to hand with the accuser of the brethren, often cast down, but never really overcome, struggling hard, and at times despairing even of life, yet holding on their way and in the end obtaining the victory.

I leave it in the hand of the Lord to apply to your heart what I have spoken in his name, that it may be a searching word to some and a comforting word to others; that it may pull down the mighty from their seat and exalt the humble and meek; that it may be a means in the hand of God to convince some poor professor of the emptiness of his religion, or of dropping consolation into the conscience of a troubled saint; that, with the help of God, it may bring down as well as build up; and that I may thus be the mouth of God, as well as the servant of God, and speak words that the Holy Ghost may crown with his approbation and his favouring smile.

THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN OVERCOME AND CAST DOWN

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, August 15, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven. Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:10, 11

The prophetic portions of God's word admit, for the most part, of a twofold interpretation—one **literal** and historical, the other **spiritual** and experimental. It would seem, at first sight, that the former was the more easy to understand. But it is not so. Great difficulties usually beset the **literal** interpretation; and besides that it requires more research and study than most persons can give to the subject, the most intelligent commentators have been puzzled to make it so square in all points with history and chronology, as to furnish a distinct, coherent meaning. But of the **spiritual** and experimental interpretation every child of God in a measure, carries in his own bosom the key; and, therefore, the intricate wards of this lock, a very Chubb or Bramah to mere literal commentators, he can in many cases turn with comparative facility. Yet these two interpretations are very closely connected—the spiritual being based upon the literal; so that we must in some measure be able to understand the literal interpretation before we can fully enter into the spiritual. With God's blessing, therefore, I shall devote a few moments this morning to a brief literal explanation of the verses preceding the text before I enter into the spiritual meaning of the words before us.

"There appeared," we read, "a great wonder in heaven." The heaven here spoken of is not heaven in its usual sense—that is, the glorious mansion of God—but the mystical heaven, what the Lord calls (Matt. 13) "the kingdom of heaven," that is, the dispensation of the gospel, the kingdom of grace and mercy set visibly up on the day of Pentecost. In this mystical heaven there appeared "a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." The woman thus gloriously arrayed represents the primitive and apostolic church as shining forth in the dispensation of the gospel, bright and beautiful. She stands clothed with Christ's righteousness, the dispensation which had passed away being under her feet, and crowned with the preaching of the gospel in its apostolic purity.

But she is represented as "**being with child**, and crying out as one travailing in birth." This signifies the soul travail of the primitive church for the manifestation of Christ to the world; that his grace and glory might be spread abroad; and he be brought forth as the Son of God to be believed in and adored by all nations—anticipating, as it were, in desire the millennial day. It has no reference to Christ's birth of the Virgin Mary, but to the bringing forth of Jesus in the glorious gospel, and to the full acknowledgment of his resurrection whereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power.

But there appeared another wonder in the mystical heaven—"A **great red dragon** having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads." This represents Rome pagan—or rather Satan using the pagan Roman empire as a means of opposing the propagation of the gospel. The seven heads and ten horns with the seven crowns, represent the power of Rome Imperial. Nor were these persecutions without effect—"His tail drew away the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth," this being the effect of the persecution of Rome pagan in causing many who seemed to be stars in the heaven of the church, by persecution to prove apostates. But the dragon "stands before the woman which was about to be delivered, to devour the man

child as soon as it is born." This represents the attempts of Rome Pagan to destroy the gospel by persecution, and to swallow up all profession and acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus. But "she brings forth the man child." All the efforts of Pagan Rome are ineffectual—Christ is brought forth and is made manifest by the preaching of the gospel in its apostolic purity.

But he does not come forth in all his glory. "The child is caught up unto God and to his throne;" to signify, not the resurrection of Christ, but the hiding of the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus in the bosom of God, and to shew that the full manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles is in the future. The woman flees to the wilderness. The church of God, instead of a triumphant, becomes a suffering church. Christ is hidden in the bosom of God from the world, and made known only to a suffering remnant. The church becomes a hidden church in the wilderness, where she is to be fed for a thousand two hundred and threescore days, or years, that is, maintained by the word and Spirit of God, during the 1,260 years other suffering condition.

Now comes "**war in heaven**;" not in the glorious abodes above. There can be no war there. There never has been, never could be battle and confusion in the realms of light, love, and bliss—as Milton represents; but in the mystical heaven in the spread and propagation of the gospel, there is and ever was strife between the powers of light and darkness. "Michael and his angels" represent the power of God in spreading the truth, "and the dragon and his angels" represent the power of Satan, chiefly shewn in opposing the spread of the gospel and the downfall of paganism. They fight, but the dragon "prevailed not;" the gospel wins the day; Christ is stronger than Satan. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." This represents the triumph of the gospel over all the arts and malice of Satan, as displayed in the persecutions under the Pagan emperors.

Connected with this casting down of Satan from his pride of place, where he and his angels had been worshipped under the guise of Pagan deities, come the words of the text—"I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Pursuing the same train of prophetic events, the text, taken in its literal acceptation, is, therefore, a prophecy of the sufferings of the ancient martyrs under the Pagan persecutions, and of their victory over all the malice of Satan. This victory they gained, not by their own strength, but by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and the free yielding up of their lives which they loved not unto death—preferring death with all its torments to denying their Lord and Master. The blood of the martyrs thus became the seed of the church; and victory over paganism was obtained not by doing, but by suffering; not by living, but by dying; not by fleshly works, but by faith in the blood of the Lamb, and faithfully adhering to the word of their testimony which had been made precious to their souls. This is, as far as I understand it, the **literal** interpretation of the chapter in connection with the text. Upon this, as I before hinted, is based the spiritual and experimental meaning to which we now come, and to which I shall chiefly confine myself.

Three features seem most prominent in the words before us.

I. The casting down of the accuser of the brethren.

II. The means whereby the victory was gained over him.

III. The blessed consequences of the victory.

I. Satan is here represented as the "**accuser of the brethren.**"

Satan does not "accuse" the world; he leaves it alone. Whilst a man is under his power and dominion, he will not molest or frighten him. Nay, so far from accusing such he will rather excuse them. He will palliate sin in every possible way before committed, to make it more readily indulged; and will excuse it after, to blunt the stings of remorse. But of "**the brethren**," the people of God, Satan is the unwearied, inveterate, unrelenting accuser.

He is said, here, to "accuse them **before God day and night.**" This does not mean that Satan has access into the presence of God, to plead against his children before the Most High, as though he was ever standing at the right hand of God, in the realms of eternal bliss, and there and then accusing the bride of Jesus. Satan in heaven! That foul spirit in the mansions of holiness! That fiend of darkness in the light which no man can approach unto! No. We cannot admit that, except in a mystical manner, as in the opening chapters of Job and in the vision of Micaiah. But the meaning is, that when the saints come before God, then and there he accuses them. This we find true in soul experience. Be engaged in your lawful calling, have no thought of God or godliness, Satan is quiet; he does not then accuse you. But be in the presence of God, come before him, as we read of David, that "he went and sat before the Lord," then Satan begins to accuse. There are six different sacred employments in which we may be said "to sit before the Lord;" secret prayer—worshipping in God's tabernacles—reading the Scriptures—communing with our own heart—conversing with the people of God—and partaking of the Lord's Supper. In each and all of these does Satan fulfil this malignant office of accusing the brethren.

1. But an accuser must have a spot whereon to stand, a court wherein he may lay his charges. This court is the **court of conscience**. **There** he brings his charges; there he files his pleas; there he exercises all his malicious eloquence and all his powers of argument to bring in the sentence "guilty of death." But without pleas an accuser is powerless. The eloquence of an advocate is nothing unless sustained by proofs. The accuser of the brethren is not wanting here. His pleas he arranges under two

heads; and accuses the brethren sometimes as **law** sinners, and sometimes as **gospel** sinners. But it is worthy of observation that Satan's charges are not random accusations. They are always based upon truth. This gives them force and edge. It is true that "when he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it;" but there is this peculiarity in Satan's lies—that there is truth for their basis. Have you never observed this in worldly things? For a slander to obtain currency there must be some truth in it. A complete, thorough falsehood has no legs to stand upon; to run abroad and to enter into house after house, it must have limbs of truth, though head and body be a lie. Base coin must be gilt and look like good, or none will take it. Trashy articles must have a surface put upon them, or nobody will purchase them. So Satan comes with a groundwork of truth. If he had no word of truth in his lips he could have no hold upon the conscience. Thus when the law seizes the sinner by the throat, and says, "Pay me that thou owest," Satan takes up its heavy charges, puts poignancy into them, and urges them with vehemence upon the conscience. Here is his main strength. When the Law pours out its curses, and the sentence of death connected with disobedience to it enters into the conscience, the soul under that sentence must fall down before it, must plead guilty. The charges are so true, and so backed by the authority of God, that there is no denying or getting away from them. Here then is the ground of truth on which Satan plants his foot. "You know," says he, "that you have broken the Law; that you have never loved the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and mind, and strength, nor your neighbour as yourself. Look at the breadth and spirituality, the claims and extent, the holiness and perfection of the Law, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart; and see the awful curse attached to every man who continueth not in all points to observe it in heart, lip, and life. But you have broken it again and again, in thought, word, and deed." All this is true, most true; and the accusation, therefore, cannot be denied nor evaded. But on this groundwork of truth comes Satan's lying conclusion—"For **you** there is no hope; despair must be your everlasting portion. A sinner like you never can be forgiven. The Law of God curses you; and under that curse you

will surely lie to all eternity." When suffering under these accusations, the difficulty is to distinguish between the voice of God and the voice of Satan; because the accuser of the brethren imitates the voice of God, and thus takes up and backs the sentence pronounced by the Lord's mouth. But herein is the enemy discovered that from true premises he draws false conclusions. Here Satan's cloven loot is detected. Because you have broken God's Law, and because it curses you, are you to be eternally lost? Satan says, yes; but God says, no. God applies the Law to bring you out of self-righteousness; Satan urges the Law to drive you to despair. God sends it into your conscience to bring, you to Christ; Satan sounds its threatenings to bring you to blaspheme; God condemns you by it to save you eventually into heaven; Satan condemns you by it to hurl your soul into hell.

2. But Satan can, and does accuse the brethren of sins against the **gospel**, as well as of sins against the law. When the Lord has spoken a measure of peace to the conscience, given the soul deliverance from law charges, and enabled it to receive the love of the truth, and to taste, in faith and feeling, something of the sweetness of the gospel, Satan is so far baffled. He slinks away. But he has not exhausted his quiver, nor parted with all his stock. Like an Old Bailey lawyer, he knows all the quirks and quillets of the law; and his tongue sometimes smooth and oily, sometimes loud and thundering, whispering one while like a serpent, and roaring at another like a lion, can plead that white is black and black is white, to suit his purposes and confuse the soul. When, then, after a taste of the Lord's goodness and mercy, we depart from him, Satan brings his **gospel** charges. It is unhappily too true that after received mercy, when the Lord has in some measure withdrawn his gracious presence, the soul backslides from him, grows cold and lifeless, perhaps even slips into some inconsistency, and says or does something that makes sad work in the conscience. Through this breach Satan enters, and lays his accusations. "If you were a child of God, you could not have acted so. No one who had tasted that the Lord was gracious ever departed from him as you have done. They are all kept; for 'He keepeth the feet of his saints.' You therefore cannot be one. You

are a **gospel** sinner, whose doom is more dreadful than a **law** sinner. The hottest place in hell is for hypocrites like you."

Such and similar are Satan's accusations; and as I before hinted, so far based upon truth that the charges themselves cannot be denied. It is in the conclusions which Satan draws that the falsehood lies. There is the serpent hiss. Yield not then to Satan's conclusions. Admit the charge; for that is too clear to be denied; plead guilty;—**that** we must ever do; but do not yield to his conclusions, and cast away your hope. Because we have slipped, have backslidden, have neglected and forsaken the God of all our mercies, have in many things sadly erred, listened too often to the tempter, and walked too much after our idols, is there no hope? Surely this is not true. Therefore, I say, admit all Satan's accusations, but do not admit his conclusions. You have not rejected nor despised the gospel, counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, nor done despite to the Spirit of grace. You may be a backslider, but are not a gospel sinner.

Remember too that it is **before God** that Satan accuses the brethren. When acting inconsistently he does not accuse them; but when they return to the Lord with weeping and supplications, then he pleads against them all their filthiness and folly. See this in the case of Joshua the high priest. It was when he was standing before the angel of the Lord that Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. {Zec 3:1} He pointed, doubtless, to the smoke of the fire of temptation which had blackened the brand, and to the filthy garments in which he stood clothed. There was truth in the charge. He **was** a blackened brand; but the Lord had snatched him half burnt through from the fire; he **was** clothed with filthy ragments; but the command was, "Take away the filthy garments from him," Thus was Satan baffled, confounded, and put to flight.

II. But we find that the blessed saints and martyrs of old were enabled to overcome this accuser of the brethren. The accuser of the brethren was cast down. His feet slipped and fell.

"He fled, and with him fled the shades of night." The brethren gained the victory. But how? "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

The weapons which the Holy Ghost put into their hands, and gave them strength to wield, were three

1. The Blood of the Lamb

2. The Word of their Testimony—and

3. The Spirit of Martyrdom.

The saints and martyrs did not overcome Satan by denying his charges: that they could not do, for their consciences compelled them to admit their truth. This gave Satan such firm ground; for who can stand against the verdict of his own conscience? Nor did they overcome him by pleading their weakness against sin, and their inability to resist temptation. Nor did they vanquish him by alleging the force of example in others; nor by palliating their guilt as comparatively small; nor by promising reformation present or future; nor by quoting God's decrees as necessarily influencing their conduct. They well knew that Leviathan would count such darts as stubble, and would laugh at the shaking of such a spear. All such iron he would esteem as straw, and all such brass as rotten wood. They dropped, therefore, all such carnal, useless weapons, and betook themselves to those alone which they knew would obtain for them the victory.

i. The first was, "**The blood of the Lamb.**" How was this weapon effectual? Because the blood of the Lamb proclaims pardon and peace; and therefore sweeps away Satan's conclusion, that the accused being guilty, condemnation must necessarily follow.

The expression, "They overcame him **by** the blood of the Lamb," implies that it was a weapon in their hands, firmly wielded in their grasp. When David overcame the champion of the Philistines by a

sling and a stone, the sling was not hanging up in the sheepcote, nor was the pebble lying in the bed of the brook. It was not the blood of the Paschal lamb in the basin, but sprinkled on the lintel and side posts, which preserved Israel in Egypt from the destroying angel. Thus it is not the blood of the Lamb as revealed in the word of God, but as applied to, and sprinkled on the conscience which answers the accusations of Satan. But we may observe that there is our coming unto the blood of sprinkling, and there is the blood of sprinkling coming unto us. The apostle speaks (Heb. 12:22, 24), "Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." This coming to the blood is the first step in gaining the victory.

In Christian warfare, defeat generally, if not always, precedes conquest. It is not therefore so easy to overcome sin, death, and hell, which are all striving against us; and usually we never look to the right quarter for help until well nigh all hope is gone. The first gleam generally comes from a view of the blood of the Lamb, if I may use the expression, in the distance. The lighthouse casts its glimmering rays far over the wide waste of waters to guide into harbour the storm-tossed mariner. So when there is a view in the soul of the blood of the Lamb even at a distance, it is a beacon light which draws towards it the eyes and heart of those who are doing business in deep waters. The light that shines may not at first be very bright or clear; but it is a day star heralding the rising of the sun. The blessed Spirit shines upon the word, and raises up faith in the soul to believe that the Lamb has been slain, that blood has been shed, that a sacrifice has been offered, and that a new and living way has been opened and consecrated, through the veil—the rent flesh of the Lord Jesus. This affords the accused soul some foothold, on which it can stand, and return an answer to Satan's accusations. "True," it says, "I am a guilty wretch. I am a sinner, and the chief of sinners; for I have sinned against light, against convictions, against conscience, and the fear of God. My heart is altogether evil, my mind wholly corrupt, and my nature utterly depraved. I have never done any one good thing. I am a wretch, and the worst of wretches; and I can never say anything too bad of myself nor others of me. But with all

that, the Lamb of God hath shed his precious blood, and that blood—cleanseth from all sin." "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord," we read, "shall lift up a standard against him." The standard which he lifts up is the blood-stained flag of the crucified Redeemer. To come for refuge and shelter under this banner dipped in blood, is to make head against Satan's accusations.

Still the victory is not fully gained. It is only when there is a coming of the blood into the heart, a sprinkling of it on the conscience, a manifestation and application of it to the soul that Satan is effectually put to flight. "They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb;" but he was not effectually put to the rout till he saw the blood on the conscience, as the angel of death saw in Egypt the blood on the lintel.

ii. But they had another weapon—"The word of their testimony."

This, I believe, is the word that God had put into their heart. It is, therefore, called "the word of **their** testimony," because truly and emphatically theirs. It is not called the word of **the** testimony, nor the word of **God's** testimony, but "the word of **their** testimony." The sword in the Tower is not the soldier's, but the sovereign's. When put into the warrior's hand, it is for the first time **his**. The martyr's sword was not a text, but a testimony; not a quotation nor a parallel passage, but a word from God's mouth. As thus made theirs, they could use this word as a testimony against Satan. Thus every sweet promise which comes with power to the soul; every encouraging word; every token for good; every beam of hope, or ray of mercy which shoots athwart the black clouds of despondency into the heart, is an answer to Satan's accusations. This is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" not a sword sheathed, but a sword bare and naked, ready for use. The word which God is pleased to speak to your soul is the grand weapon which you must never give up. Satan will accuse you of every sin; and when he has got you down, he would soon make an end of you if God did not interfere

and succour you. He knows where to hit us. We have most of us weak points, where a slight blow tells, much more a heavy one. A besetting sin, or a prevailing infirmity, or a former inconsistency, or an experience defective in some particular, or an unbelieving frame, are in grace what a weak limb or asthmatic lungs are in nature. Satan directs his artillery where the fortress is most assailable. Do you never hear the hissing of his red-hot shot? "Can the fear of God be in your soul when you are so much like the world? Why did you ever make a profession? Would it not have been better for you to have been altogether in the world than to act as you have acted? Look at your daily walk and conversation; what a poor, barren, stupid wretch you are! You are now almost asleep, sitting there without life or feeling. It is true when you get into trials you begin to rouse up and call upon God; but this is no mark of grace, for the ungodly we read, call upon God when distress and anguish come upon them." How then are these cruel charges to be met? Thus; "It is true; I admit it all; and I am worse than you can make or paint me. But has not God spoken this and that word to my soul? Did he not give me this or that promise? Have I not had this and that manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ? Did I not hear with power on that memorable day, when my heart was so broken and melted? Did not tears of mingled joy and sorrow gush forth from my eyes, and gladness, blended with contrition, fill my heart?"

When the word of God is thus believed, laid hold of, and firmly abided by at all risks and hazards, it brings victory. Thus the martyrs lived and died. They threw away all weapons but the word of God, the power of which they had felt in their conscience. This they handled and wielded, as the life-guardsman handles and wields his own sword. He is not at home with any other. The handle from use fits his hand as if the two grew together. So must the promises and truth of God be felt to be your own, if you are to use them effectually against your adversary. You cannot fight Satan with any other weapon; for you cannot hold it firmly enough. A twist of his blade will knock out of your hand texts picked up at random. What is taken up in presumption is usually laid down in despair.

But suppose the Lord has not done very much for your soul, nor given you great manifestations or promises. Still, if he has ever spoken one word to your heart, it is a testimony, and this you must use as you best can. Oh! How helpless is the soul without it! when there is not a single testimony of the fear or love of God being in the heart! It is like a life-guardsman at Waterloo, with a broken arm, ready to be cut down by a French cuirassier. Unless the blood of the Lamb be sprinkled upon the warrior's breast, and the sword of his testimony be in the warrior's hand, he stands naked before his enemy, as the children of Israel in the days of Saul, when neither sword nor spear was found in the hand of any of the people that followed him.

iii. But they had another weapon still, the mention of which is a special allusion to the ancient martyrs—"**They loved not their lives unto the death!**" This weapon we may call therefore **the spirit of martyrdom**. Now, in what does that spirit consist? In total **self-renunciation**. How did the martyrs die in Smithfield? We read in Fox's Book of Martyrs that many men, women, and even children died in those burning flames in triumph. But did they come to those flames in their own strength or righteousness? No! They went all weakness and helplessness; but relying upon the power of God, they renounced all earthly things for his name's sake, even life itself: "They loved not their lives unto the death." They parted with name, fame, worldly goods, life itself, and counted it as nothing in comparison with the truth of God and the profession of his glorious gospel. Such times may come again; and if so, there will doubtless be similar witnesses—in themselves all weakness, but in Christ all strength.

But the Roman amphitheatre in Pagan, and Smithfield in Popish persecutions, are not the only spots and places where the spirit of martyrdom has been displayed. There is another arena—the Christian's heart. We must carry in our bosom the spirit of martyrdom, just as much as though we were called upon to die at the stake. The Lord Jesus said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that **loseth his life** for my sake shall find it;" {Mt

10:39} and again, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and **his own life also**, he cannot be my disciple."

This is the essence of martyrdom—to love not our lives unto the death. Suffering does not make a martyr; for error has had its victims as well as truth its witnesses. In this country, Papists and Socinians, in China Jesuits, in Spain Jews, have been burnt to ashes sooner than renounce their creed. It is suffering for **truth, for Jesus' sake**, which makes the martyr. Many have a dogged obstinacy, so that they would sooner die than yield, even where they are clearly wrong. These are not martyrs but madmen. Obstinacy in error only adds one sin to another. We must have the martyr's spirit, though we may never die the martyr's death; and that spirit is **self-renunciation**. Life is the dearest of all possessions. If that be renounced, the rest is easy.

The renunciation of life implies the renunciation of self; and this includes the renunciation of all creature strength, wisdom, and righteousness. Look at the Smithfield martyrs. What creature strength had they in the flame? what natural wisdom to answer their accusers? what fleshly righteousness to stand in before God? All that was of self and earth was renounced in renouncing life. This baffled Satan. He thought the flames would make them recant; and took advantage of threatened death to urge more vehemently his accusations. What was their answer? That of the three children who were cast by Nebuchadnezzar into the burning fiery furnace. "I cannot give up the truth. I cannot deny the Lord. Come heaven, come hell, I will not belie my conscience." This was Satan's last assault. When he could not carry the city by storm, he raised the siege. Have the martyr's spirit, and you will win the martyr's victory.

III. This brings us to its **blessed consequences**. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, **now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ**." The loud voice denotes that there were witnesses of this solemn conflict. "We are made a spectacle," says the apostle,

"unto the world, and to angels, and to men." We are not fighting the battle without witnesses. As the apostle speaks in another place; "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." A cloud of heavenly spectators surrounds the battle field, watching with intense interest the struggle; and when Satan flees, they lift up the victorious shout—"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." These heavenly blessings had not "come" before—that is, in clear, bright, undeniable manifestation. They were in the mind of God, in his eternal purpose; but they had not come into visible being, into inward and personal experience, into soul realization and blessed enjoyment. It is in vain for the children of God to expect a victory without a battle. Some people talk as if heaven was to be obtained without a struggle; as if sin, Satan, the Law, and conscience fled at the first charge, before a sword was flushed or blood drawn. If shame could be known in heaven, a blush might well spread over the face of such bloodless combatants in the presence of the suffering Limb of God, and before the martyrs and palm-bearing victors, who came out of "great tribulation." One would think that even on earth they must be mute during the singing of the heavenly anthem, "Now is come salvation," &c., when they have known neither battle nor victory.

But why "NOW?" Because till Satan was cast down and overcome, these heavenly blessings were not come into the heart.

1. **"Salvation," What salvation?** Salvation by grace, full and free; salvation without any intermixture of creature righteousness; salvation gushing from the bosom of God; salvation flowing wholly and solely through the blood of the Lamb. But salvation never can be tasted unless there has been a previous foretaste of condemnation. Heaven can never be looked up into before there has been a looking down into the wicket gate of hell. There must have been an experience of guilt before there can be the enjoyment of pardon. "Now is come salvation." **From**

what? From the accusations of Satan, the curses of the law, the fear of death, the terrors of hell, and sentence of damnation. And how does salvation come? Whilst the battle is going on; whilst the issue is doubtful; whilst hand to hand, foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder, Satan and the soul are engaged in deadly strife, there is no felt experience of salvation. There may be hope; and this enables the soldier to stand his ground; but there is no shout of victory till the enemy is put to flight. But when Satan is defeated, his accusations silenced, and the soul liberated, then is "come salvation." The sweetest song that ever heaven proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is "salvation." To be saved! saved from death and hell; saved from the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched; saved from the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit; saved from the companionship of tormenting fiends and of all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned; saved from blaspheming God in unutterable woe; saved from an eternity of misery without end or hope! And saved into heaven! into the sight of Jesus as he is; into perfect holiness and happiness; into the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints; and all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity! What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word "**salvation?**"

2. "And **strength.**" There was no strength before, at least no felt, realized, enjoyed strength. Sin was too strong, Satan too powerful, his accusations too weighty, and the conscience too guilty for the struggling soul to realize strength. When the soldier in battle is bathed in sweat and blood, scarcely able from weariness to move hand or foot, and his sword is only kept in his hand by the blood and gore which glue them together, he fights in weakness, unconscious of strength. So the soul, when fighting with sin and Satan, fights on when ready to drop. It is all weakness then. But with salvation comes "strength,"—strength to believe, strength to hope, and strength to love, strength to bless and praise the Lord, and shout victory over the flying foe. Then there is strength to credit the promise and perform the precept;

to walk in the ways of God and submit to the will of God; and to run the way of his commandments with an enlarged heart.

3. "**And the kingdom of our God.**" This too was little known before. The kingdom of God is an inward kingdom, and it is set up in the heart of a people made willing in the day of his power. It consists, therefore, in the dethroning of sin, Satan, and self, and in the setting up of Jesus as sovereign of the heart and Lord of the affections. Till Satan is cast out and the conscience cleansed from his accusations, Jesus cannot sit upon his inward throne. But with salvation to deliver, and strength to believe, comes the kingdom of God; and Christ is crowned upon the battle field—elevated like the kings of old upon the shields of the conquerors.

4. And with this comes "**the power of Christ.**" This all-mighty, all-victorious power was not fully known before. How earnestly did the apostle desire "to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection;" how little is known of "the power of his Christ," what Christ has done, what Christ can do! But when salvation comes, and strength, and the kingdom of God, then too is known "the power of his Christ," his crucified Christ, his risen Christ, his glorified Christ, his interceding Christ; of Christ at the right hand of God, "King of kings and Lord of lords;" ruling, guiding, directing, upholding all things in heaven and earth. This power Christ often withholds for a time that the soul may learn its weakness. When pressed hard with Satan's accusations, little comparatively is known what Christ can do for the soul; how he can repel Satan, answer every charge, fight its battles, and support the fainting spirit. Till the enemy is fled, and the field of battle gone over, his power is not often fully known. The number of the slain reveals the fury of the foe. But this too makes known the power of the Conqueror. "Who is this," asks the Church, "that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" "I," answers the Lord, "that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

"Salvation, strength, the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ!" These are great things, blessed things. In them lies the very marrow of vital godliness—the very essence of that religion which God the Spirit sets up in the heart. But do you not observe their close and intimate connexion with martyrdom and suffering? Do not separate them. Do not think that the whole of religion consists in reading, hearing, praying, and attending to the ordinances of the gospel. All this is well; but salvation, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ are not tied to outward observances.

O how mysterious is true religion! How supernatural! how opposed to all preconceived ideas, or conclusions of the natural mind! Should we not, left to ourselves, say, "this is religion, to read God's word with undeviating regularity, to be very earnest in prayer, to watch and strive against all our besetting sins, never in the least degree to slip in thought, word, or deed, to do the best in our power in all the relationships of life, and so go smoothly to heaven." Let me not breathe a word against such things. They are good as means, but dangerous as ends. They are not to be left undone; but there is something far beyond them all. But is this smooth, easy road to heaven God's way? Is it the path in which the redeemed have ever walked? Those that know anything of the kingdom of God have not found it so plain, easy, and beaten a road. It certainly is not so mapped out in the words before us. The blessed martyrs did not gain their victory upon such easy terms. Theirs was not this smooth path, nor did they walk in this flowery meadow. We read that they had an accuser who accused them before God day and night. Is Satan in our day less active? Is the heart of man better now than it was then? Has God devised of late years some new road to heaven other than that in which these blessed saints walked in their day and generation? The Bible would not be true; the experience of God's people would be false; the tears that they shed; the sighs they heave; the cries, prayers, and groans that they pour forth for deliverance, would be all so many fancies, whims of a heated brain, not deep soul realities. If heaven were gained at so easy a price, so facile a rate, heaven's courts would be filled with a motley throng who had not learnt the song of Moses and the

Lamb. Half round the throne would be sufferers, and half would be doers; martyrs singing praise to the Redeemer, and workers chanting anthems to self. But have we any choice in this matter? May I be a martyr, or a worker at discretion, selecting, **ad libitum**, my own path. To come into it, or to walk in it, is not of our own choice. It is all according to God's own eternal purpose. He has appointed a certain path in which his children are to walk; he takes their feet with his own hands, and puts them into the path; and if they are diverging from it he puts them into it back again. It is "through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom;" and he has never yet recalled that word.

There may be those here who are suffering under the accusations of Satan so as sometimes to be almost without hope. All their religion seems gone, and they have no firm ground to stand upon. They feel to have so sinned against God, that it seems impossible for him to forgive them. Now you may depend upon it, that you are not travelling alone in this road, but have more fellow-travellers than you are perhaps aware of. Then be not dismayed if you find Satan or your own conscience—and you cannot always distinguish between them accusing you before God day and night. Cast not away your hope if in secret prayer you feel a load of guilt upon your conscience. Be not dismayed if, when you come before God, thousands of charges are brought against you, and it seems almost presumptuous in you to open your lips before him. See how these blessed martyrs were accused, and yet they came off victorious? Their weapons must be yours—"The blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the loving not of their lives unto the death." Search and examine well your experience. Have you never had some view of the blood of the Lamb? Has it never been sprinkled on your conscience? Have you not had some views of it by faith so as to come unto it and hide your guilty soul under it? Have you never come to "the blood of sprinkling" by faith? This was the first turn of the fight. And has the Lord never spoken a word to your soul? Have you never had a testimony in your conscience, been melted in prayer, softened and blessed? Have you never had a sweet promise dropped into your heart? Did not this give, whilst it

lasted, a measure of relief to your conscience, and in some degree answer the cruel accusations of Satan? And have you not renounced all your own righteousness, and felt willing to die if you were sure of your interest in Christ? These were the weapons whereby the martyrs conquered. We read nothing here of their own righteousness, or consistency, or piety, or holiness, or resolutions, or good words and works. Nothing is said to the high praise and glory of self. The only three weapons here mentioned are the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the spirit of martyrdom. And these three weapons are found more or less in the armoury of every child of God.

But see if you cannot also trace victory as well as conflict. With the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the spirit of martyrdom came salvation and strength, the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ. Have you not experienced a measure of these blessings? The blood of the Lamb brings "**salvation.**" Have you not embraced salvation by grace as dear to your soul? With salvation comes "**strength.**" "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." **Ps 138:3** Have you not felt this? And "**the kingdom of our God.**" Have you never touched the sceptre and bowed down at Jesus' feet as Lord of all? Been made willing to part with all idols that he might reign supreme in your heart and affections? And "**the power of his Christ.**" Are you willing that Jesus should take the reins of government, should manage you and yours, should subdue your sins, fight your battles, and bring you off more than conqueror? All these blessings are connected with, and flow from the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the spirit of self-renunciation. Look not then to any other quarter for help or hope; but trust wholly and solely to the Lord, who can bring you through every trial and difficulty, and give you to live in his glorious presence for ever.

THE AFFLICTED REMNANT AND THEIR CONFIDING TRUST

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street. London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 6, 1845

"I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Zeph. 3:12

Jerusalem was the centre of the worship of the only true God from the day that David brought thither the ark (2 Sam. 6) until she rejected the Lord of life and glory, and brought upon herself that sentence, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 28:38). For this reason, Jerusalem became a type and figure of two things: **first**, of the true church of God, his own elect family; and **secondly**, of the visible church. In those passages for instance, where we read, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6); "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city" (Isa. 52:1); "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem" (Isa. 40:2)—in these, and similar passages, Jerusalem is addressed as representing the spiritual church of God. But, on the other hand, there are many passages where she is spoken of in language only applicable to the outward professing church; as in the beginning of this chapter, "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!" (Zeph. 3:1).

In the text, we find Jerusalem personally addressed. And the Lord declares that he "**will leave in the midst of her an afflicted and poor people;**" and that this afflicted and poor people "**shall trust in the name of the Lord.**" By Jerusalem, then, in the text, is not meant the true church of God, the inner sanctuary; but the outer court, the visible church, as including the invisible. And the Lord says of this professing church, of this outward visible congregation, that he will leave in her midst, a circle within a circle, a peculiar people, whom he describes under two distinct marks.

In endeavouring to unfold this portion of God's word, I shall notice three particulars connected with the text:

I.—The **solemn declaration** of the Almighty, that he will leave in the midst of the professing church a people.

II.—The character of the people whom the Lord thus leaves in the midst of Jerusalem, "**an afflicted and poor people.**"

III.—That they shall be brought to "**trust in the name of the Lord.**"

I.—God here speaks in the solemn exercise of his sovereignty, "**I will leave.**" It is no matter of chance, or of uncertainty. It is a solemn declaration, which God, who cannot lie, has given, and which He will therefore surely fulfill.

But we may observe two things connected with this **solemn declaration**: one is, "**in the midst of her.**" The words clearly intimate that "all are not Israel who are of Israel;" that the outward court forms a bulwark to the inner; that the visible church incloses in its bounds the invisible. Thus, we are to expect to find the people of God in the midst of the professing church, and yet completely separate from it; wrapped up in it, as the kernel is wrapped up in the nut; yet as distinct in essence, in peculiarity, and in flavour, as the kernel is from the shell which surrounds it. It is also hidden by the professing church in the same way as the kernel is hidden by the shell; and yet so hidden that though the eye of man sees it not, yet it lies naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

But the expression, "**I will leave,**" carries with it also a peculiar signification. The Lord does not say, 'I will put in the midst of her,' but 'I will **leave** in the midst of her.' The word is connected with the idea of a remnant, as we read in the next verse, "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid" (Zeph.

3:13) . The inner portion, therefore, bears a small proportion to the outer: "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof."

Now it will be the concern of every one taught of God to know whether he belong to the outward, or to the inward church: whether he be one of that peculiar people chosen before all worlds, whom God leaves as a remnant in the midst of the outward church, or whether he has the mere form of godliness, while destitute of the power.

II.—And this leads me to the second branch of the subject, which is to describe **the spiritual character** of this peculiar people left as a remnant in the midst of professing Jerusalem: for the Lord in his word, for the comfort of his people, has given signs and marks by which they are peculiarly distinguished.

The Holy Spirit, in the text, has stamped these two marks upon them: 1. that they are **"an afflicted and poor people:"** and 2. that **"they trust in the name of the Lord."**

The first mark that he stamps upon them is, that they are **"an afflicted and poor people."**

1. They are **"an afflicted people."** The Lord's people, in common with the rest of mankind, have to drink of the cup of temporal sorrow. This, then, is no distinguishing mark of their being the people of God; for "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." But what is the effect of these temporal afflictions upon them? Temporal afflictions, however long, however deep, however aggravated, carry with them no evidence that those on whom they fall belong to the peculiar people of God; but the fruit and effect which spring out of these afflictions bear a decisive stamp. When afflictions come upon the men of this world, there is no sanctifying effect produced through them.

2. Affliction leaves them just as it found them. Did I say so? It leaves them worse than it found them. Their hearts are hardened

rather than softened by the afflictions they are made to pass through; and their troubles, instead of driving them to the Lord, only serve to drive them farther and farther from him. They thrust them into rebellion, or into the world, or more deeply into sin, into suicide, or into despair. So that there is this marked distinction between temporal afflictions as befalling the children of men, and temporal afflictions as befalling the children of God—that temporal afflictions leave the children of men just as they were, in nature's darkness and in nature's death; whereas the temporal afflictions that fall upon the people of God bring with them a sanctifying and fertilizing effect. For instance:

Many of the Lord's people are **afflicted in their bodies**. In this they share with the children of men at large. The wards of the hospital, and the sick chamber, are not tenanted only by the children of God: the men of this world have their share of bodily afflictions. But bodily afflictions produce in the latter no spiritual fruit. Sickness and pain do not, cannot change the heart. But the bodily afflictions that God's people have to pass through, often produce in them a sanctifying effect. When God blesses and works by them, they separate us from the world: they bring before us the solemn realities of eternity: they lead us to look more narrowly how we stand before God; they purge out false faith, false hope, false love; they sift our evidences to the very centre; they bring us more into the presence of a heart-searching God, that we may lay ourselves open before him; they embitter sin to us; they bring death nearer to view; they quicken prayer; they stir up a spirit of supplication in the heart. And in these afflictions the Lord is at times pleased to manifest himself peculiarly to the soul. Many a child of God on a sick bed has found more of the presence and favour of the Lord than ever he knew before; and has had reason to bless God to the latest breath of his life that he had been pleased to afflict him, and chose that season in which to manifest his goodness to his soul.

Others of the Lord's family are **afflicted with providential trials**. The world have these as well as they; but the providential trials that the children of men are exercised with never drive

them to God; they often, yea, usually drive them deeper and deeper into sin; they drive them into debt, to drink, and other bad courses, to drown their worldly cares, and often bring them eventually to the gallows and the scaffold. But the providential trials that the Lord's people have to pass through shew them what before was hidden from them, **that there is a God of providence.** Those who see him only as the God of grace see but one side of the Lord's face. But the providential circumstances the Lord's people are called to pass through bring more conspicuously before their eyes the other side of the Lord's countenance—that of providence. When they see how God appears for them in their temporal circumstances, it causes the sweet flowings forth of faith and love towards their kind Parent; and this endears him to them more closely.

There are also **family afflictions.** These, the Lord's people have to pass through as well as the world. But family afflictions are not sanctified to the men of this world: they disunite instead of bringing together: they make the home miserable: but never bring into their hearts any looking to the Lord to heal the breach. But the Lord's family who have to pass through family afflictions often find a profit in them. Idols are dethroned, worldly affections are restrained: and that peace which they cannot find in the bosom of their families they are led to seek for in the bosom of their God.

Thus those temporal afflictions which passing over the men of the world are as the thunderbolt to strike, are to God's people a fertilizing shower, causing them to bring forth fruit to his honour; and thus the same cloud which hangs in vengeance over the men of this world, and with lightning-flash often hurls them into perdition, drops down fatness upon the children of God.

But there are other afflictions of a far deeper, far more cutting, and far more painful nature than any of those temporal afflictions which the Lord's people may be called upon to pass through—these are **spiritual afflictions.** The Lord's people are peculiarly circumstanced. I have endeavoured to shew that they have

temporal afflictions in common with the rest of mankind; yet they have **them** in a peculiar way, as being sanctified to them. But spiritual afflictions are peculiar to them altogether; and, if we may give a balance of profit, we must assign a far greater share to spiritual afflictions than we can to temporal.

The weight of guilt upon the conscience; the distressing sensations that sin produces when God the Spirit charges it home upon the soul, is one of the afflictions which God's people are called to pass through. Indeed, without knowing the affliction of a guilty conscience for sin and for having transgressed against the Lord, no man can know the healing balm of the gospel. God's consolations are reserved for, and abound in proportion to these spiritual afflictions. So that he that would fain draw his neck out of the collar of affliction would also draw his neck out of the fulfillment of God's promises in giving consolation. The feeling of having sinned against God must lie heavy on every conscience made tender in God's fear. It is the first mark of life; and not merely the first mark of life, but it runs through the whole of a Christian man's experience. Does he daily sin? He is daily **so far as God lays it upon his conscience** afflicted in consequence of sin. And the more that the fear of God works in his soul, and the more that his conscience is made and kept tender and alive, the more is he afflicted by the sin which he daily and hourly commits. All the Lord's people suffer under this affliction: some indeed more deeply and perpetually than others. But just in proportion as the Lord would make the soul fruitful in his ways, does he afflict it with a deeper knowledge of sin, that it may prize the gospel more, receive pardon more graciously and abundantly, and bless God for the very stroke that has struck most deeply into the conscience.

Temptations form another source of spiritual affliction to God's people. The Lord's family often, in passing through temptations, think themselves different from all others. They can scarcely believe that any of the children of God are tempted as they are—that such vile thoughts, such base desires, such carnal imaginations, such wicked lusts, should work in the minds of

others, who appear to them to be holy and spiritual. And it is often a weighty part of the affliction that it is **peculiar**: for the Lord's people, especially in their younger days, before they have learnt how others are similarly exercised, often write bitter things against themselves in consequence of these temptations. Temptations to infidelity, to blasphemy, to renounce the cause of God and truth, to commit the vilest sins painted in the imagination, to pride, hypocrisy, presumption, and despair: these various temptations lie heavy on a tender conscience, and cut deep just in proportion to the depth of godly fear within.

The daily conflict that we have to maintain in our souls against the world, the flesh, and the devil; the struggle of grace against nature, and of nature against grace; the sinkings of the one, and the risings of the other, that are perpetually going on in the souls of God's people—this ceaseless conflict is an affliction that the Lord's people are all called on to pass through.

But what profit is there in all these afflictions? Does God send them without an object in view? Do they come merely, as the men of the world think, by chance? No. There is profit intended by them. The apostle unfolds this very clearly in Heb. 12:10, where he says, our fathers "for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure: but God for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." The branch cannot bear fruit except it be purged: the love of sin cannot be cast out: the soul cannot be meekened, humbled, softened, and made contrite: the world cannot be embittered: the things of time and sense cannot be stripped of their false hue and their magic appearance, except through affliction. Jesus is a "root out of a dry ground:" there is "no form nor comeliness in him," except just in proportion as afflictions exercise our souls, and the Spirit through them draws us into nearness of union and communion with him. Our greatest blessings usually spring from our greatest afflictions: they prepare the heart to receive them; they empty the vessel of the poisonous ingredients, which have filled it, and fit it to receive gospel wine and milk. They are made blessings in this respect also, that they stir up in us a "spirit of grace and of supplication;"

that they draw forth and manifest the fruits and graces of the Spirit, which God has implanted. They are to us what the plough and the harrow are to the soil; they cause a preparation of heart in order to receive the consolations of the gospel. God, therefore, having chosen Zion in the furnace of affliction, "leaves in the midst of her an afflicted people." To be then without these afflictions, these griefs, these trials, these temptations, is to write ourselves destitute of grace. But our coward flesh shrinks from them. We are willing to walk to heaven; but not to walk thither in God's way. Though we see in the scripture, and in the experience of others, that the path to glory is a rough and rugged way; yet when our feet are planted in that painful and trying path, we shrink back; our coward flesh refuses to walk in that road. God therefore, as a sovereign, brings those afflictions upon us which he sees most fit for our profit and his glory, without ever consulting us, without ever allowing us a choice in the matter. And he will generally cause our afflictions to come from the most unexpected source. Our afflictions usually come upon us like a thunder-storm. We are looking into the wind for afflictions: but God causes them to come from precisely the opposite quarter. A trial therefore generally comes in a way most cutting to our feelings: in the way that of all others we should least have chosen: and yet in a way which of all others is most for our profit.

But how are we to know whether afflictions do profit us? We sometimes mistake in this matter. We imagine that afflictions are necessarily connected **at the time** with manifest blessing. If the manifestations and consolations of divine love do not come **at the very time** with the affliction, we are often disposed to believe that the affliction has passed over our head without profit. But we are not so to measure afflictions. Affliction is one thing, consolation is another. Affliction is to prepare the heart for consolation; but when and how the consolation shall come, God has not laid down any rule in his Word. Do the afflictions we pass through humble us? They do us good. Do they deaden the love of the world in our hearts? They do us good. Do they purge out hypocrisy? They do us good. Do they bring us more earnestly to the throne of grace? They do us good. Do they discover to us sins

that we have not before seen? They do us good. Do they penetrate into our very hearts? Do they lay bare the corrupt fountain that we carry within us? Do they search and try us before a heart-searching God? Do they meeken and soften our spirit? Are they accompanied with a pouring out of the heart before God? They do us good. It is necessary that this preparation work should be done before the consolation comes. It is like a surgeon dealing with a diseased place. How painful the operation! How deep the knife cuts! How long it may be before the wound is healed! Yet every stroke of the knife is indispensable. He would not do his duty as a skilful and faithful surgeon if he did not dissect it to the very bottom. As pain before healing is necessary, and must be produced by the knife; so spiritually, we must be wounded and cut in our souls, as long, and as deeply as God sees needful, that in his own time we may receive the consolation.

2. But there is another word which the text contains as descriptive of the character of God's people, that is, **poor**; not necessarily, not always, poor in temporal circumstances. Not but that the great majority of God's people are poor; not but that God has "chosen the poor of this world rich in faith." But we should give but a literal exposition of the text, did we confine it to temporal poverty; we must view it higher; we must look at its spiritual bearing, and interpret it as the Lord himself speaks, "Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Now the Lord has declared, he will leave in the midst of Jerusalem a spiritually poor people. Are they so by nature? O no; they are not so by nature. They are not brought down into the depths of soul poverty except by the Almighty himself. They are by nature rich in their own eyes, as the Laodicean church esteemed herself. It is the work of grace upon their hearts that makes them poor; it is the stripping hand of the Spirit of God in their conscience that reduces them to poverty and ruin before the throne of mercy. And we become rich spiritually, not by adding to our natural stock, but by losing it. We become free by going to

gaol. We have our debts paid by becoming bankrupts. We become partakers of the riches of Christ's grace and compassion by sinking down into the depths of soul beggary.

But the Lord's people are spiritually poor in two ways. They are poor **actually**; and they are **poor in spirit**. They are poor **actually** as to divine attainments. They are poor **in faith**, so as not to be able at times to muster a single grain. They are poor in **hope**, for often their frail bark is tossed by the waves of despondency. They are poor in **love**, for often they cannot feel a spark of affection towards the Lord or his people. They are poor in **spiritual-mindedness**, for they cannot raise up their affections from earth to heaven. They are poor in **prayerfulness**, for often they cannot heave forth a single sigh or cry to God. They are poor in **strength**, for they cannot stand against temptation, and are unable to produce in their souls one gracious desire, one spiritual feeling. Thus **actual** poverty makes them poor **in spirit**. It is not like the actual poverty of man naturally, which is carefully disguised and cloaked over; but those who are poor actually are poor in spirit before God. They feel it, and are often exercised about it, and distressed in their souls because they are so poor. They would be rich, but cannot produce in their hearts any true riches. And this conviction of their own poverty makes them poor in spirit before God. They cannot come to him "rich, and increased in goods;" their cry is rather, "My leanness, my leanness; woe unto me!"

III.—This leads me to the last mark which God the Spirit has stamped upon the Lord's people—that "**they trust in the name of the Lord.**" Is there no connection between these two points? Is there no spiritual bond between their affliction and poverty, and their trusting in the name of the Lord? Yes: the closest. They would not trust in the name of the Lord, if they were not afflicted and poor. The Lord himself brings them to trust in his name—that is the object of his dealings with them. But they cannot be brought to trust in his name except by being afflicted and poor. I will shew you how. Until they are afflicted in their bodies, circumstances, or families, they are hanging upon the world.

They are seeking to gather a crop of happiness from nature's polluted soil: they are trying to re-enter into that earthly paradise from which their first parents were driven: they hope to die in their nests, and multiply their days as the sand. And this leads them from the Lord. They cannot trust in his name as long as they are seeking comfort outside of him.

So also with respect to their spiritual afflictions. There is no trusting in the name of the Lord until sorrow and affliction have done their work in the heart. We are looking to our own righteousness, strength, wisdom, and holiness. Whilst these remain unbroken, there can be no inward, heart-felt faith; no simple reliance, no implicit confidence. These afflictions, and this poverty, then, by purging out of our hearts false faith, empty confidence, and delusive expectations, bring us, in the hand of the Spirit, to trust only in the name of the Lord.

But what is meant by the expression, in the text, "**the name of the Lord?**" By "the name of the Lord," we are to understand the Lord's revealed perfections; whatever he has declared concerning himself. But more especially are we to understand by "the name of the Lord," the only-begotten Son of God; as he said to Moses, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; **for my Name is in him**" (Ex. 23:20, 21); that is, my essential attributes; all that "I Am," the great "I Am," is all in him. So that, to "trust in the name of the Lord" is to trust in what Jesus is and what Jesus has for the benefit of his people.

"The name of the Lord," then, comprehends all that God has revealed concerning himself: and all that dwells in Jesus Christ. It therefore comprehends the glorious Person of Christ, the Object and Centre to which all God's people turn: Immanuel, the Mediator between God and man: the great High Priest over the house of God: the Saviour of the lost, the Hope of the hopeless, and the Help of the helpless.

Now, our afflictions when sanctified, and our poverty when felt, prepare the heart to trust in Jesus. Why? Should we trust in him, if we could trust in ourselves? Should we hope in him, if we could hope in ourselves? Should we hang upon him, if we could hang upon the creature? But we **do** trust in ourselves, we **do** hope in ourselves, and we **do** hang upon the creature, till we are cut off. The Lord finds us hanging upon self, the world, the creature—glued and riveted to them all. He therefore cuts asunder this natural union, and brings us out of it, that we may have a felt union with the Lord of life and glory. He takes us out of the old olive tree, and grafts us into the good olive, to receive of its root and fatness. But can this be done without being cut off, and thus having our natural union broken asunder? We remain upon the old stock; we still grow upon the old tree; we bear nothing but the rank berries of the wild olive tree, till the sharp grafting knife comes to cut the soul from the old stock, and graft it into the Lord of life and glory. These afflictions therefore are needful, that by them we may be cut off the old stock, and grafted into the new olive tree. You complain that your afflictions are so deep, your trials so cutting, your temptations so severe! They must be cutting, deep, and severe. Till they have broken in twain the old union—till the scion is fairly cut off, there is no grafting into the new stock. Therefore they must be deep; for is not the natural union deep? They must be sharp: for is not the natural union close? They must be cutting, and felt to be cutting; for when the scion is cut from the old olive tree, does it not bleed at every pore? There cannot be separation without cutting. Will the skilful gardener, when he takes out his knife to graft the scion, make but a slight incision in the bark? That is but playing; that is what a child might do with his penny knife. There is a work to be executed, a result to be brought about: sap is to flow into the scion. And that cannot be effected without separation and grafting into the new stock. Therefore, by these afflictions and exercises the old union is cut through. And when the old union is cut through, the blessed Spirit grafts us into a living union with the Lord of life and glory.

We are brought to trust in his **Person**. And O, what sweet views does the Lord sometimes indulge the soul with of the glorious Person of Immanuel! What sympathy, compassion, and tenderness does the soul see in him, "who is over all, God blessed for ever," the great High Priest over the house of God! What beauty and glory did my soul see in him when I lay on a sick bed since I saw you face to face! Thus, when the beauty of Immanuel is seen by the eye of faith, a measure of his grace experienced in the heart, and he becomes the centre of all our hopes and wishes, how do the affections, feelings, and panting desires of the soul flow to, and centre in him!

They are brought also, in trusting in the name of the Lord, to trust **in his blood**, that blood which "cleanseth from all sin"—the blood of "Immanuel, God with us"—that holy, that healing blood, which sprinkled on the conscience makes it whiter than snow. O the virtue, the validity, the efficacy of Christ's atoning blood upon a poor sinner's conscience! This atoning blood is a part of "the name of the Lord;" and the poor and needy—the tempted, tried, afflicted, exercised, and distressed children of God—are brought by their sorrow, affliction, and trials, in the hands of the Spirit, to trust in this atoning blood as cleansing them from all sin.

And what a beauty and glory do they see also in his **justifying righteousness**, What a comely robe, what a refuge, what a harbour, what a shelter to the soul exposed to the thunderbolts of divine vengeance! They are brought to trust in this righteousness; and by trusting in it, to "trust in the name of the Lord."

They are brought to trust also in **all the perfections of God**, as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ—to trust to his **unfailing faithfulness to his sovereign purpose**; to the stability of the eternal covenant; to the promises spoken by his mouth; and to the words that dropped from his expiring lips, "It is finished!" In trusting to these heavenly certainties, these immovable foundations, they "trust in the name of the Lord."

And in trusting to the **sympathy, tenderness, condescension, lovingkindness,** in a word, to the heart of Immanuel, they are trusting also "in the name of the Lord." Thus they trust in the compassion and sympathy that dwell in the bosom, and gush in overflowing streams from the heart of the Lord of life and glory.

But who needs this tender pity and sympathy? The destitute, the afflicted, the exercised, and the disconsolate. Is it not so naturally? The healthy, the mirthful, the gay, the lively—do they want sympathy, tenderness, affection, bowels of pity? They want them not. But the distressed, the afflicted, the sorrowful, the mourning, and the desponding—these need sympathy. Is it not so spiritually? What can our souls know of the sympathy, the compassion, and the tenderness that flow forth from the broken heart of Immanuel, unless we are in circumstances to need his sympathy, his pity, his love? Our afflictions, therefore, and exercises bring us into the situation to draw them forth: as the infant draws forth the milk from its mother's breast, so to draw forth into our hearts the sympathy and tenderness of Immanuel. In trusting to this sympathy, and in hanging upon this tenderness, we "trust in the name of the Lord."

And everything that the soul sees in Jesus, every grace, beauty, and loveliness that the eyes of the understanding behold in him, when the heart is touched by the Spirit—to trust in all these, is to "trust in the name of the Lord." In a word, all that Jesus is, and all that Jesus has; the whole of his divine nature, the whole of his human nature, the whole of his complex nature as God-Man—all that Immanuel was in eternity, and all that Immanuel will be to all eternity—all his glorious fullness able to satisfy the wants of all his church as her risen and glorified Head—all is comprehended in one word, "the name of the Lord." This is the strong tower, into which the righteous run, and are safe.

But **how** do we trust in him? We cannot trust in him till we **know** him. Do I trust a man whom I do not know? It would not do in this metropolis. I must know a man to trust him. So spiritually. We must know that the Lord deserves our trust before we can put

our trust in him. We must have proved his faithfulness before we can fully rest upon him. In a word, "trust" implies this—though we cannot see the object of our trust, yet we rely on him from the knowledge we have of his faithfulness. It is like the wife, who has implicit confidence in her husband: he is away from her: but her confidence in his faithfulness fails not. It is the confidence of a child in his parent, which ceases not, though the child be at school, and separated by many miles. It is the trust of friends when divided by distance. Trust does not require sight: it relies upon the Object trusted in from what we know of him, though present sight and present experience be denied. It is so spiritually. It is a poor trust that requires sight. "We walk by faith, not by sight." The nature of faith is to trust in the dark, when all appearances are against it: to trust that a calm will come, though the storm be overhead: to trust that God will appear, though nothing but evil be felt. It is tender, child-like, and therefore is an implicit confidence, a yielding submission, a looking unto the Lord. There is something filial in this: something heavenly and spiritual; not the bold presumption of the daring, nor the despairing fears of the desponding: but something beyond both the one and the other—equally remote from the rashness of presumption, and from the horror of despair. There is a mingling of holy affection connected with this trust, springing out of a reception of past favours, insuring favours to come: and all linked with a simple hanging and depending of the soul upon the Lord, because he is what he is. There is a looking to, and relying upon the Lord, because we have felt him to be the Lord; and because we have no other refuge.

And why have we no other refuge? Because poverty has driven us out of false refuges. It is a safe spot, though not a comfortable one, to be where David was, "Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Ps. 142:4). And until refuge fails us in man, in self, in the world, in the church, there is no looking to Christ as a divine refuge. But when we come to this spot, "Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living" (Ps. 142:5)—"If I perish, I will perish at thy feet—my faith centres in thee—all I have, and all I expect to have, flows from thy bounty—I have nothing but what

thou freely givest to me, the vilest of the vile'—**this is trust.** And where this trust is, there will be a whole army of desires at times pouring themselves into the bosom of the Lord: there will be a whole array of pantings and longings venting themselves into the bosom of "Immanuel, God with us."

But this trust must be **tried.** It is so naturally. We cannot trust persons till we have tried them. And if we have tried them, and proved them unfaithful, we will not trust them. What is our nature to be trusted in? Man, a poor dying worm is not to be trusted in for anything: and God makes us to feel that none are to be trusted but himself. Thus, by afflictions and by poverty of spirit communicated by them, he leads us to trust only in his name. And this trust will never be put to confusion. This expectation will never be cut off. We may have to walk in darkness, much darkness: yet there will be a secret looking unto, and enquiring of the Lord in the midst of the darkness, that will not be disappointed. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

In this congregation there are, doubtless, those who know what it is to be afflicted—doubtless, those who know what it is to be poor in spirit. Now, my friends, just look at the tendency of these afflictions; at the fruit, which springs out of them. Do look at this point—What have they done for you? That is the point my eye is fixed upon as regard myself. What do afflictions do for me? What is the fruit produced by them? Have they brought you—have they brought me—to this one thing—to trust in the Lord—to come more simply, more singly unto him who is "able also to save to the uttermost?" Have they drawn forth a larger degree of submission to his will—a greater measure of reliance and confidence in him—a more frequent and closer communion with him—a more simple hiding ourselves in him, as having none other to hide ourselves in? Now, if our afflictions and trials have not produced this, I am sure it will often bring us to a stand to know what good they have done us. It is a thing, which has often tried my soul. The afflictions of body and mind, which I have had to pass through often seem to leave me just as they found me. I can bear afflictions when they do me good: nay, in my right

mind, I would rather have afflictions and temptations, however sharp and cutting, if they do my soul good, than be at ease in Zion, and settled on my lees. But this often tries my mind—they seem to do my soul so little good. Yet this I have felt them to do they make me to trust more in the name of the Lord. There is a weaning effect produced by them; a more earnest searching of heart: a more simple looking to him who alone can guide and keep. There is a cutting of the thread of the world: and embittering of the things of time and sense: more fervent desires after God's favour and presence: and tenderer confidence raised up in the name of the Lord as all my heart's desire.

These are some of the marks and evidences of the children of God. Have, then, your afflictions, trials, and exercises brought you to feel more earnestness of heart; given you more simplicity of purpose in the depths of that conscience into which none but the eye of God can look; led you to see more in Jesus than ever you saw before; to cleave more with your heart to that which before you viewed only in your judgment? Then they have done your soul good; they have stamped upon you this mark, whatever men may say or think, which God has put upon his own sheep, and by which they will be known in the day when he maketh up his jewels—"I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord."

Alienation and Reconciliation

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Feb. 16, 1862

"And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproueable in his sight; if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard." Col. 1:21-23

To some, if not many professors of religion, the constant preaching of the same doctrines, the continual opening up of the same experience, and the perpetual enforcing of the same practice become, after a certain period, irksome and wearisome. "O, for a little change, a little novelty, a little variety," is their secret cry, if not their expressed complaint. Let us look, then, at this complaint fully and fairly in the face. Let us see if it have any well-grounded foundation, for if it have we are bound to listen to it, and if possible remove it. What, then, do you mean by "variety?" Do you mean a variety *in* truth, or a variety *of* truth? for these two things widely differ. Let me explain how. Look at the Scriptures, for instance, which, as being inspired by the Holy Ghost, are all pure truth, and in which therefore there can be no intermixture whatever of error. But what a pleasing, charming, and profitable variety is there in the way in which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to set forth truth in the sacred volume! Compare, for instance, the simple, plain, historical language of Genesis, with the poetical, figurative, imaginative style of the Song of Solomon. Compare again the close, pointed, pithy, sententious wisdom of the Proverbs with the sublime, rapturous, and flowing language of Isaiah; or the calm, sober, quiet instruction of Ecclesiastes with the mourning, sighing, lamenting supplications, or warm, glowing praises in the Book of Psalms. There is, then, not only a very great, but a very pleasing and profitable variety in the pages of the Old Testament, when we take the wide range which extends itself between Genesis and

Malachi. Or look at the New Testament. Compare the Gospel of Matthew with that of John, or the revelation of the inspired disciple in the lonely isle of Patmos with the Epistles of Paul to the saints at Ephesus and Colosse. How these holy books differ in language and expression, yet all proclaim the same truth! Well, that variety which I call a variety in truth has the sanction of God; and, as holding it up in different points of view, presents it to us more fully and clearly, and so more profitably than a constant repetition of the same words. Now apply this to the complaint which I am examining. If a minister has to preach to a people continually as their settled pastor, it is highly desirable that there should be a variety in his mode of handling the truth; that he should not be ever using the same language, nor be ever treading the same beaten ground; but should bring forward from time to time the same precious truth,—for the truth of God, like the Church to whom it is given, is but "one" (Song 6:9),—and yet not always in the same way. For as the Lord the Spirit enlarges his heart he will also open his mouth, and enable him, as a "scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, to be like unto a man that is a house holder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." This variety, then, I do not object to, nay, wish that I were blessed with more of it; for how ample is the field of truth if we can but walk at large in it! The longest life would be too short, and the most enlarged ministry too narrow, to exhaust a thousandth part of the treasures contained in this field; for the more it is cultivated the more bounteous a crop it yields, the more deeply it is dug into the richer the mine is found to be. But there is a variety *of* truth, which, in fact, is only another word for the introduction into it of error. No such variety as that is admissible into a pulpit which is dedicated to the pure truth of God. But as an illustration to show you the difference between a variety *in* truth and a variety *of* truth, take a simple figure. There may be a variety, and not only a desirable, but almost necessary variety in our daily food; but whatever variety there may be introduced into it, it must all be sound and nourishing; for who could eat it, or desire to eat it, if it were unsound, diseased, or not nutritious? How should you like, for instance, to have a loaf of bread for breakfast and one made of

sawdust for tea; a slice of meat at dinner and of carrion at supper; a glass of water from a pure spring at one meal and one from the town ditch at another? Just so it would be if, for the sake of variety, I should occasionally change my doctrine, or introduce a little novelty into my experience, or alter the drift of my perceptive exhortations. I might in this way, if conscience would allow me or you would sit to hear it, give you a great deal of variety. I might preach, for instance, free will in the morning, and free grace in the afternoon; tell you one Sunday that you can only be saved by Christ's righteousness, and on another by your own; assure you one week evening that the path to heaven is very straight and narrow, and hard to be found, and on another that any one may find it who likes, and that it is open all day long for all comers as much as Regent-street or the Strand. I might inculcate one day a life separate from the world, and close walking with God; and on another tell you there was no harm in partaking a little of the pleasures and amusements of life, so long as you said your prayers regularly and read the Bible occasionally. Do you want this variety, this trimming between truth and error, this serving God and mammon, this half for Christ and half for the world, this motley mixture whereby so many seek to serve two masters and please all people? Would you like some indulgence to be given to your lusts? That variety I hope never to give. Of one thing I am very sure, that I should not be fit to stand up here if I were to act so treacherous a part to God and my own conscience. Let me present truth before you, according as the Lord may give me gifts, in all gracious and spiritual variety, so as to profit your soul; but the Lord keep me from indulging that cry for variety from carnal hearts which makes truth and error to be one. Would you like it in natural things, that I should speak truth on Sunday and tell lies on Monday? be honest on Tuesday and cheat on Wednesday? Would you wish to act so yourself? Then it cannot be so in the things of God. Is honesty only for the shop and the market-place? Truth must always be truth and error must always be error in the things of God as well as of man. We must keep the two distinct, as we should keep laudanum out of our drink and arsenic out of our food; unless to poison the soul is less criminal or dangerous than

to poison the body.

I just drop these observations as introductory to our text, which is the old beaten road, still proclaiming that truth which, however old, must be in the hands of the Spirit ever new—man's ruin and alienation from God, and the only way of recovery from it by sovereign grace. The very text, therefore, may seem to some to be still treading the same ground, beating the same bush. In a sense it is so; for if Jesus be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," his truth will be same also. But if the Lord is pleased to open my mouth this morning by his own blessed Spirit to unfold experimentally, the gracious truths which he has lodged in the words before us, you will find even this old path become new. As Bunyan well says, "All things become new when there is the smell of heaven upon them;" and, as Bunyan's Lord and Master said before him, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5); so with his help and blessing, we may find something new in them without being novel, something suitable and savoury in their contents without being stale.

In opening our text, therefore, I shall view it under four different aspects, and shall briefly characterise each by one word, to impress it more thoroughly upon your memory:—

I.—*First, Alienation*: "And you that were sometime *alienated*, and enemies in your mind by wicked works."

II.—*Secondly, Reconciliation*: "Yet now hath he *reconciled*, in the body of his flesh through death."

III.—*Thirdly, Presentation*: "To *present* you holy and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight."

IV.—*Lastly, Continuation*: "If ye *continue* in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard."

1.—First, then, let us consider that painful subject, and yet one

which all who are taught of God must learn in their own bosom—*Alienation*. "And you, that were some time *alienation*."

i. Let us seek to dive into the meaning of this term, as used by the apostle to describe our state and condition before God by nature and practice. What do we understand literally by it? *Strangership*. It is only another word to convey much the same idea, though in a more forcible manner, of one who is a foreigner or a stranger in a land to which he has no claim by birth or inheritance. And you will observe there is a distinction between being an alien and being "alienated." Let me show you the difference. Every foreigner in this country is an "alien," unless naturalised, that is, made an English citizen, by renouncing his allegiance to his own sovereign and becoming subject to ours. But if an Englishman, a native of this country, were to go to America and cast off his allegiance to our sovereign by becoming a citizen of the United States, he would be "alienated," that is, from his former country and his former sovereign; and, as has actually occurred in many cases, his love might turn to enmity, and he might actually fight against the country which gave him birth. In this sense, man by nature is not only an alien but alienated.

For was man thus ever an alien and an enemy to God? Was there always a breach, a distance, a separation between God and him? Not so. Did not the Lord make man in his own image, after his own likeness? When he had created him, did he not place him in a garden of all manner of delight and pleasure, as the word Eden means? Did he not look down from heaven upon him and pronounce all his works good, and man as the last of them very good? for it was not until the close of the sixth day, when man stood before the Lord, created in his own image, that "he saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good; for the last creation put the stamp of God's approbation upon the whole. And when thus created did not the Lord have sweet communion with him in the garden where he had placed him; for we read of his "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8), as if he came daily in the cool of eve to converse face to face with the

intelligent creature of his hand? There was no breach then, no enmity, no alienation. God and man were friends, and, if I may use the expression, the best of friends, for the One was blessed in giving and the other in receiving. But, alas! this blessed state did not continue long. How long we know not, but evidently for but a short period. An enemy came stealing into this happy garden, a tempter once an angel of light, but now a fiend, full of all subtlety and malice, whom God permitted in his inscrutable wisdom to carry out his hellish plot and execute his infernal design. Satan, under the guise of a serpent, was permitted to tempt the woman; she was allowed to tempt the man, and he not, as she, overcome and overborne by temptation, but wilfully disobeyed the command of God, and thus, with his eyes open, precipitated himself and all his future race into the deepest abyss of sin and misery; for we all fell in him. This may seem at first sight strange, and some have called it unjust; but we were in him as our federal head, in his loins, as Levi was in the loins of Abraham (Heb. 7:10); and thus what he did we virtually did in him. The Scripture is clear here: "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that [I prefer the marginal reading, "in whom"] all have sinned." So again, "By one man's offence [margin, "by one offence"] death hath reigned by one;" find again, "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. 5:12, 17, 19.) I like to make my points clear, and this is the reason why I thus, from the Scriptures, trace up sin to its fountain head. But now what was the consequence of this original sin, this act of rebellion and disobedience of our first parent? Alienation from God. A breach was made, estrangement introduced. Those who were once friends now became separated, and, what was far worse, they became enemies. So wide, so deep was this chasm then made, that, like the fixed gulf of which Abraham speaks in the parable, none could pass over it, nor could it ever have been brought together but for God's eternal purpose of love and mercy in the Person and work of his dear Son.

But you may say, "How is it that this descended to *me*? If Adam sinned and fell, *I* was not in Paradise, how could I help his sinning

against God? I was not there to hold back his hand from taking the forbidden fruit. Why then should I, an innocent man, suffer for his transgression? If a man now commit theft or murder, the law does not punish the innocent with the guilty." Then, I suppose, you have no personal sins of our own, and can stand before God perfectly holy and innocent? "No," you say, "I don't mean that, for I know that I am a sinner." But how did you become a sinner? Don't you see how in the fall the seed of sin was deposited by Satan in the very nature of Adam; that this alienation was dropped, as it were, from Satan's hand into his heart, as an acorn may fall into the earth, where it struck root and grew, and so filled, so to speak, the whole of his nature that it thrust out, like an overgrown tree, everything that was good. But you may say, "How could *one* sin do this?" Cannot a grain of poison, say strychnine, diffuse itself through a whole vessel full of water? So sin spread itself through the whole of Adam's body and soul, killing the life of God therein and corrupting his nature throughout. But still the question arises, "How can this reach *us*?" Why, as like can only beget like, the alienation that Satan sowed in the heart of man in the fall in infecting him infected the whole of the race that should spring from him. Do we not read that "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image?" (Gen. 5:3.) A fallen son must come from a fallen sire. Thus we come into the world alienated from the *image* of God, and this alienation is our birthright, our portion, our miserable inheritance; all that we can really call our own for time or for eternity.

1. But look at *the consequences* of being thus alienated from *the image* of God. He who is the fountain of all bliss could not, even if he would, make a creature unlike and estranged from himself really and truly happy; for alienation springs out of sin, and sin is abhorred by the holiness, and amenable to the justice of God. And see how this state of alienation from God goes on, until at last it ends in thorough ruin. We come into the world alienated from his *image*, for we lost it in the fall; we grow up still more and more alienated from it, and if we die thus alienated, what must that end be but eternal destruction from the presence of his glory? for there is no reconciliation or regeneration in the grave.

There is no possibility of coming into a state of friendship with God when the breath has left the body. As the tree falls, so it lies. If we die aliens, we die under the wrath of God.

2. But look a little further into the meaning of the word now before us. In being alienated from God, we are alienated from the *knowledge* of God. Our blessed Lord, in his intercessory prayer, says, "This is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This alienation, therefore, is an alienation from the knowledge of God; for its leading, its prominent feature is death in sin. So the apostle speaks of the Gentiles "being alienated from the life of God through *the ignorance* that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Eph. 4:18.) If, then, the knowledge of God be eternal life, ignorance of God must be eternal death. He says in his word, "Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace;" but we have no acquaintance with him by nature, and therefore no peace, for "there is no peace to the wicked." There is a veil of ignorance and unbelief spread over our heart (2 Cor. 3:15); and besides this, Satan, the god of this world, blinds our mind and hardens our conscience, so that we neither see the light nor want to see it, for we have an inward consciousness that our deeds are evil. We may indeed by the natural light of conscience and by a traditionary religion know God in some small measure as a just and holy Lord, whose displeasure we fear; but we cannot know him as a God of mercy, goodness, and truth, for as such he has not been revealed to our soul, nor have we thus beheld his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

3. But consider a little more closely the force of the word "alienated." There is an alienation, as the apostle speaks, in a passage which I have already quoted, *from the life of God*. When the Lord begins a work of grace upon our heart, he makes us partakers of a new, a spiritual, and eternal life. This life is in Jesus as a covenant head, for he is the head of his body, the Church; and at regeneration it is communicated out of his fulness to the various members of his mystical body, whereby, as made partakers of his grace, they then for the first time live unto him,

live upon him, and live by him. This life, as being a divine gift and work, the apostle calls "the life of God," not meaning thereby the eternal, essential life of God which he ever lives in himself as the self-existent Jehovah, but the life of grace communicated by him and from him to his people. Now in our state of nature, we are alienated from this life of God; that is, we are strangers to a life of faith in the Son of God. The life which we had in Adam we have lost, being, as the Scripture declares, dead in trespasses and sins, and thus are unable to quicken our own souls. Nay, we are not only strangers to it, but alienated from it, as hating it and despising it when seen in others, being dimly conscious that there is such a thing, but filled with bitter enmity to, and proud contempt of it.

4. But look still a little further at the word "alienated." There is an alienation from the *will* of God, that is, his revealed will, for his secret will we know not. This will he has revealed in the Scriptures of truth, and ever and anon there flash forth rays of holiness from this revealed will which strike upon, though they do not enter into or influence the unregenerated heart. But in this light, sufficient to condemn if not sufficient to convince, we often see and feel the will of God to be opposed to our own. Yet, though we see the alienation of our heart from this will, we are determined to have our own way, cost us what it may. This, in fact, is rebellion of the deepest dye. There is, therefore, no submission to God's will in affliction; no desire to know it or to do it, however often the lips may vainly utter, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

ii. But there is something worse behind; there is even a state worse than alienation. To live and die a stranger to God and godliness must ensure our destruction, for what mansion in heaven can we think is prepared for one who is alienated from the image, knowledge, life, and will of God? But there is even a more fearful, a more fatal condition than this. When Satan dropped the seed of sin into the human mind to take root there, he dropped a more poisonous ingredient wrapped up in it than alienation, and one which struck deeper root—*enmity*. That one

word seems to measure the height of man's rebellion and the depth of man's fall; that he is, as our text declares, *an enemy to God by wicked works*. All man's sins, speaking comparatively, are but motes in the sun-beam compared with this giant sin of enmity against God. A man may be given up to fleshly indulgences; he may sin against his fellow creature; may rob, plunder, oppress, even kill his brother man; but though such sins are justly condemned by the laws of God and man, yet, viewed in a spiritual light, what are they compared with the dreadful, the damnable sin of enmity against the great and glorious Majesty of heaven? This is a sin that lives beyond the grave. Many sins, though not their consequences, die with man's body, because they are bodily sins. But this is a sin that goes into eternity with him, and flares up like a mighty volcano from the very depths of the bottomless pit. Yea, it is the very sin of devils, which therefore binds guilty man down with them in the same eternal chains, and consigns him to the same place of torment. The very thought is appalling, because known and felt by the guilty conscience to be true. O the unutterable enmity of the heart against the living God! What! that I, that you, in our state of nature should be enemies to God; that our carnal mind, which is, in fact, ourselves, for it is the whole of that fleshly image of Adam with which we were born, should not only be the enemy of God, but enmity itself, which is far worse, more deep, desperate, and incurable, because an enemy may be reconciled, but enmity never! How utterly ruined, then, how wholly lost must that man's state and case be who lives and dies as he comes into the world unchanged, unrenewed, unregenerated! If he were only a stranger to God, an alien from his image, knowledge, life, and will, he could not, it is true, rise up at death into the presence of God in heaven; for what could he or would he do there? God and he would be as much and indeed more strangers there than on earth, because then brought more immediately face to face. Heaven is happiness and holiness. But for whom? For those who can enjoy it. What happiness could there be, then, in heaven for one who is a perfect stranger to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? But, still less, how can enmity be admitted into the realms of eternal peace and love? Will God have

enemies in the courts of bliss? Can his enemies sing the songs of praise in sweet unison with his friends? When pride entered heaven in the person of Satan, he and it were cast out together. How then can enmity enter therein? Could it gain admission, it would turn heaven itself into hell.

iii. But to proceed a little further into the bosom of our text and into the opening up from it of this deep and dark mystery of enmity against God. Observe *where* this enmity is and *how* it works. It is "*in the mind.*" That is the worst part of it. If it were merely in the understanding, or if its seat were only in the body, it might haply be weeded out. You can take your hoe and spud out a weed in your garden, or even a stout thistle in your close; but what can your hoe do with an oak that has struck its roots deep into the soil? If a finger be diseased, it may be cut off; but what are you to do with a gangrene of a vital organ, a diseased heart, or an ulcerous lung? So, if this enmity were a disease just in some corner of the mind, it might possibly be got out. But when the whole mind is full of it, so that it is its very breath and blood, what can be done then to it? for the very power that should fight against it is itself infected; and it would be like a person in the last stage of consumption trying to cure one as far gone as himself. We come, then, to this conclusion, that nothing but the mighty power of God himself can ever turn this enemy into a friend. Nay, even the power of God himself is unable to destroy the enmity of the carnal mind, for we are assured by his own testimony that "it is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be.*" (Rom. 8:7.) It must die with our bodies, if indeed we are to rise on the resurrection morn, to see the Son of God as he is, and be conformed to his glorious image. Yes, let it lie and rot and for ever perish in that grave in which our bones shall turn to dust, when the worm has fed sweetly upon them.

iv. But look also at another expression of our text, "*by wicked works.*" We gather from these words the working and the manifestation of this enmity against God. It is not a dead thing in the heart, a mere quiet, passive feeling, which lies as still as a stone; but it manifests itself in "wicked works," in carrying out

the purposes and intents of the carnal mind into downright and positive action. This you know is the height of rebellion. Thoughts and words, plots and schemes, may be rebellious, but *actions* are *rebellion*; and who that sees the wicked works daily perpetrated by the hands of man, or even remembers what he himself did in the days of his flesh, will not own that in this way the carnal mind most manifests its bitter enmity? If we loved God by nature we should do his will and keep his word. But as we despise his will and disobey his word, it is a plain proof that we neither love nor fear him, but really hate him.

But I will not dwell longer upon this gloomy subject, on this sad exhibition of human wickedness and misery, though it is needful we should know it for ourselves, that we should have a taste of this bitter cup in our own most painful experience, that we may know the sweetness of the cup of salvation when presented to our lips by free and sovereign grace.

II.—Our next point then is *Reconciliation*. How sweet the sound as it drops upon the listening ear of the awakened sinner, and is carried by the power of God into a believing heart! The first work of grace upon the soul is to convince us of our sins; and as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to convince us of sin, he opens up by degrees the secret chambers of imagery and shows us what strangers we are by nature to God and godliness, what enemies by wicked works, laying the guilt of this alienation and enmity upon the conscience. But, together with this work of conviction in the application of the law to the conscience, there is kindled by the same divine power a secret yearning after God, a longing for mercy from him and reconciliation to him. It is a great mistake to think that in the first dealings of God with the soul nothing is felt but conviction of guilt. It may seem so to the convinced sinner, for his mind is too dark to read plainly the writing of God upon his conscience; but it is not all doubt, fear, and bondage. In most cases, for I do not deny that there may be exceptions, the Lord is pleased from time to time to soften and melt the heart, to excite yearnings after reconciliation, longings to be brought out of that state of carnality and death in which the law finds us. The Spirit

of God produces this yearning after pardon and peace by being poured out upon the soul as a Spirit of grace and of supplications. "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31:9.) So it was with the publican in the temple, with the prodigal in the parable, with the thief upon the cross. Conviction of sin and prayer for mercy in their cases went hand in hand. Reconciliation, then, becomes a very sweet sound to a heart that can, as thus taught and led of God, lay hold of any way or plan whereby it may come into a state of friendship with God. The mind may be very dark, unbelief may much prevail, the conscience be full of guilt, great doubt and fear may possess the soul, causing the whole inward work of the Spirit to be enveloped in thick obscurity. Yet through all this thick darkness rays of divine light will, from time to time, beam upon the mind, either under the preaching of the Gospel, or in reading the Scriptures, or by some gentle movements of the Spirit upon the heart in secret prayer. But all these internal sensations are "cords of love and bands of a man" whereby the Lord is drawing the soul into friendship with himself; for his own words are, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) This leads us to consider more at length what reconciliation is as revealed in the word of truth and in a believing heart.

i. Reconciliation was, in its first rise and origin, a free, voluntary, spontaneous act upon the part of God. He never consulted the mind of man or angel upon the matter, or left it in the slightest degree to hang or hinge upon the will of either. He devised no plan in which he permitted the creature to share the wisdom of the contrivance with himself. It was planned in eternity by himself and by himself alone in his Trinity of Persons yet Unity of Essence; and when so planned was ordered in the everlasting covenant, which, as specially fixed between the Father and the Son, is called in Scripture "the counsel of peace between them both." (Zech. 6:13.) In heaven the plan was laid, there the eternal decree fixed, there the mode of its execution unalterably determined. And O, what a plan it was! It was nothing less than that God's dear and only-begotten Son should come into this

world, take our nature into union with his own divine Person and Godhead, and in that nature, which by this intimate union personally became his own, to suffer, bleed, and die in our room and stead. But you may say, "What need was there for all this? Could not God have forgiven man without this sacrifice? Was it needful his own Son should die that man might be saved?" What did our Lord say to his Father in the garden? "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." It was the will of God that his Son should take the cup of sorrow and of deaths and drink it to the very dregs. Do you think that the prayer of Christ in his agony would not have moved the Father to contrive some other way, if any other way had been possible? No; there was, there could be, no other way, for, as Hart truly speaks,

"Sin to pardon without blood,
Never in His nature stood."

As far, then, as we are enlightened from the Scriptures of truth to see into the mind of God, there was no possibility of man being saved without a full and adequate ransom price being paid, without the law being perfectly obeyed, without atoning blood being shed, and a perfect satisfaction rendered. But all this could only be done by the Son of God being made flesh and suffering for our sake. We must be content with believing this, for our reason cannot penetrate into this heavenly mystery; and, when we are led into it by the teaching and testimony of the Blessed Spirit, we shall not only be content with believing it, but thankfully receive what God so freely gives.

ii. Looking, however, a little more closely into this heavenly truth as revealed in the Scriptures, we may draw a distinction between reconciliation as effected by the blood of Christ, and reconciliation as made known by a divine power to the heart. These are two distinct things, though closely connected; and, in fact, the latter flows wholly out of the former. Thus, Christ by his death upon the cross reconciled the *persons* of his people unto God, for he suffered in their stead that punishment which was due to their

transgressions. So speaks the apostle, "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross." (Eph. 2:16.) So again, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10); and again, "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Col. 1:20); once more, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 5:18.) I quote these texts, as I wish to impress it deeply upon your minds that reconciliation to God, that is of our *persons*, is wholly through the atoning blood of the Lamb. But there is another reconciliation, not of our persons, but our *hearts*, of which the apostle speaks (2 Cor. 5:20), "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." He cannot mean there the reconciliation of their persons, for that he tells us was already done when God reconciled us to himself by the blood of the cross; but he means that *inward* reconciliation of heart and affection which is produced by the application of atoning blood to the conscience; as we find him elsewhere expressing himself, "By whom we have now received (that is, inwardly and experimentally received) the atonement;" as we read in the margin, which is the right translation, "*the reconciliation.*" (Rom. 5:11.) These two things are to be carefully distinguished, for there is no true peace of conscience as long as we confound them.

iii. But as I have shown you the reconciliation of our *persons*, I will endeavour now to show you the reconciliation of our *heart and affections*.

1. The first step toward it is the reconciling of the *conscience*. We know, painfully know, what a guilty conscience is. This guilty conscience, the Scripture calls "an evil conscience" (Heb. 10:22), not because it is evil in itself, but because it testifies of evil to us. Now until this conscience is purged, or purified, by the blood of Christ, there is no reconciliation of the heart unto God. The apostle, therefore, says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the

living God." (Heb. 9:14.) We cannot, therefore, "draw near unto God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," until our heart is "sprinkled from an evil conscience." (Heb. 10:22.) But when by the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, the conscience is thus purged from guilt, filth, and dead works; when the guilt of sin is removed and pardon proclaimed, then the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and his mercy revealed to the soul. This guilty conscience is now reconciled, for there is no longer law, wrath, and terror to produce enmity and division.

2. But next comes the reconciliation of the *heart and affections*. "My son, give me thy heart." (Prov. 23:26.) "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." (Psa. 57:7.) "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2.) But our heart and affections by nature are alienated from the love of God, ever wandering after strangers, going out after idols, and seeking their gratification in earthly objects. These affections, then, of ours need to be reconciled, that is, brought home, gathered up into the bosom of the Lord, made to flow in sweet harmony with the love of God, so that they may be fixed where Jesus sits at his right hand. But this reconciliation of the affections only flows into the soul with the love of God shed abroad in the heart. Love begets love. "We love him because he first loved us." "The love of Christ constraineth us." Thus, when the Lord is pleased to drop a sense of his goodness, love, and mercy into the soul, it constrains us to love him with a pure heart fervently. Without some measure of this heavenly love all religion is but a task and a burden, the wearisome service of a slave, not the loving obedience of a child. But "love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." (1 John 4:7, 8.) Blessed is he then who can say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16.)

3. But as a necessary consequence of this, there will be next the reconciliation of *our will* of that powerful principle in the mind

which Bunyan well calls "Lord Will-be-will," for, whether lord or lady, it is the ruling master or mistress, the grand director or directoress of every other faculty; for it is, to use another figure, the motive-power of both soul and body. But in a state of nature, this will, with all its strength and power, with all the train that it drags submissively along, is directly opposed to the will of God. What God hates, it loves; what God loves, it hates. And as this will influences our words and actions, the things which God has forbidden us both to say and do, we both speak and practice. In this state, therefore, our will and God's will are at thorough variance. But what reconciliation can there be unto God inwardly, feelingly, experimentally, as long as our will is opposed to his? In order to be one they must be brought together, to harmonise mutually with each other; and as our will is by nature evil, God cannot and will not change his good into our bad. Therefore our will is to melt into God's will, otherwise we are not one with God nor fully reconciled to him. But as I cannot do this myself, I need a power to be put forth in my soul to reconcile my will to the will of God, which is and only can be done by the grace of the Spirit showing me what God's will is and constraining me by every godly motive to submit to it. But that will may be in many cases very contrary to my will. The road I may have to travel may be a thorny road, a path of tribulation, temptation, and deep affliction; and things may occur continually which may very much fret and gall my natural disposition, sadly mortify my pride, cut my flesh, and wound my feelings. How, then, under these painful circumstances, my carnal mind still remaining as it was full of enmity and rebellion, is my will to submit to God's will? By the power of his all-sufficient and all-powerful grace melting my will into submission to his. Is this an impossibility? It often seems so. But did not the Lord say to his apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 Cor. 12:9.) And is not that grace sufficient for us? Surely it is, if the Lord put it forth. There is then a reconciling of our will even to afflictions, troubles, and the thorny path of tribulation in which the Lord is pleased to lead his saints. But when their will is thus reconciled to the will of God, then they see that the way in which he is leading them is a right way, though a rugged way, for it is bringing them to that "city which hath

foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

I have enlarged upon these points to show you more plainly that reconciliation has two very different aspects, which we must keep carefully separated, or we shall get into sad confusion, for we shall confound together the work of Christ upon the cross with the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. There is, then, a reconciliation of our persons by the blood of the Lamb, and a reconciliation of our conscience, heart, and will by the inward operations of the Spirit of God, specially as revealing Christ, making him precious, and constraining us, by every godly constraint, to move, walk, and act in the fear and love of God.

It is of the reconciliation of our *persons* chiefly that the apostle speaks in our text. This is and ever must be the foundation of the other; for it was only because Christ has reconciled us unto God in the body of his flesh, by taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, offering that pure and sacred humanity upon the cross, and then dying as a sacrifice to God's offended justice, that any discovery of mercy can flow into the heart, any peace be experienced in the conscience, or any love be revealed with power to the soul. But do observe in connection with this how the cross of Christ, the blood of the Lamb, opens a way for the vilest sinner to approach unto God. None of his sins, if he be enabled to believe in the name of God's only-begotten Son, shall be brought against him; they are all cast behind God's back, all washed away in the fountain of atoning blood, all covered by the robe of Immanuel's righteousness. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1.) But as we feel our lost, undone condition, and get a view by faith, of Christ's blood and righteousness, we want to enjoy the mercy, to live under the sweet manifestations of the grace, and to have our souls brought under the operation of the Spirit, revealing those things with a divine power and sealing them upon the heart with a liberating, saving, and sanctifying influence. Thus reconciliation by the blood of the Lamb is not an unfruitful doctrine or dry speculation, is not a mere article of a sound creed that we may

receive upon the testimony of Scripture, but is a truth pregnant with every grace, a tree loaded with gospel fruit, a fountain of all inward and outward holiness. The more, therefore, that we know of being reconciled to God by Jesus Christ and brought near by the blood of the Lamb; the deeper insight we have into the mystery of the cross, the more freedom of access to God shall we experience and the more shall we rejoice in the hope of his glory. If then a man look upon these things as a mere speculation, it plainly shows he is not under the teaching of the Spirit. Were the Spirit to bring the blood of the cross into his conscience and the love of God into his soul, he would feel the blessedness of these heavenly truths, and find them a most gracious and blessed fountain of life and peace in his inmost spirit.

III.—Now comes our next point, which is *Presentation*; "*to present you holy.*" We must all one day stand before the bar of God. But how shall we stand before that bar? In our own righteousness or in Christ's righteousness? You know what was the end of that guest who was found at the wedding feast without the wedding garment on. You remember the words which dropped from the master of the feast: "Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Such will be the sentence of the master of the house against all who present themselves before God without the wedding garment. But our blessed Lord, it is said in our text, presents his people "holy and unblameable and unreprouable in the sight of God."

i. If we examine a little more closely this divine mystery of presentation, we may say that on three different occasions the Lord thus presents his people before God.

When his people first appeared in him as the chosen members of his mystical body, there was a presentation of the church before the eyes of God *as she would shine forth* in all her beauty and lustre in *her future glorified condition*. Thus was she comely in his comeliness (Ezek. 16:14); beautiful in his beauty ("Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," Psl. 90:17); holy in his holiness

("For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," Heb. 2:11); and perfect in his perfections ("That they may be made perfect in one.") Again, when he died upon the cross, rose from the dead, went up on high, and sat on the right hand of the Father as her Head, Representative, and Surety in the courts of bliss, then in a mystical sense the ascended Saviour presented his Church before the eyes of his heavenly Father, *as washed from all her pollution in the fountain of his precious blood*, and justified by the imputation of his perfect obedience. Upon this presentation the Scripture especially dwells as a truth so blessedly adapted to our present state as feeling ourselves defiled by sin. Yea even now the saints can sometimes sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood." (Rev. 1:5.) So also the saints are said to have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14.) Thus, in a mystical sense, our blessed Lord presented his people when he went up on high before the eyes of the Father as so washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness, that they appeared in him without spot or blemish. And then will come that crowning transaction in the great day, when he will present them before the throne of his Father *in all the beauties of holiness*, not only as redeemed by his blood but as sanctified by his Spirit, glorious in soul as perfectly holy, and glorious in body as conformed to his glorified image. Then will he be able to say to his heavenly Father as he thus presents them in glory, "Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me."

ii. But as our text speaks of presentation as following upon reconciliation, it is doubtless this last presentation that the apostle means, when he says "to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight." He seems also in it to direct our thoughts to two different ways in which the people of God are finally to be presented before the throne of the Most High. The first seems to regard their external, the other their internal state.

1. First, then, they are to be presented "*unblameable and unreprouable.*" I understand by these words their perfect

justification before the throne of God in the great day. For just consider what must be the condition of a man in body and soul for the eye of God to see no fault in him, when in his sight the very heavens are not clean and he charges his angels with folly? What must that man be, or in what state must he stand, to be absolutely without blame before the eyes of infinite Purity? Surely no man can have the presumption to think he can stand before God thus without blame in his own obedience. Have not you, the very darkest and most ignorant among you, sufficient light of conviction in your own conscience to tell you this, so that even you who are without divine teaching are sufficiently convinced of sin to oblige you to flee to some general idea of God's mercy to give you hope? How, then, can any man who has the light of life in his bosom think for a moment he can stand before the throne of an all-seeing God, unblameable, unproveable, if he have to stand there in his own righteousness? No; no man can ever stand the scrutiny of a just and holy God if his own good works are his only acceptance. It is only as washed from all our sins in the blood of the Lamb, only as clothed in his spotless righteousness, that we can stand before the throne, as John says, "without fault." (Rev. 14:5.) The holiest man upon earth must sink under the wrath of God if he have no other title than the obedience of his own hands.

2. But the apostle uses the expression "*holy*," which I understand, not merely in the sense of being sanctified by virtue of union with Christ, as "of God made unto us sanctification," but also of that inward holiness which is wrought in the heart by the grace of the Spirit. The apostle bids us in this very chapter "give thanks unto the Father which hath *made us meet* for the inheritance of the saints in light." Thus we see, that there is not only an *external* beauty in which the church stands as adorned with the wedding robe of Christ's righteousness, but an *internal* beauty as sanctified by his Spirit. Both of those are expressed in the words of the Psalm, "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." (Psalm 45:13.) The clothing of wrought gold is Christ's righteousness; the glory within is her perfect sanctification of the Spirit. These are "the

beauties of holiness" in which she will appear. (Psalm 110:3.) Thus we find, also, the apostle bringing together justification and sanctification, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11.) Without this inward holiness there is no entrance into the courts of bliss, for without it there is no meetness for them. Can a bird live in the water or a fish in the air? The air is the element of the bird, the water the element of the fish; but each dies out of its own element. So an unrenewed, unregenerated, unsanctified sinner could not live in the presence of God. The very brightness and splendour, the infinite purity and unspeakable majesty of the God of heaven would kill him; would strike him down to hell as it were with a thousand thunderbolts.

But the question may occur even to one who truly fears God, "Am I meet for heaven? I do not feel to be so; I am not holy, but corrupt and vile." Now we must bear in mind that in this life our holiness is imperfect; it is not imperfect as regards its nature, but its development. Immediately that the Holy Spirit plants divine life in the soul it is meet for heaven, for he communicates in that divine operation a germ of perfect holiness. Was it not so with the thief upon the cross? On that very day when the Holy Ghost quickened his soul he was with Christ in paradise; as perfectly holy in spirit as ever he will be. We may compare this germ of holiness, perhaps, to a seed in the husk. The seed germinates and expands, yet it is still surrounded by the husk. But when the husk falls off by the body dropping into the grave, then that seed of holiness which the blessed Spirit has implanted will expand all over the soul, pervading, and, so to speak, fully sanctifying every faculty. And finally, when the body is raised up from the grave in glory in the resurrection morn, both soul and body will be perfectly holy, as being both fully conformed to the glorious humanity of the Lord from heaven. Then will come the glorious presentation of the saints of God before the Father's throne without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

IV.—Now to our last point, which is *Continuance*, or, as I before named it, *Continuation*: "If ye *continue* in the faith grounded and

settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard."

i. How personal is the appeal—how direct the challenge! All religion must be personal. *You* may have faith: your faith won't save *me*. *I* may have faith: my faith won't save *you*. I must live for myself; I must die for myself. My religion, to save my soul, must be one wrought in my heart by the power of God. Your religion, if it is to save your soul, must be wrought in your soul by the same divine power. Here, then, is the proof: *Continuance, abiding*. "He that *endureth to the end*," and he only, "shall be saved." If you have the faith of God's elect, if it be but as a grain of mustard seed, you are saved already in the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting salvation. But if you depart from your profession, give up your religion, go into the world, fall into error, abandon the things you professed to love, and return like the dog to your vomit again, and, like the sow that was washed, to your wallowing in the mire, what will it prove? That a saint of God may fall away and perish? No, but that you are not a saint; that you really never received the truth in the love of it by the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit; that your faith is not the faith of God's elect, but a mere natural persuasion of your mind, a mere doctrinal speculation. For were you possessed of a true and living faith, "the end" of it would be, as Peter declares, "the salvation of your soul." (1 Peter 1:9.) This is the reason, then, why the Scripture lays such stress upon enduring and continuing, not as expressing any doubt whether the true saint of God will persevere to the end, but to show that where there is not this continuance there the faith is not the gift or work of God, but a mere natural credence of the word of truth, without any application of it with power to the heart. To continue, then, in the faith, and that faith such as I have described as the gift and work of God, is an evidence of it being real. But sometimes for the past, we may take hope for the future. It may be many years since the Lord first called you by his grace. What has enabled you to continue up to thus day? How has your faith been preserved amidst so many temptations and trials, so much internal and external opposition, so many fightings without, so many fears

within? You well know that it is not by your own exertions, your own striving, but by the pure grace of God that you still stand. "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day" (Acts 26:22), was Paul's language, and will be the language of all who have his faith and his continuance.

ii. But observe also that the apostle speaks of their being "*grounded and settled*," that is, in the faith which they not only professed but possessed.

The expression "*grounded*" signifies being firmly built upon the foundation. God has laid a foundation in Zion, even the Person of his own dear Son. To be "*grounded*," then, is to be firmly built upon this foundation; not only to have a standing upon it but a strong standing. The word "*settled*" seems to signify such a settling down upon the foundation as never to be moved off it. You know that a building, say a bridge, must settle before we have any security that it will stand. When the centering of the arch is struck away, it is an anxious time with the architect to ascertain whether the bridge will settle well, and how much. So in grace: people make a profession, seem to run well, are full of zeal, ardour, and earnestness. But let us wait and see whether they will stand against persecution, temptation, the strength of sin, the corruptions of their heart, and the wiles of the adversary. Sooner or later all will fall into ruin except those whom the Lord keeps by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. The blessedness, then, of having a living faith is, that the Lord will surely carry on the work he has begun. But how needful it is to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, and whether by the continued operations of the Holy Spirit we are well grounded and settled upon the Rock of Ages!

iii. But the apostle adds another evidence of our being amongst the number of those whom the Lord will present holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in God's sight, which is "*not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel which they have heard*." The gospel, when it becomes the power of God unto salvation to a believing heart, raises up what the Scripture calls

"a good hope through grace." I hope I may say in your ears that you have heard the gospel for many years from my lips. It is my desire to preach the gospel, and nothing but the gospel, and, if it be the will of God, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that it may be attended with a divine power to your soul. With God's help and blessing, may I never keep back part of the price, but preach the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, whether you will hear or forbear. But when you have received the gospel as a message from God, it has been a sweet sound in your heart, for it has come, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." You have seen and felt its freeness, its sweetness, its blessedness, its power, for it has at times broken your heart, melted down your soul, softened your spirit. Pardon and peace, light, life, liberty, and love have come with it; and thus as you embraced and felt the power of the gospel in your soul, it enabled you to cast anchor within the veil. Now if ever you felt this power in your heart, you must never "be moved away from the hope of the gospel;" that is, from the hope in your soul which the power of the gospel has thus raised up. Whatever temptations then assail you, whatever doubts or fears trouble you, never, never give up your hope. By the mighty power of God, in spite of every foe and every fear, you must still believe against unbelief, still hope against despair, still love in spite of coldness, darkness, and death. But you say, "I cannot do this nor any one of them, for I am a poor, helpless creature." So are all; but Christ's strength is made perfect in weakness. "As thy day is so shall thy strength be." For remember this, that if you do not "continue in the faith grounded and settled, but are moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard," it will prove that you never received it in power. But so far as you do thus continue, it affords you a blessed evidence that you, who were once alienated, are now reconciled to God. And as you are enabled to believe this, and to feel the comfort of it, it will strengthen you to look forward to that blessed day when Christ will present you to his heavenly Father, not as now, a poor, feeble, wretched sinner, but arrayed in his perfect righteousness, with a body, not like your present, enfeebled by sickness,

impaired by age, and encompassed by infirmity, but raised up by the power of God and perfectly conformed to the image of the glorified humanity of his dear Son.

Now if these things are old they must continue to be so, for I have no new doctrines to bring forward; if they are old, the Lord can soon make them new by applying them with new power to your soul, for he sends forth his Spirit, and renews the face of the earth. I want for my own salvation and consolation no new doctrines, but I do want to feel their power more, and live day by day more and more under their influence. And as I hope to live, so I hope to die by these doctrines. I shall want nothing else upon a deathbed but a sweet experience of God's love, mercy, and truth to support me when my eyestrings break, and heart and flesh fail. Then to find the Lord the strength of my heart here, and my blessed portion hereafter will make me willing to yield up to him my departing spirit. I commend this gospel, then, to you with all my heart. You cannot say that you have not heard it from my lips. The Lord bless it to your soul, and seal it with his own heavenly power upon your conscience.

The Anchor within the Veil

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 17, 1845

"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil: whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Hebrews 6:18, 19, 20

The Apostle, in this chapter, has been describing the miserable end of apostates from the truth. But lest the things he had declared concerning these apostates might discourage and cast down the hearts of those true disciples to whom he was writing, being tender in the faith, he adds, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." And this leads him to shew what these "better things" were, and the nature of those "things that accompany salvation."

He therefore immediately mentions (verse 10-12) their "work and labour of love," and bids them "shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that they be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

This leads him to shew the nature of those promises, and the character of the heirs of them. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." He then shews that Abraham, like all his children, inherited this promise through faith and patience. "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

He then proceeds to point out the foundation upon which these promises stand—that they rest upon the immutable oath of God. "For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife: wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath."

And this brings us to the words of our text: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

There is something so ample in the text that I feel this morning like a weak man attempting to grasp in his arms a burden beyond his strength. In fact, there is sufficient substance in these words to occupy at least a dozen sermons, if God gave a man experience and ability to bring out all contained in them. I can therefore, only attempt to skim over the surface of the things that are contained in the text. I cannot plunge into the depth that coucheth beneath.

Let us therefore endeavour (as the words seem to lie with some degree of sweetness and power upon my heart) to bring out a few of the prominent truths contained in the text. I shall therefore, with God's blessing, attempt

I.—*To shew the character of the persons here spoken of.*

II.—*The nature of the refuge to which they flee.*

III.—*The firm foundation on which that refuge stands.*

I.—We will look, *first*, then, at *the persons* spoken of in the text. Their character we may sum up under two leading features; *one*

is, that they are "the heirs of promise;" the *other*, that "they have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel."

1. Their *first* character is, that they are "*the heirs of promise;*" that is, they are God's children, who are inheritors of the promises made in the gospel. And it is through faith and patience on their part that they come into the personal enjoyment of them. They are heirs not through anything in themselves; they are heirs because they are sons. "If sons then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Their sonship gives them heirship. But before they can enter into the inheritance, before they can be put into possession of the things laid up for them, they must have two distinct graces of the Spirit wrought in their heart; they must have *faith* to believe, and *patience* to wait for the things that their faith lays hold of. Faith is necessary in order to give the promise a place in their hearts; and patience is needful (for "he that believeth shall not make haste;") that they may not precipitately run forward, but may wait, endure, and suffer to the end, till they come into the actual enjoyment of those promises which were brought into their heart by the power of God.

2. But, besides this character, that they are "heirs of promise," the Holy Ghost has stamped a *second* upon them: "*they have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them.*" This implies that they have been beaten out of false refuges. We know that man by nature makes lies his refuge. Nothing is too treacherous, nothing too delusive for you and me not to shelter in. The world is a shelter for some; their own righteousness for others; a delusive hope for a third; the good opinion of men for a fourth; mere rites and ceremonies for a fifth. We know that man's lying, treacherous heart will hide itself anywhere but in the hope set before us in the gospel. Therefore, the Lord's people, who carry in their bosom the same treacherous heart with all their fellow-men, need to be beaten out of all these lying refuges, that the hail may sweep them away, and the waters overflow them.

The expression "*fled for refuge,*" throws a light upon the way in

which they came to lay hold of this shelter. It is an expression of alarm. They did not walk gently forward, nor carelessly saunter to the refuge, but they *fled*. This implies that there was that which drove, which alarmed, which beat them out of the false refuges in which they had hidden themselves. Now, we do not attempt to define how long, or how deep, convictions of sin must work in a sinner's conscience. But we may be quite sure of this—if they have not worked so long, if they have not worked so deep, as to bring him out of all false refuges, they have not yet done their work. If these convictions, these apprehensions, these fears, these solemn thoughts have not made us flee with fear, with anxiety, with alarm to the refuge set before us, we as yet lack the character stamped upon the heirs of promise.

To flee implies a *pursuer*, and a pursuer of that nature that unless we escape him, he will plunge his sword into our bosom. Such is the law with its awful curse. Such is Satan with his fiery darts; such is death with his sweeping scythe. If we do not flee from these pursuers, these avengers of blood, they will strike an arrow through our liver. So that by these pursuers, these avengers of blood, we are compelled, whether we will or not, forced, driven out of every refuge of lies, to that which is set forth in the gospel.

But the Apostle tells them what this refuge is, "*the hope set before them.*" *Hope* here signifies the Object of hope, the Lord of life and glory, "Immanuel, God with us." He is therefore called, "The Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble." (Jer. 14:8.) And he bears this title because in him all the expectations of Israel centre; and to him every sin-burdened soul flees that he may obtain shelter and refuge. This hope is set before us in the gospel. The word of truth reveals Jesus as the hope of the hopeless, the shelter of the shelterless, the refuge of the refugeless. And when the Lord the Spirit is pleased to enlighten our understanding—when the glorious Person, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and finished work of the only begotten Son of God are set before our eyes, and a measure of faith is raised up in our heart to look to Jesus as the object of our soul's desire, then we lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel.

But there are several things which must be wrought by a divine power before we can do this. We must, *first*, feel a *sense of our danger—that* is indispensable. We must, *next*, by a sense of our danger, be driven out of lying refuges—*that* is equally indispensable. We must *then* see what to flee to. Not to be running here; not to be turning to the right hand, not to be swerving to the left. But we must have a definite Object—know the goal to which our feet are tending; not looking back to the Sodom from which we have escaped; not hanging for help upon man, or on any thing in the creature: but with our eyes looking right on and with our eyelids straight before us, run as having a certain object in view; a goal traced out in the word of God, and held up before our soul's eye. And this is Jesus, whom we embrace as set forth in the Scriptures as the only begotten Son of God—"Immanuel, God with us;" as having, by his sacrifice upon the cross made a propitiation for sin, destroyed death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and opened a way through the veil, that is, his flesh, into the presence and sanctuary of God.

When this is made known to the soul, viewed by the eyes of an enlightened understanding, and faith is raised up to receive in simplicity and godly sincerity what is revealed with power, then we no longer run hither and thither, seeking help and finding none, turning to the right hand or to the left: but we flee to a definite Object, to the goal set before us, which is Jesus, the great High Priest over the house of God.

But there is an expression, "to lay hold," that deserves notice. There is something to be touched, tasted, felt, handled, known, and enjoyed. It is not an object merely seen at a distance—a something to be viewed merely by the eye, and not grasped by the hand. But it is set forth as a tangible object, as something laid hold of, embraced, grasped, and experimentally and definitely felt. This vital and experimental laying hold distinguishes living from dead faith; the mere natural understanding speculating about Jesus, from the enlightening of

the eyes of the spiritual understanding by the Holy Ghost. Natural faith may see Christ in the Scriptures; but it cannot see him by the eyes of the soul. Nor is there a laying hold. A living soul alone has power to embrace and grasp a living Saviour. Natural faith fails here; it may think, talk, reason, and argue; but it cannot lay hold, grasp, embrace, or bring in; it cannot enjoy a living union between a living soul and a living Lord. It is a withered hand, paralyzed and dead. But living faith reaches forth into eternity, stretches beyond the vale of transitory things to lay hold, by a sensible act and appropriating touch, of the hope set before us in the gospel.

This we see signally shown in one case when the Lord was upon earth—that of the poor woman with the issue of blood. (Luke 8:43-48.) The multitude thronged round Jesus; the crowd rudely pressed upon his sacred Person. But only one trembling hand touched him; and when that timid, yet believing hand touched but the border of his garment, instantly virtue flowed forth from his sacred Person, and healed her disease. So spiritually. Professors may intrude upon the Lord, and thrust themselves into his presence; they may, as the Jews of old, throng and press his sacred Person; but it is only the peculiar touch of living faith that derives virtue out of him. So that it is not merely *fleeing* for refuge; nor is it merely *seeking* the hope set before us, but it is the *laying hold* of it by a living hand. It may be indeed sometimes almost with a convulsive grasp; it may be at others with a trembling hand; it may be but for a few moments that living faith touches the object of the soul's hope. The accompanying incidents of time or intensity do not affect the nature of real faith. As in the case of the diseased woman, it was not the strength, nor length of her touch which healed her, but the faith which was in it, so it is now. The distinctive character of true faith is, that it touches, embraces, lays hold of, and thus brings supplies out of Christ's glorious fulness into the poverty-stricken soul.

Now this Object of hope is set forth in the gospel. But you will observe, that the Apostle having spoken of the *Object* of hope transfers himself immediately to the *grace* of hope—"which

hope," he says, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

II.—And this leads me to show, as I proposed, *secondly, the nature of the refuge that the Lord's people flee unto*. When the soul flees for refuge to the hope set before it in the gospel, whom does it see within the veil? Is it not the great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec? Was not this typified by what took place on the great day of atonement? You will remember, that none but the high priest, while the temple was standing, was allowed to enter within the veil, and that only one day in the year. He entered in with the blood which he sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. And this was typical of the entering of the Lord of life and glory, after his resurrection, into the presence of the Most High.

Now, hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, enters within the veil where Jesus now is. And this is its distinguishing character. It pierces beyond all temporal and transitory things; and enters into things eternal and invisible, within the veil. But the high priest upon earth, when he had discharged his appointed office within the veil, came forth again to sojourn among his fellow-men; but not so with the great High Priest, his glorious and ever-living Antitype; he tarries within the veil, at the right hand of the Father, the great High Priest over the house of God—the Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate of God's family.

When then Jesus reveals himself to the eyes of living faith, they view him in all the circumstances of his holy life, in all the circumstances of his suffering death, and in all the circumstances of his glorious resurrection and ascension. And thus hope fixes itself upon the risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, the great and glorious High Priest, who is passed within the veil.

The veil of the temple signified the separation that existed between God and man, and the hiding of heavenly things from

his eyes. But when Jesus died upon the cross, the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, implying that a way of access was opened into the very presence of God—that believers are no longer, like the Jewish worshippers, to tarry without; but are allowed to enter, in the actings of faith, hope, and love, into the very presence of God himself.

Thus, a good hope through grace, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, passes through all sublunary things; it pierces through that cloud which hangs upon the eyes of men; it penetrates through the veil of unbelief that rests upon the heart; it passes through the waves and billows of infidelity, as the literal anchor through the waves of the sea, and it takes firm hold of him who is within the veil. Its flukes anchor firmly in the great High Priest over the house of God, as the natural anchor passes through the deep waters, and buries itself firmly in the sand.

Jesus is here called "the Forerunner;" that is, he has entered heaven before any of his people; for "in all things he must have preeminence." He is the firstfruits and wave-sheaf of a whole harvest of redeemed, and is gone to prepare a place for them, that where he is they may be also. He has ascended up on high, and set himself down at the right hand of the Father; and there ever lives, the great High Priest, the true Melchisedec, to present his intercession before the eyes of Jehovah. He presents not his actual blood, but the merit of that blood. He presents his righteousness; he presents his holy Person, yea, he presents himself, the great and glorious God-Man, as the church's ever-living and loving Head.

Now the nature of true gospel hope is, to anchor in this glorious High Priest; not to rest upon anything in ourselves, not to rest upon anything in others; but to pass through all these frail and perishing things into the very presence of God himself; so as to take firm hold upon the glorious High Priest within the veil.

But this we cannot do until we have a sight by faith of the King in his beauty—until there is a discovery to the eyes of our

understanding, and faith be raised up in our hearts to look unto, live upon, and embrace with all our soul's affections this glorious Forerunner, who is entered within the veil. This looking unto him, is an act of faith; this anchoring in him is an act of hope; and this tender affection towards him is an act of love. These are the three grand graces in the soul—faith, hope, and love. And wherever there is faith to believe, there is hope to anchor, and love to flow forth in the breathings of tender affection.

This "Forerunner is made a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec." There are two points in which the order of Melchisedec differed from the order of Aaron. 1. The Aaronic priesthood was *hereditary*. It passed from father to son, and therefore was always in a course of mutation and change. But the Melchisedec priesthood is *permanent*, immutably fixed in Jesus. As the apostle argues, Heb. 7:23, 24, "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this Man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." Thus, as Melchisedec was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually;" so the priesthood no longer passes out of the hand of Jesus, as it did in the course of nature out of the hands of the Jewish high priest. It is not a temporary, nor transitory, but an eternal priesthood. The *second* feature of the Melchisedec, as distinguished from the Aaronic priesthood is, that it is a *royal* priesthood. Melchisedec was "king of Salem;" and of Jesus it was prophesied, "He shall be a Priest upon his throne." (Zech. 6:13.)—Zion's King as well as Zion's Priest. Thus he not merely intercedes as the great High Priest within the veil, but he lives as a King to execute his own purposes. The hope of the soul anchors in and rests upon this royal High Priest, knowing that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him—standing at the right hand of the Father as an Advocate for the poor and needy; and manifesting the virtue of his intercession, by sprinkling his blood upon the conscience, discovering his glorious righteousness, and shedding abroad his dying love.

Now everything that we have received out of Jesus, every testimony of interest in him, every mark of his favour, every glimpse and glance of his love, every thing that has raised up our heart heavenward, every word that has come home with softening, melting, dissolving power into our conscience—all flows from this one thing—having fled for refuge, and laid hold of the hope set before us in the gospel.

III.—But the apostle shews us, (and this is the third point which I shall endeavour this morning to speak upon) *the certainty and security of this refuge* that the Lords people flee to take hold of: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The Lord gave certain promises (and these are the promises to which the apostle alludes) to Abraham. He said, "Surely, in blessing I will bless thee." This was the leading promise, "Blessing I will bless;" that is, absolutely, unconditionally. But in giving this promise to Abraham, he gave it to all who have the faith of father Abraham. Every believing soul that walks in the steps of believing Abraham, God blesses with the same absolute, unconditional blessing that he blessed his spiritual progenitor with—those rich blessings which God has blessed his children with in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. As the apostle declares, (Gal. 3:7, 9,) "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." Again (ver. 14,) "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promises of the Spirit through faith." And again, (ver. 29,) "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Now these promises rests upon two things; and these two things the Apostle, declares to be "immutable," or unchangeable. One is, *the counsel of God*; as we read, "to shew the immutability of his

counsel;" and the other is, *the oath of God*.

The counsel of God is, the determinate purpose of God to bless whom he will bless, to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and to save whom he will save. This is his eternal, immutable, unchangeable counsel. The Three-One God fixed his love upon definite objects; the purpose of his love being to bless them and bring them to the eternal enjoyment of himself, in spite of all opposition from without and within. This counsel stands firm as the throne of Jehovah; an irreversible counsel, that though man may change, the elements melt with fervent heat, the world pass away, and the heavens be rolled up as a scroll, yet the eternal purpose of a covenant Jehovah never can pass away. Upon this counsel and purpose of God his promises stand; they flow out of this counsel; they run parallel with this counsel; they stand upon the same foundation with this counsel; and were given in the mind of God ere the world itself had any being, and when the "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure," was made between the Eternal Three.

We have the transcript of this counsel in the written word. Every promise in that word flowed from his eternal counsel; and his eternal counsel was the basis of every promise. So that when we read the promises, we read the counsel from which those promises flow, and on which those promises stand. When then we read "the promises," we may be as sure that every promise will be fulfilled, as we are certain that the eternal counsel itself will be fulfilled. The eternal counsel is the source, the promises are the streams; the eternal counsel is the foundation, the promises are the superstructure. The superstructure will last as long as the foundation stands, and the streams will flow as long as the source remains.

But God has confirmed his immutable purpose *with an oath*. He adopts here the custom of men, knowing how weak, how feeble, how frail man's faith is. It was not sufficient to give a simple promise, to make a covenant, and bestow promises resting upon that covenant—he would do more, he would confirm it with an

oath, as we find in Genesis 22:16, "By myself have I sworn." The margin of the text instead of "confirmed" reads, "he interposed himself;" that is, put himself by an oath, as between the promise and its fulfilment. And this he did, in infinite condescension, that Abraham's faith might be stronger as resting not merely upon the *word* of God, but upon the *oath* of God. Now, a man's word we trust to, if he be an honourable man; but if we have, not that man's word only, but the additional security and sanction of his oath, it creates double confidence. So it is with the Lord. His word is enough; but he has, in condescension to human infirmity, knowing the weakness of his people's faith, not only given his word, but also his oath: "*Surely by myself have I sworn.*"

Every heir of promise has an interest in this counsel of God; and every heir of promise is interested in this oath of God. I may—you may—doubt, fear, and question in our own minds what right we have to the promise of God. We read them in the word; we see them to be unspeakably precious; we behold them spangling the Scriptures of truth as the stars spangle the sky; we view them loaded with blessings. But this thought arises, 'Am I interested in them? I see them full of blessings; but what testimony have I that they belong to me?' Now, this is the mark—"that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel." This is the mark of the heirs of promise: this is the stamp that God has put upon them, "that they have fled for refuge;" not that they have been extremely religious, not that they have been remarkably consistent, not that they have done this or that, or mean to do this and that, for the Lord. But this is the divine stamp put upon them—that they have "fled for refuge." In other words, that they have had such a work of grace upon their hearts—such convictions of sin—such guilt, such soul trouble, as has beaten them out of lying refuges: and that, being beaten out of these lying refuges, they have looked to find some shelter from the storm which they know will one day burst upon a guilty world. Having heard the roar of the thunder upon the horizon, and seen the flashes of lightning in the sky, and felt the drops of falling rain upon the earth, while the world saw nothing but a bright sky, they fled for refuge to the Saviour that God

himself has set before them in the gospel—to the Lord of life and glory revealed in the Scriptures of truth—to the Son of God, as having appeared in the flesh. They have fled by faith to his atoning blood for the pardon of their sins—to his righteousness as their only justification—to his sacred Person as their Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father—to the promises of the gospel as the breasts of consolation to which they desire for ever to cling, and milk out their sweetness and blessedness. This is their character.

Now, every soul that has experienced these things, that has been taken out of refuges of lies, and fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel, and not merely fled to, but also by an act of living faith has laid hold of Jesus, has felt a measure of his love and blood, tasted his grace, and been ravished by his beauty—every such soul, however doubting and fearing, however dark and distressed, however cast down with the difficulties of the way, is "an heir of promise;" and being an heir of promise, he rests upon the counsel and the oath of God. In a word, every such soul that has "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel," has the counsel of God upon his side. He is one of those on whose behalf the eternal covenant was made. His title to it is—he has "fled for refuge;" and the counsel of God, the secret counsel, and the manifested counsel is, to save that man, whoever he be, however black his sins, however vile his heart, however contradictory the path he is walking in may seem to flesh and blood, however rough and rugged his way, however assailed from without and within. That man who has fled for refuge by an act of living faith to lay hold of the hope set before him—it is the counsel of God that he shall be saved. Nay more, lest that should not be enough, God has interposed himself, has confirmed it by a solemn oath that he will save such; not merely *said* it, but *sworn* it. That they may have additional security, he has condescended to swear by himself, that surely he will bless, surely he will save such souls.

Now the Apostle holds this out as *strong consolation*. He says, "By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation." No: it is utterly impossible

for God to lie. The earth may be dissolved, and all creation reduced to chaos before God could lie. He would cease to be God if the faintest breath of a change, or the shadow of a turn should pass over the glorious Godhead. But it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore this holds out strong consolation for those that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them.

"Strong consolation" implies comfort applied to the soul; and that in proportion to the strength of its faith, in proportion to the depth of its trials. Who needs strong consolation? Is it not those who have nothing which this world can comfort them with? Those who have fled for refuge? fled out of the world, and therefore they do not expect any consolation in the world? They have fled out of sin, and do not expect consolation from sin. They have fled out of self-righteousness, and do not expect consolation from self-righteousness. They have fled out of those refuges of lies. They may cast at times, through the wickedness and weakness of the heart, a hankering look for other shelters; but they never turn back. These need strong consolation. They need something that can bear up their minds, something that can support them, something that can enable them to endure to the end.

And what is the ground of this strong consolation? This is the ground, that God has eternally determined and sworn by himself—that he will save and bless those that have "fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel." This is the foundation of their consolation, this is the ground of their hope, that God has made such and such promises, and confirmed such and such promises by his solemn oath—that those who flee for refuge, and lay hold upon this hope, have an interest in and title to them, and have a manifest assurance of being "heirs of promise."

See how the Lord puts "strong consolation" on the surest ground. He does not say, 'Look at your lives—how pious, how holy, how religious they are!' nor does he even point at the depth of your experience; nor does he condescend to notice anything whatsoever of the creature. But this is the foundation on which

he places it—*his own counsel, his own oath.*

Now, did you ever in your life feel spiritual consolation? If ever you did, it was by laying hold of the hope set before you in the gospel. There was no consolation ever got by looking at fallen self. If ever there was any true consolation, any hope raised up in the heart, any solid comfort, it came out of the actings of living faith embracing the blood and righteousness of Christ, tasting a measure of his preciousness, seeing his glory and beauty, and feeling the heart in some measure dissolved into nothingness at his footstool. Not looking at ourselves; but receiving as empty sinners out of his fulness: not trusting to ourselves, or our own attainments; but going to Jesus, and receiving something into our hearts out of him. Nothing but this can give us consolation; and the more this is felt, the more this will give us "strong consolation."

But, you will observe, that the Apostle speaks of this act of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ as an anchor; and he says, this anchor is "sure and stedfast, and entereth into that within the veil." In other words, that this hope acts the same part towards the soul as the anchor literally and naturally acts to the ship. Now, can we always see the ground on which the anchor rests? Is not the bottom covered by the dark, deep waves? And the deeper the anchor sinks, is not the ground less seen? Is it not so spiritually? Is not this the mark and characteristic of a living soul—"to endure as seeing him who is invisible?" Is there not, must there not be, a laying hold of invisible realities in the soul? And is not this laying hold of, and is not this anchoring in invisible realities, a grand mark of faith? If I can see with my eyes, I do not want to see with my heart. If I can believe in my judgment, I do not want to believe in my conscience. If I can touch by the hand of nature, I do not want to touch by the hand of faith. These all fail, and come short. The child of God, I am well convinced, will be opposed at every step he takes. But he has fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him; and he believes, hopes, and anchors in an invisible Jesus.

Unbelief is always looking for something visible. Reason always questions 'how this thing can be consistent with that?' And thus all the reasonings and argumentations of our fallen nature will be bringing up strong artillery against living faith. But the Apostle says, "Hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24.) If we could see Jesus as plainly with our bodily eye as we can see the texts of Scripture in which he is spoken of, there would be no need of the special act of God the Spirit upon our heart to give us faith. If we could reason upon truth and receive it into our souls, as we reason upon and receive matters of science and human learning, there would be no need of the special operations of God the Spirit. Therefore, just in proportion as our hope enters within the veil, and anchors in this glorious Immanuel, will be the opposition made to it by nature, sense, and reason. And nature, sense, and reason, with the unbelief and infidelity of our hearts, will sometimes work so powerfully, that the anchor seems almost giving way. Nay, we scarcely at times seem to have any anchor at all. The ship is so beaten about by the waves, that there appears no firm hold of, no real anchoring in, the Person, blood, and work of Jesus. And yet it holds. The ship is not beaten from her anchorage; it does not fall upon the rocks, is not cast away and lost. Still, by some invisible cable it holds, in spite of nature, sense, and reason. Therefore, the Apostle says, it is "sure and stedfast." It is firm and stayed; it may be out of sight, and seem giving way; the waves and billows may rise so high as even to hide the cable from our eyes; and as the cable dips beneath the waves, it may seem sunk and lost; and yet all the while there is a secret, firm, invisible hold. Have not a thousand temptations blown across us to drift us from Jesus? I am sure they have blown upon my soul. Have they not blown across yours? Have not a thousand waves of unbelief almost tossed us upon the rocks? Have we not sometimes been tempted by lust, and sometimes been driven almost by despair, to give up our anchorage? Have we not sometimes doubted and feared whether our hope was not all a delusion, and whether we ever really by an act of living faith cast anchor within the veil? Yet it will not, it does not altogether give way. There is still some coming unto the Lord, still some

going up of tender affection, some actings of faith in his blood and righteousness, some pantings of heart after him, some love to him, some embracings of him as our only hope and help. Then it has not failed yet; nay, the more it is tried, does it not prove the anchor to be all the stronger? Does it not prove the anchorage to be all the firmer? What can fail? Can the anchorage fail? That cannot fail—it is the Person of Jesus. Can the anchor itself fail? That cannot fail—it is the work of the Spirit to create it in the soul. Can the cable fail—the mysterious connection there is in the heart between the soul and Jesus—can that break? No: that is twined by an eternal hand—that was woven by the fingers of God himself—that cannot, cannot break. Then what can fail? Shall the ship fail? If it be a ransomed soul—if the Lord of life and glory be the pilot, he knows all the shoals, and can steer it into the haven of eternal felicity. If that infallible Pilot who never yet missed the harbour has purchased her, chartered her, and is guiding her upon her homeward destination, how can the bark itself, 'The Good Adventure,' be ever cast away?

Then, if none of these things can fail, what strong consolation there is to those that have "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel!" How this noble anchorage, this safe roadstead, opens its capacious arms to receive every living child of God! Surely you must know whether this has taken place in your conscience; if once you were in a lying refuge, and then a storm came, and beat you out of it—then you must know whether there were any goings forth, any lookings, any longings, any stretchings forth, any reachings forward to lay hold of a precious Saviour. You must know if these things ever had a place in your soul—if you have had these feelings you must know whether Jesus ever had a place in your heart—whether you ever viewed him by the eyes of enlightened understanding—then you must know whether faith ever flowed towards him, hope anchored in him, and love embraced him. These things cannot take place in a man's bosom, without his knowing he has had such things working in his soul with power. He may have many doubts, fears, and apprehensions as to the reality and genuineness of the work. His faith may be sorely tried. But he must know whether he has

felt these things or not—whether these things have had a certain definite effect upon him that has brought him out of lying refuges to "lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel."

Now, if God the Spirit has wrought these things in your heart in a measure, though a feeble measure, you are a heir of promise; and if you are a heir of promise, you have a title to strong consolation; for your soul rests upon the immutability of God's counsel, and the immutability of God's oath. Is it not a mercy it should be so? Suppose it was thus—that I had made myself a holy man; that I had, by a long course of penance, endeavoured to atone for my sins; that I had, by rigorous acts of obedience, worked out a measure of self-righteousness;—should I not be always at uncertainty? and would not the issue be final despair? But when it comes to this—"fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel"—when it stands thus, that this is the mark God has stamped upon the heirs of promise, and put his finger upon this experience—if you have this, you have everything. If this has been wrought in your heart by divine power, you are a child of God—your soul will be saved as sure as there is a God in heaven, a counsel of God in eternity, and an oath of God in time. If these immutable things that cannot fail are on your side; how it holds out an escape for every poor sin-convinced sinner—every one that knows the plague of his own heart—every one in whose soul the blessed Spirit has begun and is carrying on a work of grace!

The Lord enable us to see it more plainly! The Lord enable us to feel it more powerfully! The Lord enable us day by day to be manifested as heirs of promise, to be continually fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the blessed hope set before us—so that when eternity shall come, and time have passed away, and be no longer—then we shall see face to face in heaven what we have seen by the eye of faith upon earth; and enjoy in full that which in this life we have only realized by feeble and distant anticipation.

The Anointing which Teacheth of All Things

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 23, 1862

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

When Moses was with the Lord face to face for forty days upon the holy Mount, he received from his lips particular and minute instructions as to the construction of the tabernacle, with its various vessels of service, such as the ark of the covenant, the table of shew-bread, the altar of incense, the brazen laver, and the golden candlestick. But these vessels of service could not be employed in the ministry of the sanctuary, according to the various purposes for which they were intended, until they had been specially consecrated to a divine and holy use. The mode of this consecration was as much a part of heavenly instruction and divine revelation as the tabernacle itself and all its vessels of service. Moses was, therefore, directed to make "an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary;" and with this "holy anointing oil" to consecrate "the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, the table and all its vessels, the candlestick, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering, and the laver, and thus to sanctify them, that they might be most holy." The various ingredients of this "holy anointing oil," with their exact weight and measure, were carefully prescribed; for in this, as in every other instance, the minutest directions were given by the Lord, from which there was allowed no departure and no variation. But let me read the directions which the Lord gave him, which you will find Exodus 30:23-25: "Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, and

of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary;" in all fifteen hundred shekels, which, computing the shekel at 219 grains, somewhat less than half an ounce troy, will amount to about 57 lbs. troy weight. But in order to make this into an anointing oil, he was to add "of oil olive a hin," about five quarts. Now it does not seem likely that Moses was bidden to put all these spices and oil together in what I may call a rough way, without some manufacture or manipulation of these various ingredients; for we must bear in mind that he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," who at that period were a highly civilized nation, and celebrated for embalming the dead and other arts which required a great deal of scientific and practical skill. But there is another reason from which we may gather that these ingredients were not roughly put together. The myrrh and cinnamon, calamus and cassia, in such large quantities, merely added to so small a quantity of oil, would soon have swallowed up and absorbed the whole. Most probably, therefore, as Moses was bidden to make the "holy anointing oil after the art of the apothecary," these spices were put with water into what is called an "alembic," itself an oriental invention, and in it distilled and a spirit formed from them. To this spirit, then, thus distilled from the spices was added the oil; the spirit having the effect, as we know it has to this day, of preserving it from rancidity, and also of communicating to it a sweet fragrance.

Of course all this, in common with the whole of the tabernacle service, was entirely typical, and as seen in the light of the Spirit highly and eminently instructive. This holy anointing oil, then, was emblematic of the unction of the blessed spirit, whereby the people of God are sanctified unto his use and consecrated to his service, that they may be a holy people, and their worship and offerings "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

But after the Lord had given Moses these instructions as to the composition of the holy anointing oil, he added three *prohibitions*, all of which, no doubt, have a very special and significant import, and which therefore we shall do well to consider.

1. The first was this: "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured." It was not to be *profaned* to any common use. In that climate, as I shall presently show, ointment was very much used for bodily purposes; and but for this prohibition, some might have taken this holy oil with profane hands and anointed with it the flesh of their body. Now the Lord specially prohibited this profanation of the holy anointing oil as most displeasing to his eyes. But what spiritual instruction do we gather from this prohibition? Is it not that the unction of the Holy Spirit must never be profaned to any common or ungodly use? But is not this too often lamentably the case? How many profess to be called by the Holy Ghost to the work of the ministry, and as such are solemnly ordained or set apart to the service of God who evidently know nothing whatever of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, but rather seek for an entrance into one of the priests' offices that they may eat a piece of bread. The unction of the blessed Spirit, like the holy anointing oil, must not be thus profaned by being poured upon man's flesh; and woe to those who so profane it. It is to be restricted to spiritual persons and to spiritual purposes.

2. The second prohibition was: "Neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it." It was therefore not to be *counterfeited* or imitated. It was to remain distinct and separate from every other ointment, and any imitation of it was prohibited by an awful penalty—the penalty of death; for such a transgressor was "to be cut off from his people." But is there not much significancy in this prohibition as well as in the former? Are not the graces and fruits of the blessed Spirit daily counterfeited? Ungodly, hypocritical men, men drunk with the spirit of delusion and error, are daily trying to imitate and counterfeit the unction of the Holy Spirit. How they come forth with their doctrines and their views, their teachings and their preachings, their sermons and tracts, their visions and revelations, as if they were under the teaching and influence of the Spirit of God. But God abhors the imposture. Nothing is admissible in the service of the sanctuary but his own teaching and his own testimony; and all carnal imitations of that holy anointing oil wherewith he alone consecrates both offerer and offering will be rejected by him with

abhorrence. This prohibition has a wide, I may indeed say a most tremendous scope, for it cuts off nine-tenths of the preaching of the day. Where gifts are sanctified by the holy anointing oil, and consecrated to the glory of God and the good of his people, on them the blessing of God rests; but all attempts to counterfeit the unction of the Spirit will be rejected. How often, too, are carnal means sought after, in the preaching of the day, to touch the natural feelings and move the passions. And thus sometimes by pathetic, and sometimes by eloquent appeals to the natural feelings, they so work upon the mind as to raise up a false faith, a counterfeit hope, and a hypocritical love. But how awful will be the end of such an imitation and of such imitators! "The deceived and the deceiver are his" (Job 12:16); but both will be cut off from the people, and have neither part nor lot in the kingdom of God.

3. The third prohibition is equally significant. The holy anointing oil was not to be put "*upon any stranger,*" under the penalty that he who so profaned it was to be cut off from the people. But what do we gather from this prohibition? Is it not that the unction and influences of the Holy Spirit, which are shadowed forth by the anointing oil, are restricted to the family of God; that those who are strangers to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope in the world, have no right to, no part in the sanctifying, consecrating influences of the blessed Spirit, and that those who would make them common and universal must expect to meet the resentment of a justly offended God?

I have brought forward these remarks in connection with "the holy anointing oil" by way of introduction to our text, in which we read of an "anointing," or, as it is termed in a preceding verse, the word being exactly the same in the original, an "unction": "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John 2:20); for this sacred anointing or unction, whereby the family of God are, as it were, consecrated to the service of God, was typified by the holy anointing oil, which I have just now been endeavouring to explain. Let us now, then, with God's help and blessing, approach our text; and in so doing, I shall endeavour to

set before you,

I.—*First*, what this "anointing" is, in its *general nature and leading characteristics*.

II.—*Secondly*, the *special qualities* which John here assigns to it, which we shall find to be four: 1, that "*it is truth and no lie*;" 2, that it "*teacheth of all things*;" 3, that, to a certain extent, it *supersedes all other teaching*; and, 4, that "*it abideth*" in its recipient.

III.—*Thirdly*, what is the blessed *effect and fruit* of being a partaker of this holy anointing: it enables us, by its divine teaching, *to abide in Christ: "even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."*

I.—The greatest blessing which God ever bestowed upon the church was the gift of his own dear Son. This is that "unspeakable gift," for which the apostle renders thanks unto God (2 Cor. 9:15), and the value of which never can in this life be fully known. But next to the "unspeakable gift," of his dear Son, we may say that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the second in value; for without the teaching and testimony, work and witness of the Holy Ghost in the soul, the unspeakable gift itself of the Son of God to the church would be to us without value or validity. In other words, in order that we may have a manifest interest in the atoning blood and justifying obedience of God's dear Son, we must have the influences and operations of the Spirit of God upon our heart to make the finished work of Christ effectually and savingly known. This heavenly teaching is the "unction" or "anointing" of which John speaks; and which he tells us we have "from the Holy One," even the Holy Son of God, and by which we "know all things" which are indispensable for our salvation and sanctification.

But I have to show you, with God's help and blessing, the *general nature and leading characteristics* of this anointing; and, in so doing, I must open up the literal figure to draw from it that spirit

of instruction which it is intended to afford.

In oriental climes, oil is much more used and indeed much more required than in our humid climate. The air there is usually very dry, and the sun has during a considerable part of the year exceeding great power; the effect of which is to dry up the skin and hair. To counteract this harshness and other attendant consequences, the people were and are still in the habit of rubbing oil into the pores of the skin, and profusely anointing the hair that they may not be arid and dry, but be softened and suppled, and preserved in health and beauty. But there is another reason also for the bodily employment of oil in the East. In that climate a vast quantity of light dust and sand is ever floating in the atmosphere, and this light dust and sand, getting everywhere into the clothes or resting on the exposed parts of the body, insinuate themselves into the pores of the skin, and thus keep up a continual irritation. Now this unpleasant consequence they counteract by rubbing the body well with oil. There is also a third reason which I hardly like to name, but still, as it is a valid one, I will just mention it. Those climates are full of minute insect life, winged and unwinged, which are a source of constant annoyance; and against these unpleasant visitants oil, rubbed into the body, is found to be the best remedy. For these reasons mainly, and there are others, connected with their luxurious habits and loves of perfumes, into which I need not enter, the use of oil and ointment of various kinds is practised in the East to an extent of which we happily are ignorant. This, then, being the habitual custom of those climates, and thus known to everybody, the Holy Spirit, writing in an oriental clime, has made use of this figure to convey by it spiritual instruction, some of which I hope this morning to lay before you; for there are many points in the figure which throw a blessed light upon the teaching and testimony of the Spirit of God in the heart. Let us look at a few.

1. The first obvious quality of oil which I will name is to *soften*. We know that it is used among ourselves in various manufactures to soften substances, such as hides and skins, which are naturally hard, and which without it would be utterly untractable. But oil is

well and thoroughly rubbed into their pores, and renders them soft and supple. So in medicine, it is made use of to soften hard tumours, to discuss them, as it is called, and thus remove and dissipate them; there being something in its very nature mollifying. That it was so used in ancient times we learn from the expression of the prophet, where, speaking of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, he says, "they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isai. 1:6.) Oil, then, or ointment, is, in this sense, a blessed emblem and scriptural figure of the softening operations of the Holy Ghost upon the heart. We by nature, as some of us know by painful experience, have a very hard heart—a heart which the Scripture compares to the nether millstone, which is the hardest of all stones, and necessarily so, lest the sand of the stone should be mixed with the meal which it grinds. The Lord has graciously promised that he will "take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and will give us a heart of flesh." (Ezek. 36:26.) Our stony heart then needs to be softened; and what can effectually do this blessed deed but the teachings and operations of the blessed Spirit, who takes away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh, according to the promise, "I will put my Spirit within you," and again, "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you?" Thus this sacred unction, this holy anointing, softens the heart. "The Almighty," says Job, "maketh my heart soft;" which he does by his gracious operations, softening and humbling, melting and dissolving the soul at the footstool of mercy. This, then, we may accept as a most certain truth, that all contrition of heart and brokenness of spirit, all godly sorrow for sin, real repentance, true humility, self loathing and self abhorrence are produced by this most blessed unction from the Holy One, and that without it of these fruits and graces there are none.

2. But oil is also very *penetrating*. If you let a drop of it fall upon a board or a table, how deeply it enters into its pores, so that you can scarcely get it out again. There it will be for weeks and months, leaving a marked and durable, clear and visible influence. So it is with the operation of the blessed Spirit upon

the heart. It penetrates; it does not lie upon the surface of the mind like a drop of water upon a pane of glass, without entering into the very pores. One drop of this holy anointing oil penetrates down into the deepest recesses of a man's heart, and especially enters into the pores of his conscience, into which it thoroughly sinks, making it at the same time soft and tender, as I have just been describing. If ever the word of God's grace reached your heart, it came there with a penetrating influence. It did not merely inform your mind or instruct your judgment, but it entered into your very soul. "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Psalm 119:130.) It is, therefore, compared in Scripture to a "two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12.) But oil penetrates *softly*; it does not force its entrance in the same violent way that the sword does, by piercing and cutting; but rather by its soft and gentle influence, it penetrates deeply into the understanding to enlighten it, into the heart to melt it, into the conscience to make it tender, and into the affections to make them spiritual and heavenly. Thus it is peculiar to the gospel. The sword of the Spirit which cuts and pierces is the law; but the oil which penetrates and yet softens is the power of the gospel. O for more of the penetrating influences of the Spirit of God upon our heart, so as to reach the very inmost depths of our soul and "sanctify us wholly, so that our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Thess. 5:23.)

3. But oil has another effect. It is *healing*; it forms the basis therefore of many healing applications. In the East, especially in ancient days, the art of medicine consisted chiefly in external applications. The people being for the most part ignorant how to make internal medicines, little was taken in that form. But frictions of various kinds were chiefly employed, the basis of which was oil. Thus oil signifies spiritually what is *healing*. And what so healing as the unction of the Holy Ghost? what brings health and cure to a bleeding conscience, to a bruised heart, and a broken spirit like what the Scripture calls the "oil of joy?" Thus,

in the same gracious prophecy in which the Lord declares that he is sent "to bind up the broken hearted," he proclaims also that he comes to give "the oil of joy for mourning." The good Samaritan, when he had taken up in his arms the man who had fallen among thieves, after he had examined and probed his wounds, poured in wine and oil—the one gently to stimulate, and the other to soften the flesh to heal. So the blessed Spirit, when he has well examined the wounds made by the law in a guilty conscience, pours in the oil of joy in sweet and blessed union with the wine of the gospel, and brings it health and cure.

4. But oil in those countries was also much used as an article of *food*. In those warm climates, butter cannot be made or kept; what is called "butter" in the Scriptures being not as we see it, but rather thickened milk. "She brought forth butter in a lordly dish." (Judges 5:25.) This was a kind of thickened milk, boiled over a fire to give it consistency, and put into a "lordly," or large and noble dish, to satisfy the hunger of the weary and hungry warrior. But a pat of our butter, however lordly might have been the dish, would have been but a poor refreshment for the thirsty and wayworn Sisera fleeing from pursuing Barak. Butter, then, in the shape in which we use it being scarcely known in the East, they use oil instead; and this being, at least when fresh, sweet and salubrious, forms a large part of their food, and is eaten by them with as much relish as we eat butter; some substance of that nature being indispensable for our health, in the maintenance of our necessary bodily warmth. But what feeds the soul better than the unction of the blessed Spirit? As he takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the heart; as he sets before the eyes and puts as it were, into the very mouth the flesh and blood of the Lamb, how he feeds the soul! And not only so, but he warms as well as feeds; for as the warmth of our bodies could not be kept up except by partaking of fatty or oily food, so our souls cannot be warmed except by the love of God which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. The Lord has promised that he will make in Mount Zion unto all people "a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow." (Isai. 25:6.) By this feast of fat things, the soul is warmed as well as fed; and thus

the unction of the blessed Spirit satisfies the soul as with marrow and fatness (Psalm 63:5); by it the people of God are made fat and flourishing (Psalm 92:14); and are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house. (Psalm 36:8.)

5. But oil has still another use. Among the other offerings which the Lord bade the children of Israel bring for the service of the tabernacle, "*was oil for the light.*" You will remember that amongst the vessels of service was a golden candlestick, or, as it should have been translated, "a lamp," for candles in those days were utterly unknown. Now this lamp gave light to the holy place, and therefore needed to be continually fed, for it was never suffered to go out. For this purpose, then, the purest oil—what Moses calls "pure oil olive beaten," that is, in a mortar, not ground in a mill, was used as giving the brightest and clearest light. (Exodus 27:20.) But is not this a striking type and figure of the light of the Holy Ghost? For what light is there comparable to the pure and holy light that he gives? And does he not give light to the church of God, as represented by the golden candlestick in the sanctuary with its six branches and one central lamp, for it had seven to indicate its perfection? (Exodus 25:37.) All the light that we have is from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the sanctuary. How blessed it is personally and experimentally to realise this! What a light, for instance, he casts sometimes upon the Person and work of Jesus! What a light upon the sacred page, irradiating it as if with a beam from heaven! What a light, too, upon the truth as it is in Jesus, making it to shine, like the face of Moses, with a heavenly lustre; and what a light also upon the teaching and dealing of God upon your own heart, when you are favoured to see light in God's light.

6. But I must just mention one more general characteristic of oil before I pass on to its more peculiar features as opened up in our text. It was used on festal days *to adorn and beautify the person.* Thus we find that the maidens who were taken into the house of King Ahasuerus were previously anointed for six months with "oil of myrrh and six months with sweet odours." (Esther 2:12.) So the wise man says, "Let thy garments be always white, and let

thy head lack no ointment;" and thus Amos, speaking of those who on their feast days "lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches," says, that "they drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments." (Amos 6:6.) Ointment, therefore, being used on these festal occasions, became a figure of joy and gladness. This may explain the meaning of "oil of joy" and "the oil of gladness;" and of "oil to make man's face to shine." (Psa:104:15.) Spiritually, therefore, oil or ointment represents heavenly feasting, holy joy; what the Apostle calls "joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) So the Thessalonians "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." (1 Thess. 1:6.) This is real joy, for it is of God, and a joy which no man taketh from its happy recipient.

II.—But having thus far dwelt upon what I have termed the *general characteristics* or leading features of oil or ointment, I shall now proceed to our next point, which was to show the *peculiar qualities* of "the anointing" in our text. You will recollect that I named four, which I shall now endeavour, as the Lord may enable, to lay before you. They are all deeply significant; and if the Lord has blessed you with any measure of this holy unction, you will be able to recognize them as more or less realised and experimentally felt in your own bosom. Look, then, well and see whether you can trace there the anointing; for if you possess it, it will have produced some measure of these four important qualities, laid down by the pen of John.

i. First, "it is *truth and is no lie*;" in other words, there is a solemn and *blessed reality* in it. You may be tried about many things in your experience, and in fact we are tried about almost everything connected with it, both in providence and in grace, for "the Lord trieth the righteous;" and it is the trial of our faith, which is "much more precious than gold that perisheth." But in spite of all our trials upon the point, all the exercises of our mind upon the subject, or all the suggestions of unbelief and infidelity against it, those who have ever experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit know that "it is *truth*,"—that there is a divine and substantial reality in it. And how do they know this? Mainly by two

evidences—the witness of the Giver and of the gift. Let me explain this double witness. Does not John say, "Ye have an unction *from the Holy One*;" and in our text, "The anointing which ye have *received of him*?" Who is this "Holy One" but the Holy One of Israel, the Holy Son of God? This anointing, then, being received of or from him, testifies to the Person of the Giver. The main work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Jesus; to take the things which are his, and to show them to the soul; to glorify him by some manifestation of his presence and power. Thus the anointing manifests, and by manifesting testifies of that glorious Son of God who received the Spirit without measure; who was anointed to be Prophet, Priest, and King; and who being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, sheds it forth in the hearts of his people.

But this anointing is also known to be "truth and no lie," from the very nature of the gift and the witness which it bears of it. Thus it enlightens the eyes of the understanding spiritually to discern the things of the Spirit of God; raises up faith in the heart, whereby the Son of God is believed in unto eternal life; communicates a sweet hope to the soul, enabling it to cast anchor within the vail; and sheds abroad that love whereby Jesus and all that savours of him are embraced with every gracious and tender affection. As then divine and heavenly realities are revealed to the heart and sealed upon the breast by the anointing which manifests, discovers, and applies them, the anointing itself is seen and felt to be a most blessed reality, or, as John speaks, "truth and no lie." It may seem, perhaps, to some enthusiastic, and to others unsafe to trust to our feelings, and make them an evidence; and so it would be were they mere natural feelings. But they are not natural but supernatural, not carnal but spiritual, not earthly but heavenly, and therefore carry with them an evidence of their own. Is not this scriptural? Does not the apostle declare that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?" (Rom. 8:16); and does not John say, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself?" (1 John 5:10.) Indeed it is only in this way and in the light of this

evidence that we really know "that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true." (1 John 5:20.) Whatever, then, Satan may suggest, or unbelief whisper, or the darkness of our mind insinuate, or however ungodly men may ridicule or rail, we are brought, so far as we are favoured with this unction in sweet operation, to this point—that "it is truth and is no lie."

1. But as a convincing evidence, look for a few moments at what you hope the Lord has done for your soul, for these words will apply with greater or less clearness to every part of the work of grace. Look, then, at the first *convictions* which were wrought in your heart by a divine power. Was there not truth in them and no lie? It is no lie that you felt the weight and guilt of sin upon a burdened conscience; that you cried for mercy, and that with many sighs and tears; that you were conscious of the heart-searching presence of a holy God; and found no rest except in pouring out your heart before him. This was the effect of the anointing which you received of him; and therefore of it, even of the first drop, you can say, "It is truth and no lie;" for were not your feelings a reality, if ever you felt a reality in all your life?

2. Now pass on to any gracious *discovery* of the way of salvation to your soul; any manifestation of Christ to your heart; any application of the word of grace with power; any inward whisper of the Spirit to your spirit, rising up a hope in the mercy of God. Was not *that* a truth and no lie? You may be tempted at times to believe it was not real; that it was but a deception or a delusion. But when you are favoured with the same anointing again, and the same blessed feelings return, then you can say of the past as well as of the present, "It was truth and no lie."

3. Or look at any *promise* ever applied to your soul in a season of darkness and depression, to relieve your mind, to comfort your spirit, and bring you out of trouble. You may be sometimes tried as to the reality of its being from God; but when the Lord again shines upon your heart, and brings once more the unction of his grace, then you can say, "It was truth and no lie."

4. But take another case. You may be sometimes tried about every *doctrine* that you have believed or professed to believe. Satan may stir up such unbelief in your carnal mind and such storms of infidelity that you doubt of everything, and seem tossed up and down on a sea of uncertainty, like Paul on the Adriatic, so that neither sun nor stars for many days appear, and no small tempest lies upon you. But when the blessed Spirit is pleased once more to anoint your soul with this heavenly unction, then you can say boldly, "It is truth and no lie." Man never invented these precious and heavenly truths. Good men would not invent them and bad men could not. Angels would not foist upon us lies as the word of God; devils could not, for it defeats all their devices, and proclaims their sin and ruin. From whom, then, came these blessed truths? From God. I feel their reality and certainty; I know they are true, for they came into my heart in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. What, then, he has been pleased to teach me out of his holy word by his Spirit and grace, I can set to my seal that "it is truth and is no lie."

This, then, is one peculiar and most blessed quality of the anointing of the holy Spirit, that it brings into your soul that certainty of God's word being his own most blessed truth, that you can stand firmly upon it in trial and temptation, sickness and death itself. "If we receive the witness of men," says John, "the witness of God is greater." This witness is the witness of the Spirit, as we read, "It is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is truth." (1 John 5:6, 9.) Thus, what God has revealed in the word, and what the blessed Spirit has revealed out of it to your heart, is inwardly known and felt to be truth and no lie. Stand here, Christian: here keep your ground against sin and Satan, an unbelieving, infidel heart, a mocking, scoffing, scornful world. Here plant your foot and stand firm, that the anointing which you have received from the Holy One "is truth and is no lie."

5. The "holy anointing oil" which Moses made, you will recollect, as being compounded of the choicest spices, possessed a

fragrance which must have made itself manifest when applied to the vessels of the sanctuary. This, indeed, is the very character of perfumed ointment, for, as Solomon says, "it betrayeth itself." (Prov. 27:16.) So when Mary took "the pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." Thus the anointing of the blessed Spirit makes itself manifest by its heavenly fragrance in the *hearts, lips, and lives* of God's people; for not only do "ointment and perfume rejoice the heart" (Prov. 27:9), but as the name of Jesus is "as ointment poured fourth," so "the savour of his good ointments" makes itself manifest in their words and works as truth and no lie.

ii. But I pass on to show another *special quality* which John attributes to this anointing: "*it teacheth of all things;*" that is, all things needful for our salvation and sanctification. He does not mean that it teaches us natural, scientific truth; that by this teaching we become linguists, historians, mathematicians, or philosophers. Such is not the mind and meaning of holy John here. What he means is, that this anointing teaches us of all things for our good and God's glory; of all things which to know is life eternal; of all things which will carry us safely and honourably through this vale of tears; of all things which to taste, handle, experience and enjoy, will be for our support under trouble, our deliverance from temptation, and our sure and safe passport into heavenly bliss. And we need not want to know much more. All other knowledge fails us at the grave's mouth. It is well for time; but what will it do for us for eternity? Few men have a greater admiration than myself for mental ability, literary attainments, and the results of science and knowledge in the various departments of life. But I have long seen and felt how they all fail when death knocks hard at the door and will force an entrance. I have personally known men of learning, science, and mental ability; but I have seen that all their attainments left them without a knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. If, therefore, I have envied them their abilities and their attainments, I have not envied them their state or their end; and, in my right mind, would sooner have one drop of this

holy anointing in my heart than all the knowledge which they possess, or all the powers of mind which they wield. But as this anointing teaches us "of all things," which mental ability cannot grasp and human learning cannot impart, we may now spend a few moments in looking at some of the things which it makes experimentally known.

1. It teaches us the *true knowledge of God*. Without this special anointing we have no right views, right apprehensions, or right feelings of that great and glorious Being with whom we have to do. His omniscience, his omnipotence, his purity, his holiness, his inflexible justice, and all his other glorious and eternal attributes are hidden from our eyes whilst we are still in nature's darkness and death. We may indeed have some natural conceptions in our mind, and some occasional convictions in our conscience of the holiness of God, and some indefinite apprehension of his universal presence and almighty power; but we do not really believe or feel or act upon them. It is at best but a general, floating idea, which has no effect or influence upon our heart or life. I do not think I am going too far when I say that we need the anointing of the Holy Spirit to show us the very existence of God. Does not the apostle tell us that we are by nature "without God in the world," literally "atheist?" (Eph. 2:12); and does he not also declare that "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God;" and that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is." (Heb. 11:3, 6.) And is not this faith the gift of God and a fruit of the Spirit? (Eph. 2:8; Gal. 5:22.) Does not our Lord also declare that "to know the only true God" is a part of that "eternal life" which he has to give? (John 17:2, 3.) And does not our experience confirm this? How plain, then, is it both from Scripture and experience that we need the teaching of the blessed Spirit to convince us of the very being of a God, and that we are sinners before him.

2. But this anointing teaches us specially to *know Jesus Christ* whom he has sent. This is the second branch of eternal life; and, as being the gift of Jesus, it is thereby implied that it is brought into the heart by the power of his grace. We are also expressly

told that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. 12:3.) Our own experience confirms these declarations, for we deeply and daily feel that we have no knowledge of his eternal Sonship and glorious Deity; no spiritual view of his pure and sacred humanity; no living apprehension of his complex Person, as Immanuel God with us; no gracious discoveries of his atoning blood as cleansing from all sin; of his obedience as justifying us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; of his dying love shed abroad in the heart; of his sufferings upon the Cross as bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; of his resurrection from the dead, so as to know its power; of his personal and present intercession at God's right hand, so as to have a manifest interest therein, except so far as they are revealed to us by the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit. Yes; these grand and glorious truths, in a true knowledge of which all salvation lies, are all hidden from our view, for there is a veil of unbelief and ignorance over our heart until the blessed Spirit destroys this yoke by his anointing. (Isa. 10:27.) But his holy unction teaches us of all these things, instructs us into their beauty and blessedness, their reality and truth, their sanctifying influence and power. How beautifully and blessedly did the Lord set this before his disciples in those gracious, those heavenly chapters in John's Gospel, whereby he sought to comfort their mourning hearts. How he promised them that he would send them another Comforter, who should glorify him, take of the things that belonged to him, and manifest them to their hearts. How those chapters, breathing forth in themselves a heavenly fragrance, are filled even to overflowing with most gracious declarations and promises in reference to the work of the blessed Spirit in making Christ known to the soul. These gracious declarations and divine promises were not spoken for their comfort only; but as the Lord, in his intercessory prayer, prayed not for his disciples only, but "for them also which should believe on him through their word," so to believers in every age do the same promises belong. It will be our richest mercy to have that holy anointing, whereby they become fulfilled in our heart.

3. Nor, again, do we know anything of our lost and ruined state by nature, or what *our hearts* really are in their thorough *nakedness* and hideous *vileness* before a holy God, except as this holy anointing instructs us into this deep and most painful mystery; for there is a "mystery of iniquity" as well as a "mystery of godliness." Without the light and life of this heavenly teaching we do not see or feel the depth of guilt and crime, misery and wretchedness, into which we are sunk in the Adam fall. We do not know the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of our desperately wicked nature; what it is capable of thinking, of saying, or of doing. Observe my word, "capable;" I do not say that we either speak or do what we feel working within; but we see that there is a capability of wickedness in the human heart, yes, and in our heart, which exceeds all that ever has been thought, said, or done. Nor, again, do we see or feel our thorough and complete helplessness to save or deliver ourselves, and our inability to believe, to hope, or to love unto eternal life. In a word, we have no right views of God, and we have no right views of self: we neither see sin nor salvation, the malady nor the remedy; what we are in Adam the first, or what we are in Adam the second, except by the anointing which teacheth of all things.

4. But, again, by this teaching we are led into "*the truth as it is in Jesus.*" There is not a branch of divine truth, not a part or particle, that we spiritually and savingly know but by virtue of this anointing. But "the truth as it is in Jesus" is a most comprehensive expression, for it includes the whole of God's revealed truth. It comprehends, therefore, every doctrine of our most holy faith, every promise and every precept. As then this anointing "teacheth of all things," it leads us into an experimental knowledge of the truth as it shines forth in the Person and work of our gracious Lord. And as by this anointing we are led into all truth, so by it we are preserved from all error. By this anointing also the precepts are made as dear to us as the promises; the whole truth of God is opened up and made known; and though I do not mean to say that any of us experience all that is contained in the truth, for how little do we really know, yet this I will say, that we know nothing as we ought to know of any one branch of

divine truth, whether in doctrine, experience, or practice, in type or figure, promise or precept, except by virtue of this anointing. I will also add that what it teaches us that we know to some purpose; for the sanctifying, liberating power and influence of the blessed Spirit ever attend this anointing, making the soul wise unto salvation. How, then, we need to be ever begging of the Lord to give us this unction from the Holy One, whereby we know all things! I, as a minister, who have to stand up in the name of the Lord to teach you, and you as a people, who desire to know the truth for yourselves in its saving efficacy and sanctifying influence,—what need we both have to beg of the Lord to favour us with this anointing; for not only does it sanctify us to the service of God, as the holy anointing oil sanctified Aaron and his sons, but it also makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light: not only does it give us a spiritual understanding of the mysteries of the gospel, but it sets up the kingdom of God in the heart, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Much we may learn by the wisdom of men; but all will fail us in a dying hour that we have not learnt by the teaching of God. But what we know by the Spirit's teaching and testimony will last through time, and I may say, through eternity.

iii. But I pass on to another *special quality* of this divine anointing, which is somewhat connected with that which I have just explained. This anointing, then, to a certain extent—I qualify the expression—*supersedes all other teaching*: "Ye need not that any man teach you." There is some allusion in this to the promise made in connection with the new covenant, that "they shall not teach every man his brother and every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest." (Jer. 31:34.) This teaching, then, supersedes all other teaching to this extent, that is not necessary or indispensable to a right knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Man may teach us many things; and, in fact, without instructors and tutors we cannot possibly learn the chief branches of education. Persons sometimes try to teach themselves modern languages; but a man might as well teach himself music as to write and speak French and German without an instructor. I have

know grown-up men, brought up without any real education, who, having become ministers, thought they would teach themselves Hebrew or Greek, so as to be able to read critically the Old and New Testaments. But what did they obtain with all their self instruction? Why, a vast amount of conceit, but no real knowledge. Languages, especially the ancient languages, cannot be so learnt. We must learn them in boyhood, when the mind is pliable, and the memory active and strong, and have them ground into us by many years' hard instruction, before we can be said to know them critically or usefully. That is the way in which I learned what little I know of the ancient languages, having had them ground into me for 15 or 16 years, first at a public school and then at College. But though I myself may possess a little of this knowledge, which I would not now be without, for I often find it very useful, yet I hope I estimate it at its right value, and see what a mercy it is for the poor, illiterate, uneducated family of God, that they have not to learn the language of Canaan by such laborious means as Greek and Latin are drilled into us in boyhood; that they need sit at no minister's feet to learn the pronunciation, the grammar, the syntax, and prosody of the heavenly tongue, so as to speak and write it correctly; but that the blessed Lord himself brings them to his feet, and there teaches them rightly to understand and rightly to speak the language of Zion. To a certain extent, then, for I qualify the word, this anointing, in great measure, supersedes other teaching; but does it supersede all? If so, why are you here this morning? What have you come to hear me for? Am not I, in a certain sense, your spiritual teacher and instructor? Don't you come to hear me open up the word of God—to teach you what I hope the Lord has taught me? We may learn much from one another, as the apostle says, "That all may learn and all be comforted." (1 Cor. 14:31.) I can say for myself that I can sit at the feet of any one who I believe is taught of the Lord, and am glad to receive instruction from his lips, however poor or unlearned he may be. Nay, I have often got very great good from the poor saints of God, and have gathered profitable lessons from their conversation. Thus this teaching does not supersede such teaching as the teaching of the ministry, nor the teaching we get from conversation upon the

precious things of God with those who fear his great name. But it supersedes human teaching in this way—that of itself, without any other instruction, it can and does lead the saints of God into a personal and experimental enjoyment of the power of God's truth. Thus in the absence of a gospel ministry, and the deprivation of every other means of grace, this anointing is all sufficient in itself to teach the saints of God the things which are for their eternal peace.

iv. One more *special quality* of this anointing remains to be considered—its *abiding* character: "The anointing which ye have received of him *abideth* in you." This is the very nature of oil—that you cannot get it out. Have you not sometimes dropped a drop of oil upon the boards, and all your rubbing and all your scrubbing cannot get it out again or efface the mark; so it is in a spiritual sense. If the Lord has dropped a drop of his holy oil upon your heart, and it has penetrated into the very pores of your conscience, nothing will ever get it out. And what a mercy it is that nothing ever will get it out. What floods of sin will sometimes roll over the holy spot into which the oil has dropped; but all the floods of sin can never wash it out. What waves of temptation and billows of God's displeasure may roll into and over the soul; but these waves and billows will never wash out the consecrated spot. What opposition from ungodly men—what fiery darts from hell—what doubts and fears, misgivings and apprehensions; but all these combined can never efface the holy anointing oil. Whatever a man may be in himself; however vile and filthy he may feel himself to be; whatever the weight of sin that lies upon his conscience, nothing—nothing, no, nothing can wash out this anointing if God has been pleased to favour him with it. This is our meetness for heaven, for what the Lord does he does for ever; and his gifts and calling are without repentance. This is the saint's richest mercy that what the Holy Spirit has communicated can never be effaced or blotted out. If sin could do it, would not sin have done it long ago? If temptation could do it, would not temptation long since have succeeded in drying up, like a wind from the desert, every trace of it? If Satan could do it, would he not long ago have triumphed with hellish glee over defacing the

workmanship of God? But this is the blessedness and this the security of the saints of God, that the anointing which they receive from the Holy One abideth in them uneffaced and ineffaceable.

III.—Now, to come to our last point, on which, as I have already somewhat trespassed upon your attention, I must be brief—the *spirit and effect* of this anointing: "Even as it hath taught you, ye shall *abide in him*." The Apostle speaks here of two things—what this anointing has done, and what it will continue to do.

What has it already done? What are its past fruits and effects? Two, chiefly. To give union, and to maintain union with the Son of God. "Our fellowship," John tells us, "is truly with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3.) But whence came this fellowship? From the anointing; for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit"—so that the anointing gives union with Christ. As then it gives union with Christ, so it also produces communion; and as this union and communion abide by virtue of the abiding of the anointing, it enables the soul to abide in him—never to leave him, as he never will leave it, and never forsake him, as he will never forsake it. But thus to abide in him is the fruit of his abiding in us. "Abide in me and I in you." "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." But how do we abide in him? By his Spirit and grace; and how does he abide in us? By his presence and his word, both of which are by virtue of the anointing of the Spirit. O what a divine reality there is in these things! May we not say of them, as of the blessed Lord himself, that they are "all our salvation and all our desire?"

But, now to keep you no longer, let me ask you in all simplicity and sincerity, what you know of this anointing? Can you feel, as it were, as if holy John were himself personally addressing you and saying to you, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things;" "the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you?" Have you ever had a solitary drop of this holy anointing oil fall upon your heart? One drop, if it be but a drop, will sanctify you for ever to the service of God. There was not

much of the holy anointing oil used for the service of the tabernacle, when we consider the size and quantity of what had to be consecrated; for Moses had to anoint therewith the whole of the tabernacle of the congregation, as well as all the vessels, with all their various appurtenances. When he went through the sacred work, he touched one vessel after another with a drop of oil; for one drop sanctified the vessel to the service of the tabernacle. There was no repetition of the consecration wanted; it abode. So if you ever had a drop of God's love shed abroad in your heart; a drop of the anointing to teach you the truth as it is in Jesus; a drop to penetrate, to soften, to heal, to feed, and give light, life, and power to your soul; you have the unction from the Holy One; you know all things which are for your salvation; and by that same holy oil you have been sanctified and made meet for an eternal inheritance. Examine these heavenly mysteries: look to them well, and see whether you can bless God for having bestowed one drop of this holy anointing oil upon your soul.

An Anxious Inquiry and a Gracious Response

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Jan. 20, 1861

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." Song of Solomon 1:7, 8

It is very beautiful, and not less profitable than beautiful, to observe the variety of ways in which it has pleased the God of all grace to reveal his mind and will to the sons of men in the scriptures of truth. Look a little closely at your Bible from this particular point of view. What a wonderful book it is! and not less wonderful for its contents, and the glorious truths which shine and sparkle as with divine lustre in every page, than for the amazing variety in which those contents are unfolded to our enlightened understanding, and those glorious truths held up to our spiritual view. This variety is not a matter of accident, or of human contrivance, but a fruit of heavenly grace, originated by divine wisdom, and designed for a special purpose, that God might instruct us more clearly into his mind and will. Let me, then, devote a few minutes to the illustration of this peculiar feature of the Scriptures, as I love to point out the wisdom and grace of God in the revelation of himself in the word of truth.

1. God instructs us, then, sometimes by *history* or sacred narrative; as we find it employed in the historical books of the Old Testament, and in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles in the New. What should we have known of the creation and fall of man; of the destruction of the old world by the deluge; of the preservation of Noah and his family in the ark; of the call of Abraham; of the raising up and maintenance of a peculiar people in the children of Israel from generation to generation, that from the tribe of Judah and the loins of David, as concerning the flesh,

the promised Messiah should come into the world, except for the historical books of the Old Testament? Again, but for the Gospels, what should we have known, at least fully and clearly, of the holy conception, the lowly birth, the suffering life, the agonizing death, the glorious resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ? Where but for the Gospels would have been our knowledge of the surpassing miracles, the instructive parables, the precious discourses, the garden woes, the bloody sweat, the sacrifice and sufferings of our most gracious Lord? And but for the Acts of the Apostles, what should we have known of the pouring out of the Holy Ghost and the promulgation of the Gospel at Jerusalem; of the persecutions and sufferings of the Christian Churches in various places, and of the blessings that rested upon the ministry of the apostles?

2. But God has sometimes seen fit to vary his mode of instruction, and to teach us *by type and figure*, as in the paschal lamb, in the cloudy pillar, in the tabernacle and ark of the covenant in the wilderness, in the brazen serpent, in the scape-goat, and in the whole train generally of Levitical rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices.

3. But as a further instance of this variety of instruction, let me mention how God has been pleased also to teach us by *prophecy*, as in the whole range of prophetic scripture, from Isaiah to Malachi in the Old Testament, and the book of Revelation in the New. He has thus afforded us predictions of countless events, either already accomplished, as those referring to the first coming of Messiah, or yet to be fulfilled, as in his second coming; and has thereby given us the strongest attestation to the truth and inspiration of his holy word.

4. Sometimes he has taught us by *metrical compositions* of men of God in days of old, when they poured out their complaints or recorded their joy in "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs"—as, for instance, the songs of Miriam, Moses, and Hannah, and especially that blessed treasure-house of Christian experience, the Book of Psalms.

5. Sometimes he has seen good to teach us by *proverbs, apophthegms,* and short *sentences,* in which he has been pleased to couch vast depths of moral and spiritual instruction—as in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

6. Sometimes he has seen fit to instruct us by *letters,* as in the Epistles of the New Testament, wherein we have the grand truths of our most holy faith so blessedly set forth, and the top stone, as it were, put on of divine precept and godly practice to crown the edifice of doctrine and experience.

7. And in one instance, he has seen fit to instruct us by a *Song—a holy song*—called "the Song of Songs," or "the Song of Solomon," but which, from its general arrangement and character, we would, in all godly reverence, rather term a *holy drama, or sacred pastoral;* for in it we find a kind of dramatic picture or scenic representation of the mutual love and sacred communion of Christ and his Church under the figure of a Bridegroom and Bride, enjoying, in various scenes and places, each other's delightful company.

From this part of Holy Scripture, then, this vivid and picturesque representation of heavenly love, I shall endeavour, with God's help and blessing, to speak in your ears this morning, taking for my text the words which I have already read.

In those words you will find two speakers—one the Bride addressing the Bridegroom in the language of inquiry, and the other the Bridegroom answering her question. This simple division then of Question and Answer will form the two leading branches of my subject.

I.—*First,* then, we have the *Anxious Inquiry* of the Bride, who desires to know where the Bridegroom's flock would rest at noon; for she could not bear the thought that she should be "as one that turned aside by the flocks of his companions."

II.—*Secondly*, the *Gracious Answer* which fell from his lips, that if she knew not the appointed place of rest and refreshment she was to go her way forth "by the footsteps of the flock, and feed her kids beside the shepherds' tents."

i. But before we address ourselves to the Anxious Inquiry of the Bride as thus stated, it will be necessary to look a little at her character; because though the Bride represents the Church of God in the aggregate, yet as there is but "one body, and one spirit" (Eph. 4:4), her sighs and songs, prayers and praises, conflicts and conquests, sorrows and joys, are but the reflections of, and intimately correspond with, the experience of every saint of God. So she stands forth in the word of truth, and specially in this sacred drama, not only as representing the whole of God's family in the aggregate, but as foreshadowing the character and experience of each child of God in the particular. You may compare yourself then personally and individually with the description which the Holy Ghost has given here of the Church of God in her inmost experience. He has taken the veil from off her face and heart that you may see the features of the one and watch the pulsations of the other; and if, as in water, face answereth to face, you can see your features in her features and read your heart in her heart, you may so far, with God's help, take some comfort or encouragement, as having scriptural grounds to believe that you are a living member of the mystical body of the Lord the Lamb.

1. Now one feature, and a very prominent feature of the Church here is, her *humiliation; the low place* that she takes, and the language of self-condemnation which she uses. She says, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." (Song 1:6.) She had a view by divine teaching of her thorough wreck and ruin in the Adam fall, and of the consequences resulting therefrom through the power and effects of temptation. In a woman, a clear, fair, fresh, soft complexion is a special beauty and a most attractive charm. But she, in her own eyes, was "black." Dark and swarthy was her skin, like that of an African negress, burnt into her by the scorching sun which had

dried up all the tender juices of her once fair face and roseate complexion. She could not bear to look at her own tanned and tawny face, and therefore cried out, "Look not upon me, because I am black. I am unworthy of the least glance of thy favourable eye. The sun of temptation hath looked upon me, and meeting the foul humours and gross corruptions of my face has blackened my skin; I am not a fit bride for thee who "art fairer than the children of men;" for how can black match with white? and I am black." But to represent this feeling of her blackness more strikingly, she compares herself to "the tents of Kedar," a place in the wilderness of Edom, where the wandering shepherds dwelt in tents made of camels' hair, and therefore black not only from the original colour of the material, but additionally so by being continually beaten upon by the rays of a burning sun and begrimed by the smoke of the tent and the dust of the desert. Such was she in her own eyes—"black" in her original colour as woven throughout with sin in the Adam fall; "black," as warped and scorched by the sun of temptation; "black," as begrimed with the daily smoke of internal corruption; "black" as ever blown upon by the dust of this ungodly world. Instead, therefore, of viewing herself fair and comely, she rather beheld herself as did Job, when he cried out, "Behold, I am vile;" as Isaiah, when he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone;" and as Daniel, when his comeliness was turned in him into corruption.

2. But with all this view of her own blackness, humbling her into the very dust, she had a sight and some experimental knowledge and enjoyment of her interest in Christ; she knew there was something more and better in herself than blackness, for she could add, "I am black, but comely"—yea, as comely "as the curtains of Solomon." We read in this book of Solomon's bed, and we have a description given of its guards: "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's: three-score valiant men are about it, of the valiants of Israel." But if we adopt the marginal reading of "bed" for "chariot" in the following verse, which seems to be more suitable to the context and to the description itself, we shall find a most glowing and picturesque account of the ornaments and furniture of this bed. "King Solomon made himself a bed of the wood of

Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple; the midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem." Is not that last touch of the picture more suited to a bridal bed than to "a chariot," or palanquin, as some explain the word? Now "the curtains" of this bed must have been as beautiful as the four pillars of silver at each corner, the bottom, or main support, of gold, and the covering or coverlid, spread over the whole of purple—the quilt of Tyrian dye, worn only by kings and princes. As there was in those days a great intercourse between Judea and India, Solomon's ships going from Tarshish to Ophir, there is a great probability that these curtains were formed of the most beautiful India muslin. They might even have been made of shawls from the looms of Cashmere, those costly productions which grace the very shoulders of queens and princesses.

But what a contrast to the tents of Kedar! Can you picture to your eye first "the tents of Kedar," a low, black, dusty group of shepherds' tents, nestling in the desert amidst the desert amidst the bleating flocks—something like a gipsy camp! Such was the Bride in herself. Now look into Solomon's palace and see the curtains of his royal bed. How clean, how rich, how beautiful! Such was the Bride in Christ.

3. But there are other features stamped upon her; and one of a very marked character. I shall have occasion to dwell by and by more fully upon this point; I shall therefore only just touch upon this feature of her character. She had, then, great love for Jesus, for she could say, "*O thou whom my soul loveth.*" Her tongue here expressed what her heart felt, for she could say that her very soul loved him. Now if a man has no love whatever to Jesus, he certainly has no right to think or call himself a Christian. Do I stretch the cord too tightly when I say this? Is my test too severe? Let me ask have you ever pondered over that solemn word of Paul's? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema"—or accursed? Is my sword sharper than Paul's, or my test more severe than his? If then a man professing to know the truth for himself by some experience of its power has

never known anything of love to the Lord from some discovery of his Person and work, grace and glory, well may I ask if he has any well grounded testimony of his interest in a salvation so great, and in a Saviour so blessed?

4. But besides this love, there was another feature stamped upon her character to which I have already partially alluded—*great sincerity*. She could appeal to him as one who knew her very heart. "O thou whom my soul loveth." She felt as Peter felt, when the Lord seemed in some measure, as Peter feared, to doubt his love. Knowing his own sincerity, and conscious that the Lord knew it too, he broke out, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." So the Bride not only felt the warm flame of love glowing in her breast, but was so sure it was there that she could appeal to him that she was sincere in the expression of it. It was therefore, not a love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; not a love of lip, but a love of heart—a love which he himself had kindled in her breast, and given her to know as his own gift and work, the fruit of his own grace.

5. But now look at another feature which beams forth from her portrait under the lively handling of the blessed Spirit; she was *hungry*, for she asked him to tell her where he fed his flock, evidently showing that she was seeking heavenly food.

6. But she was *weary* also of sin and self, of the world and of everything below the skies; and yet felt that there was *rest in Christ*, for she asked him to tell her where "he made his flock to rest at noon."

7. The last feature I shall now name is her *holy jealousy and godly fear* over herself. She dreaded lest she should be led to turn aside from the strait and narrow way, from her loyalty and her love, and be beguiled in any measure to say or do anything that seemed like a departure from her willing obedience to the Lord of her heart and affections.

Now can you find any or all of these seven marks of grace in your

soul—that you are self-abased; that you have any testimony of your interest in Christ; that you do love the Lord Jesus; that you are sincere; that you are hungry and long for food; that you are weary and seek for rest; and are jealous over yourself with a godly jealousy, lest you depart from the right ways of the Lord? The standard I have set up is not very high, but I believe it is true and scriptural. If, then, you can find these seven marks in your soul, wrought there by divine power, you have so far a scriptural testimony that you are one whom the Bride here represents, and will therefore be able to enter more fully and clearly into her Inquiry, and the Lord's Answer.

ii. Let us look then now at her *Inquiry*: "Tell me," she says, "O thou whom my soul loveth." You see how anxious she was to get a word from the Lord. This also I might have named as a special mark of a soul under divine teaching: its earnestness, its anxiety to be taught of God, to get a testimony from the Lord's own mouth, a witnessing word from the Lord's own lips. She could not be satisfied with the testimony of man, or be content with such instruction as she might gather from the lips of others. Nothing short of the Lord himself speaking with power to her soul could give her any solid satisfaction. Were you ever there? Do you know what it is often upon your knees to be begging of the Lord to speak to your soul with power? She then appeals to him why he should thus speak to her? for it was with her a matter of very anxious inquiry. She would not be deceived for all the world. She knew that everything was at stake, and putting her soul, its salvation and its sanctification into the balance, nothing could induce her to depart from this point, that it must be the Lord, and the Lord alone, who could satisfy her longing desires, by speaking a word to her inmost heart. And observe the ground on which she appeals to him. It is *the ground of love*. She would say, "I do not come before thee as a stranger, as an enemy, as an alien, as one who has no knowledge of thee, or of whom thou hast no knowledge; but as one who loves thee—not in word, or tongue, or profession, but in my very soul, from some communication of thy love to my heart." Now can you go before the Lord on the very same ground of love and affection to his dear name, and say

with her as sincerely, if not as warmly and as tenderly, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth?" Is your answer "Yes, I can." You must have some ground for your answer. Love is easily talked about, easily professed, and perhaps no one thing is more counterfeited; but to talk about love is to love in word and in tongue; the love that is wanted is in deed and in truth. Now what forms the ground of love? for we do not love either naturally or spiritually for nothing. If we fall in love, as it is called, there is some ground for it, something attractive, amiable, winning, loveable in the beloved Object. So before you can love the Lord, you must have seen something in him to love him for. You must have had, for instance, a view by faith of his eternal Deity and Sonship, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. You must have had a view of his holy, suffering, and pure humanity, and seen him in some measure as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, or on the agonising cross at Calvary; and you must have had also some discovery to your faith of his complex Person as God-man, Immanuel, God with us, at the right hand of the Father, in glory and majesty. Now I do not say that the Old Testament saints had as clear a discovery of the Person and work of the Redeemer as those have who have lived since his appearance in the flesh; yet Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and saw it and was glad; and Job knew that his Redeemer lived. So the Bride, speaking under divine inspiration, and representing the Church of Christ, had, no doubt, a view of the glorious Person of her Beloved, for giving a description of him in this holy book, she says, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." She must then have had a view of his glorious Person and surpassing beauty. Nor was she without some intimation of his love, for she says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for his love is better than wine" (Song 1:2); and, after a glowing description of his Person, adds, "his mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." (Song 5:16.) We cannot doubt, then, that the Bride, as representing the church, loved the Bridegroom, not from hearsay description, but from a gracious discovery of his heavenly beauty.

But besides this attractiveness in the Object, winning the heart and affections, there must be some intimation from his own lips that he loves us as well as that we love him. How tormenting is unrequited love, as many a poor love-stricken maiden has felt and known even to death. How galling, how mortifying to man or woman to love and not to be loved again. But spiritual love is never unrequited love. No Christian heart need bleed or break under the pangs of love being only on one side. This the Scripture has decisively settled. "We love him because he first loved us." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." A child of God may fear, as many have feared, that the Lord does not love him; but there is no real ground for this fear; for our love to the Lord, if indeed we do love him, is but a faint and dim reflection of his love to us.

iii. This love, then, in the Bride's heart moved and influenced her to put up this anxious inquiry, "Tell me," she says, "where thou *feedest*." She was hungry, for she was one of those whom the Lord himself pronounces blessed, as "hungering and thirsting after righteousness;" and under the pressure of this hunger she needed food. The Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in the word of truth as "the good shepherd." "The Lord is my shepherd," says David, "I shall not want." But a main office of the shepherd is to feed the flock: as in the psalm to which I have already referred, David says, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." And thus speaks the prophet, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." (Isai. 40:11.) So in Ezekiel the Lord himself promises, "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 34:15.) Thus viewing the Lord in the character of a shepherd, the bride here says, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock." It is, therefore, almost as if she said, "Lord, I am hungry; I want some food for my soul; I am starving, sinking, fainting, for want of food; I am dying for something which thou alone canst give. O tell me with thy own lips where it is thou feedest thy flock, that I may go where they are, and get some of the pasture which thou givest them." Does your soul ever want to be thus fed? Have you come up here this

morning with any appetite? Do you hunger for a word from the Lord to be spoken to your heart? Are you in search of Gospel food? Are you come here this morning, saying in substance if not in word, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, that I may have some food given to me by thyself?"

iv. But if the Lord feed them, he must have *something to feed them with*, and that suitable to the hunger of the soul. What does he feed them with? With various kinds of food; but all alike nourishing and satisfying to the soul—for the food he gives is not less than *himself*.

1. Sometimes, then, he feeds the soul with *his presence*. This fills up the aching void; this relieves the hunger; this satisfies the want; for to feed upon his presence is to feed upon himself.

2. But he feeds them also with his *promises*; for he has filled the word of truth with them as so much choice provender for his flock. There is not a state or case, trial or temptation, difficulty or perplexity, grief or affliction, ache of heart or pain of mind, burden of spirit or guilt of conscience, heavy bereavement or sore disappointment, for which there is not some suitable promise in the word of his grace. As, then, these promises are laid before the sheep by the good Shepherd as their choice and suitable food, and they are enabled by his grace to feed upon them, their souls are sensibly nourished and strengthened. This is fulfilling the word of promise; "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel." (Ezek. 34:14.)

3. But he feeds them more especially with *his own flesh* and *his own blood*, for he says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" and again, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John 6:55, 57.) When, then, the blessed Lord is pleased to discover to the soul a sense of his dying love, what he is as a suffering Jesus, in bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and applies this love and blood to the conscience, then there is a feeding by faith upon his flesh and drinking by faith of his blood.

This is "meat indeed and drink indeed," for eternal life is in it; as the Lord himself declared, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." (John 6:54, 56.) To be thus blessed and favoured is to be fed with the choicest provision of God's house and be sealed for heaven; for "he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." (John 6:58.)

v. But the bride wanted not only food; she wanted also *rest*. As hunger made her long for food, so weariness made her long for rest. Are you never weary of the world, weary of sin, weary of self, weary of every thing below the skies? If so, you want something to give you rest. You look to self; it is but a shifting sand, tossed here and there with the restless tide, and ever casting up mire and dirt. No holding ground; no anchorage; no rest there. You look to others; you see what man is, even the very best of men in their best state, how fickle, how unstable, how changing and changeable; how weak even when willing to help; how more likely to add to, than relieve your distress; if desirous to sympathise with and comfort you in trouble and sorrow, how short his arm to help, how unsatisfactory his aid to relieve! You find no rest there. You lean upon the world: it is but a broken reed which runs into your hand and pierces you. So look where you will, there is no rest for the sole of your foot. But there is a rest; for the sacred word of truth declares, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9); and our blessed Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28.) This rest is Christ, and especially Christ in his finished work, as the apostle declares, "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Heb. 4:3); and this by ceasing from our own works and resting on Christ's, according to the words, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." (Heb. 4:10.) Now when you can fully rest upon the finished work of the Son of God, and believe by a living faith that your sins were laid upon his head; that he bore them in his body on the tree; that he has washed you in his precious blood, clothed you with his

righteousness, and is sanctifying you by his Spirit and grace, then you can rest. There is something here firm and solid for the conscience to rest on. Whilst the law thunders, whilst Satan accuses, whilst conscience condemns, there is no rest. But you can rest where God rests. God rests in his love; in the finished work of his dear Son; in the perfection of Christ's humanity; in his fulfilment of all his covenant engagements; in the glorification of his holy Law; in the satisfaction rendered to his justice; in the harmonising of all his attributes; in the revelation of his grace and his glory to the children of men; for he is his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. The tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards the temple on Mount Zion, was a type of the pure and sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus. There God rested in a visible manner by a cloud upon the mercy seat, called by the Jewish writers, the Shekinah. This, therefore, was the place of his rest, as he speaks, "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Psalm 132:13, 14.) As, then, the Shekinah or presence of God rested upon the ark; and as the glory of God in the cloudy pillar rested upon the tabernacle, so the glory of God rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ; and when you can rest where God rests, then you enter into rest, and cease from your own works, as God ceased from his. This is a glorious rest, for we read, "To it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious" (Isai. 11:10); and "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." (Jer. 17:12.) "The Lord giveth grace and glory" (Psal. 84:11); and this glory he gives his people when they believe on the Son of God unto eternal life, as he himself said, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." (John 17:22.) Have you not often toiled and laboured to establish your own righteousness? And what was the end of all your labours, the fruit of all your toils? Bondage, guilt, fear; weariness, dissatisfaction, disappointment. And have you not sought sometimes to get a little pleasure from the things of time and sense, a little ease, a little rest, as a sick man tries a new remedy or the weary invalid a fresh posture? But no remedy for the sick man; no rest for the weary woman. So no change of place or pursuit, no poppy of the field or drug of the laboratory could give

you the rest and peace that you needed. Nor will you ever find it but in the Son of God.

But the Bride in the text was not, at that time at least, enjoying this rest, or why need she utter the anxious inquiry, "Tell me where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon." In those countries, the noon is not, as in this, the most beautiful part of the day, when, even in summer, if it is not too hot, we are glad to go abroad into the open air. In those fervid times the noon-day sun is something terrible to man and beast. All retreat to shelter, for those fervent rays beat with such terrible power that men sometimes drop down dead by what is called sun-stroke, or are seized with brain-fever. The shepherds, therefore, when the noon-day heat is about to make their flocks languish and hang out their tongues with thirst and weariness, lead them under some cool rock or the thick boughs of some umbrageous tree, like the Banyan fig tree of India, where they find shade from the heat, and can crop their food at ease. So when the burning sun of temptation blazes in the sky; when the noon-day heat of the assaults of Satan, or the hot rays of personal trouble and affliction beat upon the defenceless head of the sheep of Christ so as to make it faint, weary, and languishing, it longs for rest and shelter. "Tell me," says the bride, "where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon." She knew there was a place where the flock of Christ rested at noon; and where he himself made them rest. But this place she could not find without his guidance, or obtain rest when found unless he himself gave it. She does not say, "Tell me where the flock rests," but "where *thou makest it* to rest;" for the Lord must not only provide the green pasture and the still waters, but himself make the soul lie down in them and feed beside them. How often you have had food spread before you, and could not eat; had the bed made, and could not sleep in it!

vi. But there is another feature in her character which as I have before pointed out, seems very marked—*her godly jealousy over herself*. "For why," she says to her most blessed Lord, "for why should I be as *one that turneth aside* by the flocks of thy companions?" There is a little difficulty here, I am free to confess

it, in understanding whom these "companions" represent. If we understand these "companions" to be the same persons as are spoken of in the last chapter, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice" (8:13)—they would seem to represent those who were favoured with holy intimacy and companionship with the Lord Jesus Christ; and as they had flocks, they would shadow forth the under shepherds—pastors of churches, ministers of truth, whom the great Shepherd had set over various parts of the fold below, that they might feed them with food convenient for them. If this be the correct interpretation, the question might arise how she could turn from the Lord if she associated with the flocks of his companions, for when with them she would seem to be in her right place. Surely we can hardly be wrong or be turning aside from the Lord if we are walking in fellowship with those who are themselves walking in close fellowship with Christ. Does not John say, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin?" (1 John 1:7.) According to this testimony, then, to have fellowship with the saints of God is closely connected with walking in the light of God's countenance and enjoying the application of atoning blood to cleanse from all sin. If, then, we interpret "the companions" as the companions of Christ—the friends of the bridegroom who, according to the Jewish custom, attended him at the marriage feast (Judges 14:11; John 3:29), we must make a little pause or inversion of the words, and read it thus: "Why should I, by the flocks of thy companions, be as one that turneth aside?" As though she said, "Why should I, with all my privileges as being amongst the flocks of thy companions, favoured with church ordinances and church fellowship, continually hearing the servants of thine own sending, and walking in sweet union with the people of thine own choosing,—why should I, so highly favoured, be as one that turneth aside?" This interpretation, if we adopt it, would bear a good gospel sense, for there is a tendency, even amongst God's children to rest upon privileges, to build upon ordinances, and to think because they are favoured with sitting under a gospel ministry, or belong to a gospel church, that all is well between God and their soul, when there may be a great

deal of secret turning aside from the Lord in their heart and affections. Your walk and conduct may be consistent; you may keep up the strictest attention to what are called the duties of religion; and yet with all this there maybe a great deal of inward departing from the Lord. True spiritual fellowship with the Lord's people, and especially with his "companions," or those who live very near to him, I have already shown, is closely connected with walking in the light of the Lord's countenance; but there may be an associating with the Lord's people, and yet borrowing no light from their lamp or getting heat from their warmth. The wise and foolish virgins went out on the same errand and for the same purpose. Even a believer may associate with the believing, and not have the same activity of faith; and a lover of truth with the loving, and not feel the same warmth of love. Taking that view of her meaning, it is as if she said, "Why should I be as one who drinks at the stream instead of drinking at the Fountain? whose wicked heart turns aside from thee even amidst the flocks of thy ministering servants—those "Happy men," those "happy servants," who, like Solomon's, "stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom." (1 Kings 10:8.) "O how base must be my heart to be contented without enjoying thy sweet presence, resting upon some outward privileges, and going in and out amongst thy people and thy servants, and yet be secretly forsaking the Fountain of living waters and hewing out to myself cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water." She saw the snare, and cried to be delivered from it. In this expression of her feelings, I see the godly jealousy which the Bride has over herself. Many, I believe, rest upon their Christian privileges, their Church membership, and their general reception as partakers of grace by the people of God, without any deep searchings of heart whether they are walking near the Lord in all holy obedience to his will and word. But where the soul is sensitively alive to its own spiritual condition, and especially when it has known something formerly of sweet communion with the Lord of life and glory, it sees the snare thus spread for its feet, and says, "Though I am favoured with sitting under a sound gospel ministry; though I have joined myself to the people of God, and have been cordially received and am generally esteemed by them; though I stately

meet with them, and often converse with them and the minister on the things of God, yet I know and feel that I may have all these privileges, and yet be a backslider in heart, a wanderer from the Lord in my affections, and not enjoy his sweet presence within, or have that sacred communion with him with which I have been favoured in times past. O why should I, then, if favoured with all these privileges, be as one that turneth aside from him, so that instead of using them I rather abuse them, and rest upon them instead of resting upon the Lord?"

That is one sense of the text, and affords in my judgment a sound, scriptural, experimental meaning. But take another—that these "companions" were not the real companions of Christ, but such as professed to be; and that these flocks were not really sheep of Christ, but only so in appearance, like those spoken of in Ezekiel; "And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats." (Ezek. 34:17.) There the Lord declares he "will judge between cattle and cattle"—implying that there are "cattle" which are not his cattle; and "between the rams and the he goats"—the strong and vigorous goats, as distinguished from his own poor, weak, and sickly sheep. The "companions," then, who shepherd these rams and he-goats would represent the letter ministers who profess to preach the truth and to be companions of Christ; but who have never learnt of him to be meek and lowly in heart, and who have never felt the liberating, sanctifying influence and power of the very truth which they preach. When, then, a tender-hearted, humble, and simple child of God gets in any way amongst these flocks of Christ's pretended companions, and especially if he become secretly entangled with these letter ministers and these letter churches, he feels there is a being gradually drawn aside from the simplicity of the gospel. "Evil communications corrupt good manners;" and a hardness of heart and deadness or carelessness of spirit soon creep over him. As, then, he begins to feel the working of this death-dealing poison, godly jealousy is roused up as if from its drugged sheep, and seeing the snare he trembles lest he should become a backslider in heart, and be filled with his own ways. He becomes jealous

over his own heart, lest he be drawn aside from the Lord, and be satisfied with a name to live. "O," he says, "why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of these companions? The minister starves my soul, and the people deaden my spirit. Their conversation is of the earth earthy, and though they profess to be flocks of Christ, what marks of sheep do I see in them? I feel I am turning aside from my most blessed Lord. Why should I depart from him, the source of all my life and love, to be entangled with the flocks of his professing yet false companions; perhaps be deceived in my profession of religion, and following their bad and corrupting example, be righteously left to take up with the form instead of the power, and substitute the letter of truth for the sweet experience of it in the heart?"

II.—But as time is running on, which stops for no man, we must pass on to the second leading point which I proposed to bring before you—the Bridegroom's *gracious Answer* to the Bride's anxious Inquiry: "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." (Song 1:8.)

i. Observe first in this gracious and wise Answer, the kind and tender language in which he addresses her. She had called herself "black;" but he will not have it so. He will not admit her description of herself, or sanction it as applicable to her. "No," he says, "thou art not black in my eyes, if black in thine own, but art the fairest among women." What sweet humility on her part; what gracious condescension on his! Not only was she fair—"thou art all fair, my love;" but she was the fairest of the fair—the very paragon of her sex. But what made her so fair in his eyes, though so black in her own? Several considerations.

1. First, he viewed her as she was originally presented to his acceptance in the councils of eternity before the foundation of the world, as a *spotless, unfallen bride*. All the saints and servants of God do not see exactly with me in this point; but my own view and belief is, that the Church was espoused to Christ not as a *fallen*, but as an *unfallen* Bride; and that as the High Priest, under

the law, was not allowed to take any but a pure virgin to wife, so the blessed Lord, as the great High Priest over the house of God, espoused to himself a virgin Bride; in other words, that the Church was presented to him, as God afterwards presented Eve to Adam, in all her unfallen purity and innocency. As such he viewed her; as such he loved her; as such he wedded her. Thus, as Milton says of our first mother,

"The fairest of her daughters, Eve,"

so was the Church in her unfallen condition, "the fairest among women." As such he took her into union with himself, and as such she was blessed in him with all spiritual blessings.

2. But she is "the fairest of women" in another sense. He viewed her as washed in his atoning blood, clothed in his glorious righteousness as her wedding garment, and sanctified and cleansed by the washing of regenerating grace, as the apostle speaks, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11); and again, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27.)

3. But take another view of the words. Looking at her as she one day will be in heaven perfectly conformed to his own glorious image—"fashioned," as the apostle speaks, "like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 4:21), comely in his comeliness, and glorified with his glory, a fitting bride for the Lord the Lamb; looking beyond the narrow isthmus of time into the mighty continent of a vast eternity, he could even in a time state address her, "O thou fairest among women."

ii. But though He so calls her, he yet gives her a gentle reproof: "*If thou know not*"—as though he should say, "How comes it to

pass, that after all my teaching, all my instructions, thou art still so ignorant?" "If thou know not"—surely thou oughtest by this time to know. Yet with this not unmerited yet gentle reproof, he still condescends to answer her Inquiry; as if he would say, If thou art so ignorant, as thou art not wilfully ignorant, but art willing to learn of me, "I will tell thee; I will not leave thee in thine ignorance; I will teach thee."

iii. This brings us to the instructions he gives, and they are two, by attending to which she would attain the object of her desires. She had sought for food; she longed for rest; and she would make any sacrifice to obtain them. Well knowing this, he gives her two lessons of instruction.

1. The first is, "*Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.*" He showed her by these words that she was still a good deal entangled in things and circumstances out of which she must fully and fairly come. There was a measure of the spirit of the world in her which had to be purged out; she still had too much reliance upon self, and cleaved too closely to her own wisdom, strength, and righteousness: all these things were so many bonds and hindrances, clogs and fetters, which kept her back from walking in the narrow path. Her want of full separation from the world and things worldly brought a veil over her eyes, and obscured the road from her view. He says, therefore, "*Go thy way forth.*" Here is the wilderness before thine eyes, for thee to tread, not a flesh-pleasing world. Thou must go forth from the world, from sin, and from self, if thou art to find where I feed and make my flock to rest at noon. If thou art still leaning upon thine own strength, trusting to thine own righteousness, thou wilt never find the object of thy desire. Go forth; leave these things behind, and set thy face toward the wilderness." Now this requires a strength not her own, a power which the Lord himself alone can give.

But she was to take very great care as to *the road which she took*; for the wilderness having no beaten tracks, she might lose herself therein. He adds, therefore, "I will give thee a sure and safe direction that thou mayest find the right way. Mind *the*

footsteps of the flock. Go thy way forth by them; walk closely in them; depart not from them; they are the right, the only road to come to the place where I feed and where I make my flock to rest at noon." Of course this has a spiritual and experimental meaning. What, then, spiritually viewed does it signify? It is as if he said, "Look at the way in which the saints of old have ever trodden, and mark the deep footprints which they have left in the road. And observe this, that all these steps are forward, and not one of them is backward; all toward the wilderness, and not one toward the world; all toward Christ, and none toward sin; all toward life, and none toward death. As you see how the flock have walked before you, take care that you walk just in the same steps. Their steps will guide you right; they will bring you to the place of food and shelter."

But what are these footsteps of the flock? *Tribulation* is one; for "through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom." If, then, we are to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, it will be the path of tribulation. Sorrow of mind, affliction of body, distress of soul, disappointments in providence, persecution from the profane or professing world, with many other painful trials and temptations, are the usual lot of the Lord's people. In this way, as the apostle testifies (Heb. 11.), those ancient witnesses, of whom the world was not worthy, walked of old. In this path of tribulation our blessed Lord himself walked, for he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and in this path of trial and suffering all have walked since he appeared on earth and entered into his glory. To be, then, out of the way of tribulation is to be out of the way altogether. He says, therefore, "Go thy way forth from the path of ease and worldly happiness; shun not the cross; endure hardship; prepare thyself for trouble. See how the flocks have gone on before; observe what deep marks they have left, and how they have all trodden the same path of temptation and trial. By walking thus stedfastly in their footprints, thou wilt reach the quiet, secluded, and shady spot where I feed my flock, and where I make them lie down at noon."

But again, these footsteps of the flock are *footsteps of faith*;

because it is only by faith that we can walk in the path of life; as the apostle says, "We walk by faith not by sight;" and again, "As ye have received Christ, so walk ye in him." By faith Enoch walked with God; and so walked Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac, Joseph, and David, and the prophets. They all lived a life of faith and died a death of faith; for God's own testimony concerning them is, "These all died in faith." (Heb. 11:13.) If, then, we wish to get into their rest, to live as they lived, and to die as they died, we must walk by faith as they walked before.

2. But he gives her another direction: "*And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*" These shepherds are the servants of God, the ministers of Christ, whom he raises up by his Spirit and grace to feed the flock of slaughter. These have their "tents," by which is intended that they at present dwell in the body of an earthly tabernacle, and are strangers and pilgrims on earth. The servants of Christ, like the servants in the wilderness, do not inhabit fixed mansions, splendid palaces, enduring cities, for "here we have no abiding city," but mere tents in which to tarry for a night; for our life is but a vapour: it is soon cut off and we fly away.

But these shepherds, so far as they are taught of God, give the sheep the same food that the Lord gives, and spread for them the same rest at noon that he provides. He says, therefore, "Feed thy kids," the tender graces of thy soul, "beside the shepherds' tents;" look to the shepherds and where they feed and tend their flocks. Spiritually interpreted, Seek out and find a gospel ministry; see where power attends the word; bring your soul under a shepherd who can feed it and give it rest. Bring the kids of your soul, the tender graces which want special nurture, and let them feed beside the shepherds' tents. Seek every opportunity of hearing the word faithfully and experimentally preached: it may often be a feeding time to your soul, that your faith may be strengthened, your hope increased, your love nourished, and the work of grace confirmed in your heart.

But if you set no value upon a gospel ministry, have no desire to hear the word, or anxious cry that the Lord would bless that word

to your soul, how are you fulfilling the Lord's direction? You say you want food and rest, to know Christ for yourself, to enjoy his presence and love. The Lord gives you two directions to attain to the enjoyment of these two blessings; 1, to tread in the footsteps of the flock, to walk in the way in which the saints of old have walked, in the path of tribulation and faith; 2, if you are favoured in any way to live within reach of the shepherds' tents, and have the privilege of hearing the gospel preached in its purity and power, to bring your kids in your arms beside the tent, and to put them down to feed on the juicy herbage. And be assured that if you come to the shepherds' tents with a prayerful spirit and a hungry soul, begging of God to open your heart to receive the word with power, and to crown it with his blessings, sooner or later you will find food and rest. But these things go together. If you want food, you will go where it is to be got; if you want rest, you will go where it is to be obtained. You will get neither in the world. But as you get food and rest besides the shepherds' tents, you will find that it is really and truly Jesus himself who feeds, and Jesus himself who makes you lie down and rest. The shepherds are but servants. Christ is the Bridegroom and he alone has the Bride. The shepherds' joy is to bring the sheep to Christ that they may find food and rest in him. By this test you may find who are the shepherds that feed them with gospel food, with the blood and flesh of Christ, and with that provision which he has laid up in Zion. And I may add, that as your heart receives the joyful sound, and you feel the power of God's truth in your soul, there will be a doing what Christ bid as well as enjoying what Christ reveals.

Consider these things; lay them to heart; ponder over them; and may the Lord the Spirit apply them with his own divine unction to your soul, that you may see their truth, feel their reality, and know their weight and importance by a blessed experience of both in your own bosom.

THE APPEAL AND PRAYER OF A WAITING SOUL

Preached on Tuesday Evening, August 3rd, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish." Psalm 39:7, 8

This psalm was written under peculiar feelings, and whilst the Psalmist was passing through a peculiar experience. This indeed is the case with well nigh every psalm, though we cannot always so distinctly trace out the experience as in the one before us. Let none think that David could sit down at pleasure and throw off a psalm. Before he could pen one of these divine compositions, he must have been brought by the Spirit of God into a special experience; special feelings being thus wrought in his soul by the power of the Spirit, he must next have special words dictated by the same almighty Teacher. And when he was under such solemn impressions and such inspired feelings, and was taught such inspired words, he sat down and poured forth those heavenly strains which were first sung in the tabernacle, and then laid up with the other scriptures to be perpetual breasts of consolation for the exercised family of God. Nor let anyone think that he can understand the meaning, or use the words of the psalm, except as he is taught by the same Spirit and brought into the same experience. If he have not the same key, he cannot turn the wards of the lock.

By examining this psalm, we may, with God's blessing, gather some of the peculiar feelings of the Psalmist when it gushed warm from his heart and mouth.

1. It seems to me, then, that he was at this time *stretched upon a bed of sickness*; for we find him dwelling much upon the uncertainty and frailty of life. "O spare me," he says in the last verse, as if the Lord were about to cut short his days, "that I may

recover strength before I go hence and be no more." Again: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am," or, as we read in the margin, "what time I have here."

2. But besides the *bodily* affliction under which the Psalmist seems to have been labouring, it appears as if the Lord was at this time chastening him very heavily in *soul*, for he prays, "Remove Thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of Thy hand." He cries out here as one who was writhing under a sense of God's displeasure.

3. But further, these strokes of God's chastening rod, and these blows of His heavy hand, were *laying bare the iniquity of his heart*; for he says, "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth; surely every man is vanity."

4. Lying, then, in this way under the double stroke of God, stricken in body, and smitten in conscience, he looks, so to speak, out of his chamber window, and *takes a survey of mankind in general*. Viewing with spiritual eyes their useless cares and vain disquietudes, and yet seeing how by all these they were kept from divine realities, from the true knowledge of God and of themselves, he bursts forth, "Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

5. Put besides this, it would appear that *his conscience was now made exceedingly tender*, so that he durst not speak lest sin should be stirred. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me."

6. Coupled with this (not to enlarge further upon the point), we see also *a blessed submission to the will of God* wrought in his soul. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it."

Prostrate, then, in body and spirit under the afflicting hand of God, and having these divine impressions wrought in his soul by the blessed Spirit, he breathes forth the words of the text, "*And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish.*"

Our text contains four distinct clauses, which I shall, as the Lord may enable, attempt to open up one by one as they lie before me.

I. One reason why I have been endeavouring this evening to give a faint sketch of the Psalmist's experience whilst penning this psalm, was to show that David was not *always* in this frame of soul. He was brought into it by the Spirit of God working in and by those peculiar circumstances with which he was surrounded. *He* was not always able, nor are *we* always able, to say unto the Lord, "*What wait I for?*" His soul was not always thus chastened, always thus meek, always thus waiting upon God, always thus able to appeal to Him with simplicity and godly sincerity. The fan in God's chastening hand had first winnowed away the chaff and dust of self out of his soul before he could come to Him with that prostration of spirit, that brokenness and humility, and to crown all, that beautiful simplicity, "*Now, Lord, what wait I for?*" We may use the words; but that is a very different thing from possessing the same child-like brokenness, the same godly sincerity, the same filial tenderness, the same bowing down of heart, in a word, the same heavenly frame of soul in which David was when he thus earnestly appealed to God. Before we can use the words as David used them, the Lord must take us by His own hand and mould us into the same experience as the potter moulds the clay. But if we are brought by the hand of God into this simple, child-like, tender, penitential frame—and this is for the most part only under the chastening, afflicting rod of the Most High—it will be sweet and blessed to walk in David's track, use David's words, and feel a measure of David's simplicity and godly sincerity in our soul.

i. In examining these words, it may be as well to see *first* what David *did not wait for*. This may somewhat clear the way to see what he was waiting for. One thing seems pretty plain; he was not waiting for any *temporal, earthly advantages*, or anxiously expecting any measure of *worldly happiness*. Those carnal desires and earthly longings which engage the hearts of thousands had been, for the time at least, winnowed out of him by the breath of God's displeasure. Doubtless he wished to live a little longer; he clung to life, as all men, even God's children, do cling to it, till the Lord is pleased to dissolve that last tie which binds them to earth. "Spare me," he cries, "that I may recover my strength." But though he clung to life, he did not *wait* for life. Eternal things had such a firm place in his heart, and lay with such weight and power on his conscience, that there was no room for earthly wants, no, not for life itself.

But did he wait, under these circumstances, for *wealth and temporal prosperity*? As he looked out of his sick room he saw "all men walking in a vain show." Men, he saw, were generally walking, not in the possession and enjoyment of what was substantial and eternal, but only of what was shadowy and delusive. He perceived, therefore, how "they were disquieted in vain; heaping up riches, not knowing who should gather them." Could he, then, be waiting for that about which he saw men were disquieting themselves in vain? Longing after realities, could he pant after shows?

Or was he breathing after *human applause*? Did he pine for the perishing breath of dying worms? We may be sure, when he was lying under the afflicting hand of God in body and soul, human praise and human dispraise, whether his name were on the lips of admiring thousands, or he sank into the grave unnoticed and unknown, were to him matters of indifference. But not to enlarge further, was there anything of a *temporal nature* that he was waiting for? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

Now a man does not very easily nor very often come into this spot. It needs some, I might say much, furnace work before a

man can really come into this experience. So closely, so firmly, does nature cleave to us, that it is rarely thus put off; so pressing are its desires, so importunate its wants, that its voice is rarely thus so dumb.

ii. But having seen what David did *not* wait for, let us attempt to gather what he *did* wait for.

1. First and foremost, we may lay down as an object of his waiting heart, *a clear manifestation of the love of God*. I do not mean to say that he had not enjoyed this before; but when the Lord was correcting him for iniquity, rebuking him with His heavy strokes, and consuming him as the moth consumes the garment, all sensible realization of it was gone. The cloud upon the throne hid the face of the Lord. It is indeed this only which can really comfort and support the soul with death in prospect, eternity in view, and the hand of God upon the troubled conscience. This alone can give solid peace, and dispel those gloomy doubts and fears which, like night birds, flap their dismal wings over the soul as death seems to draw nigh. By this alone the sting of death is removed, the mouth of hell is closed, and the gates of heaven are opened. Well then might he say, "Lord, what wait I for?" The manifestation of Thy pardoning love to my heart.

2. But was there anything else besides that he waited for? David at this time was lying under the rebukes of God; the chastening hand of the Lord's displeasure lay heavy upon him. "Remove," he cries, "Thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of Thine hand." He was therefore waiting for *the removal of the chastening hand of God*; or, if the Lord still continued to chastise, to be enabled to feel that the rod was dipped in love. Languishing in body, troubled in mind, with a load of guilt on his conscience, well might he plead that these strokes might cease, or that he might be able to regard them as fatherly chastisements, which were working together for his spiritual good.

3. But was he waiting for nothing else? He was waiting also to have *his sins subdued*, his powerful lusts and corruptions

overcome by the grace of God, that they might no longer, as they had been accustomed, tease and distress his soul. The corrections he was receiving for iniquity would necessarily make him desire the subduing of iniquity; for unless subdued, a repetition of sin would draw down a repetition of chastisement.

4. But was he waiting for nothing else? O yes; he was waiting for *a word to be spoken to his soul*. We cannot read the 119th Psalm without seeing David's intense love for and desire after God's word. It was to him sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, his daily delight, and his nightly meditation: "The entrance of Thy word giveth light." "I opened my mind and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments."

5. But was he waiting for nothing else? Yes; he was waiting for *a smile from God's gracious countenance*; to behold all the clouds that shrouded His face from view dispersed, and to see the beams of the Sun of Righteousness break forth from behind those clouds and shine with brightness into his soul. The frowns under which he was lying made him pant after a smile: "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon me."

6. But was he waiting for nothing more? Yes, he was waiting for *the will of God to be accomplished in his soul*; for the Lord to manifest His victorious power, to dethrone his idols, subdue his creature affections, and take such complete possession of his breast that there might be room there for God and God alone. Inordinate affections had been alike his sin and sorrow. Lust after women had drawn him into adultery and murder; and an idolised son had well nigh cost him his life and his throne.

7. But was he waiting for anything else? Yes; for *the mind of God to be stamped upon his soul*, that he might be cast into the mould of the divine image, having no thoughts but the thoughts of God, no desires but the desires of God, and no will but the will of God. To be teachable, patient, submissive, humble, child-like, tender, obedient, watchful, prayerful, spiritually-minded; to have the power of vital godliness brought into the heart, dwell on the

lips, and be made manifest in the life; to be purged from hypocrisy, pharisaism, covetousness, pride, and worldly-mindedness; to speak, act, and walk in the fear, faith, and love of God; to live a believer's life, and die a believer's death, and then exchange earth for heaven, and sin and sorrow for perfect holiness and endless bliss—O what a store of such and similar spiritual desires are crowded in the words, "Lord, what wait I for?"

But the very words themselves clearly imply that he had no power to produce these heavenly realities in his own soul. He groaned out his desires after them, supplicating God that He would bestow them upon him; and yet he was utterly unable to bring the least portion of them into his heart. But he knew that God, according to His revealed will, must be waited upon, inquired of, supplicated unto; and he knew also that, for the most part, He delayed His answers until He saw that the soul was in a fit state to receive them.

But what *kept* him waiting? for we need to be kept waiting as well as to be put, in the first instance, in a waiting position. What kept him close to the footstool, made him persevere, and wrought this feeling in his heart, that he would take no denial? What fixed him to the throne, in spite of all opposition and all obstacles, the workings of invisible agency, Satan's suggestions, infidel doubts, and the surmises and suspicions of his own evil heart? The greatness of the blessing that God was able to bestow upon him.

All these things it was working together in his soul, which wrought in him that experience which he poured forth in the simple yet most expressive words, "And now, Lord, what wait I for?"

The *words* are easy; anybody can make use of them; and the more that men's consciences are hardened, the more freely do they make use of them. They are used all over the kingdom, in all the churches and chapels of the land. Catholic and Churchman, Puseyite and Methodist, the Sunday school child and University

student, all take the words as freely and unconcernedly into their mouths as they would so much water. But who can enter into their solemn import? Who can come with the same child-like simplicity, and appeal to a heart-searching God with the same godly sincerity? Who can thus lay out his whole soul before God, and prostrate his spirit before the footstool of Jehovah? Only he in whom the blessed Spirit is working in the same manner as He wrought in the soul of David. Only he can really say, "Now, Lord, what wait I for?" It is indeed a blessed posture to be lying thus at God's feet, and to be able to tell Him that we are only waiting for Himself. Such a soul is indeed precious in God's sight, and such an experience is indeed wrought by His own hand in the heart.

II. "*My hope is in Thee.*" These words plainly show how completely David had been stripped and emptied of all creature sufficiency. He had ceased to hope in himself; and no man can hope in God until he has ceased to hope in himself. But every man will, nay, must hope in himself, till all creature hope has been burned out of him in the furnace. David did not then hope in *his own righteousness*. That had been held up before his eyes with all its rags and tatters, moth-eaten, as he speaks, and therefore dropping to pieces from its own rottenness. Nor had he any hope in any *resolutions* he might make that matters would be with him at some future time better than they were now. He must have felt, doubtless, by painful experience, that all such resolutions are but as the tow when it meets the flame. Nor could he hope in any *promises* or *vows* he might make that he would never again transgress, never again be entangled in evil, never again rebel, never again murmur, never again doubt or fear. Nor could he hope in anything of *human manufacture* or creature production. As every man did but "walk in a vain show," realities, soul-sustaining realities, were not to be expected from those who were themselves not real personages, but mere walking actors in a theatrical pageant. Thus he had no hope either in himself or others. Nor could he hope in the *bare naked letter of God's Word*; without the Spirit's application it fell short of his case. Nor could he hope in the mere *doctrines of grace*; in the external sound, without the internal testimony. Nor could he hope in *Christ at a*

distance, without any manifestation, union, or communion. When I say *David* did not thus hope, I am assuming him as a pattern of a believer in similar circumstances now; for his views of Christ and the gospel were, from the very nature of the dispensation under which he lived, less clear than I have laid down.

But what brought David, and what brings every child of God with David, to have no hope in himself? The afflicting hand of God in his soul, breaking all his dreams of earthly happiness, all his webs of creature righteousness, all his confidence in man, all his hopes from the past, all his expectations from the future. Like Noah's dove, he could find no rest for the sole of his foot on the floating carcasses; he could only hope in God, for there was none else left to hope in. This was the only spot on which the soul of his dove-like heart could rest; fluttering backwards and forwards over the wreck of a deluged world, no rest could he find till he alighted upon the ark.

But, though so much dust and rubbish had been swept away, and room thus made for a gospel hope, something was still wanting. The removal of a false hope does not give a true one; the pulling down of an old hovel does not build up a new house. Before, therefore, David could confidently say, "My hope is in Thee," he must have had some clear manifestation of Christ to his soul. We cannot hope in an unknown God, nor in an unseen Saviour, nor in an unfelt salvation; we can only hope in these divine realities as they are revealed to the soul, and brought into the heart by the power of God Himself. Hope, in Scripture, is compared to "an anchor, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." But of what use is an anchor whilst lying in the dockyard? It must be brought into the ship, and united to it by a strong cable; then, when the wind rises and the storm comes on, it is let go from the bow into the sea, and, grasping with its tenacious fluke the firm bottom, it holds the ship's head from off the breakers. An anchor, with a cable, is salvation; without one, an incumbrance. So a hope that brings salvation must be a hope in union with God. A hope that stands in the naked letter, in the bare promise, is an anchor in the dockyard, and not an anchor in

the bottom of the sea. We want union with God through Christ to bring salvation into the heart. "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they also may be one in Us." This union is personal, vital, spiritual, experimental, eternal." I am the vine, ye are the branches." Now, when there is a manifestation to the soul of the mercy, grace, and love of God in Immanuel, this produces a vital union; and this is the entering of hope as an anchor "within the veil." Then we ride at anchor; then we are safe amidst the billows; and then we shall not concerning faith make shipwreck.

The words are simple, so simple that a child may use them. In fact, as scarcely anyone is without some dim or distant hope in God's mercy, it seems as if almost anybody might say unto God, "My hope is in Thee;" but when we dive a little below the surface of this outside religion, what a fund of Christian experience is implied in the words! How the soul must have been brought to see the fearful depth of the fall! How much must have been pulled down, and how much built up! What a death must there have been to self, and what life to God; what sights of sin, and what views of grace, before a man can really take into his lips these five monosyllables—in word, a sentence for an infant's primer; in deed, the experience only of an exercised believer: "*My hope is in Thee!*" People talk about hope, just as if it could be picked up in the streets, or found at well-nigh every corner; but this blessed grace of hope, this "anchor of the soul," is not so easily got at. It is the result of the manifestation of God to the heart, and therefore no man has any solid, well-grounded hope in God, who has not ceased to hope in himself, and who has not had, more or less, some manifestation of Christ.

III. But David adds, "*Deliver me from all my transgressions.*" Sin had been deeply opened up in his soul. Lying under the chastening hand of God, writhing in body from pain, and in soul from a sense of God's displeasure, he had had deep and solemn views of the awful nature of sin. This forced from his heart and lips the cry, "Deliver me from all my transgressions." Ah! how rarely it is that we see sin in its true colours; that we feel what the apostle calls, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin!" O how much is

the dreadful evil of sin for the most part veiled from our eyes! Satan and a deceitful heart so gloss it over, so excuse, palliate, and disguise it, that it is daily trifled, played, and dallied with, as if this beautiful viper had no poison fang. "When the wine" of sin "giveth its colour in the cup," how rarely is it remembered that, "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder!" It is only, then, as God the Spirit is pleased to open the eyes to see, and awaken the conscience to feel "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and thus discover its dreadful character, that we have any real sight or sense of its awful nature. But let a man lie, as David lay, under the afflicting hand of God, smiting him with rebukes, and making his "beauty to consume away like the moth," he will soon cry out with him, "Deliver me from all my transgressions." Sins of heart, sins of lip, sins of life, sins of omission, sins of commission, ingratitude, unbelief, rebellion, lust, pride, worldliness! as all these transgressions, troop after troop, come in view; as our backslidings, inconsistencies, carelessness, carnality, sins long buried and forgotten, but now rising up like spectres from the grave, appear, well may we bury our head beneath the bed-clothes, and cry with stifled voice, "Deliver me," O deliver me "from all my transgressions!"

Now, there are five things respecting sin from which every child of God desires deliverance, and from which none but God can deliver him.

1. There is, *first*, the *guilt* of sin, when sin is charged home upon the conscience, and lies there as a heavy load! O the guilt of sin, when God brings the soul to book, when He squares up matters, when He holds out a long list of hideous transgressions, to bear with weight and power upon the conscience! Then is felt the *guilt* of sin; and David doubtless felt this when he said, "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." From this guilt of sin none but God can deliver the conscience; and He delivers it only by the application of the atoning blood of Jesus to the soul—that precious blood which "cleanseth from all sin." Until, then, there is, more or less, such a manifestation of this precious blood to the

conscience, the guilt of sin is not effectually taken away.

2. But then there is the *filth* of sin. O how it defiles the mind, the memory, and the imagination! Like an uncovered sewer, you can track its course by its smell and slime. This open sewer is a defiled imagination. How loathsome and filthy does a poor sinner feel "the earthly house of his tabernacle" to be, as this slimy ditch oozes up through the chinks and cracks of the well-washed boards, as I have read that a poor but clean country-woman literally was pestered in one of the courts of Whitechapel. Sin, horrid sin, defiles every word and work, every thought and prayer. This makes the child of God cry out sometimes, in real distress of mind, "Deliver me from all my transgressions." "O deliver me from the filth of them! O wash me in the fountain once opened for sin and uncleanness! renew me in the spirit of my mind; purify and sanctify me by Thy grace."

3. But there is, *thirdly*, the dreadful *love* of sin which is so deeply rooted in the carnal mind—that most accursed desire after and delight in it. O that there should still dwell in the breast of one who fears God lust and sensuality, and a whole host of corruptions, better felt than described, better hinted at than entered into! O that these should so lurk and work, and kindle such desperate hankering desires after sin! How many sighs and groans does this draw forth from the poor child of God! And yet, after all his prayers and entreaties, convictions and sorrow for sin, he will still find an accursed cleaving to it in his carnal mind. And this makes him cry out, "Deliver me from all my transgressions," and especially from that dreadful love of sin which I feel so continually at work. But how is he delivered? By the shedding abroad of the love of God in his soul; by the Holy Spirit taking his affections and fixing them on things above, and thus subduing, or casting out, the love of evil.

4. But closely connected with the love of sin is the *power* of sin; for it is from the love of it that sin derives all its power. And who can honestly say before God that sin, in some shape or other, is never his master? Who can say with an honest countenance

before God, the Searcher of hearts, that pride, unbelief, evil temper, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, and similar sins, in these or other shapes and forms, have not sometimes had dominion over him? This *power* of sin brings forth many a piteous groan from the oppressed bosom of the child of God, and his cry is for deliverance. Sometimes he receives this answer: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace;" and as grace comes into the soul it subdues, while it lasts, the dreadful dominion of evil.

5. The *fifth* and last dreadful feature of sin is its *practical commission*. And who can say that he is altogether free here—that he is never, more or less, guilty of the commission of sin, at least in tongue, if not further? Who is free from hasty or idle words? Who can always "keep his lips as with a bridle, while the wicked is before him?" Who can say that all the day long his soul is so kept in the fear of God, that he never speaks a word, or does anything, that conscience testifies to be wrong? And if now kept, who can look back through the vista of a long profession and see nothing to be ashamed of? I know not the man—wherever he lives, I cannot tell the road to find him; he certainly does not live in my house.

These five things—the guilt, the filth, the love, the power, and the practice or commission of sin, are surely enough, when felt, to make the child of God grieve and groan, and exclaim in the language of David, "Deliver me from all my transgressions." O deliver me from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, the love of sin, the filth of sin, and the practice of sin: "Deliver me from all my transgressions" in every shape and form, here and hereafter, in their cause and in their consequences, as offensive to God, as wounding Christ in the garden and on the cross, and as grieving and dishonouring the Holy Ghost.

IV. Now, closely connected with these breathings is the last clause of the text: "*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*" Why should David couple this petition with the preceding? Because he knew what he was—his weakness and helplessness

under the power of temptation. He remembered the frailty of his nature, and the evils of his heart; he was no novice in the school of experience, but was deeply acquainted with the power of temptation and the sin that dwelleth in us; he feared, therefore, that in an unguarded moment he might be entangled in temptation, and he knew that if then left of God he must fall; and if he should fall, he knew that he would become "the reproach of the foolish."

But who are these "foolish?" I think the best answer to this question is given by our Lord Himself, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. "The foolish" were those who had oil in their lamps, but none in their vessels. By "the foolish" in the text, therefore, we may understand those who have the light of knowledge in their heads, and the lamp of profession in their hands, but no oil of grace in their hearts. They are "foolish," because they know neither God nor themselves, neither sin nor salvation, neither the depth of the fall nor the greatness of the remedy. They are "foolish," as regards themselves, in thinking that light and knowledge will save them, without life and grace; and they are "foolish" as regards others, for want of an experimental acquaintance with the heart. They know nothing, therefore, of the temptations of a child of God; how he is beset on every hand; how Satan is ever thrusting at or enticing him; how his own heart is continually prompting him to evil; and how snares are in every direction laid for his feet. The "foolish" know nothing of these trials; they are Pharisees, who "make clean the outside of the cup and platter," who whitewash and adorn the sepulchre without, whilst within it is "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." David knew well, and every child of God knows well, that if he were allowed to slip, if he were suffered to say or do anything unbecoming, these would be the very first to make him an open reproach. "The foolish" can, and will, make no allowance for the least slip of tongue or foot, for they themselves are ignorant of the weakness of the flesh, the subtlety of Satan, the strength of sin, and the power of temptation. Were he to stumble and fall, "the foolish" would be sure to point the finger of scorn at him. In breathing forth, then, this petition, we may well

suppose him to say: "Lord, whatever temptations I may be called upon to endure, whatever snares of Satan or lusts of the flesh may beset my path behind and before, O keep me, keep me, that I may not be the reproach of the foolish; that they may have nothing to take hold of, to make me a byword, and through me to reproach Thy name, cause, and truth."

To become in this open way "the reproach of the foolish," is one of the heaviest and most humbling strokes that can ever befall a child of God. That these "foolish virgins," these empty professors, who know nothing of God or themselves, should be able to point the finger of scorn at him who has contended so loudly and so long for the experimental possession of vital godliness, and spurt out all their venom, saying, "Aha, aha! so would we have it!"—O it is death! and indeed a man had better die at once than ever thus become "the reproach of the foolish."

True religion is a very simple thing. Simplicity is stamped upon all the works of God, and especially upon the work of grace. The more genuine, therefore, our religion is, the more simple it will be. To be simple is to be child-like, and to be child-like is to have that mind and spirit without which no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven. Can we, then, with this child-like simplicity, walk step by step here with David, and follow him throughout? Can we put our seal to these things, and say, "Lord, what wait I for?" Is your religion brought into this narrow point? "Truly, my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation." "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." Such a frame of soul is indeed from the hand of God, for no man ever did, or could bring himself into it. And if we can enter into one part of these heavenly breathings, we shall be able also to enter into the others, and say, "My hope is in Thee." Feeling the weight and burden of sin, we shall be constrained to cry, "Deliver me from all my transgressions;" and feeling our own weakness, and the evil of our hearts, we shall add, "Make me not the reproach of the foolish." If, then, we can sincerely, before God, employ these petitions, may we not ask, Who produced them? Who wrought this experience in the soul? From whose hands did

it come? Surely, surely, the same Lord that taught David must have taught us; the same power that wrought in him must have wrought in us—before we could, in sweet experience, enter into this feeling language, and adopt it as our own. Here, therefore, we see a little of what true religion is; here we see what are the genuine breathings of a child-like spirit, and what is the experience of a man of God; and it will be our mercy if we can see in his experience a sweet counterpart of our own.

An Ascending Scale, or Steps of Thankful Praise

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Afternoon, June 13, 1865

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." Psalm 103: 3, 4

Whatever God does, whatever God has done, is for his own glory. No other object, end, or aim can such a glorious Being as the great self-existent I AM have than his own glory and its manifestation to created intelligences. To this truth the Scriptures bear abundant witness. When, for instance, they speak of creation, their testimony is, "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." So witnesses Psalm 8:1: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." In a similar strain, in the Book of Revelation, a song of praise issues from the four-and-twenty elders: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. 4:11.) Nor is the glory of God less his end and aim in Providence. Thus when the Lord speaks in the Book of Numbers of his providential dealings with the children of Israel, after he had given that grand declaration, "As truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," he adds, "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." The glory which they ought to have seen was the glory of God in his providential dealings with Israel in bringing them out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, in providing for them food from heaven and water out of the rock. (Numbers 14:21, 22.) Nay, the very reason of his providential dealings with Pharaoh was to manifest his glory, as

the apostle quotes from the Book of Exodus: "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Rom. 9:17.)

But though the glory of God is thus plainly manifested in creation and in providence, it is in *redemption* that it specially shines forth. We find therefore that after the four living creatures and four-and-twenty elders had fallen down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials (or rather as the word means "bowls"), full of odours, which are the prayers of saints, they sang a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." Nor were the angels mute; for though the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, yet all these mighty myriads said with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and blessing." Nor was creation itself silent, for we read, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. 5:13.) Thus, whether it be in creation, in providence, or in redemption, in all these domains of his wisdom and power, the end and object of God have ever been to manifest his glory. Nor let any one dare to think that this was, so to speak, a selfish end. We must not measure God by ourselves, or ascribe anything unworthy or unbecoming to him. He is so infinitely above all his creatures that it would be unbecoming his glorious perfections to have as his main object anything but his own glory. And yet it was intended also for the happiness of those to whom his glory should be manifested. God is essentially good; so good that "there is none good but he." His name, his nature is love. To reveal then this goodness, to manifest and make known this love, was to create happiness for, and to fill with bliss and blessedness thousands of millions of created intelligences, both angels and

men.

But besides the manifestation of his own personal glory, it always was the eternal purpose of God to glorify his dear Son. He is, as the Scripture testifies, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person." (Heb. 1:3.) God is essentially invisible; for "he dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see." (1 Tim. 6:16.) And yet it was his eternal purpose to make himself seen and known. This is beautifully opened up by the apostle John: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." By "declared him," is meant made him known, discovered, and revealed him. It is in the face or Person of Jesus Christ that we see this glory of God, as the apostle speaks: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) Where God works by his Spirit there is a desire to behold his glory. We find therefore Moses pleading earnestly with the Lord, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." But what was the Lord's answer? "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live." And yet he gave him his request: "And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand, while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:21, 22, 23.) Now of what was this cleft of the rock typical? Was it not a type of the Lord Jesus?

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

But what was the glory which the Lord displayed before the eyes of Moses when he stood safely sheltered in the cleft of the rock? "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving

iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exodus 34:6, 7.) Thus we see that to be merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, is the glory of God in its manifestation. But what forgiveness is there of sin except in his dear Son? as we read: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7.)

Our blessed Lord glorified his Father by doing his will upon earth. He therefore said, in his intercessory prayer, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4); and as he glorified the Father so did the Father glorify him, by supporting and sustaining him in the garden and upon the cross, by accepting his sacrifice, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand as the High Priest over the house of God. For this he prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was;" and this prayer God answered to the joy of his soul. Truly was that prayer then fulfilled which the church offered for him in anticipation: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel." (Psalm 20:1, 2, 3, 4.)

Now as the Son has glorified the Father and the Father has glorified the Son, so there is a people in whom both the Father and the Son will be glorified. He therefore said, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22); and again, "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them" (John 17:10.) When, then, God's goodness and mercy in the face of Jesus Christ are manifested to this people whom he has formed for himself that they might show forth his praise, then they give him back his glory. But how is this done? By praising and blessing his holy name for the manifestation of his goodness and mercy to

their soul. We thus see in what a blessed circle this glory runs. The Father glorifies the Son; the Son glorifies the Father; both unite in glorifying his chosen and redeemed people; and they glorify Father and Son by giving them the glory due to their name. We therefore read that "the Gentiles glorify God for his mercy." But how? "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him all ye people." (Rom. 15:9-11.)

This is beautifully developed in the Psalm before us. It begins with blessing and praising God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Why was it that David called upon his soul to bless the Lord—yea, appealed to every faculty within him to unite in blessing his holy name? Why did he charge it upon his soul not to forget all God's benefits, but bear them in perpetual remembrance? For this reason, that he might render unto God a tribute of thankful praise. Now by this God is glorified, for whoso offereth praise glorifieth him. We cannot add to his glory: for his glory is above the heavens. It is infinite, eternal, ineffable. No creature therefore can add to it or take from it; but he does permit poor worms of earth to glorify him by giving him a tribute of thankful praise. But this we can only do by believing in his dear Son, receiving of his fulness grace for grace, and blessing and praising his holy name for the manifestation of his goodness, mercy, and love, as brought into our soul by his own divine power. This will perhaps, however, be more clear if I am enabled in any measure to lay open and bring before you the rich treasures stored up in our text, in which David with all his heart praises and blesses the God of his salvation.

We may observe in it, I think, what I may perhaps call an ascending scale; for you will observe that it contains four clauses, and that each seems to rise one above another in offering the tribute of praise.

Let us thus look at the words again, carefully examine them, and see what we can find of the grace and goodness of God in them:

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases: who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

The sweet Psalmist of Israel begins with praising God for the forgiveness of all his iniquities; he rises up a step further to bless him for the healing of all his diseases; he advances upon higher ground still in praising him for redeeming his life from destruction; and then he puts the crowning glory upon the whole work by adding, "who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

In this way, with God's help and blessing, I shall this evening attempt to handle the subject before us.

I.—*"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities."*

i. This is a point on which the children of God are often deeply and painfully exercised. Yes, here it is that their souls often hang trembling as it were in the balance. There is a question to be settled between God and their conscience; there is something to be manifested with power to their hearts; there is a burden to be taken off their minds; there is a voice of mercy to be heard in their bosom. But whence arises this question, this burden, this need of the voice of mercy, of this manifestation of pardon? From a sense of the state into which sin original and sin actual have brought them. But what has made them feel this? Whence has come the light to see, the life to feel what sin is and the evils which sin has wrought? Is it not from God's own work upon their heart? He therefore begins with laying their sins as a burden upon their conscience. Sin has caused a separation between God and them, as he himself speaks: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isa. 59:1, 2.) Nor is this all. We are "alienated and enemies in our mind from God by wicked works" (Col. 1:21); and in the days of our flesh we were "without Christ, being aliens

from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Ephes. 2:12.) There is then a barrier between them and God; and he can have nothing to do with them and they nothing to do with him until this barrier is removed. But it must be felt to be a barrier before there can be any sensible removal of it. To discover this barrier to us in its reality, its greatness, its insuperable nature, is a part of that divine teaching which is promised to the people of God. When, then, the Lord the Spirit begins his secret and sacred work upon their heart; when he lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, he discovers to them this barrier by discovering their iniquity. The work of the blessed Spirit, in commencing the work of grace, is to convince us of sin, to bring our iniquities to view, and to lay them upon our conscience, to reveal the justice of God, as aimed and directed against them, and thus manifest his unspeakable displeasure against all transgression and all transgressors. Until this work is wrought with a divine power, we are what the Scripture calls "dead in trespasses and sins." The first work of grace upon the soul, therefore, is to quicken the soul into spiritual life, and thus bring our iniquities to light, which before were neither seen nor felt, and especially those glaring and open sins in which most of us were found walking. It is he also which discovers to us our secret sins, as working in thought and imagination, and often in lust and desire, if we have not been guilty of flagrant offences, and by setting them in the light of God's countenance, to show us how offensive they are in the eyes of infinite purity. All this is very trying and distressing, and by some it seems to be considered needless. But it is a solemn fact, that until we are exercised with a burden of guilt; until we know by painful experience our lost and ruined condition; until we see something of the holiness and purity of God; until we have some apprehension of his inflexible justice and terrible displeasure against sin, we trifle with him, trifle with our immortal interests, play fast and loose with our own souls, live regardless of all the claims God has upon us as the creatures of his hand. Besides which, we have naturally many false and foolish ideas about religion; easily satisfy ourselves with some floating opinions

about it, and settle down very quietly into some beaten track of formality and self-righteousness, or take up with a light, loose profession. Now we must be awakened, aroused, and, as it were, rescued like a brand from the burning from all these deceptions, that our heart may be made sincere and right before God. This then is the reason why, when the time comes for God to work with power upon a sinner's heart, that he brings his sins to view, that he sets them in the light of his countenance, and lays them with more or less weight as a burden upon his soul. Now observe the effect of this and what springs out of it. This question arises in the sinner's breast, how his sins can be pardoned? He feels that he cannot live or die with unpardoned sin resting upon his head. If his iniquity be not forgiven, how can he stand before the bar of God when he bringeth every secret work into judgment? It was this feeling which made the poor publican cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" which made the Philippian gaoler exclaim, "What must I do to be saved?" This made David say, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." (Psa. 38:3, 4, 5, 6.) O, how many of the dear children of God—some from self-righteousness, some from ignorance, some from the confusion of their minds, some from the temptations of Satan, some from sitting under legal ministers, and most from a deep sense of their helplessness and inability to bring any peace into their own bosom—are long and painfully exercised with this matter of the forgiveness of sin, and how they shall personally and experimentally realise it. Now if we are saints at all, and are amongst the number of those who are believers in Christ Jesus, "God hath blessed us (that is, already blessed us) with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" and amongst them with the grand blessing of forgiveness; for "in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in

Christ. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephes. 1:3, 7.) I want you to see, believe, and feel this, that the forgiveness of sin is a blessing with which God has already blessed the whole of his dear family. We therefore read: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. 2:13.) You see from this testimony that God has forgiven all the trespasses of those whom he has quickened together with Christ. This is a part of the ministry of reconciliation, as the apostle testifies: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:19.) But we need something more than the blessed fact. We want the sweet and personal experience of it. To get then at the blessing; to know its power and sweetness in our own breast; to receive it as from the mouth of God, and to know from the testimony of the Holy Spirit that God has pardoned all our sins, forgiven all our iniquities, cast all our sins behind his back—how many of God's dear people who are "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus," and are quickened together with Christ, are exercised upon this point nearly all their days; and many come even to a dying bed before the clear forgiveness of their sins is sealed with power upon their conscience. It is difficult to know why the blessing is often so long delayed; but doubtless God has wise purposes to answer in thus exercising them. He knows how closely self-righteousness cleaves to them, and he uses these means to strip them of all their wisdom, strength, and power, to empty them thoroughly of all creature goodness, and to convince them that nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ, experimentally sprinkled upon the conscience, cleanseth from all sin.

ii. But let us now take a view of the expression "all our iniquities." How wide the scope, how ample the field, do these words open to our spiritual eye! And do you not observe what strong language the Holy Ghost employs here and elsewhere in testifying against sin, but not too strong at all for the circumstances, nor too strong

for the feelings of an awakened soul? Men have invented many terms to lower the character of sin, and pare it down so as to diminish its weight. But the Holy Spirit in our text calls it "iniquities." It is a strong word, but not too strong for any sensible sinner, when we see sin in its true light: for when its awful magnitude and deep dye are discovered to our awakened conscience, language itself falls short of expressing what it appears as contrasted with the view of the infinite purity of God. When, too, we look at the magnitude of these iniquities as aggravated by peculiar and personal circumstances; how many have been committed against warnings, against convictions, against the whisperings of our own conscience, against the admonition of friends; how in various instances we have broken through the hedge of every resolution and done violence to our own knowledge of right and wrong, and yet been drawn on by the power of temptation, been inveigled and entangled by some darling lust, overcome by the strength of some inward corruption, shut our eyes to the consequences, and felt as though that sin we would commit, that lust we would indulge, that gratification we would have if it cost our soul, O how aggravated have our iniquities been if this has been our unhappy case, and it is the case of many; for so desperately wicked is the heart of man, so determined to have its fill of evil, that I have sometimes felt and said that, left of God, a man would sin one moment and jump into hell the next. Now when God begins to lay these sins thus aggravated upon his awakened conscience, to set his iniquities before his eyes, how low it sinks a man; how it brings him sometimes to the very brink of hell; how it shuts him up at times almost in gloomy despair; how it exercises his mind whether his dreadful iniquities can ever be pardoned. He views his own case as peculiar. Every man best knows his own circumstances, for these are mostly hidden from all but himself. Many sins, unknown to others, are well known to him. The circumstances under which he sinned; the violence done to his own conscience in sinning: the aggravated state of the case, under temptations known only to the individual: all these, as they are opened up to him by the Spirit, and he sees light in God's light, form a heavy and peculiar burden, under which he is ready to sink. But all this is to teach

him that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse from all sin. It is to drive away all creature hope, break to pieces every expectation formed and centering in the creature; to show him that as the blood of bulls and goats in ancient days could not put away sin, so now no repentance, no reformation, no floods of tears, no amount of prayers, no external change, can ever put away his iniquities. We know, comparatively speaking, little of the inward experience of many whose faces we often see in our midst; and how many hidden and silent ones are shut up in condemnation, sighing and groaning for some application of the blood of sprinkling to their conscience. Now the Lord is often pleased to raise up a hope in his soul that his sins are put away. Sometimes he gets a view by faith of the sufferings and sacrifice, bloodshedding and death of the Lord Jesus; and though the blood of sprinkling is not clearly or fully revealed unto, or sprinkled upon his conscience, yet he sees it by the eye of faith, as sprinkled upon the cross, and the only possible atonement for sin. He thus gets, as it were, in the distance a passing view of a suffering Christ, a bleeding Jesus, an atoning Lamb of God, as the children of Israel looked upon the serpent in the wilderness; and though this falls very short of what he looks and longs for, yet it raises up a hope and expectation of coming mercy. It also effectually cuts off all expectation of pardon and peace from any other quarter, and thus fixes his eyes upon the cross as the only spot where mercy and justice meet together, the only fountain open for all sin and uncleanness, the only place where a guilty sinner can meet with a forgiving God. Faith being sometimes much strengthened by this view of the cross, and much softness of spirit, and melting of heart being found and felt at the sight his hopes rise very high, and it seems almost as if Christ was about to speak a forgiving word to his soul and to manifest himself in the power of his blood and love. But the view fades away, and he is suffered to doubt again, to fear again, to distrust every mark he has received of the mercy of God; to call in question everything he has tasted, felt and handled of the word of life, until sooner or later in some unexpected moment Jesus is pleased to reveal himself to his soul, to bring the blood of sprinkling into his conscience, and give him a clear evidence that all his sins are

pardoned, and all his iniquities, so great, so black, so aggravated, are forgiven.

But though this is for the most part the usual way, we must not lay down a rigid, precise, fixed rule, and erect an unbending standard on this point. Some have the substance of pardon in the feeling who have not the clear application of the blood. They, as the apostle speaks, "receive the atonement" (Rom. 5:1), that is, receive it into their hearts by faith, and feel its blessed effects as revealing peace with God. They have therefore the substance of pardon and peace, by receiving that through which they flow; they have the enjoyment of it, the deliverance it brings, the liberty it produces, the love which it draws forth, the repentance and godly sorrow which it creates, though the words, "thy sins be forgiven thee," might not have been spoken with a special power to their soul. They have received Christ into their hearts in the full efficacy of his atoning blood, which they could not do till he came nigh and manifested himself, and they have all the fruits and effects of his dying love by which they love him and live to his praise.

iii. But now take another point into your spiritual view—God *never forgives by halves*. We look at this sin and we look at that sin, we call to mind this and that slip or fall, and sometimes say with bitter grief and mournful cry, "O, that I had never committed that sin! O, that I had never broken out in this or that direction! O, that my lust, my pride, my covetousness, my angry temper, my foolish lightness, my carelessness, and carnality had never overcome me at that time! O, that I had never spoken that foolish word, done that sad thing, that I had never fallen into that snare of the flesh! O, that I had never got entangled in that awful trap of the devil!" Have you not sometimes pondered over the various ways in which you have been drawn aside into some by-path, until you are almost ready to give up all hope and to sink into despair, as scarcely believing it possible that grace could be in your heart? Thus we keep looking at individual sins, weighing this and that in the balance of conscience, not seeing the awful number of the whole as an overwhelming mass; and we expect

perhaps that God will forgive this particular sin and that particular sin, as if that were the great thing to be done. God does not forgive so. He forgives all or none. It is either a full remission of all our sins, or pardon of no single one of them. Have I not already brought before you that gracious word from the Colossians, "having forgiven you *all* trespasses?" (Col. 2:13.) And what a testimony there is through the Scriptures to the same precious truth. How John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin." (1 John 1:7.) How our gracious Lord declares, "*all manner* of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." (Matt. 12:31.) How the prophet declares, "thou wilt cast *all their sins* into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19); and how blessedly does the Lord himself speak, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Isaiah 44:22); and again, "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." (Jer. 50:20.) How plainly and clearly do all these testimonies preach as with one united, harmonious voice that precious, glorious doctrine, that where there is forgiveness there is a forgiving of all iniquities, a casting of all trespasses behind God's back, a full and free, eternal, irreversible blotting out and putting away of every sin and every transgression.

Now nothing short of such a full, free, complete and perfect forgiveness could satisfy God or satisfy us. It could not satisfy God; for one sin unforgiven would shut us out of heaven as much as a thousand. It could not satisfy us, either in earth or heaven. If the guilt of one sin remained upon our conscience at death, it would fill us with fear, and could we enter heaven with it? The guilt of that one sin would make us ever tremble before the purity of God, and mar ever rising joy. Neither sin in its guilt nor sin in its filth, though it be, so to speak, but the smallest that could be committed by man, could stand before the purity of God in glory. We thus see why all sin must be forgiven, washed away, cast behind God's back, or there is no standing before him, who is a consuming fire. We need not then be ever dwelling upon

individual sins, but should be ever casting ourselves into that sea of love and blood in which all are drowned and for ever washed away.

II.—But I now pass on to my next point, where I find the Psalmist rising a step higher in what I have called the "ascending scale:" *"Who healeth all thy diseases."*

i. When the Lord first begins his work of grace upon our heart, we are not sensible of the disease of sin as thoroughly infecting the whole of our nature. We are like a person attacked with some incipient disease. He feels himself what is called out of sorts, his general health impaired, his nerves unstrung, his appetite capricious, his flesh and strength wasting. He sees these symptoms of illness, but does not know what those symptoms indicate, and very probably are marks of some fatal disease. He spits blood, perhaps, and has a pain in his side, a hacking cough, perspires much at night, and has other marks of consumption, but he does not see that these are merely indications of a very grave malady. So we look at this sin or that sin, which are merely symptoms of a thoroughly corrupt and diseased nature; far deeper than the outbreakings of it, which, comparatively speaking, are but eruptions in the skin; or to speak more scripturally, like those signs of leprosy which Moses describes in Leviticus. (Lev. 13.) We are, perhaps, like a consumptive patient, who thinks that if he can but get the cough cured, or the pain removed, or the hectic flushes abated, get a little flesh put upon his bones, and feel more strong and active, he would soon be well. And so he would; but, alas! these are but symptoms, and there is no use curing the symptoms while the disease remains and is daily gaining strength. So there is no use looking at this or that sin, and trying to cure this or that evil when, as the prophet speaks, "from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." (Isa. 1:6.) We may go on sometimes in this way for a long time, hoping and hoping that as this and that sin is cured, we shall, by and by, get cured of the whole. But after a time God the Spirit, as he keeps searching the heart and casting fresh light into the

mind, discovers the fatal secret by leading us to see, feel, and realise the disease of sin as infecting the whole of our nature. But this discovery fills a man with consternation and dismay; for this is now his language, "I have committed iniquity; I have sinned against God. These sins he has mercifully pardoned. But O! after he has pardoned all these sins and healed all these backslidings, to find that there is a secret something within me which is ever breeding fresh!" We thus learn that there is no making a clean bill of health, and reporting that all taint of infection has disappeared; no casting off and throwing away all sin like a worn-out filthy garment, without a rag being left behind to hold and disseminate fresh disease. But it is rather like destroying one crop of vermin, and leaving behind a whole host which have slyly crept away, and are ever breeding in the dark vermin afresh. Or it is like some malady that may seem for a time subdued and apparently cured, and then breaks forth again with double virulence. How, for instance, we see sometimes consumption or cancer apparently cured, and yet how they break forth again worse than before. So it is with that dreadful disease of sin which has infected the whole of our being. It may for a time seem subdued, removed, and almost if not fully healed; but again and again it breaks forth worse than before—not worse I mean in outward act, but worse in inward sense and experimental feeling.

But have you ever considered the meaning of the word "disease," as descriptive of our state by nature? You know what a diseased body is, or, what is worse, a diseased mind; how in both of these cases everything is wrong, out of order, thrown off its right balance, and the consequence perpetual pain and suffering. So it is with the disease of sin. It makes everybody wrong and everything wrong; disorders the eye, distempers the ear, turns every benefit into bane, and wholesome food into little less than poison. Everything is a burden, full of labour, weariness, and dissatisfaction; life a misery, days wearisome, and nights sleepless.

ii. But having thus seen the general character of disease, let us now look at some of the special diseases which infect our nature,

and two above all others as most generally known and felt with which God's people are afflicted.

1. The first which I shall name is the disease of *unbelief*. When the blessed Spirit convinces of sin, he convinces also of unbelief. (John 16:9.) But this sin of unbelief usually is not felt so much as the guilt of particular and more open sins. At any rate, we do not usually see and feel it at first as an inbred disease. When faith was strong, as it was when the Lord appeared, unbelief did not come to the fore. It hung behind, as it were, invisible in the shade; it lurked in the secret recesses of the heart, undiscovered, like a thief in the night. But after a time, when faith begins to slacken, this disease of unbelief comes to view; it crops out to the surface, like the hard rock that was covered over with soft herbage; when flowers and grass grew upon it, its depth and hardness were not seen. But we soon begin to find under all this soft and springy turf there lies a hard rock, going down into the very bowels of the earth. O how this wretched unbelief rises to view as the turf is stripped off! How like an unbidden and unwelcome guest at a marriage feast, its very presence mars all comfort, beats out of the hand every sweet morsel of food or cheerful cup, arising like a spectre at the very time when we want its company least, robbing us of all peace and happiness, and as if dropping poison into the very springs of life. There is, I believe, scarcely any other disease of the soul which seems so thoroughly to have spread itself through the whole of our being, to produce such distempered views of God and ourselves, and set itself so determinately against the word of God itself. In these points it much resembles a diseased mind, such as we often see in unhappy individuals, which sees nothing aright and takes everything wrong; which you can neither rectify nor comfort, persuade nor guide, but which is ever listening to its own persuasions, and can listen to nothing else.

2. But another disease is *helplessness*. It is so naturally. Weakness, prostration of strength, inability to raise hand or foot may be and is a mark of very serious disease; nay, a disease in itself. Look at that poor paralytic lying helpless upon his bed:

what a miserable object he is. Look at that poor saint, as unable to raise hand or foot, as unable to move any one of his spiritual limbs as the paralytic patient himself. Is not his helplessness a disease as great and dangerous as unbelief can be? Some diseases are attended with much bodily pain and suffering. How sharp, how lancinating are the pains of cancer. How torturing is tic, how painful is pleurisy, how racking and severe is headache. So it is with some spiritual diseases. What fiery darts Satan can shoot into our mind; what painful corruptions he can stir up; what vile suggestions he can infuse. What sudden sharp pains there are in the soul under the injection of these fiery darts of Satan, like the lancinating pangs of cancer, or the acute throb of sudden tic. But there are complaints in which the patient gradually sinks without any very great pain, without much apparently severe disease. In consumption, though it is a great mistake to think that usually it is a painless disease, yet some gradually seem to decay until they die of sheer exhaustion, without suffering acute pain. So in paralysis and similar complaints, as softening of the brain. May we not trace a similar analogy in the case of spiritual diseases? Some of God's people are not so painfully exercised as others with the fiery darts of the devil, nor so tormented with the workings of inward corruption, nor so pressed down by the power of unbelief. Their chief complaint is a sense of helplessness. They seem so languid in the things of God, have such a fainting spirit, such an inability to press forward, such a gradual weakening of every faculty, and a sinking down into self as though they must sink away and die under positive exhaustion. Now all this is the effect of spiritual disease; it springs from the corruption which entered into and took possession of us at the fall.

3. But let us look a little further still. The effect of the fall was not only to produce special diseases but to fill us with disease throughout. It is so sometimes naturally. Some persons are full of disease, like the man spoken of in the gospel, "full of leprosy" (Luke 5:12); their whole system and constitution thoroughly vitiated by hereditary complaints. So sin has thoroughly diseased us, poisoned our very blood. It has diseased our understanding, so as to disable it from receiving the truth; it has diseased our

conscience, so as to make it dull and heavy, and undiscerning of right and wrong; it has diseased our imagination, polluting it with every idle, foolish, and licentious fancy; it has diseased our memory, making it swift to retain what is evil, slow to retain what is good; it has diseased our affections, perverting them from all that is heavenly and holy, and fixing them on all that is earthly and vile.

But O what an unspeakable mercy it is that God has provided not only a Redeemer in the Lord Jesus, so as to insure the forgiveness of sins through the redemption which he has wrought, but has made him also the Healer of diseases; not only constituted him as a Saviour, and a great one, but a Physician: not only given him out of his own bosom to shed his precious blood to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, but raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, that he might heal by his word "all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." He thus becomes "Jehovah Rophi," the Lord my healer. As he testifies of himself: "I am the Lord that healeth thee." (Exodus 15:26.) View, then, God's poor diseased people; see them lying as it were in Bethesda's porch, all waiting for the approach of the great Physician; knowing that one look of his eye, one touch of his hand, one word of his mouth, can heal all their diseases. See this poor, diseased family of God, some complaining of one disease, some of another, some of a third; but all like a number of sick folk, gathered at the door of a dispensary, or patients lying in the wards of a hospital, or such a suffering mass of humanity as would meet your eye after some dreadful railway collision, where you would see some almost dying, others fainting away with pain and terror, others lying upon the road with broken limbs and blood streaming down their faces, but all feeling the terrible shock. So it is with God's poor, diseased family: one you may hear complaining of his broken limbs, another of his fluttering, agitated heart, a third of the internal wounds of his conscience, a fourth of his bruised hands and maimed feet; but each and all mourning and languishing under a sense of the disease of sin, and the sad effects which the collision of the fall has wrought. But turn your eyes away and

look in another direction. See here approaching the gracious Lord, and going round, so to speak, from ward to ward, addressing a kind word to this patient, administering a healing balm to that, giving a smile of encouragement to a third. See too how every eye follows him, all seeking some help from his hand. Now when this gracious healer sends his word, for it is by his word that he heals (Psalm 107:20), it brings with it instantaneously a medicinal power. Was it not so in the days of his flesh? How, at a word from his lips, a touch from his hand, every disease fled. So it is now. When he speaks all complaint ceases; disease disappears under its touch; pain and suffering are assuaged by his kind look, his sympathising voice, his gracious smile: and the very appearance of the Physician, though but for a few moments, does the patient good.

But how does he heal these diseases? He heals them chiefly by subduing them; for in this life they are never thoroughly healed. The promise runs: "He will subdue our iniquities." (Micah 6:7.) To subdue them is to restrain their power. Thus he sees one suffering under the power of unbelief. He gives him faith; this subdues his unbelief. Here is another poor languid patient, dying of exhaustion: he gives him strength. Here is a third mourning under his corruptions: he gives a drop of his blood to purge his conscience, and a taste of his love to warm his heart. He sees a fourth crying under the strong assaults of Satan: with one look Satan flies and the soul is set free. Thus with infinite wisdom blended with infinite love and power, he passes on from bed to bed of every sick patient, administering health wherever he goes. O what a blessed thing it is to know something of having our diseases healed; that there is one who can sympathise with his poor afflicted people, who can stretch forth his hand to heal, or apply a word suitable to their case! With infinite skill and power, this blessed physician has a remedy for every disease, and the remedy is always felt to be exactly suitable to the exigency of the case. It goes, so to speak, at once to the right spot: it heals the malady wherever it be, and whatever it be, just in the right way, and just at the right time. No disease is too deep for it to reach, no complaint too complicated for it to cure, and no secret

complaint hidden even from the patient's own eyes which he cannot dispel by his look and heal by his word. O then how good it is to bring all our diseases before the Lord! In a case of bodily sickness or painful complaint we uncover freely our malady to a physician whom we can trust; we tell him every circumstance and disclose every symptom. So should we go to the Lord with all our diseases, tell him all our complaints, unfold to him all our sorrows, and fully and freely lay before him everything that burdens the conscience, pains the mind, distresses the soul, looking and waiting until he speaks the word, and every malady is healed.

III.—But we pass on to the next step in the ascending scale. *"Who redeemeth my life from destruction."*

The first step was the forgiveness of all iniquities; the second the healing of all diseases; the third is the redemption of life itself from destruction, insuring thereby the certain salvation of the soul.

When God commences the work of grace he plants spiritual life in his people's hearts, but this life is exposed to a thousand foes and a thousand fears. The preservation then of this life is in some points a greater miracle and a richer mercy than the healing of disease. Would it not be a greater triumph of medical skill, if a physician could guarantee you from all attacks of illness, or prolong your life for ten years, than if he cured you of some passing complaint? To redeem then our life from destruction is a higher mercy and a greater miracle than healing present disease. For let us consider what this life is exposed to, and then we shall see what a marvel it is that it is kept alive in a sinner's breast, when he is surrounded on every hand with that which but for the mighty power of God must inevitably destroy it. For we may be said to be moral suicides, as God declared to Ephraim: "O, Ephraim, thou hast destroyed thyself." Is not this a true bill? Does not thy conscience fall under it as a well founded accusation? Hast thou not willingly with thine eyes open run into some sin, which, but for God's mercy and upholding hand, would

have proved thy certain destruction? Have you not stood upon the very brink of some deep pit down into which another step would have plunged you? You do not learn this lesson at first. You look back sometimes to the time when God was pleased to deposit his life in your breast. It was a memorable season with you, for he then communicated his fear, and made your conscience alive and tender. But though convinced of sin you did not then know the evils of your heart. But if your profession has been of any long standing, and especially if you have been much exercised with temptation, you now look back and wonder how the life of God has been preserved so many years in your soul. You have been sunk sometimes into such carnality that you could find scarcely any difference between yourself and the most carnal professor. You have felt such emptiness of all good, such proneness to all evil, and seemingly such a careless abandonment of the things which at one time you held with such warmth and tenderness, that you trembled lest you should prove a poor empty professor, worse than those against whom you have so often spoken. Now when you have been sunk under the weight and guilt of these things laid upon your conscience, you have wondered how you stood in days past, where you stand now, how and why you are what you are, and have not been swallowed up, overcome, and carried away into the pit of destruction. Sometimes Satan has tempted you to suicide; sometimes to give up all your profession; sometimes to blaspheme the name of God; sometimes to disbelieve every sacred truth; sometimes to think the Bible altogether inconsistent, confused, and contradictory, and that all religion itself was but a delusion. You have had all these things working in your mind till you have trembled lest you should turn out at last a vile infidel, or die in despair. Yet hitherto God has kept you: he has preserved your life from destruction. David said, "I am as a wonder to many" (Psalm 71:7), but you can say, "I am a wonder to myself." The world, the devil, and your own evil heart all have been for years aiming at this precious life of God, all stretching out their hands to strangle and suffocate it; and yet, mysterious wisdom, unspeakable grace, and tender compassion! how he has kept the holy principle alive, not suffered his fire to die out from the altar,

or the lamp in the temple to expire for want of fresh oil. O, the mystery of redeeming love! O, the blessedness of preserving grace to have our life redeemed from destruction! We can look back, it may be, to sundry places in our lives, when, like David, we could say, there was but a step between us and death, and yet we have been preserved, upheld, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Observe the expression, "*redeemed*," and how it connects the soul with the work of redemption by the Lord Jesus. Christ has redeemed our life by his own precious blood. Such a price being paid for it, it cannot be lost.

A sight and sense of this sinks the soul very low, and yet sets the Lord very high. It makes us see how great a thing redemption is, how wonderful the love of God, how incessant his tender care and preserving power, how blessed and yet how mysterious the work of grace upon the soul is, that sin cannot defile it, Satan cannot quench it, nor anything in earth or hell effectually destroy it.

IV.—But we now come to our last point, the crowning point of all, the highest point in the ascending scale, which seems to set its seal upon all the foregoing: "*He crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*"

i. The coronation of a king puts the last and highest seal upon his reigning authority. This made the spouse say, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." (Song Sol. 3:11.) And what a day will that be when the anti-typical Solomon is crowned Lord of all. Thus there is a crown put upon the soul which is healed of all its diseases, and whose life is redeemed from destruction. It is as if God could not be satisfied till he had put the crown of his lovingkindness upon the soul, until he had himself crowned the heart with his own love. And not only love, but "*lovingkindness*"—kindness mingled with love, love overflowing with kindness. Thus when God is pleased to reveal a sense of his lovingkindness, to show how he has been at once so

kind and at once so loving; so kind in forgiving sin, so kind in healing disease, so kind in preserving life from destruction, and all flowing out of the bosom of his eternal love, it is a putting on the crown of all his goodness. And he does it with his own hand: "Who crowneth thee." God from heaven his dwelling place puts upon the soul the crown of his lovingkindness and tender mercies. And what is the effect? The soul puts a crown of glory upon his head. So the soul has the crown of grace, and God has the crown of glory. This is being crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies.

And O what a crown it is! How it crowns all our iniquities, hides them from God's sight as a crown covers a monarch's brow. How it crowns all our trials that we have had to pass through, severe and cutting as they were at the time to the flesh. How it crowns all our bereavements by putting upon the bereaved heart the crown of God's lovingkindness. How it crowns all our prayers by enabling us to see their gracious answer. How it crowns all God's dealings with us in providence and in grace, and stamps lovingkindness upon them all; for the crown includes everything in it. As the Queen's crown includes her royalty, her dignity, her power—for all are symbolized thereby—so God's lovingkindness, put upon the heart as a crown, includes and secures every blessing for time and eternity.

ii. And what an effect it produces. It is a sense of God's tender mercies which breaks the heart and produces real repentance and godly sorrow for sin; for this is the feeling of the soul: "O that I could have sinned against such tender mercy as revealed in the Person and work, sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus. O what a wretch ever to have sinned as I have done. O what a monster to have given way to this and that sin and temptation, provoking God, if possible, to cast me away for ever from his presence." And yet his lovingkindness, his tender mercies, prevailed over all. He would not take an advantage of me. He would not seize me in the very act of sin and overwhelm my soul in hell. But he mercifully brought me out of sin, and crowned me with lovingkindness and tender mercies. This not only brings forth a

song of praise unto God, but constrains the soul, by every sweet constraint, to walk in his fear and live to his honour and glory. O these things come warm upon the heart wherever they are truly felt. They are urgent motives to live to his praise and walk in his fear; not to grieve his holy Spirit; but, being such debtors to grace, to live, walk, and act in such a way as to bring honour to his worthy name.

I have endeavoured this evening to lay my hand upon the state and case of God's family, and speak a word for their encouragement. Those who travel in the strait and narrow path long to hear their case touched upon and entered into, and some testimony given to the reality of the work of grace upon their heart. So I leave it in his gracious hands, who can do with it as seemeth good in his sight, and put on another crown, even the crown of his own blessing, which maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

BALM IN GILEAD

Preached on Tuesday Evening, 27th July 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road.

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"
Jeremiah 8:22

A pregnant question! and asked by the prophet under very peculiar and painful feelings. What read we in the preceding verse? "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me." Whence sprang these convulsive pangs, this deep and overwhelming astonishment, which worked so powerfully in the mind of the prophet as actually to distort his features and make his face appear livid and black? Why was he hurt and wounded in spirit? What was he astonished at? At three things, **First**, at the hurt of the daughter of his people, at the deep and desperate wounds under which Zion lay languishing; **secondly**, at the greatness of the remedy which God had provided; and, **thirdly**, as the malady was so desperate and the remedy so great, why the health of the daughter of his people was not recovered?

In endeavouring, then, to open up the words of the text, I shall, with God's blessing, attempt to show from them,

I. The desperate state of the daughter of God's people.

II. The remedy which God has provided for her desperate condition.

III. Answer the prophet's question, "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

I. Sin is a damnable thing; and every one of God's people **is** made, **has been** made, or **will be** made, to feel it so. And the

more that they see of sin, know of sin, feel of sin, the more damnable will sin appear in their eyes, and with greater weight and power will its dreadful guilt and filth lie upon their conscience. Now there are but few, comparatively speaking, who have any clear sight or any deep feeling of what sin really is; and the reason, for the most part, is because they have such a slight, shallow, superficial knowledge of who and what God is. But let them once see the purity of God by the eye of faith, let them once have a manifestation of His justice and holiness, majesty and greatness to their soul, and let them, seeing light in His light, have a corresponding sight and sense of the deep and desperate state in which they are as fallen children of a fallen parent, then will they no longer have slight, superficial feelings of the nature and evil of sin, but will so see and feel its hideous and damnable character as to make them cry out with Isaiah in the temple, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isa. 6:5.)

But if we look at the words of our text, it would seem as if the daughter of God's people, that is, the Church of God ("the daughter of God's people" being a Hebrew idiom for God's people), was suffering under wounds so as to need balm, and under a complication of diseases, so as to require a physician. There was work for the surgeon as well as for the physician; deep and desperate wounds which needed balm, and an inward destructive malady which required internal remedies. This is just what sin has reduced the family of God to. God has described His Zion as "full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." When the Church of God fell in Adam, she fell with a crash which broke every bone and bruised her flesh with wounds which are ulcerated from top to toe. Her understanding, her conscience, and her affections were all fearfully maimed. The first was blinded, the second stupified, and the third alienated. Every mental faculty thus became perverted and distorted. As in a shipwrecked vessel the water runs in through every leak, so when Adam fell upon the lee-shore of sin and temptation, and made shipwreck of the image of God in which he was created, sin rushed into every

faculty of body and soul, and penetrated into the inmost recesses of his being. Or to use another figure; as when a man is bitten by a poisonous serpent the venom courses through every artery and vein, and he dies a corrupted mass from head to foot, so did the poison-fang of sin penetrate into Adam's inmost soul and body, and infect him with its venom from the sole to the crown. But the fearful havoc which sin has made is never seen nor felt till the soul is quickened into spiritual life. O what work does sin then make in the conscience, when it is opened up by the Spirit of God! Whatever superficial or shallow views we may have had of sin before, it is only as its desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality. It is this sword of the Spirit which cuts and wounds; it is this entrance of life and light that gashes the conscience; it is this divine work which lacerates the heart and inflicts those deep wounds which nothing but the "balm in Gilead" can heal. And not only is a poor convinced sinner cut in his conscience, inwardly lacerated and gashed by sin as thus opened up by the Spirit of God, but, as the prophet speaks, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." He is thus labouring under a complication of diseases. Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin. Every mental faculty is depraved. The will chooses evil; the affections cleave to earthly things; the memory, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good; the judgment, like a bribed or drunken juryman, pronounces heedless or wrong decisions; and the conscience, like an opium-eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupified silence. When all these master-faculties of the mind, the heads of the house, are so drunken and disorderly, need we wonder that the servants are a godless, rebellious crew? Lusts call out for gratification; unbelief and infidelity murmur; tempers growl and mutter; and every bad passion strives hard for the mastery. O the evils of the human heart, which, let loose, have filled earth with misery and hell with victims; which deluged the world with the flood, burnt Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven, and are ripening the world for the final conflagration! Every crime which has made this fair earth

a present hell, has filled the air with groans, and drenched the ground with blood, dwells in your heart and mine.

Now, as this is opened up to the conscience by the Spirit of God, we feel indeed to be of all men most sinful and miserable, and of all most guilty, polluted, and vile. But it is this, and nothing but this, which cuts to pieces our fleshly righteousness, wisdom, and strength, which slays our delusive hopes, and lays us low at the footstool of mercy, without one good thought, word, or action to propitiate an angry Judge. It is this which brings the soul to this point, that, if saved, it can only be saved by the free grace, sovereign mercy, and tender compassion of Almighty God. These are painful lessons to learn. How trying is **bodily** illness! To be parched by fever, racked by internal pain, with nerves unstrung, temples throbbing, limbs tottering, appetite gone, are heavy afflictions. Wounds also festering, abscesses gathering, ulcers spreading, cancers eating—what a catalogue of ills this poor flesh is heir to! Yet these are but types of the maladies and wounds which the fall has brought into the soul. But as it is one thing to read of disease in books and another to be sick oneself, one thing to walk through the wards of a hospital and another to lie there a dying patient; so it is one thing to know the fall by theory and another to feel it by experience. This miserable state, brought upon us and into us by the fall, all the people of God must in some measure feel. It is of no use mincing the matter and saying that a person can be saved by the grace of God and the blood of Christ, without knowing anything of the depth of misery and wretchedness into which he is sunk as the fallen child of a fallen sire. We must go down into the depths of the fall to know what our hearts are and what they are capable of; we must have the keen knife of God to cut deep gashes in our conscience and lay bare the evil that lies so deeply imbedded in our carnal mind, before we can enter into and experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace.

How the saints of old were led down into these depths! See the tears with which David watered his midnight couch; mark the lamentations of Jeremiah out of "the low dungeon;" hear the

groans of Heman "in the lowest pit, in the darkness and the deeps;" listen to the roarings of Job, "poured out like the waters." Were not all these choice and eminent saints of God? And whence their dolorous cries? Was it not sin which forced them from their heaving, labouring breasts? But if this will not satisfy you and show you what sin is as laid on the conscience, see the co-equal Son of God agonizing in the garden and on the cross, and then say whether sin be a slight thing, or its burden light or small.

Now it was seeing and feeling this which made the prophet cry, "I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me." When he saw himself so polluted and vile; when he viewed the Church of God pining and languishing with the sickness of sin, his very features gathered blackness; he seemed amazed that man should be what he is; his very soul trembled within him at a sight and sense of God's majesty and holiness; and he could only burst forth in the language of awe-struck wonder, "I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me." And so it will take hold upon us, when, under divine tuition, we look into our hearts and see the lusts and passions, the unbelief and infidelity, the worldly-mindedness and carnality, the pride and covetousness, with all the hosts of evils that lurk and work, fester and riot, in the depth of our fallen nature. Well may we lift our hands with astonishment that the heart of man can be capable of imagining such depths of baseness, and that sin can so stride over the soul and trample down every promise of a crop.

But you will say, perhaps, "You are too hard upon us; you make us out too bad; and you use such exaggerated language, as if we were all fit only for Newgate." I admit I use strong language, because I feel strongly; but not exaggerated, because it is impossible to exaggerate the evils of the heart or the depths of the fall.

II. But it would seem that whilst the prophet was thus almost overwhelmed with a sight and sense of sin, he had brought before him a view of the remedy. He therefore cries out, "**Is there no balm in Gilead?**" Is the case desperate? Must the

patient die of the disease? Must the poor sinner sink under his sins? Is there no hope for him? Say that he has wandered far away from God, forgotten Him, neglected Him, repaid all His favours with base ingratitude, requited all His bounties and mercies with carnality and folly—is there still no remedy? Must he perish under the load of his iniquities and crimes? "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Is the supply exhausted, or has its value ceased?

(i) But what did this balm in Gilead literally signify? Gilead was a country beyond Jordan, in which certain trees grew of great value and rarity, from the trunk and branches of which there distilled a highly odoriferous gum, which was said to be of sovereign efficacy in healing wounds. We find that the Ishmaelitic merchants to whom Joseph was sold by his brethren were taking some of this balm to Egypt; and when Jacob would propitiate the chief lord of Egypt, whom he knew not then to be Joseph, he bade his sons "take a little balm" with them, as a suitable and acceptable offering. It thus became celebrated for its healing properties; and its very scarcity, the trees growing in no other soil or climate, and consequent dearness, gave it a still higher reputation. The prophet, therefore, viewing on the one hand Zion's desperate case, and on the other God's own divinely-contrived and appointed remedy, asks this pregnant question, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" He looked at the hurt of the daughter of his people, and saw her pining away in her iniquities; the veil being taken off his own heart, he saw her like himself, beyond description black and base. But was there no hope for him or her? Must she go down to the chambers of death? Must she sigh out her heart without any manifestation of pardon and peace? "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Why, the very question implies that there is balm in Gilead; that God has provided a remedy which is suitable to the desperate malady; and that there is more in the balm to heal than there is in guilt to wound; for there is more in grace to save than there is in sin to destroy. Why, then, should Zion so languish? Why is she so sick and sore? Why so bleeding to death? Why does her head so droop, her hands so hang down, her knees so totter? Why is her face so pale, her frame so

wasted, her constitution so broken? What has done all this? Whence this sickness unto death? "Is there no balm in Gilead?" From that far country does now no healing medicine come? Has the balm-tree ceased to distil its gum? Is there none to gather, none to bring, none to apply it to perishing Zion?

But spiritually viewed, what is this precious balm? Is it not the Saviour's blood—that precious, precious blood, of which the Holy Ghost testifieth that it "cleanseth from **all** sin?" Look at the words; weigh them well; they will bear the strictest, closest examination. "**All** sin;" then sins before calling, sins after calling, sins of thought, sins of word, sins of deed, sins of omission, sins of commission, sins against light, sins against life, sins against love, sins against the law, sins against the gospel, sins against God in every shape, in every form, of every name, every kind, every hue, every blackness, one sin only excepted—the sin against the Holy Ghost, which a believer can never commit. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth," not from some sins, not from many sins, not from a thousand sins, not from a million sins, but "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from **all** sin." This is indeed the balm, when the conscience is cut and gashed, bleeding and sore, to allay the smart, to soothe the pain, to bring together the edges of the wound and to make it kindly heal. Is there any other remedy? Search the whole round of duties; run through the wide catalogue of forms and ceremonies; examine every cell and nook of the monastery, the convent, and the confessional; weigh every grain of human merit and creature obedience; tithe with the utmost nicety the anise, mint, and cummin of self-imposed observances; hold up the hair shirt, the bleeding scourge, the jagged crucifix, the protracted fast, the midnight vigil, the morning prayer, and the evening hymn, and see whether all or any of these can heal a wounded conscience. But why do I mention these things? Are there Papists or Puseyites before me? No. But because there really is no medium between faith in Christ's blood and full-blown Popery. As between grace and works, Christ's blood and human merits, there is no real medium, so there is no standing ground between experimental religion and Popery, between absolution by Christ and absolution by the Pope.

The Pope's real "see" is the human heart. To drive out this Antichrist and bring in Christ is the main work of the Spirit, the grand aim and end of the gospel.

This is the reason why the Lord, in His wonderful dealings with the soul, makes it sink so deeply and feel so acutely. It is to drive out heart-popery. Where was the sword forged which "wounded one of the heads of the beast as it were to death?" In the cell of an Augustine monk. Popery was first driven out of Luther's heart by the law and temptation; and then smitten down by Luther's hand. But thousands are Papists in heart who are Protestants in creed. How many, for instance, there are who would fain heal themselves—some by duties, some by doctrines, some by resolutions, some by promises, some by vows, some by false hopes, some by ordinances, some by the opinion of ministers, some by church membership! What is this but a subtle form of Popery? How many heal themselves in this slight way! and every one will do so till the wound is opened up and deepened by the Spirit of God. Then all these vain and inefficacious remedies are seen in their true light. They do not speak peace to the conscience; they bring no sense of pardon to the soul; the love of God does not accompany them; the fear of judgment is not taken away; the grave has still its terrors, and death has still its sting. All these remedies, therefore, are found in the case of the child of God to be utterly inefficacious, because they cannot heal the wounds, the deep wounds, that sin has made.

(ii) But the question is also asked, "**Is there no physician there?**" We want a physician as well as balm, and one who can fully enter into the very state of the case. Now, a physician naturally ought to be a man of deep skill and large research, of thorough knowledge and great tenderness. He should understand, and rightly appreciate every symptom, and know exactly what remedies to apply. But, spiritually, what a physician we need! We are afflicted throughout with disease! "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint!" We want, therefore, a physician who knows all our secret maladies, who is perfectly acquainted with heart disease and head disease, who sees all our

backslidings in lip and life, our various misgivings, doubts and fears, coldness and deadness, helplessness and inability, with all the workings of unbelief and infidelity, and the desperate aboundings of our filth and folly. We want a physician who can look into our hearts, and perfectly understand all these aggravated symptoms, and yet deal with us with the greatest tenderness, as well as the deepest wisdom and the most consummate skill. There is this almighty Physician; and if we are enabled by grace to put ourselves into His hands, or rather, if He take us and put us into His own hands, He will deal with us in the most tender and gentle, and yet the most efficacious manner possible. Still, it will at times be very painful to be under His hands, for He will touch the sore places, and probe the deep wounds, and some of His remedies will be very severe, bitter, and pungent. Yet with all this apparently rough handling, He will display the most infinite wisdom, the most consummate patience, and the tenderest love.

III. When the prophet, then, had taken this solemn view of the hurt of the daughter of his people, and had seen, too, by faith, "the balm in Gilead and the physician there," he asks, "**Why** then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" clearly implying that although there was balm in Gilead, and a blessed Physician there, yet the health of the daughter of his people was **not** recovered. And is not this the case with many of God's people now? They are cut, wounded, lacerated by sin, though they know, at least in their judgment, that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a Physician there. They are not seeking salvation by the works of the law, they are not trusting to their own righteousness, they are not halting between two opinions, they know that there is no hope but in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet their wounds are not healed, nor their sickness relieved. But if there be balm in Gilead, and if there be a Physician there, **why** is not their health recovered?

But let us not here impeach either the reality of the malady or the sufficiency of the remedy. It is certain that the balm of a

Saviour's blood has healed thousands, and that there is salvation in no other name and by no other way, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is equally certain that this great Physician has cured the most desperate diseases, diseases past all human help; it is also certain that this blood is never applied in vain, and that this Physician has an ear to hear, a heart to feel, and a hand to relieve.

Yet still there may be certain wise and sufficient reasons why this balm may not be immediately applied or this Physician not at once stretch forth His healing hand.

(i) The patient may not have **sunk deep enough** into the malady. Some of God's people are often wondering why they do not know more of pardoning love, and of the application of the blood of the Lamb to their conscience; why they have not a clearer testimony and a more unwavering assurance of their interest in the everlasting covenant; why they have so much bondage and so little liberty, and, with a clear sight of the remedy, enjoy so little of its application. They clearly see that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a Physician there. Still their "wounds stink and are corrupt because of their foolishness," and still the Physician delays to come. But may not **this** be the reason—that they have not sunk deep enough, nor got yet into the incurable ward? In many living souls there lurks a spirit of self-righteousness, and a secret unacknowledged dependence on the creature. Till that is purged away, the balm in Gilead is not fully suitable, nor do they apply with all their heart and soul to the great Physician. "And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." **Jer 29:13**

(ii) Or it may be **that the due time** is not come. "Humble yourselves," says the apostle, "under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (1 Pet. 5:6.) There is "a set time to favour Zion," and till that time is run out the Lord does not manifest His favour. Abraham had to wait twenty-five years for a son; Joseph two years in prison for deliverance; David seven years to sit on the throne of Saul. It is "through faith and

patience that we inherit the promises." "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Hab. 2:3.) When this set time is come, the balm will be applied, the skill of the Physician experienced, and the health recovered.

(iii) Or there may be certain **hindrances in themselves of another kind** why the balm in Gilead and why "the Physician there" are not more deeply and experimentally known. They may not yet have been made willing to part with all their idols; they may still hug their sins; they may cleave to their own ruin, and play with the serpent that bites them. Or they may be half-hearted, may be drawn aside by pride or covetousness; the world may have fast hold of their heart, and their affections may be too much after earthly things. Such was Ephraim's case: "His heart was divided, and thus he was found faulty." And what was the consequence? "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." (Hos. 5:13.) Or it may be that the wound has been slightly healed, and therefore has broken out worse than before. A relapse, we know, is often worse than the original disease, and an old wound harder to heal than a fresh one. The Lord Himself condemns the prophets who "healed the hurt of the daughter of His people slightly." The wound, therefore, must needs break forth again, and the cure be thus put further off. Or there may be some secret yet powerful temptation, under the power of which the soul is lying. Or some darling lust which holds fast, and will not let go, and in the baseness of the heart would rather go on with. Or it may be sucking what sweetness it can out of backsliding rather than be purged and cleansed by God's searching hand. What a proof is this of the deceitfulness, the desperate deceitfulness, the wickedness, the deep and desperate wickedness, of the human heart! There is something in sin which so bewitches, something in carnality which so deadens, something in the world which so engrosses, and something in sensual gratification that so hardens the conscience, that where these things are pursued and indulged, the life and power of

godliness are as if buried and suffocated. The soul, indeed, may at times cry and roar under this load of carnality and death, but its half-heaved cries do not penetrate the vault of heaven, nor enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

May not this throw light on the experience of some of God's people? How many seem to be at no clear point! They hope, they fear; sometimes they seem to have a testimony and sometimes none; and thus they go on perhaps for years, and many even almost to a death-bed, before there is any clear decided work in their consciences to slaughter and kill, or any sweet manifestation of the mercy and love of God to heal and save them. It is true that these, with all other matters, we must eventually trace up to the sovereignty of God. The final answer to all inquiries why misery and mercy were so long deferred, and came only just in time, must still be, "The Lord will have it so." And yet however sovereign the dispensations of God are, no one who fears His great name should so shelter himself under divine sovereignty as to remove all blame from himself. When the Lord asks, "Hast thou not procured this to thyself?" the soul must needs reply. "Yea, Lord, I surely have." This is a narrow line, but one which every one's experience, where the conscience is tender, will surely ratify. Though we can do nothing to comfort our own souls, to speak peace to our own conscience, to bring the love of God into our hearts, to apply the balm of Gilead to bleeding wounds, and summon the great Physician to our bedsides, we may do many things to repel one moment what we would seem to invite the next. We cannot bring ourselves near to God, but we can and do put ourselves far from Him; we cannot advance into the warmth and brightness of His beams, but we can wander into regions of cold and frost; we cannot make to ourselves a fountain of living waters, but we can hew out a broken cistern; we cannot live to God's glory, but we can live to our own; we cannot seek God's honour, but we can seek our own profit; we cannot walk after the Spirit, but we can walk after the flesh; we can be carnal, worldly-minded, reckless, thoughtless, careless about our souls, though we cannot be spiritually-minded, heavenly, holy, with hearts and affections at God's right hand; we cannot make

ourselves fruitful in every good word and work, but we may, by disobedience and self-indulgence, bring leanness into our souls, barrenness into our frames, deadness into our hearts, coldness into our affections, and in the end much guilt upon our consciences. No man knows better, I believe, than myself, that we cannot do anything of a spiritual nature to bring us near to God, but I am equally sure that we can do many things that set us very far from Him. Let all the shame and guilt be ours; all the grace and glory are God's. Every drop of felt mercy, every ray of gracious hope, every sweet application of truth to the heart, every sense of interest, every blessed testimony, every sweet indulgence, every heavenly smile, every tender desire, and every spiritual feeling, all, all are of God. If ever my heart is softened, my spirit blessed, my soul watered, if Christ is ever felt to be precious, it is all of His grace—it is all given freely, sovereignly, without money and without price. But can it be denied? I for one cannot deny it, that by our carnality, inconsistency, worldly-mindedness, negligence, ingratitude, and forsaking and forgetting the God of our mercies, we are continually bringing leanness and barrenness, deadness and darkness into our own souls. Thus we are forced to plead "Guilty, guilty!" to put our mouth in the dust, acknowledge ourselves to be vile, and confess ourselves indeed "of sinners chief, and of saints less than the least." Yet thus does God, in His mysterious dealings, open up a way for His sovereign grace and mercy to visit the soul. The more we feel ourselves condemned, cut off, gashed and wounded by a sense of sin and folly, backslidings and wanderings from God, the lower we shall lie, the more we shall put our mouth in the dust, the more freely we shall confess our baseness before Him. And if the Lord should be pleased, in these solemn moments, to open our poor blind eyes to see something of the precious blood of the Lamb, to apply some sweet promise to the soul, or to bring to the heart a sense of His goodness and mercy, how sweet and suitable is that grace, as coming over all the mountains and hills of our sin and shame.

There is, then, balm in Gilead, and there is a Physician there. This is, and must ever be, our only hope. If there were no balm in Gilead, what could we do but lie down in despair and die? For our

sins are so great, our backslidings so repeated, our minds so dark, our hearts so hard, our affections so cold, our souls so wavering and wandering, that if there were no balm in Gilead, no precious blood, no sweet promises, no sovereign grace, and if there were no Physician there, no risen Jesus, no Great High Priest over the house of God, what well-grounded hope could we entertain? Not a ray. Our own obedience and consistency? These are a bed too short and a covering too narrow. But when there is some application of the balm in Gilead it softens, melts, humbles, and at the same time thoroughly heals. Nay, this balm strengthens every nerve and sinew, heals blindness, remedies deafness, cures paralysis, makes the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing, and thus produces gospel fight, gospel heating, gospel strength, and a gospel walk. When the spirit is melted, and the heart touched by a sense of God's goodness, mercy, and love to such base, undeserving wretches, it produces gospel obedience, aye, a humble obedience, not that proud obedience which those manifest who are trusting to their own goodness and seeking to scale the battlements of heaven by the ladder of self-righteousness, but an obedience of gratitude, love, and submission, willingly, cheerfully rendered, and therefore acceptable to God, because flowing from His own Spirit and grace.

It is the application of this divine balm which purifies the heart, makes sin hateful and Jesus precious, and not only dissolves the soul in sweet gratitude, but fills it with earnest desires to live to God's honour and glory. This is the mysterious way the Lord takes to get honour to Himself. As He opens up the depth of the fall, makes the burden of sin felt, and shows the sinner that his iniquities have exceeded, He brings the proud heart down, and lays the head low in the dust; and as He makes him sigh and cry, grieve and groan, He applies His sovereign balm to the soul, brings the blood of sprinkling into the conscience, sheds abroad His mercy and love, and thus constrains the feet to walk in cheerful and willing obedience. This is obeying the precept from right motives, right views, right influences, under right feelings, and to right ends. This is the true Christian obedience, obedience

"in the spirit and not in the letter," an obedience which glorifies God, and is attended by every fruit and grace of the Spirit. Thus, wondrous to say, the more we see and feel of the depth of the malady, the more do we prize, as God is pleased to show it, the height and blessedness of the remedy; the lower we sink in self, the higher we rise in Christ; the more we see of nature, the more we admire the grace of God; the more we are harassed, and tried, and distressed, the more suitable and precious, and God-glorifying is the gospel of the grace of God. So that the more we sink into the ruins of the fall, the higher we rise experimentally into the knowledge of the gospel of the grace of God; and all this attended, when it is genuine, by the fruits of the Spirit, a spiritual obedience, a glorifying God, a separation from the world, and as the Lord enables, a glorifying Him in body, soul, and spirit, which are His.

Here, then, is the answer to the prophet's question, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Yes, there is, blessed be God; the blood of Jesus and the sweet promises of the gospel. "Is there no physician there?" Yes, blessed be God, there is, a wise, a mighty, yea, an Almighty, an all-sufficient One. "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" If not recovered, it is only delayed and delays are not denials. The time will come, the appointed season will roll round, and then every hindrance will be removed. If it be the world, some affliction will be sent to wean the heart from it. If an idol, the hand of God will take it away or destroy its power. If it be a temptation, God will deliver from it, or make a way of escape that the soul may be able to bear it. If unbelief prevail, He will overcome it, and give faith a victory over it. If there be any lust indulged, He will purge the heart from its power and prevalence. So that our wisdom and mercy alike are to fall into His compassionate hands, to renounce our own righteousness, to acknowledge that we have nothing in ourselves but filth and folly, and thus to seek His face, to call upon His name, to hope in His mercy, and rest in His goodness; and, as He may be pleased to shine upon the soul, to thank and praise His holy name for the mercy He displays in Christ to the vilest of the vile.

Here, then, is the answer to this important question, "Is there no balm in Gilead; Is there no physician there?" Blessed be God, there is both one and the other. "Why then is not the health of the daughter of God's people recovered?" It is already accomplished in the mind of God, and will be made experimentally manifest in His own time and way.

The Battle is the Lord's

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, Hampstead Road, on Tuesday Evening, July 29, 1851

"O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." 2 Chronicles 20:12

It is one thing to read the Bible as a history, and another to read it as a mystery. The mere narration of facts in the Old Testament is interesting and instructive. How pathetic is the history of Joseph! How stirring is the combat of David with Goliath! How touching the lamentations of David over Absalom! How full of interest the whole life of Elijah! Read in the mere letter, there is in these ancient records everything to inform the mind and touch the heart; and many have wept over the pathetic narratives of the Bible who have never wept over their sins.

But when we penetrate through the shell into the kernel; when we read the Bible with a spiritual eye, and God is pleased to communicate a measure of faith which, as the Apostle says, is mixed with the word, and so profits the soul (Heb. 4:2); how different then are the Scriptures of truth! When we can appropriate the promises laid up in them, read our character depicted in them, feel their sweetness, and have the soul bedewed with the savour and unction that is diffused all through them, then the Scriptures are something far better than merely instructive or interesting. The sacred truth of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, reaches the heart, melts the soul, softens the spirit, touches the conscience, and brings, as a divine power accompanies it, blessed feelings and heavenly sensations into the bosom.

And in this way alone are the Scriptures profitably read. Thus read, the Bible becomes a new book, perused as it were with new eyes, and felt as with a new heart. Look, for instance, at the narrative of incidents contained in this chapter (2 Chron. 20).

Read in the mere letter there is something very instructive in it; but when we penetrate beneath the surface of the letter, and read it spiritually, with a special eye to the church of God, it is invested with a new character, and upon it is shed a holy and blessed light.

Before, however, we enter upon the spiritual meaning of the text, let us look at a few of the incidents connected with it.

Jehoshaphat, the godly king of Judah, was, we read, attacked by a numerous company of enemies, and these of a race and from a quarter quite unexpected. They were not such as formerly had attacked them, Canaanites or Philistines, Egyptians or Ethiopians, nor the severed tribes of Israel. But they were those who had a kind of blood alliance with them. They were the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, who, you will recollect were the illegitimate children of Lot by his incestuous connection with his two daughters. They had thus an illegitimate relationship, a spurious, half-blood alliance with the people of Judah. We shall, with God's blessing, see by and by how this bears upon the spiritual meaning. Judah at this time was very weak. She had been brought low for her iniquities. And when this "great company" came against her, she had no strength, no army, no forces left to oppose them. Under these circumstances, what did the godly king of Judah as her head and leader? He "set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." All human hopes, all creature help were utterly in vain; and therefore, as their only resource, they came to the Lord, who had rescued and delivered them again and again. The Lord heard their cry, and smote their enemies with confusion and destruction. I need not enter into further particulars, but will proceed at once to our text: "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee."

With God's blessing, in looking at these words, I shall consider:

I. First, What this "great company" spiritually represents.

II. Secondly, How the children of God have "no might against this great company, neither know they what to do."

III. Thirdly, How under these circumstances they cry to the Lord, "Wilt Thou not judge them?" And,

IV. Lastly, The fixed posture of their souls: "Our eyes are upon Thee."

I. This "great company" of hostile invaders was, as we before remarked, indirectly and illegitimately connected with them. They were not heathen idolaters, alien in race and language, but the same blood partly ran in their veins. An illegitimate flesh and blood alliance subsisted between the invaders and the invaded. View that circumstance spiritually. What foes chiefly invade our peace? Those that have a flesh and blood alliance with us. The enemies, then, that we have most reason to fear are those which claim relationship with our fallen nature. For instance,

1. There is a "great company" of *temptations*; for they come for the most part, not singly, but in troops. One temptation usually makes way for another. A single temptation resembles a burglar attempting to break into a house. The most bold, or the most dexterous comes first, cuts through the shutter, lifts up the window, enters the house, and then admits the rest; so one temptation opens a way for the entrance of more. Let a man only dally with temptation; let him only entertain one lust, and give it lodging in his breast; let him only be allured by, and consent to, one powerful besetment, that one temptation will open a way for a whole troop of temptations to come and take possession of his heart.

But these temptations are, like the Moabites and Ammonites, our blood relatives. Illegitimate, indeed, and incestuous is their birth, for Satan is their father and sin their mother; but they have in us a nature akin to them. The same blood runs in their and our veins. It is this unhallowed, ungodly affinity which gives

temptation such wondrous power. When temptation knocks at the door, there is a half-sister, a traitress to the very bone, waiting in the hall to open it and let him in. Temptation is fearful only as it is suitable. If there were nothing in our heart in alliance with evil; if we could reject it instantaneously, and say, "Get thee hence;" if we could deal with temptation as the blessed Lord dealt with it, when Peter said, "Be it far from Thee!" if we could say to every temptation as the Lord then said to Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" temptation would lose its power, it would drop from us as the viper from the hand of Paul, when he shook it into the fire, and felt no harm. But, alas! there is that in our heart which has a blood alliance with it, which listens to it, parleys with it, and would, but for the grace of God, fall on its neck and embrace it.

2. But there is also a "great company" of *afflictions*. For as with temptation, so affliction rarely comes alone. Look at Job's case. How affliction came after affliction, as messenger after messenger came with evil tidings! You will find that afflictions of body often bring affliction of mind, and that affliction in circumstances often produces rebellion, peevishness, and discontent. Thus we have to bear the load, not merely of natural, but also of spiritual trouble; one, as it were, helping on and giving force, weight and power to the other. A concurrence of trials is so frequent, that it is a common saying, "afflictions seldom come single." And if this be the case with men generally, much more so is it with the people of God. "Woe is me now," cried Baruch, "for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow" (Jer. 45:3). "Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves," complained Heman (Psa. 88:7). This combination of troubles much increases their weight. If they came alone, it seems as though there would be strength to bear them; but to have affliction after affliction, and when one has struck, as it were, the soul down, then for another to strike the dying dead—this, this it is that gives such poignancy, weight and acuteness to the trials of the Lord's family.

3. But, again, what a company there is of *lusts*! If we look at the evils of our nature, we shall find that they too are not single. To examine our heart is something like examining by the microscope

a drop of ditch water; the more it is looked into, the more hideous forms appear. All these strange monsters, too, are in constant motion, devouring or devoured; and, as glasses of stronger power are put on, more and more loathsome creatures emerge into view till eye and heart sicken at the sight. Such is our heart. Superficially viewed, passably fair; but examined by the spiritual microscope, hideous forms of every shape and size appear; lusts and desires in unceasing movement, devouring each other, and yet undiminished; and each successive examination bringing new monsters to light. O what a company of lusts! how one seems to introduce and make way for the other! and how one, as among the insect tribe, is the sire of a million!

4. And what a company at times there is of *doubts, fears, and distressing apprehensions!* What an alliance, too, not only with our carnal mind, but with one another! "The children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites." And all against Judah. Temptation comes first; with temptation comes the stirring up of lusts; and with the stirring up of lusts comes a whole troop of doubts and fears arising from guilt laid upon the conscience. Hart justly says, "Sin engenders doubt." It is the evil of the heart continually manifesting itself that gives such strength to unbelief, and adds such force to those doubts and fears which often come as a great armed company against the soul. A guilty conscience has a strong alliance with doubts and fears, and this indeed makes them so formidable.

5. What a company of *professors* also are arrayed against a child of God! How they are all watching for his halting! How ready to magnify his infirmities! how eager to catch up any slip that he may make, or anything he may say or do inconsistent. One hounds on another. "Report it," say they, "and we will report it." Thus they hunt in packs; and many who have never tasted the bread of life, nor fed on the flesh of Christ, have had a sweet repast upon the mangled limbs of a child of God.

It was not the heathen that attacked Judah, but the Moabites and Ammonites; a spurious blood, but indirectly allied. So it is not the

profane, but the professing world, a spurious race, who attack the living family. And surely they are "a great company," unmindful, like the children of Ammon, of all former benefits (ver. 10), and bent only on Judah's destruction.

Now all these "great companies" come against the children of God at some time or other of their spiritual life. It is true that all may not come at once; but at one time or other most of the children of God have to fight against them all; a "great company" of afflictions, of temptations, of lusts, of doubts and fears, or professors, who hate the truth of God which they see in them.

II. And what can they do? They are in the same plight and spot spiritually in which Jehoshaphat and the children of Judah were literally and naturally.

1. Jehoshaphat speaks for himself and his people: "We have no might against this great company." We have no weapons, no power of resistance; we cannot meet them hand to hand, or foot to foot; they are too many and too mighty for us; we have no power whatever to withstand or resist them. This every true Christian is taught and brought more or less to feel. None but Christians really feel it, because others have their weapons. But what makes a living man powerless is this: he knows there is no use to fight flesh with flesh; that is, by weapons of our own contrivance, or our own forging. A pharisee can fight in his own strength and righteousness; he can make his vows and promises, form his resolutions, and combat hand to hand against this "great company." But a Christian is stripped of his carnal weapons. To afflictions a natural man can oppose stoical endurance; to temptation a hardened conscience; to doubts, impenitence, or self-righteousness; to attacks from men, blow for blow. But all these weapons have dropped from a Christian's hand; God must fight his battles, for he cannot. He has therefore no power, nor wisdom, nor strength, nor might against this "great company," for his weapons are not carnal, but spiritual; so that if he fight, it must be in the strength of the Lord, and the power of His might. Now when the Lord denies His gracious presence; when He does

not come into the soul in any measure of divine power and grace; when He leaves us, as He often leaves us, to prove our own strength by feeling utter weakness—then we come into this experience, "We have no might against this great company."

In what a wonderful way was the Lord pleased to teach Paul this great lesson! He was caught up to the third heaven; there he saw and heard things unspeakable; his soul was indulged with the greatest revelations perhaps ever given to any mortal. He comes down from heaven to earth. And then what takes place? He has a messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh to buffet him. Thus he falls, as it were, from the heights of heaven down to the very gates of hell. He leaves the company of God and angels, and the presence of the glorified spirits above, and comes down to be buffeted and plagued, harassed and beaten about by Satan. O how mysterious was this dealing of God! How the Apostle himself was unable to enter into this mystery, that one recently so highly favoured should now be so deserted; that one upon whom the Lord had bestowed such blessings should now be left in the hands of Satan! But he learnt afterwards why he had such an experience. The Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." But how could the Apostle have learnt this weakness but by soul experience? Was it not necessary for him to be buffeted by Satan, to be beaten and roughly handled by the Prince of darkness, and to have this thorn in the flesh continually puncturing and lacerating his soul in order to learn it in and for himself? And can you tell me any other way whereby we can learn the same lesson? Can we learn it from the Bible? from books? from ministers? or the experience of others? We may learn the theory. The experience must be learnt in another school; and that is the school of painful and personal experience. The Lord, to convince us then of our weakness and to make His strength perfect in that weakness, suffers in His providence this "great company" to come against us; and thus teaches us that we have no might, that we cannot lift up a finger, that we have no weapons to fight with.

Now look at your experience, you that have any, and see when

this "great company" came against you, whether you had any strength of your own. What could you do with *temptation* when it came in a powerful way? Could you master it? Could you throw up a bank against it, and say, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further; and here thy proud waves shall be stayed"? Could you say to any one temptation, "Get thee behind my back; thou shalt not tempt me"? O when temptation creeps in like a serpent into the carnal mind, it winds its secret way, and coils round the heart. As the boa constrictor is said to embrace its victim, twining his coil around it, and crushing every bone without any previous warning, so does temptation often seize us suddenly in its powerful embrace. Have we in ourselves any more power to extricate our flesh from its slimy folds than the poor animal has from the coils of the boa constrictor?

So with the *corruptions and lusts* of our fallen nature. Can you always master them? Can you seize these serpents by the neck and wring off their heads?

The *doubts and fears* and distressing apprehensions that come into your soul when guilt lies hard and heavy upon your conscience, can you say, "Begone, doubts and fears; I will have none of you; you shall not touch me"? You might as well, when the storm came down this morning, have said, "Storm, cease to fall;" as say, when doubt and fear and apprehensions of God's anger come down upon your soul, "Hailstones, beat upon me no more."

And what can you do against *afflictions*—afflictions in body, in family, or in circumstances? Can you bear them with a patient resignation, and say, "I can endure anything or everything"? Who can bear one affliction in his own strength? Can you bear your little finger to ache? Can you bear a sharp toothache, half-an-hour of *tic douloureux*, or a night's ear-ache? Can you bear to see a dear child suffer? Can you endure the frowning face of God in providence? Are you never chafed? Is not your mind cast down, and does not the rebellious wave sometimes flow over your breast?

When *professors* speak against you, and cast out your name as evil, can you always bear it? Can you put your mouth in the dust? When one cheek is smitten, can you always turn the other? O you must be made of different material from Adam's fallen race; you cannot have the same heart that beats in the bosom of him that speaks to you, if you can always be patient and resigned; always believe, and hope, and love; always be calm and unruffled; are never tempted, never slip, and never backslide. Surely, surely, you are not yet perfect in the flesh, nor out of the reach of gunshot.

2. "Neither know we what to do." That seems worse still. Know not what to do! To be in such perplexity as not to know how to act! If a man were to say, "I am very weak, but I have a plan in my head which I am sure will succeed; or, although I cannot do the thing myself, yet I have a friend that can;" such a person we should not consider without resource of some kind. He could not with truth say, "I know not what to do." To have no strength is to be very low; but to have no wisdom is to be lower still.

Now when a "great company" comes against you, do you always or often know "what to do"? Is there a treasure of wisdom in your heart? Can you take inward counsel, and say, "I see how I can manage this; I can easily overcome that; I have a plan for this difficulty, and a contrivance for that annoying circumstance. It does not therefore much matter what trial comes, I know exactly how to meet it"? If you are there, you are not in the experience of Jehoshaphat, and the people for whom he was interceding with the Lord. He was compelled to confess for himself and them what many a poor child of God has said in substance, if not in word, "We know not what to do!" We are fairly brought to our wits' end, and are altogether baffled and confounded.

Apply this experimentally to your own case. When afflictions come, do you know what to do? You may have heavy losses in providence. Can you always meet the trial with calmness and resignation, and say, "Well, to be sure, it is rather a loss, but

then it does not much signify"? A man who can talk so, does not know much about the matter. Apathy is not submission, though one of that spurious brood that often walk abroad under Christian surnames. This is the trying point, not to "know what to do"; not to see what way to take, nor be able by any contrivances of our own skill or wisdom to meet the difficulty.

Again, when your lusts and passions are stirred up—and I suppose sometimes they move, they do not always lie calm and dead in your soul—you find now and then a little working of the old Adam nature; sin is not always taking its nap, nor torpid like a snake in winter. I suppose that now and then there is something not altogether spiritual or gracious, some sensual desire, some pride, some base imagination at work in your carnal mind. O be assured there is a veil of unbelief on your heart if you do not see, and your conscience is not very tender if you do not feel it. But when your old Adam nature is stirred up, do you know what to do? "O, yes," say you, "I do; I am at no loss or standstill whatever. Directly I find sin stir, I make a firm resolution that I will not be overcome by it. I never give way to pride, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, evil tempers, or any of the works of the flesh." I really cannot believe you. You may make resolutions; but how long or how often do you keep them? Is it not as long as a little child keeps its resolutions to be good? When the parent is about to punish it, O what resolutions it makes! The tears run down its little cheeks; it will promise almost anything to avoid punishment: "I will never do it again, I will never do it again; I will be so good, so good." How long? how long? Perhaps not half-an-hour. And thus our resolutions, if we make them, are not much better than the promises of a child. I have long given over making any. But if we are so foolish as to make resolutions, how long will they last? Just as long as a feather lies quiet upon the roof of a house; it only waits for the first puff of wind, and then it is gone. And so our resolutions are like feathers; the first puff blows them to the winds.

And how can you manage your doubts and fears? Do you take them by the neck and strangle them? Can you put your hand

down into your heart and cast them out like a nest of vipers? You will be stung in the attempt.

The real cry of the soul is, "We know not what to do!" In times past we thought we knew what to do; we were tolerably strong, we would pray, would read God's Word, would keep our eyes and ears and tongues, would set a guard over the movements of the heart, and perhaps to a certain extent we succeeded. But it was because we knew little of this "great company." It was a little company, perhaps; and when it was only a little company, we might know what to do; but when this "great company" came, it put the soul to its wits' end, and brought forth the exclamation, "We know not what to do!"

Now, till the soul is more or less brought here, it knows very little of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must be brought into trying places to know anything of God. I have often thought of poor McKenzie's words, and striking words they were, in his last illness. When the blood was gushing from his mouth, he said, "It is here we want a God!" Aye, it is here we want a God; but very often, too often, we do not want a God. Am I going too far when I say that nine-tenths of our time, perhaps, we can do without a God? Take this day. You have been engaged in your business, in your lawful occupations. Have you not been doing the greater part of this day perhaps without God? Have you in many hours, many quarter-hours, many minutes this day, really felt your need of a God, really wanted God; feeling in that state and case that you wanted a present God, a God to help, a God to bless, a God to appear, a God to come down into your soul? I do not mean that there has been no aching void, no looking upward, no secret prayer or supplication; but not such extreme desires and earnest cries as if you needed Him in a special manner. Base creatures are we with all our profession, that we can do so much and so often without a present God; that we keep Him, so to speak at a distance; pay him compliments, and yet can do for the most part so much without Him.

But when brought into trying circumstances, then it is we begin

to want a God, and such a God as is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, such a God as alone can bless and comfort the soul.

III. Now under these circumstances does Jehoshaphat plead with God. And how tenderly and affectionately does he plead! If you will read what precedes our text, you will see how he pleads with God, and chiefly on three grounds. He pleads with Him first on the ground of His power and might: "Is there not all power with Thee?" He pleads with Him secondly on the ground of His covenant: "Art not Thou our God?" He pleads with Him thirdly on the ground of His dwelling with them in the sanctuary: "And they dwell therein, and have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying, If when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence (for Thy name is in this house), and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help." By the "sanctuary" we may understand the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, that sanctuary and true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. He comes therefore to God with these three powerful pleas: as a God of great strength, and therefore able; a God in covenant, and therefore willing; and a God in Christ, and therefore loving and merciful. These three powerful pleas he brings, and lays them at His sacred feet, interceding with Him to do that for them which they could not do for themselves: "Wilt Thou not judge them?"

There is something, to my mind, very striking and suitable in this expression: "Wilt Thou not judge them?" It is as though he put himself, so to speak, into close communication with God, and identified Judah's cause with the cause of God; so that God in delivering her was actually fighting His own battles; and as a judge upon His judgment seat, was passing a judgment upon His own enemies.

Now this is the most prevailing plea we can make with God; when we can look up to Him as our God in covenant, and take our enemies, our temptations, our afflictions, our doubts, our

exercises, so to speak, into our hand, as so many enemies to God, and ask the Lord to pass a sentence upon them, not because they are our enemies, but because they are His. We may perhaps thus illustrate it. In war time there is in the garrison a traitor who is conspiring to betray the fortress. A soldier detects the wretch; he seizes him upon the spot, brings him to the general, and denounces his crime. Now when the soldier arrests the traitor, he does not arrest him as his enemy, but as the enemy of his sovereign. So, if we can arrest our lusts and base passions, seize them as traitors, bring them before God, and say, "These are Thy enemies; do Thou judge them and punish them, and for Thy name's sake deliver us from their treachery;" this seems, as it were, to put God upon our side, and to call in His justice to execute judgment upon them as His enemies.

There is no use fighting the battle in our own strength. We have none. There is no use when sin has made a breach in the conscience to thrust into the gap a stout faggot of self-righteousness. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. The strength of Christ, the blood of Christ, the grace of the gospel, the sword of the Spirit—these must be our weapons. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." But how few fight with these weapons! How many take their self-righteousness as a weapon against their sins; and thus they only fight flesh with flesh; they only combat self in one form by self in another form. This is popery. Poor weak creatures go into convents and monasteries. For what? To fight against sin. By what? By self-righteousness. They macerate their bodies, wear sackcloth, repeat their prayers, and attend to their ceremonies. For what purpose? To subdue their sins, arming flesh against flesh. And what is the consequence? If they have any conscience at all, they are crushed down in this ineffectual struggle, as Luther was in his cell at Erfurt. This is popery in full blossom—a gaudy flower, of which Protestant self-righteousness is a swelling bud. The essence of popery is creature righteousness, and to fight against sin by self-righteousness is next door to going into a monastery, wearing a hair shirt, or flagellating the shoulders with a scourge. The gospel has brought

to light a better, a more effectual way. "Wilt Thou not judge them?" "Here are my lusts, I cannot manage them; here are my temptations, I cannot overcome them; here are my doubts and fears, I cannot subdue them; here are my enemies, I cannot conquer them. Lord, I know not what to do. But wilt Thou not judge them? Wilt not Thou manage for me? Wilt Thou not subdue mine enemies and Thine?" This is, so to speak, taking these lusts and passions by the neck, and laying them down at the feet of God as God's enemies, and thus bringing the power of God against them, setting in array the omnipotence of Jehovah against what would otherwise destroy us. This is prevailing. To fight thus under the banner of the Lord is to make head against sin; but to fight against it in our own resolution and strength is only to fall its victim. This is taking the weapons of God to fight against our spiritual foes; and these weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. This is fighting against sin, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; not by the law, but by the gospel; not by self, but by the grace of God. And if your soul has had many a tussle, and many a wrestle, and many a hand-to-hand conflict with sin, you will have found this out before now, that nothing but the grace, power, and Spirit of Christ ever gave you the victory, or the least hope of victory.

IV. "But our eyes are upon Thee." Jehoshaphat did not know what to do; he was altogether at his wits' end; and yet he took the wisest course a man could take. This is the beauty of it, that when we are fools, then we are wise; when we are weak, then we are strong; when we know not what to do, then we do the only right thing. O had Jehoshaphat taken any other course; had he collected an army, sent through Judah, raised troops and forged swords and spears, he would certainly have been defeated. But not knowing what to do, he did the very thing he should do: "Our eyes are upon Thee." "Thou must fight our battles; Thou must take the matter into Thy own hands. Our eyes are upon Thee, waiting upon Thee, looking up, and hoping in Thee, believing in Thy holy Name, expecting help from Thee, from whom alone help can come." But this is painful work to be brought to this point, "our eyes are upon Thee," implying there is no use looking to any

other quarter. It assumes that the soul has looked, and looked, and looked elsewhere in vain, and then fixed its eyes upon God as knowing that from Him alone all help must come. This I believe to be the distinctive mark of a Christian, that his eyes are upon God. On his bed by night, in his room by day, in business or at market, when his soul is in trouble, cast down, and perplexed, his eyes are upon God. From Him alone all help must come; none else can reach his case. All other but the help of God is ineffectual; it leaves him where it found him, it does him no good. We are never safe except our eyes are upon God. Let our eyes be upon Him, we can walk safely; let our eyes be upon the creature, we are pretty sure to slip and stumble.

"Our eyes are upon Thee." And O, how simple, suitable, complete, and blessed a remedy is this, when the Lord is pleased to open our eyes, and fix them on Himself. He must do it all. If the eyes are to be upon Him, He must first give us eyes; if lifted upon Him, He must raise them upwards; if kept upon Him, He must hold them waking. It is good to be in this spot. There are times and seasons, perhaps, when we seem to have no religion whatever; when we look, and look, and look, and cannot find a grain. Where is our spirituality? Where our heavenly affections? Where our prayerfulness of spirit? Where our tenderness of conscience? Where our godly fear? Where our meditations upon God's Word? We look, and look, and look; they seem gone. Now perhaps, in the midst of this uncertainty we are brought into some painful exercise, some affliction, some temptation, some apprehension, something that lies with weight and power upon the soul. Now is the time we want our religion. But it is gone, it is gone, leaving us empty, needy, naked, and bare; religion, as regards its blessedness and comfort, we seem to have none. This is emptying work; this is stripping the soul, as it were, to the very bone. But what a preparation to receive the religion which is from above! How the vessel must be emptied of the dirty water of creature religion, well rinsed, and washed out, to have the pure water of heavenly religion communicated from the divine fountain. God never mingles the pure stream of heavenly religion with the dirty, filthy water of our own creature religion. We must

be emptied of every drop, so to speak, of our natural religion, to have the holy and spiritual religion, which is from above, poured into the soul. But to look, and look, and look, and find nothing but emptiness, nakedness, barrenness, and destitution; to have a "great company" of enemies all coming against us, and we as weak as water; what an emptying for divine filling, what a stripping for divine clothing, and what a bringing down of self for the raising up of Christ! True religion consists mainly in two points: to be emptied, stripped, made naked and bare; and then to be clothed and filled out of Christ's fulness.

Thus, of all people the children of God are the weakest, and yet they are the only persons really strong; of all they are the most ignorant, yet they are the only wise; of all the most helpless, and yet they alone are effectually helped; of all the most hobbling, yet they alone have a good hope through God; of all perhaps in their feelings the most unbelieving, and yet are partakers, and they alone, of the grace of faith. "Great is the mystery of godliness;" a paradox is the life of a Christian; a mysterious path he is called upon to tread; and he can rightly learn it in the school of experience alone. By a series of lessons in the school of Christ the people of God have their religion burnt into their souls; and what they thus learn becomes a part of themselves. It is not lost on the road from chapel, nor left behind in the pew, nor shut up in the hymnbook till the following Sunday, nor dropped at the street-door. It is not a passing notion, nor an empty name, nor towering smoke, nor earth-born vapour; but a divine reality lodged by the hand of God Himself in the heart, which will shine more and more to the perfect day. Be not then discouraged, if the Lord is leading any of you in this path; say not, "a strange thing has happened unto you;" things you little thought of in times gone by. Does not the Lord lead the blind by a way they knew not? And in paths they have not seen? Does He not make crooked things straight before them, and rough places plain? Is not God in Christ alone to be our King, our Leader, our Help, our Hope, our All? It is a mercy to have something of the teaching of God in the soul, if it be only to empty it, at present no further than to strip and lay low; to take away every false covering, to bring down

into the dust of self-abasement, with the eyes upon the Lord, looking for and expecting a revelation of His mercy and love.

There are few who have got so far as this. There are few, comparatively speaking, who know they are nothing; few who are low enough for Christ to stoop down to; few who feel they are fallen among thieves, and want the good Samaritan to pass by and pour oil and wine into their wounds. There are very few who have got so far as to know their own sickness and their own sore. Yet would we hope there are those here whom the Lord is leading down into the valley; and though they are perhaps writing bitter things against themselves, their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. It is the poor and needy whom the Lord has respect unto, and those that humble themselves in God's own time and way shall be blessedly exalted.

A BELIEVER'S COLLOQUY WITH HIS SOUL

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, 19th July 1868.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Psalm 42:11

What a proof it is of the truth and inspiration of the word of God, that no sooner is the Lord pleased to quicken our souls into spiritual life, than we find the Bible to become our companion, counsellor, and friend. True, we might possibly before that time, from a sense of duty or out of custom, have read the Scriptures, and that diligently. We might have been taught them from childhood, and committed large portions to memory; or even have been able so far to understand them as to speak fluently upon the truths contained in them, and contend for the doctrines of grace against opponents. But though we might have done all this, and much more than this, for who can say how far nature may go?—yet for the most part, how listlessly and languidly was the word of God read by us; how little was its spiritual meaning understood; how much less were the solemn realities revealed in it believed or acted upon.

We might not have doubted the inspiration of the Bible, and might have regarded it with a degree of reverence as the word of God; but with all that outward respect, there was no real faith in our heart either to fear the threatenings, or to receive the promises. We never obtained through it any well-grounded hope in the mercy of God; we never felt from it any spiritual love to his name, or to any truth connected with the Person and work of Christ. Nor did it ever work in us any humility of mind, brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, or any obedience to God's will, or create any earnest desire to please or solemn fear to offend him. And thus, as regards what the word of God was to us, as to any saving or sanctifying effect upon our hearts or upon

our lives, it was a perfect blank to us, and we as great a blank to it.

But O what a change takes place in the soul's feelings towards the word of God when God is pleased to quicken it into divine life! Nor indeed need we wonder why there is such a marked revolution in our feelings toward it; for it is by the power of God's word upon the heart, that this wondrous change is effected. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (James 1:18) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23) "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." (Ps. 119:50) By that same word we were convinced of our sins; "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) By the power of that word also upon our consciences, we were, in due time, enabled to believe in the Son of God; for it is through his word applied to the heart with a divine power, that faith is raised up to believe in his name; and then it is, as the Lord said to his disciples, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63) And this spirit and life are the spirit and life of faith, and specially of that faith which embraces Him as the Son of God; for when he is pleased to apply his precious word to the heart, and in the power of that word to manifest himself, faith is raised up to receive his testimony, and thus his word is made Spirit and life to the soul. This made Jeremiah say: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." (Jer. 15:16) In a similar way, when the soul is cast down by reason of the many difficulties of the way, that word becomes its support. "My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word." (Ps. 119:81) When we are in difficulties or perplexities, that word becomes our counselor; as David found it: "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors." (Ps. 119:24) And again, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105)

And the counsel it gives us is good counsel, for it tells us how to act and what to do: bids us cast our care upon the Lord, for that he will sustain us; bids us be still and know that He is God; warns us not to fight our own battles, or go forth to meet the enemy in our own strength; but to watch, and pray, and wait for the Lord to appear.

If we are persecuted by our enemies as David was by Saul, when he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, it is by the power and support of that word we get strength to bear their cruel accusations and to stand firm against their attacks. This made David say, "They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts." (Ps. 119:87) If Satan come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord by the power of his word lifts up a standard against him. If we slip and start aside from the strait and narrow way, the word comes to restore us: "He restoreth my soul." (Ps. 23:3) for it is by believing God's promise of freely forgiving all iniquity, transgression, and sin, that our backslidings are healed and our souls brought back from bondage, carnality, and death. In fact it is by the power of his word upon our heart, that the whole work of grace upon the soul is carried on from first to last. By its promises we are drawn, by its precepts we are guided, by its warnings we are admonished, by its reproofs we are rebuked, by its rod we are chastened, by its support we are upheld; in its light we walk, by its teachings are made wise, by its revivings are renewed, and by its truth are sanctified. Not that the word of God can of itself do all or any of these things in us and for us; but in the hands of the Spirit, who works in and by it as his effectual instrument, all these gracious operations are carried on in the soul.

Now can we say this, or anything similar to this, of any other book? Other books may instruct or amuse: they may feed the intellect, charm the imagination, and cultivate the mind. But what more can they do? I do not mean by this to despise or set aside every other book but the Bible; for without books society itself, as at present constituted, could not exist; and to burn every book would be to throw us back into the barbarism of the Middle Ages.

Let, then, books have their place as regards this life: but what can they do for us as regards the life to come? What can our renowned authors, our choice classics, our learned historians, our great dramatists, or our eloquent poets do for the soul in seasons of affliction and distress? Can they heal a wounded conscience? Can they put away a sense of God's wrath? Can they restore the joys of salvation, when, through guilt and fear, they seem well nigh gone? Can they support a dying man upon his bed of sickness? Can they take away the sting of death and snatch victory from the grave? How powerless all human writings are in these circumstances. Is it not as Mr. Hart well says?

What balm could wretches ever find
In wit, to heal affliction?
Or who can cure a troubled mind
With all the pomp of diction?

Now here is the blessedness of the word of God, that when everything else fails, **that** comes to our aid under all circumstances, so that we never can sink so low as to get beyond the reach of some promise in the word of truth. We may come, and most probably shall come, to a spot where everything else will fail and give way but the word of God which for ever is settled in heaven. Then the word of grace and truth which reaches down to the lowest case, the word of promise upon which the Lord causes the soul to hope, will still turn towards us a friendly smile, and still encourage us under all circumstances to call upon the name of the Lord, and to hang upon his faithfulness who hath said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Mark 13:31) Thus, under circumstances the most trying to flesh and blood, where nature stands aghast and reason fails, there the word of God will come in as a counsellor to drop in friendly advice, as a companion to cheer and support the mind by its tender sympathy, and as a friend to speak to the heart with a loving, affectionate voice. We need not wonder, then, how the word of God has been prized in all ages by the family of God; for it is written with such infinite wisdom, that it meets every case, suits every circumstance, fills up every aching void, and is

adapted to every condition of life and every state both of body and soul.

These thoughts spring up in my mind in connection with my text. What that connection is may perhaps be more evident as I unfold it; but is not this a wonderful circumstance, that if your soul is cast down within you and your mind disquieted, and yet you are hoping in God and expecting him to appear, you have a companion in the word of God; and that our text assures you that there was one before you walking in the same path, and in whose heart the Spirit of God wrought feelings and desires similar to yours? Let us, then, see whether, as you compare the things that you pass through with the word of truth, you will not find a reflection of your experience, and an echo of your voice in the words of the Psalmist now before us.

We see in them a pathetic colloquy which David carries on with his soul; and that from this colloquy he gathers up hope and encouragement for himself. I shall, therefore, simply follow the order in which the words present themselves to our view, and shall

I. **First**, address myself to the consideration of David's **pathetic inquiry** to his soul: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?"

II. **Secondly**, I shall consider the **encouraging admonition**, which he addresses to his soul as thus cast down and disquieted: "Hope thou in God."

III **Thirdly**, the **confident expectation**, which he gathers up in this colloquy, that the dark cloud will pass away and the time come when he shall praise Him who was "the health of his countenance and his God".

I. Observe the tender and familiar way in which David converses with his own soul, as a tender and sympathising bosom companion.

(i) But how few, speaking comparatively, know that they have a soul which they can thus talk to. Indeed, I may say, that it is really a very great discovery when a man discovers, for the first time, that he has a soul in his breast. The great bulk of mankind, may we not indeed say, all who are destitute of divine life, do not really and truly know that they have a soul. This may seem harsh doctrine, but at any rate they act as if they had none. In fact, a man never really and truly discovers that he has a soul till he discovers that there is a God, nor does he ever discover that there is a God until a ray of divine light shines out of the fullness of God into his heart. I do not mean to say that men actually in so many words deny either the existence of the soul or the existence of God. But we must judge men from their actions; and if they act as if they had no soul to be saved or lost, and as if there were no God who would bring them into judgment, we must conclude that they do not believe either in heart, though they may not boldly and positively deny it in lip.

But a man never knows really and truly that he has a soul till there is life put into it; for a dead soul makes no movement in his breast, and is therefore not known to be there. It is like a stillborn child, which gives no sign or movement of life, and therefore is to its mother as if it were not. We need not wonder the child does not cry if it be dead; we need not marvel it does not move a limb if stillborn. How does the child make its existence known but by the cry and the movements of life? Thus it is in grace: we never know really that we have a soul till it is made alive unto God and cries unto him. Then we begin find for the first time, that we have a soul by the cry of life; and then our soul becomes a matter of the deepest interest to us; for we find that, according to the word of God, it must either be eternally saved or lost; and as we cannot separate enduring happiness or misery from the soul which is the seat of both, it becomes to us the most important thing that we have ever had to deal with. This brings us into an intimacy and a sympathy with it.

O what a tender part of a man his soul is, when God has put life and feeling into it; what a valuable part, in fact, the only valuable part, for it alone can never perish, it alone is the immortal part of man. Being, then, so tender and so valuable, lying so deeply hidden in the breast, and yet ever present and ever ready to speak and be spoken unto, an intimate friendship and a tender sympathy springs up between a man and his soul. Intimate is the friendship between brother and brother, between sister and sister, between friend and friend, and more intimate still between man and wife. But what is the intimacy, even of man and wife, the nearest, tenderest, of all relationships, compared with the intimacy that a man has with his own soul? How a man can talk to his soul, reason with it, comfort it, chide it, encourage it, remonstrate with it; and how the soul can talk again with him, listen to his words, re-echo them and answer them; how, sometimes, it will give heed to his counsel, at others, obstinately refuse even lawful comfort; as David speaks, "My soul refused to be comforted." (Ps. 77:2)

We need not, then, wonder that David and his soul talked together, both in our text and elsewhere, nor that he should seek to cheer it up; for if his soul were cast down, he was cast down. The sorrows of his soul were his sorrows, as the joys of his soul were his joys; the pangs his soul felt were his pangs, and its distress was his distress; and felt all the more because it touched such a tender and valuable part as the dear friend that dwelt in his breast. Not that I mean to separate a man from his soul, as though the soul was one thing and his consciousness of having a soul was another. Nor shall I plunge into the depths of metaphysics, or bring forward speculative ideas and imaginative notions. I wish to avoid all such vain ideas and foolish speculations, and merely take the broad ground that God takes here in bringing before us the language of David; for he evidently is set before us in the word of truth as talking with his soul, and asking it why it is cast down.

But, following out the analogy and carrying on the figure, the soul may be considered as answering his question; for if David said,

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" we may well conceive the soul may return him some answer, or else there could be no mutual converse or affectionate and sympathising colloquy between them. Now, if we may be allowed to listen to what the soul says, or if I, as an interpreter, may interpret to you its language, we may conceive it speaking thus: "I will tell thee David, why I am cast down; for I know that in thee I shall have a sympathising friend; I will not, therefore, keep back why I am cast down and why I am disquieted, for it will relieve me and may help to comfort you."

(ii) I shall, therefore, speaking as it were for the soul, endeavour to show various causes why it is often cast down and disquieted, and thus may be able to return some answer to David's anxious enquiry, which I will assume is often your own.

"One thing," says the soul, "which casts me down, is **guilt upon the conscience**"

The very idea of being cast down is that of a person thrown down from a high into a low place. Thus the soul had stood in pride and self-righteousness. It had no knowledge of the majesty or holiness of God, nor of the demands of his righteous law. But the entrance of God's word giving light, and the power of his grace giving life, the holiness of God is seen and the demands of the law are felt. Now the effect of this is to cast down the soul from its vain-confident, hypocritical, presumptuous security; and nothing casts it down so much as a load of guilt which is thus laid upon the conscience. I may be addressing myself, even now, to some individual who at this moment is suffering under distress of conscience, who knows the burden of guilt, and is cast down through the recollection of some sin or sins which he has committed, and the guilt of which has brought him into much distress and anxiety of mind.

Now, may I not say to such a one, "Why art thou cast down, O soul? Is there no remedy for thee in this cast-down state? Has not the Lord Jesus Christ shed his precious blood to put away sin

by the sacrifice of himself? Is there not in him a sufficiency, and with him, as the Scripture speaks, 'plenteous redemption?' Is there not in His blood an efficacy which cleanseth from all sin, and in His righteousness a fulfillment of the law, which perfectly justifies?" "Ah," says the soul, "there is, I know there is. On that point I am well satisfied. I do not doubt the efficacy of Christ's blood and righteousness. But what I want to feel is the application of that precious blood, the pardon-speaking voice of the Lord himself, the inward whisper, the sweet testimony, the gracious assurance, and the word from the Lord's own lips, that shall heal my guilty conscience, and pour oil and wine into my troubled spirit."

But let us hear the soul speaking again; for it has other things which cast it down: "What casts me down is **finding so much sin working** in my carnal mind, and manifesting itself in my fleshly members to bring forth fruit unto death. O that I could be holy, walk tenderly in the fear of God, get the better of besetting sins, never be entangled in, or overcome by, the power of temptation, so that I might live more as becometh a Christian, have more of the life and fear of God in my soul, and find less inward conflict, less opposition, and less evil, with a more abundant measure of the love of God shed abroad in my heart!" "Well, cast-down soul, thou art only cast down as most, if not all, of God's people have been in all ages, and are at the present time. It is the body of sin and death that we have to carry about with us, the depravity of our fallen nature, the lusts and abominations that lurk and work in our vile imagination, if they go no further, which give us all this trouble. How many are continually sighing and mourning because they have so little of the image of Christ stamped upon them, so little of the holiness of God made conspicuous in them, so little of that blessed sanctification of body, soul, and spirit, that we see in the word and strive after, and yet find so little carried on and carried out in ourselves."

But the soul speaks again, and says, "What casts me down is the **temptations** of Satan, the hurling in of his fiery darts, and the

stirring up of every vile abomination in the depths of my wicked nature; so that I seem at times to be worse than the devil himself. Where can the fear of God be in my heart, the life of Christ in my conscience, or the teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost within, to be so subject to these temptations and to find them so stir up the corruptions of my vile nature?"

But the soul has yet to speak, "O, **how long** have I been praying for a **manifestation** of Christ! How I have seen one after another delivered from bondage, doubt, and fear; and yet here I am, after long years of profession, much in the same spot. O I do not seem to get one step forward in the things of God, or get on as I see others do! O how my soul longs for a word from the Lord, if it were but one word; one smile, if it were but one faint smile; one turning of the Lord's face toward me; one breaking in of the light of his countenance; one manifestation of his mercy and love to my heart; one drop of his blood upon my conscience; one discovery of him so as to know that he is mine!"

But as the soul is still free to speak, and can almost say with Elihu, "I will speak that I may be refreshed," (Job 32:20) we will hear its voice speaking again: "I have great **troubles in Providence**, heavy trials in my family, am much exercised in my business, for all things seem against me, and this casts me down, for I think God is angry with me, and therefore his hand is gone out against me."

But let us hear its voice once more, and let it speak it may be for you, lest you should think yourself left out; "Do what I will, I **cannot be what I would**. I try to read the word, but seem neither to understand nor to believe it; I bend my knee before the throne, but have little access to the throne of grace; I come to hear, and often go away as I came, without any power, life, or feeling under the word to my heart; I talk to the people of God and hear them speak how the Lord appears for them here and there; but my mouth is silent, for I have nothing to tell them in return."

(iii) But what is the effect of the soul being, in these various ways, cast down? Disquiet. For David says, still addressing his soul, "And why art thou disquieted within me?" "O," the soul says, "there is no rest in my bosom! I cannot get that solid peace which I am looking for, and which Christ has promised he will give to his disciples as his own peace, his abiding legacy. But instead of feeling sweet peace, a holy calm of mind, producing submission to the will of God, reconciling me to the path of affliction, bowing my back to every chastening stroke, making me to rejoice even in tribulation, and conforming me to the suffering image of Christ; instead of this, I find rebellion, restlessness, disquietude, so as rarely to know a moment's solid rest or peace."

Somewhat in this way, then, in answer to the question, "Why art thou disquieted within me?" we may suppose the soul to say, "I have told you the things that cast me down; do they not afford sufficient reason to explain why I am disquieted within me?"

But let me now apply this more particularly to your case. Does not all this disquietude teach you that there is no solid rest nor peace except in the Lord?, Out of him all is disquiet, confusion, restlessness, and uneasiness. Now it is life within which makes us feel all this; and therefore, if you, or any of you, are thus cast down and your soul is thus disquieted within you, do not think you are traveling a path unknown to the family of God, or that yours is a solitary case. Depend upon it, you have many companions in this road besides the companionship of your own soul. And do you not see, that David traveled in the same path before you, and that God has left upon record the exercises of his soul, that they might encourage others who are similarly dealt with? Why should David have talked the matter over with his soul ages ago; and why should the Holy Ghost have left upon permanent record his conversation with his bosom friend? Why should he have removed the veil, which at the time hung over David's inmost thoughts and feelings, and brought to light his secret communing with his bosom friend, except to cheer,

comfort, and encourage those who should afterwards travel by the same path?

II.—But this brings us to the next point, in which I proposed to show how David **admonished** and **encouraged** his cast-down and disquieted soul: "**Hope thou in God**".

It is as if he had said, "Well, soul, thou hast told me thy mournful tale; thou has breathed thy sorrowful complaints in my ear;" I know all that concerneth thee; for there is not a secret pain which I do not see and feel too. If thou art cast down, so am I; and if thou art disquieted, I am disquieted with thee; for we are one in life, death, time, and eternity. And yet, O soul, it is all for thy benefit. Listen with me to the word of God and see if we cannot gather up thence some strength and support. Let me, then, give thee a word of exhortation, that thou shouldst not be so cast down or disquieted as to renounce thy hope. Satan would gladly, if he could, drive thee to the borders of despair; he would soon rob thee of every grain of hope, and fill thee with his own misery. But O my soul, thou must not listen to the enemy's subtle temptations, nor even to thine own distressing fears; for, by so doing, thou rather sidest with Satan than resistest him.

If cast down, remember this, that to be cast down, is not to be cast away. For his own wise purposes; God often suffers his people to be cast down; but he never casts them away. Has he not promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?" (Heb. 13:5) Has he not said, "I have engraven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me?" (Isai. 49:16) It is expressly declared: "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance." (Ps. 94:14) We may doubt and fear, and even say with David in the very Psalm before us, "Why dost thou cast me off?" or even plead with him, "O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?" The Lord still answers: "I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God." (Lev. 26:44)

Thou mayest be disquieted and have many reasons why sorrow fills thy heart, but thy very disquietude shows signs of life. Whence comes thy craving after God, thy panting after him, as the hart after the water brooks? Are not these the movements of divine life in thy bosom? Thus, thy very restlessness, like a child's disquietude after its mother in her absence, manifests that thou canst find no rest except in the bosom of the Lord. "Hope thou then in God." Do not give way to this casting down, as though thou wert sunk to rise no more; and be not so disquieted as to give up thy hope: for that is given thee to be thy anchor, sure and steadfast, to ride out this storm. Nothing is got by despondency but rebellion or self-pity; and these the Lord will never approve of or smile upon. Does he not say "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lam. 3:25, 26) And surely if it be good to hope, it must be bad to despond.

But as, according to our exposition, the soul told David why it was cast down, so we may in the same way assume David as giving the soul reasons why it should hope. We may thus listen to their secret colloquy; and it seems but fair, as we have heard one side of the question, that we should also hear the other. Let us, then, listen as if we heard David now speak: "Well, my soul, I have heard thy melancholy tale. I know it is all true, for I feel every word of it." But now listen to me, as I have listened to thee. And as thou hast poured thy mournful complaints into my ear, see if I can pour some comforting word into thine. As Thou hast told me that thou art so cast down as not to be able to rise, and so disquieted that thou canst get no rest, now let me tell thee how thou mayest, with God's help and blessing, stand upon thy feet and get rest and peace. I will not set thee a hard task to do in thine own strength, nor preach thee a long sermon on creature ability and the duty of faith. It shall all be summed up in four words, "**Hope thou in God.**" "Well," the soul may answer, "that is good advice; for I know by experience a little of the cheering sensations of hope; but must there not be some ground of my hope? for at present my eyes are so dim that I can scarcely

see any," But David answers, "Let me, then see for thee, O soul, and, like Jethro in the wilderness to the children of Israel, be to thee 'as eyes.'" I think I can give thee some good ground for thee to hope; and this shall be the first—

(i) That thou **art alive**. Now, consider **who** made thee alive, O soul, which art thus cast down, and **when** thou wert first thrown down from thy former standing. Wert thou so cast down in days past? Was sin thy burden in times gone by? Was thy mind disquieted for want of the blood of sprinkling, of a revelation of Christ, of a shedding abroad of God's love, of a manifestation of mercy? What, then, has made thee to be disquieted? Thou wert not always so, but found pleasure and happiness, in the world. Must it not be, then, because thou hast life within; and if God gave thee life as his own free gift, if he had compassion upon thee when thou wert dead in sin and far from him by wicked works, will he leave thee now when, he has taught thee to fear his great name, and to worship him in spirit and truth?

He sees it good thou shouldst be cast down. Thou wert getting very proud, O soul. The world had got hold of thy heart. Thou wert seeking great things for thyself. Thou wert secretly roving away from the Lord. The Lord has sent thee these trials and exercises and allowed these temptations to fall upon thee, to bring thee down from thy state of false security. Thou wert too much lifted up in self. The high tree had to come down, that the low tree might be exalted; the green tree to be dried up, that the dry tree might be made to flourish. Therefore, O soul, thou needest not wonder that these dispensations should have come upon thee in providence or in grace to cast thee down. Rather bless his name that thou art cast down; for when there is casting down there will be lifting up. It is a good thing to bear the yoke in one's youth: for if never cast down, thou wilt never be exalted. Write not, therefore, bitter things against thyself, O soul, because thou art cast down and disquieted. These are the teachings of God in thy conscience; and therefore, "Hope thou in God."

(ii) Besides this, O soul, let me give thee another ground of

hope. Has not the Lord **appeared** for thee **in days past**? Canst thou not remember that signal opening in providence when thou wert so exercised and scarcely knewest how matters would be with thee, but didst pray to the Lord in thy distress and he appeared for thee in a very conspicuous way? Hast thou forgotten all that, O soul? And canst thou not remember when the Lord applied some promise to thee, when sinking and fainting, and ready to despair: gave thee power to look and live; power to believe and find support; so as to receive out of his fullness grace for grace? Then is he not the same God now as he was then? And has he not given thee a sure pledge thereby that he can do as much and more, for thee again now? Should not this encourage thee to hope?

(iii) But let me give thee another ground on which thou mayest hope. Dost thou forget, O soul, that the way to heaven is a very **strait and narrow** path—too narrow for thee to carry thy sins in it with thee? Dost thou not know there is a fire to try every man's religion, of what sort it is? And canst thou expect never to go into the furnace in which God has chosen his Zion? If thou art to walk in the strait and narrow path, must thou meet with no trials and temptations there? If thou art come out of the world and livest godly in Christ Jesus, will not the world persecute and hate thee? Art thou to have a different path from that in which the Lord Jesus himself has walked before thee? Then hope in God. Do not cast away thy confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, but cast thy anchor boldly within the veil, and hope in God.

If thou wilt foolishly ever be looking at thy miserable self and seeking to extract some comfort thence, thou wilt be ever disappointed. Instead then of looking at thyself and at all thy badness, vileness, sin, guilt, and misery look up and hope in God. Has he not given us a thousand encouragements to do so? See his tender pity and compassion for the poor and needy. See what rivers of mercy, grace, and love are in him. See his all-seeing eye, ever watching over thee and knowing the worst of thy case and all thy misgivings. View his all-powerful hand, ever ready to be stretched out on thy behalf. And now, my soul, when thou

hast taken this view of God by faith, as manifesting himself in his dear Son, hope thou in him.

But now, leaving for a moment this assumed address of David to his soul, let me speak in my own language to you who can sympathise with what I have just laid before you, from a feeling experience of it. May I not upon this point ask you if you do not feel the benefit of this advice of David? Have you not proved, again and again, that when you are enabled to look out of your sinkings and sorrows, castings down and disquietude, and cast anchor within the veil, you find a secret and sacred support given unto you? What does the sailor do when he comes to a lee shore and the wind is blowing hard and strong upon it, so that in a short time his ship might be upon the rocks? Does he say, "O I never shall get over this storm; I shall certainly be shipwrecked?" What does he do? Why, instead of wringing his hands in despairing misery, he lets the anchor go, and it at once takes hold of the ground and holds the ship up in the storm.

Now if ever you have known anything of hoping in God, you have an anchor on board. God's own gift to you, and meant not for ornament, but for use. Indeed, it is by the possession of this anchor, that the good ship built, owned, and chartered by God is distinguished from the man-built bark which, concerning faith, makes shipwreck. Now if you are enabled by the power of God's grace to cast your anchor thus within the veil, you will find a secret strength communicated thereby which will enable you to ride out, every storm. I am not speaking in the language of free will, as some might think who cannot distinguish sounds, but of free grace, the language of solid, spiritual experience, and what every child of God knows more or less by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost. Such know what a blessed relief a good hope through grace gives, when, as an anchor of the soul, it is cast within the veil.

But I shall return to our colloquy between David and his soul; for it now begins to receive the word from his lips. The soul, had told David its complaint, and David, like a wise counselor, had bidden

it hope in God. And now the soul cheered and comforted by his encouraging word, begins to answer him: "Well, David, I feel great comfort from your words; for they drop with sweet power into my inmost spirit; and I do believe you are a true prophet, for I have a witness within that they are agreeable to the word of truth, as well as to my own experience."

Now as the soul thus encourages its hope, for there is an encouraging of faith and hope, as well as a damping of them, then comes with it a measure of confidence, so that it says, "Well, after all I believe that I shall praise Him: I begin to feel almost as if I could bless and praise him now. I feel so lifted up; I feel the anchor to be so firm, and my heart seems so strengthened and comforted, that really, David, it is as though I must begin to bless and praise the Lord already. There I was so cast down and disquieted, as if nothing could raise me up; but thy words have come with such sweetness and savour into my breast, that I do believe I shall yet praise him. And I am sure that none in heaven or earth, as I often tell him, will have such cause as I."

Now tell me whether you have not been in this spot sometimes? You have gone upon your knees so cast down, so tried and distressed in your mind, almost as if there was not a grain of hope in your soul; but you have poured out your complaints before the Lord, and shown him all your troubles: and to your surprise and astonishment did there not come, almost suddenly, a sweet movement of life and grace upon your soul? In looking back to the days gone by, a blessed promise which was once given you came over the secret depths of your heart and raised up such a sweet hope, that it seemed as if you must burst out in blessing and praising the Lord. How these things, in their various changes, these ups and downs, ins and outs, sinkings and risings, chilling fears and encouraging hopes, ever keep the life of God warm and tender, living and stirring, in a man's breast. By these alternations of sun and shade, these vicissitudes of summer and winter, for the Lord has made both, (Ps. 74:17) these storms and

calms, these nights and days, the plant of divine life grows and thrives in the soul.

What would a river be unless it were ever flowing? What would the sea itself be unless it were continually agitated by the restless tide and ever-moving waves? A mass of corruption, giving forth, instead of healthy exhalations which, distilled in clouds, water the earth, noxious steams, breathing disease and death. So what would the soul become if there were no movement of divine life, no castings down or liftings up, no mourning or rejoicing, no hopes or fears? What would it be? A stagnant pool, in which there would be nothing but a mass of weeds and rank vegetation; like a village pond mantled over with duck-weed. But these castings down, this disquietude, these movements of God upon the spirit, these various exercises, trials, and temptations, keep the soul sweet, preserve it from becoming stagnant and stinking, and maintain the life of God in its vigour and purity.

There is reason, therefore even to praise God for being cast down, for being disquieted. How it opens up parts of God's word which you never read before with any feeling. How it gives you sympathy and communion with the tried, exercised children of God. How it weans and separates you from dead professors. How it brings you in heart and affection out of the world that lieth in wickedness. And how it engages your thoughts, time after time, upon the solemn matters of eternity, instead of being a prey to every idle thought and imagination, and tossed up and down upon a sea of vanity and folly. But, above all, when there is a sweet response from the Lord, and the power of divine things is inwardly felt, in enabling us to hope in God, and looking forward to praise his blessed name, then we see the benefit of being cast down and so repeatedly and continually disquieted.

III.—But I shall pass on to David's **confident expectation**: "For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

These sudden turns as we may call them, from the lowest despondency to the highest confidence, from the depths of disquietude to the fullest assurance, are very frequent in the Psalms. And perhaps the very history of David's life, with such sudden and marked alternations of adversity and prosperity in providence, may help to account for a similar experience in grace. But be it so or not, the fact is plain, that a distinguishing feature in David's experience was the sudden changes which came over his soul.

But you will observe, that in his confidence, he is rather looking forward to the future than enjoying it at the present. And is not this the very nature of hope? "Hope that is seen," says the Apostle, "is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24) Though not yet fully blessed or delivered, he therefore looked forward in faith and hope to the time when he should be so, and be enabled to praise God. He could not do it then; but he firmly believed the time was coming when he both could and would.

But observe, also, the expression, "Who is the health of my countenance." By this we may understand the restoration of his soul to the enjoyment of God's manifested favour and presence, which always communicates such happiness and peace as proclaims itself by the very countenance itself. Disease is always marked in a man's countenance. No man can have organic, or even ordinary disease, without his face showing it to the experienced eye, and even often discovering the very nature of the complaint itself. "How well you look!" "How ill you look!" These common expressions show how health and sickness manifest themselves in a man's countenance, even to ordinary observation.

When God is pleased then, to drop his word with power into a man's heart, and restore his soul so as to enable him to bless and praise his holy name, God becomes the health of his countenance. The former sickliness of his soul manifested itself in his very face. He could not smile, and sometimes could hardly lift

up his head. Feeling himself such a guilty wretch, it seemed to him as if everybody could read his sins in his countenance. Full of doubt and fear, he was often scarcely able to look up before God and man; and his heavy eye, and drooping eyelid, betrayed the feelings of his soul. We see how even natural joy bespeaks itself in the face. How it gives freshness and animation to the cheek and lustre to the eye; but how much more is this true of spiritual joy for as that gives inward health of soul, it manifests itself in a man's natural countenance, and his happiness overflows as it were into his eyes, and features, and face.

But we may take the words as applicable to a man's **spiritual** countenance; for your soul, like your body, has its diseases that cast a sickly hue over its face. Sometimes your soul is very sick, languid, and feeble, unable to take any exercise, almost loathing food, and much deprived of rest. Now this will soon begin to tell upon your soul's countenance. Spiritual eyes can read it in your appearance, spiritual ears hear it in your prayers and lamentations, spiritual hearts can feel it and sympathise with you, as knowing themselves what it is to be similarly afflicted. And you yourselves, as knowing so intimately what is the matter with your own soul, need no one to tell you that it is in a sickly state; that you are not as you were in time past, full of life and vigour in the things of God, but have got into a languishing, unhealthy condition. Now, this casts you down and makes you disquieted.

But by and by, when a healing word comes, it removes this sickness out of your soul; it brings, as the Lord promises, "health and cure;" and the soul once more begins to walk with life and vigour in the ways of God. Being thus renewed and revived, it reads and understands the word of God with more life and feeling; hears it with more savour, unction, and power; knows more of sweet access to the throne of grace, and enjoys the things of God more experimentally and believingly. It is in this way, that God is the health of our countenance; for it is his grace and his blessing that gives health to the sickly soul. He therefore said of himself, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." (Ex. 15:26) And David well knew this, when he said: "Bless the Lord, O my

soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." (Ps. 103:2, 3) A healthy soul is a greater blessing than a healthy body. Perhaps, the greatest of all temporal troubles, is an unhealthy body; and the worst of all spiritual troubles, is an unhealthy soul. And conversely, the greatest of temporal mercies is a healthy body, and the greatest of spiritual mercies is a healthy soul.

And then come those few and simple words which crown all, "And my God." What, when you have been so cast down, when so disquieted, when so ready to abandon all hope—what, will you ever be able to say, "My God?" Yes, for he is your God when cast down and disquieted; your God when you could scarcely feel any persuasion of interest in his love; your God in all the changing scenes through which you have passed; and your God so as never to leave or forsake you for his name's sake. How this sums up every thing, "My God;" for if he is your God, all he has and all he is yours.

Now, what mercies these are to embrace, and what blessings these are to enjoy. May I not well say: "O what is all that earth calls good and great, compared with being able to believe that God is your God; your God in life, your God in death; your God in time, and your God in eternity! O this is a religion that will do to live and die by; for if you only have God for the health of your countenance, and the Holy Ghost seals that home with power upon your heart, have you not every reason to praise God, even now, for every dispensation of his providence and grace, and every ground of confident expectation that you will for ever bless him when time itself shall be no more?"

Dialogue between a Believer and his Soul.—Psalm 42:11

Believer:

COME, my soul, and let us try,
For a little season,
Every burden to lay by;
Come, and let us reason.

What is this that casts thee down?
Who are those that grieve thee?
Speak, and let the worst be known;
Speaking may relieve thee.

Soul:

O, I sink beneath the load
Of my nature's evil!
Full of enmity to God;
Captived by the devil;
Restless as the troubled seas;
Feeble, faint, and fearful;
Plagued with every sore disease;
How can I be cheerful?

Believer:

Think on what thy Saviour bore
In the gloomy garden.
Sweating blood at every pore,
To procure thy pardon!
See him stretched upon the wood,
Bleeding, grieving, crying,
Suffering all the wrath of God,
Groaning, gasping, dying!

Soul:

This by faith I sometimes view,
And those views relieve me;
But my sins return anew;
These are they that grieve me.
O, I'm leprous, stinking, foul,
Quite throughout infected;
Have not I, if any soul,
Cause to be dejected?

Believer:

Think how loud thy dying Lord
Cried out, "It is finished!"

Treasure up that sacred word,
Whole and undiminished;
Doubt not he will carry on,
To its full perfection,
That good work he has begun;
Why, then, this dejection?

Soul:

Faith when void of works is dead;
This the Scriptures witness;
And what works have I to plead,
Who am all unfitness?
All my powers are depraved,
Blind, perverse, and filthy;
If from death I'm fully saved,
Why am I not healthy?

Believer:

Pore not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower;
Look to Jesus, kind as strong
Mercy joined with power;
Every work that thou must do,
Will thy gracious Saviour
For thee work, and in thee too,
Of his special favour.

Soul:

Jesus' precious blood, once spilt,
I depend on solely,
To release and clear my guilt;
But I would be holy.

Believer:

He that bought thee on the cross
Fully purge away thy dross;
Make thee a new creature.

Soul:

That he can I nothing doubt,
Be it but his pleasure.

Believer:

Though it be not done throughout,
May it not in measure?

Soul:

When that measure, far from great,
Still shall seem decreasing?

Believer:

Faint not then, but pray and wait,
Never, never ceasing.

Soul:

What when prayer meets no regard?

Believer:

Still repeat it often.

Soul:

But I feel myself so hard.

Believer:

Jesus will thee soften.

Soul:

But my enemies make head.

Believer:

Let them closer drive thee.

Soul:

But I'm cold, I'm dark, I'm dead.

Believer:

Jesus will revive thee.

Joseph Hart (**Hymn 780—Gadsby's selection**)

THE BELIEVER'S GAIN HIS LOSS, THE BELIEVER'S LOSS HIS GAIN

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 24, 1845

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Philippians 3:7-9

There are two instances of sovereign grace which shine forth in most conspicuous lustre in the New Testament. One is, the conversion of the thief on the cross: and the other, the call by grace and the call to the ministry, of Saul of Tarsus. I do not mean to say that every call of the Spirit is not a manifestation of sovereign grace. I do not wish to imply that one heart is a whit better than another; or that one man is more an instance of sovereign grace than another man. But there were circumstances that surrounded the call of these two men, which heightened, if heightened it can be, the superaboundings of sovereign grace. And the Lord, by these two men, seems to have given us two instances—one, of human nature in its worst form, and the other, of human nature in its best form. He has held up to our view man in the depth of profanity, and man in the height of profession: to shew, that neither the depth of profanity, nor the height of profession, is beyond the reach of almighty, distinguishing, and superabounding grace.

In the **thief upon the cross**, we see human nature in its worst light. We behold a malefactor stained with a thousand crimes: we view him at last brought by a strong hand of the law to suffer merited punishment: yet we see him quickened and made alive

by sovereign grace, brought to believe in the crucified Lord of life and glory, and taken by the blessed Lord himself into paradise, to be for ever with him.

In **Saul**, we see a pharisee of the pharisees, carrying natural religion to its greatest height, adorned with everything virtuous, moral, honourable, and consistent. We see this man, who had gone as far to the extreme of pharisaism, as the thief had gone to the extreme of profanity, arrested by the same almighty power, and brought to the same point—to fall into the dust as a poor sinner, and be saved by the manifestation to his soul of Christ's blood and righteousness.

For the instruction and edification of God's people in all time, the apostle Paul was inspired and directed to leave his experience upon record. And this experience of the apostle we have under different phases. In three different places in the Acts of the Apostles we have his call by grace circumstantially detailed, accompanied, in his case, with a call to the ministry. In the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, we have his experience as a Christian man set forth, as distinct from his apostleship; there he describes the conflict he had with sin, the daily struggle betwixt nature and grace, and the power of these two opposing principles. In the second epistle to the Corinthians, in various portions scattered up and down, we have his experience as an apostle—the trials and consolations connected with his ministry—described. And in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians, and more especially in the passage before us this morning, we have him in three distinct points of view—three distinct appearances, or phases, as I may call them. We have **Paul past, Paul present**, and what **he hoped to be**, or what I may perhaps call Paul future.

In other words, I shall endeavour, if God enable me, to unfold this passage this morning, by shewing,

I.—What Paul was in the time to which he referred as past.

II.—What Paul is in the time of which he is now speaking. And,

III.—What Paul hoped to be in time to come.

These three distinct features, for the sake of clearness, I shall endeavor this morning to unfold, as various portions of the experience of the apostle Paul. And in so doing, I shall try to run a parallel betwixt your experience and his experience, that you may see whether the Lord has wrought in your heart and conscience any measure of that which he wrought in the heart of Paul.

I.—Our first point will be to look at **what the apostle was**. This we may divide into two distinct periods: first, what he was **before** the Lord quickened his soul: and **secondly**, what he was **after** he was so quickened.

1. Paul, as I before hinted, seems to have carried natural religion up to its very height. Do we want an instance of what the flesh is in its most religious form? in its brightest shape, distinct from, and independent of, the grace of God? Do we want to see how far a profession of religion can be carried out? We have it in the case of the apostle Paul. What does he say of himself? He is trying to put down all fleshly confidence; he therefore points out what a child of God is: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Every child of God, he says, has three distinct marks stamped upon him: first, "he worships God in the Spirit;" secondly, "he rejoices in Christ Jesus;" and thirdly, "he has no confidence in the flesh." But some might answer, 'It is very well for you, Paul, to talk of having no confidence in the flesh; for you never had anything to trust to, or boast in.' 'Stop,' replies the apostle, 'if there be any man in the world who might have had confidence in the flesh, who might have trusted in natural religion in its highest, brightest, and best form, I am the man.' Then he tells us what those things were in which he could have trusted, and which

appear to have been the grand points in those days in which the religious people, independent of the grace of God, the strict devotees of that period, trusted for eternal life. Indeed, the Jews used to say, 'If only two men of the human race were saved, one would be a scribe, and the other a Pharisee.'

He tells us then, that he was "circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews." These were what we may call, in the language of our day, his 'religious privileges.' Under this head, he could boast that he was "circumcised the **eighth** day," the traditional law allowing circumcision from the eighth day after birth till the twelfth, but attaching peculiar sanctity to the eighth; that he was not a Gentile, but a real Jew; that he was not from apostatizing Israel, but of the tribe of Benjamin, which adhered to Judah when the ten tribes departed; that he was not a Hellenistic, Gentilizing Hebrew, who had forsaken the language of his fathers, and adopted, in some measure, Grecian customs, but was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," a Jew throughout: born not only of two Hebrew parents, but following out to the very letter the strict obligations of the ceremonial law, as well as all the traditions of the elders.

With respect to his religious education and religious profession, he could boast that he was "as touching the law, a Pharisee;" the strictest of the sects; not a monastic Essene, not an infidel Sadducee; but a rigid, austere, and unbending Pharisee. And to shew that he had embraced this strict pharisaism, not from hypocrisy, but from real fleshly enthusiasm—that his heart was thoroughly in it—that it was not to deceive others, but that he was really deceived himself—to shew that he had something more than mere outside profession, that his creed had touched his natural conscience, he shewed his "zeal by persecuting the church," by abhorring, hating, and imprisoning the disciples of the Lord of life. As he told King Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth: which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave

my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:9-11).

As respecting his life and deportment before men, he could say, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless;" that is, outward righteousness. There are two kinds of righteousness connected with the law; one **of** the law, another **in** the law. These are not indeed distinct in their nature, for one comprehends the other; but they are distinct as regards our experience of them. For instance, the righteousness of the law condemns an adulterous look as adultery; but the righteousness **in** the law condemns but the outward act. He was not, then, blameless touching the righteousness **of** the law, in its spirituality and purity; but as touching the righteousness **in** the law, in its observances and commands, he was blameless—leading a most upright, consistent, virtuous, and honourable life. Surely if heaven could be gained by religious privileges, a strict life, and good works, Saul of Tarsus had, a fairer claim than anybody.

Now, you will observe that the strict religious professors of those days rested for salvation upon those things which the apostle enumerates as meeting in himself. And can we not find a strict parallel now? Things are changed with time: but man's heart is not changed, and the fleshly confidence of human nature is not altered. Can we not then find now a precise parallel? Let us endeavor to trace it out. Is it not the boast of many that they are born of religious parents? Is not **that** a present parallel with being—"a Hebrew of the Hebrews?" Do not others glory that they were sprinkled in infancy by a minister of the Established Church? Is not that parallel with "circumcised the eighth day?" Do not others boast, that they have had a strictly religious education, been trained up to piety from childhood, been instructed in the Catechism and all things taught at the Sunday school, and been carefully watched over by parents and guardians? Is not this a parallel with Paul sitting at the feet of Gamaliel? Do not others rely for salvation upon attending church or chapel regularly,

never omitting the ordinance or the sacrament, being constant in their prayers night and morning, reading so many chapters of the Bible every day, and living according to the strictest laws that man has devised for them, or they can devise for themselves? Is not this a parallel with "touching the law, a Pharisee?" Are there not others who believe that they are doing God service when they speak against the doctrines of grace, when they persecute Christ's people, when they hate vital godliness as manifested in the experience, or carried out in the life of God's family? Is not this a parallel with, "concerning zeal, persecuting the church"?

And do not others expect heaven as the reward of their good works, and pride themselves upon leading a moral, upright, perfectly consistent life? Is not this parallel with "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless"?

Now upon these things, as I have observed, in their various shapes, many are resting for salvation, from the most bigoted Churchman to the most Radical Dissenter. Hundreds and thousands are resting upon these things, as a means of climbing to heaven, feeling persuaded that by their privileges and their duties they shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. And had God suffered Paul to live and die in this delusion—had he been stretched upon a deathbed the day before his journey to Damascus. I believe in my conscience, he would have gone out of life fully persuaded he was going to heaven, and never have found out his mistake till the lightnings of divine vengeance had struck his horrified soul down to eternal perdition. He was so wrapped up in a lie, that nothing but the voice of the Lord of life and glory from heaven, and the arrow of conviction from the divine quiver penetrating into his conscience, could bring him out of the delusion in which he was held so fast, and strip him out of the garment in which he was so closely wrapped.

Where Paul was, thousands are: and only a few, a remnant "according to the election of grace," the "vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory," are brought out of this state by a work of

grace upon their hearts, so as to be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation.

But having looked at Paul as he was **before** the Lord called him, let us see now,

2. What Paul was **after** the Lord called him. If you look narrowly and closely at the words of the text, you will observe two distinct tenses. "What things **were** gain to me, those I counted loss." Here we have the **past** tense. "Yea, doubtless, and **I count** all things." There we have the **present** tense. And in the last clause of the same verse, we have both the **past** and present: "For whom **I have suffered** the loss of all things, and **do count** them but dung that I may win Christ." The apostle, then, speaks of what he had felt, and does now feel—what he had suffered, and does now suffer, drawing a distinction between what he **was** in time past, and what he **is** in time present. Thus, when the Lord was pleased to arrest this persecutor on his errand of blood, and opened up to his conscience the spirituality of the law in those three days when Paul was at Damascus, he neither ate nor drank. The law was then doing its work in his conscience, shewing itself in all its strict purity; it was laying bare the hidden corruptions that had before been covered over with the varnish of profession and self-righteousness: it was stripping him, and opening up the chambers of imagery within, carrying a death stroke to everything boasted of and trusted in.

Now this, every child of God, every quickened vessel of mercy is, more or, less, brought to feel, though he may not be three days and nights, without eating or drinking, under the burning agonies of a broken law. The Lord appears to have done the work quickly in the case of Paul: and, by doing it quickly, made up by depth and intensity, while it lasted, for the short time of duration. I believe this is frequently the case with the Lord's people. All must be brought to the same point: but where the work is more rapid, it is usually more intense. The very same work of conviction and condemnation, emptying and stripping, wounding and slaughtering, breaking down and laying low, may be spread over

a number of years: and, being spread over a longer space, is not so intense in feeling as when carried on in a shorter space of time—the duration of the feeling during a longer period making up for the intensity of the feeling when carried on in a shorter space.

But, however, this was the effect—"what things were gain" to him, he was brought to count "loss for Christ." He was made to see that they were not helps, but positive hindrances. He does not say, 'I count them as little value, but as absolute loss.' To use an illustration: it is like a tradesman, who is obliged to transfer a debt which he thought to be in his favour, to the opposite side of the ledger—an account to pay, instead of to receive. Thus, when the depth of his hypocrisy was laid open, when his own righteousness was thoroughly held up to his view, when he came to see light in God's light, and had the hidden corruptions of his heart made bare—then he began to see that his former acquirements, so far from being gain, were absolute loss; that so far from being so many rounds in the ladder to take him up to the Lord, they were so many rounds in the ladder to take him deeper into the pit; that every step which he took in a way of fleshly righteousness, instead of being a step to heaven, was a step from heaven, and instead of bringing him nearer to God, carried him farther from God. So that, absolutely and actually, with all his profession, he was farther from God, in a worse state, than the malefactor upon the cross, there expiring by the strong hand of the law on account of the crimes he had done.

Now, when a man once sees this, he is brought into his right spot: and he is never brought into his right spot before. When he sees that all his religious privileges, all the doctrines his head is stored with, all his piety and uprightness, all the consistency of life in which he had gloried: that all these things were absolutely hindrances instead of helps, really loss instead of gain: that set him farther from heaven than nearer heaven—then he drops into his right spot. But how should this be? I will tell you. Because he trusted in them. If I am going, say to the East end of the Town, and being unacquainted with the metropolis, take a turn leading

to the West end, I may walk very confidently forward: but I have taken a wrong direction: and every step I take carries me from the wished-for point. I cannot get right till I turn completely round. So spiritually: while a man is traveling on in self-righteousness, every step takes him farther from heaven, and farther from the Lord Jesus Christ; and becomes to him positive and absolute loss. But till his eyes are opened to see this, he never can be in his right spot. Man will cleave to the flesh in one form or another as long as he can; he never will give it up till brought to this point, to count everything connected with the flesh not merely not as gain, but absolute loss.

3. But there was another thing wrought in the apostle's mind to bring him to this spot—**a view of the Lord of life and glory by the eye of living faith.** He had a personal knowledge in his heart and conscience of the glorious Person, atoning blood, dying love, and justifying righteousness of the precious Immanuel.

These two things are absolutely needful to bring us to the spot where the Lord brought Paul. There are two indispensable operations of the Spirit upon the heart to produce in us a saving work. All stripping will not do; all emptying will not suffice; all slaughtering is not enough. These are necessary to bring us down; but we want something else to raise us up, and bring comfort. We want something sweet and precious, as well as something bitter and painful; the honey and the honeycomb, the milk and wine of gospel grace, as well as the gall and bitterness of sin felt in a wounded conscience. And this is summed up in the words, **"The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."** Such a sweet application, such a blessed discovery, such a divine manifestation to the eyes of the understanding, to the heart and conscience of the believer is needed, as shall bring him to know the Lord of life and glory as all his salvation and all his desire, and make him to feel in the very depths of his conscience before a heart-searching God that Jesus is in his eyes the "altogether lovely."

Now, if the Lord has made your conscience tender let me, as a friend ask you to search into your experience upon these two points. Depend upon it, they are absolutely indispensable: they are not to be smuggled over, not to be wrapped up, not to be obscured: they are to be plain and conspicuous in a man's soul. And only so far as they are plain and conspicuous in a man's soul, has he any solid testimony, any good hope through grace, that he has "the root of the matter" in him. These two points, then, must be stamped on every quickened sinner's conscience in order to give him an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. He must have been brought down, stripped and emptied, and have put his mouth in the dust as a poor guilty sinner. And then he must have had such a discovery to the eyes of his understanding, such a revelation in his soul of the glorious Person, atoning blood, and justifying righteousness of the Lord of life and glory, as shall have raised up a measure of faith, hope, and love towards this blessed Lord; so as to create some embraces of him in the arms of affection, some cleaving to him with purpose of heart, some delight in him as altogether precious, altogether glorious, altogether lovely.

These are the two grand jewels in a believer's heart. The work of the Spirit in stripping, and the work of the Spirit in clothing; the work of the Spirit in pulling down, and the work of the Spirit in raising up; the work of the Spirit in the law, and the work of the Spirit in the gospel; the work of the Spirit in making self loathed, and the work of the Spirit in making Jesus loved.

II.—We have looked at Paul as speaking of himself in the **past tense**; let us now pass on to consider him **speaking of himself in the present tense**, or the experience he was then going through. I have before pointed out a difference in the tenses, "Yea, doubtless, and **I count** all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." If you observe, he takes here a wider scope than he had taken in the preceding verses. He said there, "**What things were gain to me:**" but he goes further in his present experience; "yea doubtless, and **I count all things.**" Before he merely counted those things to be

loss that he once boasted in: but as he advanced further in the knowledge of his own heart, as he had greater discoveries of the glorious perfections of Christ, as he was led down deeper into the quagmire of felt corruption, and led higher up into views of the glorious Immanuel, he gets into another branch of spiritual arithmetic: he embraces a wider scope of calculation: he now says. **"I count all things."** 'There was a time when I looked at many things that I highly prized, and them I counted a dead loss: but now I am brought further: for I count everything in the world loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

You see, until a man is brought into the gospel conflict, his vision is for the most part dim and obscured. There are two conflicts: one, a legal conflict; the other, a gospel conflict. While under the legal conflict, the eye is directed to the things, which were once counted as gain; our own righteousness, our own strength, our own creature performances, our fleshly religion; and all come to nought. But when the gospel conflict comes, it is a different thing. A legal conflict is when there is no knowledge of Christ in the soul; but in a gospel conflict, we are brought to this point, not merely to count as dung and loss the things so esteemed of old, but everything in the world, however enchanting, beautiful, attractive, ensnaring, and alluring—to count all things as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

Every man has his own peculiar temptations, his own natural inclinations, his own besetments; each has his various objects of pursuit, which he makes his idol. There is the studious man bent upon languages and sciences; the industrious tradesman buried in business; the man elevated a little above the ordinary mass of God's people, striving to add to, or preserve his respectability. Each person has a disposition peculiar to himself. Now, under the law, we may renounce many things, and yet not renounce these bosom idols. We may renounce our own strength, our own righteousness, our own wisdom; renounce many things in the flesh, and put them aside; but yet, after all, a whole nest of bosom idols may be untouched. Just a few hornets may have

been struck down as they buzzed out of their holes, but a whole nest of them remains in the deeps of man's depraved heart, which must be burnt out, that the Lord of life and glory may reign supreme.

Look into your heart. Have you not some idol in your bosom—your science, your business, your child, your wife, your husband? The idol self, in some shape or another? Is there not something which day after day catches your eye, entangles your feet, draws you from the Lord, overcomes you, proves your bosom idol that you cannot master? I know it is so with me. There is one thing or another working perpetually: there is an idolatrous heart, an adulterous eye, a roving mind, a lusting imagination perpetually going after something which conscience tells me is hateful to God, and hateful to myself in my right mind.

Now, in order to be brought to the point to which God brought Paul, to esteem all things as loss, to count them as dung, and trample them under foot for the sake of the Lord of life and glory, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," we need two distinct operations of the Spirit upon our soul. We need, first of all, to be put into the furnace; we need to have our faith tried as by fire; we need to have temptations, afflictions, perplexities, heartrending grief's and sorrows, in order to overthrow, destroy, put down, and subdue those cursed idols in our heart, which are the root of all sin. It is not your outward profession; your coming to chapel regularly; your going to hear a man preach certain doctrines, or liking to hear certain experiences traced out. A man may do all this, and yet wrap up an idol in his bosom all the week long; be wandering after his lusts all the day, and come with a smooth countenance on Lord's Day morning, as though all his heart and soul were with the Lord of life and glory.

Such is the heart of every man. We must go then into the furnace of affliction; we must have trials, exercises, perplexities, the sharp rod of chastisement, painful, sometimes heartrending afflictions, to pluck up these dunghill gods, and overthrow these

idols in our heart. This is the reason why so many of God's people are in affliction—why one has such a suffering body; another, such trying circumstances; a third, such rebellious children; a fourth, such a persecuting husband; a fifth, such opposition from the world; a sixth, such temptations from the devil; a seventh, such an acquaintance with the awful corruptions of his heart: an eighth, such a desponding mind: a ninth, such shattered nerves. I say this is the reason why they have this painful discipline, that they may not lean upon Egypt or Assyria because they are but broken reeds that will run into their hands and pierce them.

But besides these, there is another thing wanted, that is, greater discoveries, more openings up, sweeter revelations, more enlarged manifestations of the glory, grace, love, blood, preciousness and beauty of Immanuel: so as not merely to put down idolatry, not merely to overcome this master sin in them, but to substitute an Object of spiritual worship, and raise up in their heart the actings of heavenly affection and love.

Here then is the difference. In the legal conflict, there is the law killing, cursing, and condemning. But in the gospel conflict, there are furnaces, floods, troubles, temptations, exercises, perplexities, and sorrows. All these things lay a man lower than ever he was laid before, bring him down more into the dust, and thus make a way for larger openings up of the gospel, more glorious discoveries of salvation through Jesus, and greater sweetness, preciousness, and suitability in him. The superaboundings of grace become thus more manifested over the aboundings of sin; and this experience will purge out that which the law never touched, and clear out of the heart those idols that the commandment had not effectually put down. This lifts up the Lord of life and glory in the soul, that he may be, as the apostle says, "our Lord"—"**for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**"—to worship him as our Lord, to cleave to him as our Lord, to glory in him as our Lord—to give up ourselves, with all the affections of our souls, into his hands.

But to be brought here, the apostle says, "he had suffered the loss of all things." Worldly prospects, fleshly joys, human honours, lucrative gains, the esteem of my fellow-creatures, the esteem of my own heart, that more delicious morsel than the esteem of others—I have suffered "the loss of all these things." 'But do I repent of it.'? do I regret it? do I murmur at it? do I kick at the hand that has stripped me?' 'No,' says the apostle, I count them all dung, that defiles my feet if it but touch them: things only fit to be cast to the dogs: mere offal in the street, that I turn my eyes away from.' O what an experience is this! How few, and how rarely those few, come to this spot to be brought in solemn moments before God to have such a taste of the beauty, preciousness and love of Jesus—to have such a going forth of holy affection to his bosom, as absolutely to count all things but as dung! Where is the man to be found who knows much of this? And if you find the man, how long is he there? It was doubtless with Paul a far more enduring feeling than with any of us. But how many of us can say, 'Such is the daily bent of our minds, such the hourly experience of our hearts'? I dare not say it. There have been times when just for a short half-hour, a transient period, a very transient one, I have felt it. But to say, that this is my or your experience daily and hourly—to count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord—where is the man? where is the woman?—in London, or the country?—who can rise up to this height of glorious and blessed experience? We must indeed know something of it, have a measure of the very same experience, though different in degree, or we have nothing. But as for rising up into a full measure of it, I have never seen the man yet who comes even up to the tenth part of it—to "count all things but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord!" And, for that to be his daily, hourly experience—I have never yet fastened my eyes upon either the man or the woman who could enter into such depths, or such heights of experience as this. Do not misunderstand me. There are seasons, there are moments, when it is felt; but to have it of an enduring nature, abiding with a man through the week, accompanying him all day, going with him to bed, getting up with him the morning, continuing with him through all his hourly

occupations—I have not seen the man yet, who could ever come near by a thousand leagues thus to experience what the apostle Paul declared he felt an abiding reality in his bosom.

III.—But we pass on to consider, **what Paul hoped, and what he wanted to be.** If you observe, he gives us, lower down, some intimation that all God's family were not thus perfect. He says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect"—that is, adult, matured in the divine life—"be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded"—as though he saw that all to whom he wrote were not in his experience, had not attained to this height—"God shall reveal even this unto you." 'Be not discouraged and cast down: God is able to reveal it in your heart, and work it in your soul's experience.' "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained"—each according to his own measure—"let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Let us have our eyes fixed upon the same point. Let us not suppose there is one rule for man, and another rule for another man. We must all have our eyes fixed upon the same thing. I allow of degrees, but I allow of no difference—an experience similar, though not the same—not differing in nature, although it may differ in degree or circumstance.

He was looking forward, then, to something future. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended"—I do not know all that is to be known; I have not felt all that is to be felt; I have not experienced all that is to be experienced—"but this one thing I do"—like a racer running a race—"forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Now, what were the two things that he was aiming at? One was, **that he might win Christ;** and the other, **that he might be found in him.** These were what he hoped to enjoy. These were what he was pressing forward to obtain. This was the ultimatum

of his wishes. This was the goal towards which his anxious steps were pressing.

1. **"That I might win Christ."** What is the meaning of the words? Nothing short of a personal enjoyment of Christ in the soul. Nothing short of seeing him on earth by the eye of faith. Nothing short of seeing him as he is, in open vision, in the realms of glory above. I cannot allow for a single moment, that any other explanation will suffice for the expression, 'to win Christ.' Christ in the heart here—Christ in heaven hereafter. Christ seen by the eye of faith below—Christ seen by the eye of open vision above. Christ embraced and enjoyed in the arms of love and affection upon earth—Christ beheld for ever in the realms of endless bliss without a shadow between.

These, then, are the two things that every quickened soul is pressing on to obtain—"to win Christ; and to be found in him." What is my religion? Can I rest in that? What is my experience? Can I rest in that? What my consistency? Can I rest in that? What my knowledge? Can I rest in that? What my ability, my gifts, my understanding, my education, my enlightened views? Can I rest in them? If I do, it will be to my confusion. They will be found a bed too short, and a covering too narrow. On what can I rest, short of the Lord of life and glory? I never have been able to rest in anything short of him. I hope never to be able to rest in anything short of him.

But what is it to "win Christ?" It is to have him sweetly embraced in the arms of our faith. It is to feel him manifesting his heavenly glory in our souls. It is to have the application of his atoning blood, in all its purging efficacy, to our conscience. It is to feel our heart melted and swooning with the sweet ravishments of his dying love, shed abroad even to overpowering. This is winning Christ. Now, before we can thus win Christ, we must have a view of Christ, we must behold his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We must see the matchless dignity of his glorious Person, the atoning efficacy of his propitiating blood, the length and breadth, the depth and

height, of his surpassing love. We must have our heart ready to burst with pantings, longings, and ardent desires that this blessed Immanuel would come down from the heaven of heavens in which he dwells beyond the veil, into our heart, and shed abroad his precious dying love there.

Now, is not this your feeling, child of God? It has been mine, over and over again. Is it not your feeling as you lie upon your bed, sometimes, with sweet and earnest pantings after the Lord of life and glory? As you walk by the way, as you are engaged in your daily business, as you are secretly musing and meditating, are there not often the goings forth of these longings and breathings into the very bosom of the Lord? But you cannot have this, unless you have seen him by the eye of an enlightened understanding, by the eye of faith, and had a taste of his beauty, a glimpse of his glory, and a discovery of his eternal preciousness. You must have had this gleaming upon your eyes, as the beams of light gleam through the windows. You must have had it dancing into your heart, as the rays of the sun dance upon the waves of the sea. You must have had a sweet incoming of the shinings of eternal light upon your soul, melting it, and breaking it down at his footstool, as the early dawn pierces through the clouds of night. When you have seen and felt this you break forth—'O that I might win Christ!' Like the ardent lover who longs to win his bride, you long to enjoy his love and presence shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

But besides this winning him, enjoying him, having sweet discoveries of him, and swooning away in the arms of his blessed embracement below, there is a winning of him in glory; a being with him face to face; such a personal and individual enjoyment of him, in one's body and soul, as though there were not another saint in heaven; as though all the inexhaustible love of Immanuel, "God with us," were given to, and fixed upon one, and there was no other in heaven to love but that individual saint! So to win him, as the bride wins the bridegroom; so to win him, as to be with him for ever when time shall be no more! Now, nothing short of this will ever satisfy a Christian; nothing short of this will

do for a living soul; nothing short of this will fill up the unbounded desires of an immortal spirit.

2. **"And be found in him."** The apostle knew a time was coming when God would search Jerusalem as with candles. He knew a day was hastening on when the secrets of all hearts would be revealed. He knew an hour was approaching when the eyes of the Lord would try, and the eyelids of the righteous Judge would weigh the words and actions of men. And he knew in his own soul's experience, that all who, in that awful day, were not found in Christ, would be consigned to the eternal pit of woe. He knew that when the Judge took his seat upon the great white throne, and heaven and earth fled away from his presence, no one could stand before his look of infinite justice and eternal purity, but those who had a vital standing in the Son of God. And therefore, looking to that awful time, and the solemnities of that day of judgment, that day of wonders, this was the desire of his soul—and towards that he pressed forward, as an active runner presses towards the goal—"that he might be found in him;" that when the Lord comes a second time to judgment, and his eyes run over the assembled myriads, he might be found in the Man who is "a refuge from the storm, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," the only Saviour from the wrath to come, which will one day burst upon the world. "Be found in him."—having a vital union to him—in him, as vitally as the branch is in the vine—in him, as actually as the limbs are in the body—in him, by an eternal, vital, and indefeasible union.

But he knew, that if he were found in him, he would have on a robe of righteousness such as the eyes of infinite Purity would accept. "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,"—a cobweb garment, full of rents and tatters, which cannot shelter deep-dyed, stained, and defiled nature from the penetrating eye of infinite Purity. But as a beggar's dirty skin is seen through a beggar's tattered rags, he knew that if he stood in creature righteousness, the eye of infinite Justice would look through the rents and tatters of that creature righteousness, and

see the black hue of depraved nature through those rents and tatters.

And he knew that if God saw sin in him—if there were no garment to cover his naked skin—the eye of infinite Purity would dash him down into eternal flames. Therefore he says, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law"—a cobweb garment, a thing of rags and tatters, a patchwork counterpane—"but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"; that is, the righteousness of the God-man—the pure, perfect, and spotless obedience of Immanuel, "God with us," received by the hand of living faith in the soul, and the enjoyment of it communicated to the heart through the operation of the faith of God's elect: that I might have that righteousness "which is through the faith of Christ," put upon my person, imputed to me, considered as my own, by my believing in Jesus, by my receiving him into my heart, by my looking wholly and solely unto him, by my implicit dependence upon him—"the righteousness which is of God," by the appointment of God, wrought out by Immanuel, "God with us," and owned and accepted by God the Father, as a righteousness justifying all those that are found clothed in it.

Now I would ask whether you and I can lay down our feelings and our experience side by side with the experience and feelings of the apostle here? Thank God, I can in some measure find a similarity in my feelings, and a oneness in my experience with what the apostle has laid down as felt by himself in the text. 'There was a time,' say also some of you 'when I trusted in the flesh, was very religious, very pious, very consistent, and was thought to be a very good Christian: and had I so lived, and so died. I had then no doubt I should go to heaven.' But there was a change. You had the slaughtering-knife thrust into your heart to let out the lifeblood of natural religion. Then convinced, convicted, hewed down, and made to feel that in you, that is in your flesh, dwelt no good thing: and therefore, that all your righteousnesses were as filthy rags, and that you could not save

yourself by anything you could say or do: you were brought down in contrition of spirit to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Then, did you ever have a discovery of Jesus? some manifestation of the Lord to your soul? some gleams, glances, glimpses, and shinings in of heavenly rays? some liftings up? some sweet tokens? some comforting views of the Son of God in his beauty and glory? And did these produce this feeling in your soul?—Away with everything but Jesus! All my own righteousness, all my own attainments, all my idols, all my bosom sins, all that nature loves and the flesh cleaves to—I count them all but loss, I esteem them all but dung, that I would scarcely touch with my foot to kick it away. This, in solemn moments, is the heartfelt desire of my soul—to win Christ by a sweet manifestation of his dying love; to see him as he is in glory; and when he sits upon the great white throne, to be found in him, having a vital union to him, clothed in his righteousness, washed in his blood, and justified through the faith which is in him.'

Now, no experience short of this is worth a single thought. Nothing short of this operation of God the Spirit upon a sinner's conscience, is worth the name of religion. It is only another form of the deceitful flesh; it is only another delusion of Satan as an angel of light; it is but a garment too short, and a bed too narrow; and it will leave the soul that lives and dies wrapped up in it, to the awful judgment of an angry God, who is "a consuming fire."

Look to it, you who desire to fear God, whether you can find anything of this experience in your heart and conscience. A grain of it will save you, if you can find a grain; but if you have none of it, you may be the acutest critic of doctrinal truth, the most consistent character, the most confident professor in the world—it will never save you. If you live and die in a religion of the flesh, you will live and die with a lie in your right hand.

The Lord mercifully keeps us from being deluded! The Lord will keep his people: for the promise is, "He will keep the feet of his

saints." So that the Lord of life and glory will say when he stands before the Father at the last day, surrounded by his ransomed millions, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me."
"Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost nothing!"

THE BETTER THINGS WHICH ACCOMPANY SALVATION

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 30, 1843.

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Hebrews 6:9

It appears, from several passages in this Epistle, that the Hebrews, to whom it was written, were suffering under severe persecutions; and not being firmly established in the faith, they manifested under the pressure of these heavy trials a wavering disposition. It is for this reason that we find the Apostle Paul intermingling in this Epistle solemn warnings and admonitions with suitable encouragements.

He felt for them as undergoing persecution; but his keen, discerning eye perceived in some of them symptoms of wavering; and this led him to speak to them in a tone of solemn admonition, such as we scarcely find in any other of his Epistles. In the sixth and tenth chapters, especially, of this Epistle, we find two most solemn warnings; and perhaps there are no two chapters in the Bible which have more tried God's people than those just mentioned.

As the text is intimately connected with the fearful warning in the sixth chapter, it will be necessary for me, as briefly as is consistent with clearness, to drop a few hints on it, before I enter on the words of the text. In so doing, I shall set out by stating it as my firm persuasion that the Holy Ghost is not speaking of the children of God in that place; but that when he is describing those whom, if they should "fall away," it is impossible "to renew again unto repentance," he means professors of religion, entirely destitute of a work of grace on their souls. "It is impossible," he says, "for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the

world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

If we look at the words, there certainly seems to be a very near approach to what takes place in the heart of a child of God; and yet, if we examine the passage more minutely, we find nothing said in it of a work of grace, nothing of repentance unto life, nothing of faith in Christ, nothing of hope in God's mercy, nothing of love towards the people of God; in a word, nothing of that spiritual teaching which makes a man wise unto salvation.

1. The first thing said of these awful characters, is, that they were **"once enlightened."** The apostle does not say they were quickened into spiritual life, regenerated, and born again; but he speaks of them as being "enlightened."

Now there are two different kinds of enlightenment; the one, spiritual and saving, such as the apostle speaks of in Eph 1:18, **"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened,** that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." And so David, "The entrance of thy word giveth light"(Ps. 119:130). "With thee is the fountain of light; **in thy light shall we see light"** (Ps. 36:9). In these passages, spiritual saving light is spoken of; what the Lord himself calls the "light of life" (John 8:12) ; that is, not merely light to enlighten the understanding, but life accompanying it to quicken the soul. But there is another enlightenment, and of that the apostle speaks here, the enlightening of the natural understanding; not a **spiritual** light, such as attends a regenerating work on the conscience, but an intellectual light, whereby the truth is perceived by the natural mind in the letter of the word.

2. **"And have tasted of the heavenly gift."** In the apostolic times "gifts" were communicated to the churches for the profit of the saints. There were gifts of healing, of tongues, of prophecy, and others such as we find mentioned in 1Co 12:8, 9. These were given for the profit of the body, and were distinct things from

grace, as the apostle declares in 1Co 12:31; when, after describing these gifts, he adds, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way," that of "charity" or love: and then he goes on to say, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

These gifts then, are called "heavenly gifts," as being communicated from heaven for certain purposes; but are not "grace," whereby the soul is regenerated. In the exercise of these gifts a natural pleasure was found by their possessors, here called "**tasting**." Similarly in our day, there are gifts in prayer, gifts in preaching, gifts in conversation, gifts in interpreting and expounding the Scriptures. Now a man may have all these gifts, and yet be entirely destitute of grace; and when he exercises them, he may find a certain pleasure and delight in their use, which is called a "**tasting** of the heavenly gift;" and is perfectly distinct from eating the bread of life, enjoying the presence of God, and feeding by faith on the savoury meat of the gospel.

3. But it is also said, they were "**made partakers of the Holy Ghost**." This perhaps is one of the most stumbling expressions in the whole passage; but I think we may clear it up by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Do we not read of Saul that "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied?" (1 Sam. 10:10). Is it not also recorded when on one occasion Saul sent messengers to take David, in two successive instances, when they came into the presence of Samuel, "the Spirit of God was upon the messengers, and they also prophesied?" (1 Sam. 19:20). Do we not read too what the Lord says, Ex 31:2, 3, "See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to do all the work of the tabernacle?" And did not Balaam speak by the Spirit, and prophesy wonderful things

concerning the Messiah? Thus in this outward sense, a man may be "made a partaker of the Holy Ghost;" his natural understanding being illuminated, but his soul never regenerated, nor the grace of God communicated to his heart. Balaam and his ass both spake as God moved their tongues, but the rider was no more regenerated than his beast.

4. **"And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come."** There is much in the word of God, which can be understood and relished by the natural understanding; there is in parts great eloquence, many flowers of poetry, many moving expressions, and pathetic sentiments; and all these things may have a certain effect upon the natural mind, quite independent of and distinct from any revelation or application of truth to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, quite different from the inward reception of truth in the heart and conscience. There may be also a natural relish for "the good word of God," and a receiving of the gospel with gladness **which is meant by the expression "the world to come,"** where there is no peace nor joy in believing.

But the Apostle having shewn how far a man may go in a profession, and prove at last utterly destitute of vital godliness, proceeds to bring forward a word of encouragement and consolation for the people of God, who might have been tried and exercised with the solemn warning set before them. He therefore adds, in the words of the text, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

I.—What does he mean by these **"better things?"** He means graces in opposition to **gifts;** the work of the Spirit upon the heart and conscience, as a thing distinct from any mere profession of religion, or any mere intellectual understanding and natural reception of truth. And why are these **"better things?"** They are better, because gifts are for time, grace for eternity; gifts profit the church, grace saves the soul; gifts puff up men with pride, grace gives a single eye to the glory of God; gifts,

when unaccompanied by the grace of God, harden the heart, grace melts and softens the soul, and makes it meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light": gifts leave a man where they find him, or I might rather say, unaccompanied by grace, worse than they found him **for the more a man touches sacred things with unclean hands, the more hardening effect they have upon him**, while grace in its communication, makes a man a new creature, and lifts him up into the eternal enjoyment of the Three-One God.

Inasmuch then, as eternity is better than time, salvation better than damnation, and heaven better than hell; so are the blessed graces and teachings of God's Spirit in the soul "better" than the highest gifts and brightest attainments which are short of the work and witness of the Holy Ghost in the heart.

II.—But the Apostle adds also, **"things that accompany salvation,"** which he was "persuaded" those to whom he wrote were in possession of.

What then is **"salvation?"** In looking at salvation, we must consider it from two points of view; salvation wrought out **for** us, and salvation wrought out in us. Salvation was wrought out **for** us by the finished work of the Son of God, when he cried with expiring breath, "It is finished." The salvation of "the remnant according to the election of grace" was then completely accomplished, so that nothing could be added to, or taken from it; for "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that were sanctified;" and thus the elect stand complete in Christ, without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

But there is a salvation which is wrought out **in** us; the manifestation and application of that salvation which Jesus has wrought out by his sufferings, blood-shedding, and death: and this we can only know experimentally, so far as the blessed Spirit brings it into our hearts, and seals it there with holy unction and heavenly savour.

But all the people of God cannot feel sure they have this salvation as an experimental reality; doubts, fears, darkness, and temptations becloud their path; Satan hurls his fiery darts into their souls; and they are unable to realize their interest in the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation. They do not doubt whether the Lord Jesus is the Saviour of those that believe; they know that there is no other refuge for their guilty souls but the blood of the Lamb. They are effectually stripped from cleaving to a covenant of works; they are not running after things that cannot profit them, nor hiding their heads in lying refuges; from all these things they are effectually cut off, and cut out by a work of grace on their souls. But through the unbelief of their hearts, the deadness of their frames, the barrenness of their souls, and the various temptations they are exercised with, they fear they have not the marks of God's family, and are not able to realize their interest in the love and blood of the Lamb.

The Apostle, therefore, speaks of "things that **accompany** salvation;" that is, certain marks and signs, certain clear and indubitable tokens of the work of grace on the soul. And, speaking to the Hebrews, he says for their comfort and encouragement, "we are persuaded," whatever be your doubts and fears, whatever the darkness of your mind, however exercised with sharp and severe temptations, "we are persuaded" you are in possession of those "better things," of those "things that accompany salvation;" and that this salvation is therefore eternally yours.

Let us then with God's blessing, endeavour to trace out a few of these "better things," these "things that accompany salvation;" and shew how far better and more blessed they are than any gifts that hypocrites or mere professors may be in possession of.

1. **A work of grace on the soul** then, is "a better thing" than any mere gift, and is "a thing too which accompanies salvation." And what is a work of grace on the soul? It is to be quickened by the Spirit of God into spiritual life; it is to be made a new creature, by being brought to experience the almighty work of

God on the conscience, renewing us in the spirit of our minds; and it consists in the communication of eternal life to the soul, with all its blessed consequences.

But wherever this work of grace takes place in a man's soul, there will be certain fruits and results that follow out of it. A man cannot be a partaker of the grace of God, and remain where he was before the Spirit quickened his soul; being "a new creature, old things are passed away" with him, and "all things are become new." And thus, being a new creature, and having the life of God in his soul, it will be manifested by the certain fruits that invariably spring out of it.

And I know not a surer test that this good work is begun than when **the heart is made tender in God's fear**. The Lord took especial notice of this mark in Josiah, when Shaphan the scribe read to him the book of the law, which Hilkiah had found in the temple, and he sent to enquire of the Lord: "**Because thine heart was tender,** and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord &c., I also have heard thee" (2 Kings 22:19). This tenderness of heart was a mark in Josiah, on which the Lord, so to speak, put his finger; it was a special token for good which God selected from all the rest, as a testimony in his favour. The heart is always tender which God has touched with his finger; this tenderness being the fruit of the impression of the Lord's hand upon the conscience.

This spiritual tenderness of heart is a very different thing from a natural conscience. Many persons mistake the movings to and fro of natural conscience for a heart made tender by the work of God's Spirit. But you may know the difference between a natural conscience, and a heart tender in God's fear by this, that the natural conscience is always superstitious and uncertain; as the Lord says, it "strains at a gnat, and swallows a camel." It is exceedingly observant of self-inflicted austerities, and very fearful of breaking through self-imposed rules; and whilst it will commit sin which a man who has the fear of God in his heart would not do for the world, it will stumble at mere unimportant trifles in

which an enlightened soul would not feel the least scruple. It will "pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin," whilst it "omits the weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23); and "will not go into Pilate's judgment-hall lest it should be defiled" (John 18:28), at the very time that it is seeking to imbrue its hands in the blood of the Saviour.

But here is the mark of a heart tender in God's fear; it moves as God the Spirit works upon it; it is like the mariner's compass, which having been once touched by the magnet, always turns toward the North; it may indeed oscillate and tremble backwards and forwards, but still it will return to the pole, and ultimately remain fixed at the point whence it was temporarily disturbed. So when the heart has been touched by the Spirit, and has been made tender in God's fear, it may for a time waver to the right hand or to the left, but it is always trembling and fluctuating till it points toward God, as the eternal centre of its happiness and holiness.

2. **Godly sorrow for sin** is a "better thing" than any gift which a mere professor may possess, and a thing too which invariably "accompanies salvation." Godly sorrow for sin differs much from natural conviction for sin. Powerful natural convictions, I believe, for the most part are not felt more than once or twice in a man's life; and when they have passed away, the conscience is more seared than it was before, the world more eagerly grasped, and sin more impetuously plunged into.

But godly sorrow is produced by a work of grace on the heart. The eye of faith sees sin in the light of God's countenance, and thus the soul becomes alive to its dreadful evil and horrible character. The heart too is melted down into godly sorrow by beholding the Saviour's sufferings, and viewing the Lord of life and glory as stooping and agonizing under the weight of sin, not only as imputed to him, but as pressing him down into anguish and distress. And thus, godly sorrow for sin is not a thing which a man feels once or twice in his life: but from time to time, as the Spirit works it in his heart, godly sorrow flows forth. If he has

been entangled in sin, overcome by temptation, slidden back into the world, or his heart has gone after idols, a living soul will not pass it by as a thing of no consequence: but, sooner or later, the Spirit touches his heart, godly sorrow flows out, and his soul is melted and moved within him by feeling what a base wretch he is in the sight of a holy God.

3. A "**spirit of grace and supplications**" springing up in the heart from time to time, as the Lord works upon it, is a "better thing" than any gift a reprobate may be in possession of, and a thing too that "accompanies salvation." Now there is what is called a gift in prayer, but that is a very different thing from the communications of a "spirit of grace and supplications" by God himself to the soul.

A man for instance may pray in public apparently most feelingly and movingly; he may play well on his instrument, so as to touch the passions, and work on the feelings of God's people; yet he himself may be only "a tinkling brass," or "sounding cymbal," and know nothing of "a spirit of grace and supplications" in his own soul. But whenever there is a work of grace on the heart, it is always accompanied by a spirit of prayer; as the Lord says, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zech. 12:10). And wherever it has been once poured out into a sinner's heart, it will never leave him from the moment that God quickens his soul until that blessed day when prayer shall end in praise.

I do not mean to say, that there may not be long suspensions of it; that darkness of mind may never cover it; that coldness and iciness of heart may never freeze it up; that emptiness and barrenness of spirit may never seem to quench it: but in spite of, and in the midst of all these things, the blessed "spirit of grace and supplications" will from time to time rise up to its Source. If this spirit of grace and supplications exists in your heart, if you have not power to pray, you will have power to sigh and groan. There will be again and again some inward going out after the Lord, some panting after his presence, some expression of

dissatisfaction against self, some seeking his grace, some longing and languishing after his manifested favour and love.

And thus, the spirit of prayer wherever once given, will from time to time be springing up in the soul. But we cannot call it forth; we may attempt it, but we shall feel powerless to produce it: yet the Lord will sometimes **and perhaps at a moment when we least expect it, when we are cold, dull, stupid, and carnal**, draw up the desires and breathings which he has himself implanted, and raise the soul up that it may spring upwards once more towards its eternal and heavenly fountain.

4. **Brokenness of heart, and contrition of spirit**, is a "better thing" than any mere gift, and a grace which "accompanies salvation." The heart that feels the burden of sin, that suffers under temptation, that groans beneath Satan's fiery assaults, that bleeds under the wounds inflicted by committed evil, is broken and contrite. This brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, is a thing which a child of God alone can feel. However hard his heart at times may seem to be, there will be seasons of spiritual reviving; however he may seem steeled against any sense of love and mercy, or even of misery and guilt, from time to time, when he is least expecting and looking for it, there will be a breaking down of his soul before the Lord; there will be a bewailing of himself, a turning from the world to seek the Lord's favour, and a casting himself as a sinner once more on undeserved mercy. Tears will flow down his cheeks, sighs burst from his bosom, and he will lie humble at the Saviour's feet. If your soul has ever felt this, you have a "better thing" than any gift; for this brokenness of spirit is a thing that "accompanies salvation," and is a sacrifice that God will not despise (Ps. 51:17).

5. **Deadness to the world**, an inward separation from the things of time and sense, is a "better thing" than any mere gift, and a thing too that "accompanies salvation." I believe no one is really dead to the world but a child of God. A man may change his world who is not separated from it: he may for instance leave the profane world for the professing world; he may change from a

Churchman to a Dissenter, from an Independent to a Baptist; he may become a member of a gospel church; he may, like Herod, do many things, and hear ministers of truth gladly. But all the time, unless he is made a partaker of "the divine nature" by a work of grace in his soul, his heart is and ever must be in the world.

The human heart must be engaged upon something; its affections must be fixed upon some object; its thoughts and desires must be occupied with one thing or other. If his heart, then, is not set Godward, if his affections are not fixed upon Christ, if his soul is not engaged on heavenly things, he may have the greatest profession of religion, but his heart is still worldly, his affections still earthly, and his soul still going out after idols. But where the Lord has really touched the conscience with his finger, and made himself precious to the soul, however a man may seem for a time to be buried in the world, and his affections going out after forbidden objects; however he may be "hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water;" however he may secretly backslide from the Lord, still he cannot break the hold that eternal things have upon his heart; he cannot find real pleasure in the world, though he may often seek it; nor bury himself contentedly in its pursuits. There will be a restless dissatisfaction with the things of time and sense, an aching void, and a turning again to "the strong hold," a seeking the Lord, who only can really satisfy the soul, and make it happy for time and eternity.

6. Faith in the Lord of life and glory; to receive him into our hearts as the Christ of God, and view him with the eye of faith as our once bleeding, suffering, and agonizing Lord, and now raised to God's right hand as our Intercessor, Advocate, and Mediator—this is a "better thing" than any gift, and a thing too that "accompanies salvation." This the apostle clearly points out in this chapter, where he says, "Be not slothful, but followers of them, who **through faith** and patience inherit the promises."

He had not said a word about **faith** in those, of whom he declares "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." He never

dropped a hint that they were partakers of this or any other grace; but when he comes to the "better things," he puts his finger immediately on living faith in the soul. This faith in the Son of God, whereby he is believed on to life eternal, received into the heart, adored by the spirit, enthroned in the affections, submitted to and embraced with every faculty of the soul, is a blessing only communicated to God's family. A faith which is lodged in the secret court of conscience, in the deep recesses of a man's heart, which views the Son of God, and receives him as all its salvation and all its desire, and hangs upon his blood and righteousness; such a faith as this is beyond the highest attainment of any gifted hypocrite, and is a "better thing" than was ever possessed by the most flourishing professor.

7. A hope in God's mercy, not the "hope of the hypocrite, that shall perish;" but what the Scriptures call "a good hope through grace;" a "hope which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast, that entereth into that within the veil;" such a spiritual hope is a "better thing" than any mere gift, and a thing too that "accompanies salvation." We do not find that the apostle said anything about hope as dwelling in those awful characters, whom he compares to "the earth, which beareth thorns and briers, and is therefore rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." They indeed had a heavenly gift, and an enlightened understanding, and did many wonderful things; but they never had hope, "as an anchor to the soul," to keep it steady in the winds and storms. They had not on board their gallant bark this heavenly anchor, which was never known to break or fail, because its flukes take hold of the flesh of the God-Man Mediator, and its cable forms a living communication between the storm-tossed vessel and him in whom it anchors.

The hope which penetrates beyond the things of time and sense, and enters in and anchors upon a blessed Jesus, was never possessed by the most gifted professor that ever deceived himself, or ever deceived the church of God. And what is the root of this good hope through grace? The Lord's own work and witness in the conscience, his tokens for good, his manifested

favour, enabling the soul to look to Christ as his forerunner who has entered within the veil. This hope which "maketh not ashamed" does not arise from anything in the flesh, does not hang upon the approbation of man, does not depend upon the testimony of the creature; it passes beyond all these things, and enters within the veil, into the immediate presence of God, where Jesus is sitting as Mediator and Advocate.

8. And **love** also is "a better thing," and a thing that "accompanies salvation." Love is the crowning point of all: as the apostle says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing," but "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." We do not find **love** mentioned in the catalogue of the "heavenly gifts." Those whom it was impossible to renew again unto repentance were not made partakers of this blessed grace.

But, on the contrary, the apostle, in speaking to the believers, says, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of **love**" (Heb. 6:10). The other wretched apostates might have every gift, yet they were destitute of love; and being destitute of **that**, had not passed from death unto life. And what is **love**? It is a grace that changes not; one of the three heavenly sisters, and the greatest of them all; for "now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Faith will be changed into sight, and hope into fruition, but love remains the same, for "God is love."

If your soul, then, has ever known what it is to love God, and to feel the flowings out of affection towards the Lord Jesus Christ; if you have felt him precious to your soul, you have a thing that "accompanies salvation." You are not a poor miserable self-deceived professor, not a Satan-deluded wretch, that flutters for a little time in the religious world, like a moth around the evening candle, till at last it burns its wings, and is destroyed in the flame. But if ever the Lord Jesus Christ has been made precious to your soul, it is because you have embraced him in the arms of

a living faith, as the Scripture says, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Pet. 2:7).

But **love** comprehends not only **love to God, but love also to God's people**. The apostle especially insists on this mark in the verses following the text. "But God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. 6:10). The Apostle John, too, says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). This is the first evidence the soul usually has of its having "passed from death unto life," that it sensibly feels a union of spirit with God's people, a drawing forth of affection to those who are manifest partakers of the grace of God.

This union with the children of God is better felt than described. There is often a sweet knitting of spirit, a blessed interweaving and interlacing of hearts, when God's people come together, and speak of the things which they have tasted, felt, and handled. The Spirit of God rests on them, and baptizes them into a blessed union with each other, so that their very souls are melted together, and they embrace each other, just as though they had but one heart and one spirit: as the Holy Ghost describes the early Christians, "they were all of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). Their spirits were so fused by the heat of divine love into each other, their hearts were so intermingled, and there was such a flowing out of mutual affection, that all the company seemed to have but one heart and one soul amongst them.

Now, my friends, just see if you can realize this one evidence in your soul. You meet with a person, say, whom you have never seen before; he is, perhaps, one from whom in the pride of your heart you would turn away with disdain; he has no personal gifts, nothing whatever naturally to recommend him; or he may be a person against whom you have been prejudiced, and when you see him you look on him with distaste or sullen aversion. But he begins to speak; and as you listen, you feel all your prejudice give way; the bar is effectually broken down; and there is a

sweet melting of your heart into his, and his into yours, and a mutual flowing forth of love to each other. Now, if your soul has ever experienced this, you are not a gifted hypocrite, though you may have gifts, but one of those whom the Lord has taught by his Spirit, and are in possession of those "better things" that "accompany salvation."

God's children fear to be deceived, and if a man have no such fear, the probability is that he is deceived already. All God's people know the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the abounding hypocrisy of their corrupt nature; they are more or less alive to the devices of Satan; and all know what a dreadful thing it is to be deluded, and have a portion with the hypocrites, where there is "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

III.—The Scriptures, then, have brought certain marks not only to test but also to comfort God's people. But in order to keep them tremblingly alive to the fear of being deceived; in order to set up an effectual beacon lest their vessel should run upon the rocks, the blessed Spirit has revealed such passages as we find in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Hebrews. They seem set up by the Spirit of God, as a lighthouse at the entrance of a harbour. Is it not so naturally? Some shoal or sandbank often lies near the entrance of the port, which the mariner has to guard against. How is he guarded? A lighthouse is erected, on or near the spot, which warns him of the shoal.

Now I look on this chapter, and the tenth, as two lighthouses, standing near the entrance of the harbour of eternal safety. And their language is, "Beware of this shoal! Take care of that sandbank! There are gifts without grace; there is profession without possession; there is form without power; there is a name to live whilst the soul is dead." The shoal naturally often lies at the very entrance of a harbour: and as the ship makes for the port, the sandbank lies in her very course; but when the harbour is neared, the friendly beacon not only warns her of the shoal, but also points out the safe passage into the haven. And so, spiritually, from these two chapters many of God's people have seen what shoals lie in the way, and have, perhaps, before they

were warned off, come near enough to see the fragments of the shipwrecked vessels. The gallant barks that sailed from the same ports with themselves they have seen wrecked on the rocks, their freight lost, and the dead bodies and broken fragments floating on the waves. But these never looked for the lighthouse, nor saw the bank; they were intoxicated, or fast asleep; they were sure of going to heaven; and on they went, reckless and thoughtless, till the vessel struck on the shoal, and every hand on board perished.

These awful warnings and solemn admonitions seem to me so written that they may scrape, so to speak, as nearly as possible the quick of a man's flesh. And they appear couched in language of purposed ambiguity that they may be trying passages; nay, the very beauty and efficacy of them, and the real good to be wrought by them, is in their ambiguity; so that the people of God may take a more solemn warning by them, and may cry unto the Lord more earnestly that they may not be deceived.

Then, my friends, it is not the poor desponding children of God, who are tried by these passages, that have reason to fear them. Their being thus tried shows that their conscience is tender in God's fear, and that they are "the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringing forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God;" and that they are not that "which beareth thorns and briers, which is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

And thus, these very fears and suspicions, by which many of God's people are exercised, causing strong cries unto the Lord, that he would teach, guide, and lead them, are so many blessed marks that they are not graceless persons, but partakers of the grace of God; and at the same time prove, "that he which hath begun a good work in them" will carry it on, and "will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ," and bring them into the eternal enjoyment of God that they may see him for themselves, and not for another.

THE BITTER WATERS SWEETENED

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 28, 1850

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, what shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Exodus 15:23-25

The children of Israel after the flesh were a typical people; and therefore the dealings of God with them were typical and figurative of His dealings with the spiritual Israel. When we see this, and read the Old Testament Scriptures with an enlightened eye, what beauty does it add to the sacred page! We read these records then, not as so many historical documents, but as descriptive of the children of God, and of His mercy, love and grace towards them. And thus their experience becomes brought home to our own heart and our own bosom. We can see in them our own features, and read in the dealings of God with them the dealings of God with our own souls now.

I need not run through the history of the children of Israel to prove this. Every step they took is, more or less, a proof that the Lord dealt with them outwardly as He deals with his spiritual Israel inwardly. Their state, for instance, in Egypt typified the death and darkness of the people of God before they are quickened by the blessed Spirit. The Paschal Lamb of which they partook, and the blood sprinkled upon the lintel and side-posts, showed forth the redemption of Christ, and the application of His precious blood to the conscience. The passing through the Red Sea signifies the baptism wherewith they are baptised, when the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost; and their seeing their enemies dead upon the seashore, signifies the

rejoicing of a child of God at finding his sins cast into the sea, and overthrown into dead carcasses by the mighty power of Christ.

But we come now to a strange passage in their history. They little expected, as we should little expect, that so heavy a trial would come immediately upon the back of this astonishing deliverance. And what was this trial? "They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." In this humid climate, we can scarcely conceive what a privation this must have been. But we should not like even in this wet clime, and at this dripping season, to be without water for three days. No water to drink, no water to wash with! But look at this vast multitude, amounting to two millions, wandering in a barren desert, with a scorching sun above and parched sands beneath; men, women, children, cattle, languishing, and all but for dying of thirst! And this for three days! One can scarcely conceive what a privation, what a scene of horror it must have been. But, at the end of three days, water is discovered. They catch a glimpse of palm trees in the wilderness, and perhaps see the glimmering of streams beneath them. You may well conceive what joy would fill the camp. We may well imagine what a universal shout of exultation there would be. What hurrying on to partake of the waters that glistened before their eye in the distance? But alas! when they came there, a further disappointment awaited them. "They came to Marah, and they could not drink of the waters of Marah." Though for three days they had been without water and were dying from thirst, yet when they came to these waters, they were so bitter and brackish, that absolutely they could not drink! What a blow! what a stroke upon stroke! This was indeed striking the dying dead. This was indeed adding grief to their sorrow and heaping calamity upon calamity.

Well, what did they do? What you and I no doubt would have done. They murmured and rebelled, and cried out against Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, with its beautiful Nile, and leading them into this wilderness, where for three days they had no water; and when they came to water, it was so bitter they could not drink. And what did Moses do? Did he join with them? Did he

encourage their murmuring, or take part in their rebellion? No; he did what he ever did, and what every child of God must sooner or later do—he "cried unto the Lord." And did he "cry" in vain? Was the Lord a "God afar off, and not at hand?" Was His hand shortened that it could not save, or His ear heavy that it could not hear? No. The same almighty arm that had brought them through the Red Sea found a way of escape. "The Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

Now, upon this foundation I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to rear a spiritual building. Four things seem to strike my mind as connected with, and flowing out of our text:

I. —**The bitter waters of Marah.**

II.—**The murmuring of the people.**

II.—**The cry of Moses.**

IV.—**The healing of the waters.**

May the Lord enable me to speak this morning in such a way as He shall condescend to bless to our souls.

I.—In looking at these waters of Marah, it seems that we have to consider two things respecting them: **first**, what these **waters** spiritually and typically represented. **Secondly**, what is intimated by the bitterness of these waters.

We cannot understand by these waters the water of life. There is nothing analogous in the waters of Marah to the streams that gushed out of the rock when smitten by the rod of Moses; for those waters were and ever must be intrinsically sweet. Nor do they resemble the waters seen by the prophet Ezekiel that flowed out of the temple, which when they went into the salt sea healed its bitterness (Ezek. 47:1-9). These waters, then, cannot be the waters of life, the streams that flow out of the bleeding side of the Redeemer. What then are they? Why, they seem to my mind

to denote things in themselves perfectly suitable and adapted to our natural constitution, and yet embittered by sin; because by the bitterness that is in the waters, I mainly understand **sin**, and as its necessary consequence and never-failing attendant, **sorrow**.

When God created the world He pronounced it "very good;" the waters then were sweet. Man, in his primitive innocency, was adapted to the world in its original purity; but "sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Satan was allowed to cast bitterness into these waters; and ever since, sin and sorrow have embittered all circumstances, states and conditions, in a word, everything that would have been otherwise sweet and adapted to our present state of existence.

Let me illustrate this by a few particulars, and show how sin, and its consequence sorrow, have embittered all the streams that otherwise would have been sweet and innocent, healthful and pure.

1. First, look at **the world** generally. It is a fair world, even in ruins. There is a natural beauty in it, though shattered by the fall. Yet, though outwardly lovely, sin has marred all. We might, in travelling, see a beautiful prospect; a village, for instance, nestling in a valley, by some picturesque mountain side in Switzerland or lake in the North of England, and say, "Beauty is here; and with beauty, there must be happiness and innocence." But, if we penetrated beneath the surface of this external beauty, what should we see but sin? This beautiful village is probably but a den of drunkenness and profligacy. Thus these waters, which naturally were adapted to the constitution of man, made suitable to him, and he suitable to them, have all been polluted, defiled and embittered by sin cast into them. So, wherever we go, we find sin embittering everything. There is not a country, not a town, not a village, not a family, not a bosom, in which sin is not, and which sin has not embittered—embittered by alienating it from the source of all true, real happiness.

2. Again. There is your **lawful occupation in life**; your business, your shop, your counting-house, your farm; the calling that God has appointed for you to gain your daily bread by. These are streams of water necessary to your actual existence. You could no more live without them than you could exist without the bread and water that perish. And yet, sin and sorrow embitter all; disappointment, vexation, temptation flow out of and mingle with everything you set your hand to. So that when you would satiate your thirst at these streams they are "waters of Marah" which you cannot drink. If not actual sin, yet disappointment will attend them. I do not believe that you can carry on your lawful calling without sin being intermingled with it. I do not mean open, allowed sin. But sin will interfere, will intrude, will creep in, will work. You can scarcely attend to your lawful calling without in some way partaking of the evil mingled with it. And if not sin, yet there will be sorrow and disappointment. If there be nothing in conscience against you in carrying on your daily business and concerns, yet there will be losses, crosses, bad debts, disappointments and vexations from others. Thus when you would take a sweet and luscious draught from the occupations of life, the cup is dashed from your lips by the bitterness of its contents.

3. Look again at the **social relations of life**. All are embittered. Let us picture for a few moments a young couple. How roseate is the hue, which invests their life! how happy they are going to be, never dreaming of sorrow and trouble! All is bright sunshine. Let them live a few years; let them have children; let them get into middle life, and the cares of a family come upon them; and then see whether their young visions have been realized—whether all has been of a rosy colour, whether dark clouds have not hovered over those domestic scenes from which they once thought to drink so much happiness. How often children grow up to be their parents' disappointment and misery! Wives and husbands, instead of being mutual sources of happiness and comfort, prove mutual plagues. Friends, who once seemed so true, turn into enemies; relations, from whom we should expect every kindness and help, grow cold or hostile. How all these domestic relations in

various instances are marred and embittered by sin or sorrow! So that, when like the children of Israel, we would fain stoop down, and drink at these sources of happiness **and they would be sources of happiness but for the marred state of the world, and the sin in men's hearts** we cannot drink the waters; they are embittered; they are "Marah."

4. And so with the **human body**. God made the body healthy, as He made the soul pure: but when sin entered into the soul, sickness came into the body. How many of God's people have their lives embittered through ill health, and all their pleasing prospects disappointed, broken up, crushed, and thrown down by a load of illness and bodily infirmities.

Now here are the waters of "Marah"—sorrow, vexation, bitterness, disappointment marring everything; so that we cannot drink of the otherwise sweet streams of life. And it is a mercy that we cannot. Could we drink of them we should want no other waters. Could we assuage our thirst at these earthly rills, we should want no streams of that river which "maketh glad the city of God." If we could take our fill of earthly comfort and worldly happiness, we should never want to have the consolations of the blessed Spirit, or to drink out of the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But this is very disappointing. To have bitterness in everything, and bitterness in those things most from which you would fain derive most pleasure; that directly you are looking forward to some worldly happiness, as the children of Israel hurried onward to the waters glimmering under the palm trees, yet no sooner do you come to that scene of anticipated pleasure, than you find it embittered; some disappointment, some sorrow, some vexation, some sin mars all. Is this very pleasing? Is this what nature loves? Does this go down very smoothly? Not whilst man is what he is. Did the children of Israel like it? No; they "murmured."

II.—And this brings us to our **second** point, which is, **the murmuring** of the rebellious flesh against these dispensations.

When the Lord is not present to bless and smile upon the soul, is it not very hard work to have so many trials, vexations and disappointments; to find everything here embittered; that God will not let you have a gourd to rejoice in; that you cannot sit down and say, "Come, now I am going to be comfortable; here is at last a little rest?" Is it not very vexatious, very disappointing, very contrary to every feeling of our natural heart, that the Lord will never let us take comfort in anything but Himself? that when we would fain stretch forth our arm and embrace an earthly joy, there is a hand that dashes it from our lips? when we would stoop, and drink the waters that glimmer in the desert, they are so salt, brackish, and bitter, that we cannot slake our thirst at them?

1. Now, say that you have many disappointments **in business**. Are they pleasing? When the postman brings you a letter, for instance, full of bad news: that some one has failed who owes you a sum of money; do you feel very comfortable under it? Is it not much against the grain? And does not this raise up in your carnal mind murmuring and fretfulness, and a rebellious feeling that you should be so hardly dealt with? You can look abroad, perhaps, and see how others get on in the world—men whom you have known in poverty riding in their carriages, and you always crossed, disappointed, ground down and everything going against you. This is not very pleasant to flesh and blood; this is contrary to nature; and therefore nature murmurs, frets, repines, rebels against these dispensations.

2. Or, you have **ill health**, and cannot do as others: exertion is a pain to you; your nerves are shattered and your whole frame disorganised from constitutional debility; everything is wearisome—the "grasshopper a burden." You look round, and see people walking about in such health and strength, and you perhaps racked with pain, or your frame altogether shattered, and constitution gone. Why, this will raise up in the mind, at times, some very unpleasant feelings. There will be murmuring, rebellion and fretfulness against God when you see others dealt

with so favourably, and you dealt with, as you think, in a way so contrary.

3. Your **own family**, perhaps your sons and daughters, are not what you wish them to be. You look abroad and see the sons of others steady; their daughters doing well, married and settled comfortably in life; while, as regards yourself, things are just the contrary: everything is opposed to what your nature wants, and what your carnal mind loves. And, instead of sitting down quietly, and bearing these afflictions and sorrows, there is a heaving up of the carnal mind against them, a working of rebellion, a repining, a murmuring, as though the Lord dealt with you very hardly, and nobody ever had such a weight to carry as yourself.

4. Or again, you have a **continual cross**, and feel a body of sin and death always plaguing you; so as never to be let alone, or as Job says, not to have a sufficient time "to swallow down your spittle;" but are vexed and tried day after day. There is some temptation, and you entangled in it; some bait, and you entrapped; some discovery of evil in your heart which you had never seen before. And you think there never was anybody like you; so harassed, so exercised, so tried, so tempted, so cast down; having withal so little grace, so little spirituality, and finding so little in your heart of which you can say, "Thank God, I have some real religion now." Now, when the mind is thus exercised, tried and cast down with a thousand things, unless God be present, and His grace intervene, there will be much of this fretfulness, repining and murmuring in the carnal mind.

But is this all? Would it do to leave you thus? Can a living soul stand here? No. There must be something more than this. It is sad work to have nothing but bitterness and murmuring; and therefore, we will pass on to our **third** point;

III.—Which is what a living soul sooner or later must do and does. "**Moses cried unto the Lord.**" And this is what we do when we have no one else to go to. When we come to the waters of Marah, and find we cannot drink; when there is nothing but

bitterness and disappointment, then there is at first a struggle, a murmuring, a rebelling, which only makes matters worse than before. But, in tender mercy, the Lord is pleased to raise up a sigh and a cry in the soul, and to cause supplications to go up out of the heart. But this is hard work, because it seems as though we ought to have done this before. Conscience begins to say, "Why, you only pray to God when you want Him; you ought not to have murmured and repined; you ought not to have rebelled and fretted as you have done. How can you expect God to hear you now? You have tried all you could to creep out of it, and get the yoke off your neck; and not being able to do it, then you come to the Lord."

Yet this is what we are obliged to do; and I may add, what grace enables us to do, because trials in themselves will not raise up prayer; they rather crush it. We might be in the very belly of hell, and have no prayer except God put it there into our souls. We might have blow upon blow, stroke upon stroke, but no prayer. Afflictions without the grace of God only stupefy, harden and deaden. People think sometimes, "O, when I grow old, or get ill, then I shall pray, and seek, and serve God." Why, you would find your very illness and age would only stupefy the mind; and if you were in pain, you would have little to think of but pain. Your very sufferings would only harden your heart, and stop prayer instead of encouraging it. Therefore, it is not all the afflictions we go through which can raise up one prayer to God; they only make us fight against Him; they only make us murmur, rebel and despair. It must be grace in sweet operation that softens the heart in these trials, and the Lord's pouring out upon the soul "the Spirit of grace and supplications." The two go together, enabling us to "cry."

And what a mercy it is, that in all our rebellion, and in spite of all our rebellion, there is a God to go to; that though our rebellions do and will bring a cloud upon the throne, yet they do not push Jesus off the throne. Whatever darkness, whatever confusion rebellion may bring upon our mind, Christ is still there. It is like a London fog. When you Londoners in November are wrapped up in

fog and smoke, we that live in the country are perhaps enjoying the sunshine. All your fog does not blot the blessed sun out of the sky; he is shining upon others, if he is not shining upon you. So spiritually. When we get into a fog, we think sometimes that the sun will never shine again. We judge by our feelings, and the exercises of our minds; as though now there were no Christ; as though all He had promised were false, all His mercy had failed, and there was no longer anything for the soul to rest upon.

But how blessed it is in these seasons to find a little submission and prayer; a sighing, looking, longing, hungering, thirsting, waiting upon the Lord! This is what we must do; and what we shall do, if grace be in our hearts; for without it, we cannot expect any relief.

The Lord works generally thus. He brings afflictions, and lets us feel what we are in our carnal mind under the cross to humble us and prove us. He then raises up and draws forth a spirit of prayer in the soul; and then He answers and blesses. The very power to pray is a gleam of light upon the soul; the very pouring out of the heart brings a relief; the very sight of Christ upon his throne dispels the rebellion that works in the carnal mind. The very coming to Him as filled with all grace; the very looking unto Him, interceding for us as our Advocate with the Father, seems to drive away the clouds of darkness and rebellion. It may not be, indeed it is not a complete deliverance, but it is deliverance from rebellion and murmuring. To pour out the heart before God brings a measure of relief, as Hannah and Hezekiah found. If it fill not the soul with joy and peace, at least it brings it out of that stupefied state in which it was sunk through rebellion; it softens the heart which before was hard; it thaws the spirit which before was frozen; it communicates contrition where before there was little else but hardness and desperation. And thus, the very power given to the soul to seek, supplicate, cry, beg and pray, though it may not bring deliverance from the trial itself, yet is a help and encouragement enabling it to bear up. A praying soul will in due time be a praising soul. He that seeks shall find; he that asks

shall receive. "To him that knocketh, it shall be opened." The Lord has given many sweet promises to those that seek His face.

It is not only a mercy to have a God to go to, but to have a heart to go to Him. It is an inestimable favour not only to have a throne of grace, but to have grace to go to the throne. It is not only a blessing that there is a mercy seat, but that there is mercy reaching the heart to bring us there. And when there is this real heartfelt cry, then in due time comes a blessed, gracious answer; which brings us to our fourth and last point;

IV.—And that is, **the healing of the waters**. Now, in the healing of the waters, we may observe certain marked steps. "The Lord," we read, "showed Moses a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

1. The first thing to consider is, "**the tree**." I need not say what this signifies. Your hearts have pronounced it already. It is the tree of life—the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the tree; for "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." This is the tree—the tree of life; the cross of Jesus; salvation through blood; pardon through the atonement which He made upon Calvary's tree; reconciliation through the offering which He there once offered; for "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

2. But this tree was **shown** to Moses. It was there before; but Moses knew it not. It needed to be revealed to his eyes and heart. The tree was standing there before Moses saw it. So with us. The cross of Christ is the same, whether hidden from our eyes or not. If we are God's children, we are even now reconciled, pardoned, accepted, saved. Our salvation is already accomplished; the work is finished; everlasting righteousness has been brought in; Christ has saved us from the wrath to come. "Who hath saved us, and called us."

But what we want is a **discovery** of this tree to our soul. It does not say that God created the tree for the first time; but that he

"showed" it to Moses. He took the veil off Moses' eyes and heart, and showed him the tree. And what is this but a blessed revelation to the soul of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; seeing Him by the eye of faith as the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world; a viewing Him by the eye of faith suspended as it were between earth and heaven, accomplishing our salvation by His own precious blood?

Now in all our murmuring, rebellion and fretfulness we do not see this. It is hidden from our eyes; and we have no union, no communion then with a suffering Lord. If we could go to the cross, clasp it in our embrace, lay hold of a crucified Jesus, feel sweet communion with Him, gaze upon His sufferings, and see that face which was marred more than the sons of men, it would thaw away the rebellion, it would remove the murmuring, it would melt the heart down into contrition, brokenness, and love. But we cannot see it; we only see our disappointments, our vexations, losses, crosses and sorrows. The mind is so wrapped up in darkness; there is such a fog over the soul that we can only "grope for the wall like the blind." We think ourselves hardly dealt with, wonder that God should be so unkind, and have no eyes or heart to look beyond all these things, and to see the Lord Jesus Christ reconciling us to God, and bearing our sins and sorrows in His own body on the tree. And therefore, we need it to be shown to us; we need the blessed Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to our soul; to bring into our hearts a sight and sense of the bleeding Lamb, of the suffering "Man of Sorrows," of the crucified Immanuel.

3. But there is another step. It was not sufficient that there should be a tree, nor enough to show Moses the tree. The tree must be cast into the waters. The boughs of the tree might overshadow the streams; that did not heal them. Those too that stood on the banks of the stream might gaze upon the tree; that did not heal the waters. A further process was necessary. There was another step to be taken; and that was, **the tree was to be cast into the waters.** And does this not signify spiritually the bringing in of the cross of Christ into the soul; the revelation of a

crucified Saviour to the heart; the manifestation of Jesus in His sufferings and blood to the conscience; and this, by bringing the cross of Christ into the soul, as the tree was cast into the waters? Now nothing but this can heal the waters. But when the tree was cast into the waters, when it sank, and the waters covered in, then they were made sweet; their bitterness was taken away, and they could be safely drunk.

Let us apply this. I have endeavoured to show you what these waters are, and how they were made bitter; and I must therefore just cast my mind's eye a little back, to show you how they are made sweet.

1. Now there are many things that are vexatious and disappointing in **our daily calling**. You have many things in business very plaguing, very trying. You cannot, therefore, take that pleasure in it which worldly men can; or if it much occupy your mind, you find guilt resting upon your conscience; you cannot take, as it were, a good draught of your worldly occupation, drink it down and enjoy it; but there is some disappointment, or some guilt of conscience connected with it, that when you would fain take pleasure in it, you cannot succeed. Well, how is this to be sweetened? If there be some discovery to your soul of a precious Jesus, and you be indulged with some knowledge of, and communion with a suffering Immanuel, does not that sweeten to you your daily occupation? Does it not sanctify the meanest employment? Yes: sanctify it! Why, a man may be a sc, avenger, a chimney sweep, a nightman, and if he have the grace of God in his heart, the visitations of the Lord's presence and the bedewings of His love and favour will make this calling a holy calling, aye, much more a holy calling than many a bishop preaching in lawn sleeves, or a priest bowing before the altar. Aye, a poor old washerwoman, rubbing her stockings over her tub, may be worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and have her soul filled with happiness and holiness, when surpliced choristers and Puseyite priests are mocking him with lies and hearts full of uncleanness. Thus, washing stockings may be a holier employment than chanting psalms. It is not church or

chapel that makes us holy, but the blessed Spirit making our bodies His temple.

2. Or you may almost constantly have **bad health**, which may be your daily cross; and when the Lord does not favour you with His presence, a very hard cross it is to carry. But suppose the Lord is pleased to bless your soul, lead you to Jesus, give you communion with Him, show you the sufferings of "the Man of Sorrows," and that you are interested in His precious blood and love—is not the bitter water sweetened? Can you not then bear your aches, pains and infirmities? Do you even see good springing out of your afflicted body; and would sooner have sanctified illness than unsanctified health?

3. Or your "house," like David's, does not "grow" as you wish. You have rebellious children, gay sons, carnal daughters, servants that plague your life out; with other domestic things that try your mind; and it seems as though you were always grieved and vexed. Well now, if your soul were blessed, watered, sanctified with some of the manifestations of the dying love and atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you think it would sweeten even these waters? If you felt Jesus to be your brother, and God your father, would you not be so swallowed up in this spiritual relation, that you could say, "As to my worldly relatives, my earthly ties, compared with all this, what are they? Jesus is more precious to me than all worldly things—than husband, wife, or children." Is not this sweetening the bitter waters?

4. Or, if sin has marred everything **in your soul**, made you a wretch, given you a daily cross continually, troubles your mind, and subjects you, as it does all the children of God, to a constant exercise from the workings of evil in your carnal heart, and your spirit is plagued with it day and night, what then is to sweeten these bitter waters—these waters of Marah—but the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? Pardoning love, atoning blood, a sight of Jesus, an embracing of Him as our all in all, when felt, is a casting of the tree of life into the bitter waters; and when the tree is cast into the bitter waters, they are healed. Now you can drink; you can

attend to your lawful calling; you may go about your daily duties; you can enjoy your family and home relationships; aye, and have sweetness in your soul amidst all your sins and sorrows, when you realise anything of this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as sweetening every bitter draught.

5. But there is one draught to come, which in bitterness exceeds all, and that is, the bitter draught of **death**. How is that bitter water to be sweetened? Die you must, and none know how soon. We know not the circumstances of our death—what long illness, what pain, langour, or suffering may attend it; or what the state of our minds may be when death seems to draw near and hold us in his grasp. This is a bitter draught, and how is it to be sweetened? By looking back to a well-spent life? By thinking of the duties you have discharged, the very religious part you have played, your being a member of a Christian church, having attended a certain chapel, prayed and read, and so on? Why all these things, if only these, would but embitter the draught more, because you would say, "I have been all this, and done all this, and where is my poor soul now?" Nothing but the casting in of the tree of life, the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ into these bitter waters can sweeten them. Many saints—all saints, I may say in their degree—have found these bitter waters sweetened; and though they shrank from the draught, yet when it touched their lips it went down like honey; it was sweetened by the manifestations of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the shedding abroad in their soul of His dying love.

Now, do you not see how needful it is, to find the waters bitter, that you may have them sweetened? Suppose you were to go through life with no bitterness, no sorrows, no disappointments, no vexations, no temptations, no exercises, might you not drink of these waters till you burst?

There might have been even a temporal mercy to the children of Israel in finding these waters bitter. If, after wandering three days in the wilderness, they had found them sweet, they might have drunk of them so immoderately as to have injured them,

and perhaps fatally; there might therefore have been a mercy even in the embittering of the waters before they were sweetened. The water having been bitter, they would drink cautiously for fear of the bitterness returning. Well, so spiritually. If you were to have your own way, your own will, and enjoy what your nature cleaves to, what would you be? What sort of a Christian would you be? Where would be the love of God in your soul? Where would there be any experience either of mercy or judgment? Where any sighs or cries? Where any praises or blessings? You would live and die without God. But when everything is embittered by sin or sorrow, and the Lord does not let us do what we would, but mars all sources of earthly happiness, then we fain turn to Him. And when He is pleased to drop a little measure of His grace and mercy into the soul, then these bitter waters are sweetened and healed; and you may drink safely of them.

And there is no other way. You may try a thousand ways; you may attempt to doctor the waters; put sugar, honey, treacle into them; you may try your best. These waters cannot be sweetened by treacle or honey; they can be sweetened only by the tree of life, the cross of Jesus, the manifestation of dying love, the application of atoning blood. Nothing short of this—nothing but this, can ever heal the bitterness; and to disguise the taste will only eventually make the bitter taste more bitter still.

Then, it is your mercy to have your daily draught of bitters; to find life embittered, health embittered, family embittered, business embittered, your own soul embittered; so as to lead you to say, "Call me not Naomi, but Marah; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

It is your mercy to be a "Marah," or a Hannah. It is a mercy to weep bitter tears, to have bitterness of soul, and many griefs and exercises, when they lead us to see and feel that there is only one thing which can sweeten our trials, the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, under the teaching of God, to embrace and cleave to

that, and not be satisfied without its sweet enjoyment and blessed manifestation.

The Benefits and Blessings of Union with Christ

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Dec. 7, 1862

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1:30, 31

The sovereignty of God is a great deep—a deep so profound as to be absolutely unfathomable by the human intellect. Unable, therefore, or unwilling to believe what they cannot comprehend, men have denied the sovereignty of God, and sought, with feeble hands, to wrest the sceptre of omnipotence out of the grasp of the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, the great and glorious Arbiter of all events and Disposer of all circumstances, who "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35.) But because we cannot comprehend the sovereignty of God, is it less real? Can we comprehend any one perfection of that great and glorious Being, "who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see?" Can we comprehend, for instance, his *eternal existence*? Is our intellect able to fathom that profound mystery, that there is a glorious, self-existent Being, who from all eternity is, according to his own declaration of himself, "I AM that I AM?" Our mind is lost in the contemplation of an eternal, self-existent Being; and yet to deny it is atheism. What shall we say too of his *omnipresence*?—that he fills all time and all space, so that wherever we are there God is. Can the mind of man fathom a presence that spreads itself, so to speak, in every place, and yet is but one God? Or view his *omniscience*—that he reads with one glance the hearts of millions of men. Can we fathom that perfection of the Almighty? And yet dare we deny it when our own conscience assures us that all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do? Or look again at his *omnipotence*—that the same

hands which formed the sun, that glorious orb of light, created the crawling worm and the slimy snail. Are we not lost when we attempt to bring the powers of our reason to bear upon any one of the infinite perfections of Jehovah? To all such vain reasoners who attempt to measure God by the line of human intellect, and presumptuously reject what they cannot understand, we may well apply the keen language of Zophar: "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." And to all who would attempt to comprehend what is incomprehensible, we may well apply his pungent description of what man really is, with all his attempts to introduce his earthly wisdom into heavenly mysteries: "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." (Job 11:7-9.)

But these proud reasoners, who bring everything to the bar of human intellect, are not the only persons who deny the sovereignty of God. There is a generation of men, and a numerous generation too, who, because the sovereignty of God militates against their favourite doctrine of creature agency—what is commonly called "free will"—fight against it with desperate enmity. They clearly see that the sovereignty of God cuts up by the very roots their darling dogma, and that a God who is the sovereign Disposer of all events sadly interferes with the liberty of man to do what he pleases and be what he wills. They would sooner, therefore, give up the sovereignty of God than the free agency of man; and rather than allow God to be the Governor of his own world, they would put every circumstance under the dominion of blind chance, and a confused raffle of luck and fortune. But whether men deny it, or whether men dispute it, it matters not: neither their denial nor their contention will alter the solemn fact that God reigns supreme; that "he sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." (Isai. 40:22.) But the child of grace, who is under divine teaching, whatever may have been his strong prejudices against, or his violent opposition to scripture truth in the days of

his ignorance, is brought sooner or later to see and acknowledge the sovereignty of God; and, when he is led into the mystery, receives it as a most blessed truth. In fact, as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to enlighten the eyes of his understanding, he sees the sovereignty of God in everything. If he look at creation, he sees there a sovereign hand which fixed the sun in the sky and made the day-spring know its place. If he look at himself, he sees and feels that a sovereign power called him into birth and being; that he had no control over his own coming into his present time and state, no choice who should be his parents, what the circumstances of his birth, what situation he should occupy, whether of peer or of peasant, or where his lot be cast among the children of men. Over these circumstances, which affect the whole of his life, he feels that he had no more control than he had over the creation of the sun, or of "the seven stars and Orion" (Amos 5:8); and that free will had no more name or place in the disposal of any one of these events on earth than it had of those in heaven. But as his eye is opened to see the sovereign hand of God in fixing and determining the circumstances of his earthly being, he sees how all was arranged by infinite wisdom and executed by infinite power. And when he comes to the department of grace, and can with believing eye trace out the dealings of God with his soul, then, in a more conspicuous manner still, does the sovereignty of God beam upon his heart; for well he knows that free will had no place there, and that "it was not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." How plainly he sees and feels that it was sovereign grace which first arrested him on his downward course; that it was sovereign grace which made him feel the burden of sin; that it was sovereign grace which put a cry and a sigh into his soul; that it was sovereign grace which brought him to the footstool of mercy; that it was sovereign grace which revealed the Saviour, and applied the message of mercy and peace to his heart. Thus what some deny and others dispute, he is brought to receive in the simplicity of faith, as most glorifying to God and suitable to man; and as he receives it, he admires it, adores it, and submits to it.

But you may say, "What has all this to do with your text? We fully see with you in your description of the sovereignty of grace, and we believe it to be the truth: but what has this to do with the words from which you intend to speak this morning?" To this I answer, "Much every way. The sovereignty of God is stamped upon our text in living letters of light." "The sovereignty of God in the text?" you say; "I see no sovereignty mentioned there." No, not the word; but the thing is there if the word be absent; and I have to deal with things and facts, not bare words. Thus I can see the sovereignty of God stamped upon our text in the broadest characters. I see it first in the expression "*Of him* are ye in Christ Jesus." What but sovereignty is fully implied, if not positively expressed, in the declaration that it is "*of God* that the saints are in Christ Jesus?" for if it be wholly and solely "of God," it is wholly and solely of the sovereignty of God. Did the saints of God at Corinth put themselves into Christ Jesus, or did God put them? And if God put them into Christ, so as to give them a standing in him, and a union with him, what was that but an act of divine sovereignty? But I see it also in the declaration which the apostle has made in the same text, that Christ Jesus "*of God* is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" for was it not as much an act of God's sovereign grace and power to make Christ Jesus to be to us and for us all these divine and heavenly blessings, as to give us a union with him? Could we, could any, have made him to be all this unto us? Did we devise the plan? Did we carry it into execution? Did we raise up Christ from the dead? Did we set him at God's right hand in the heavenly places, and make him head over all things to the Church? Is not the whole of this, first and last, of the sovereign will and gracious execution of the God of all grace? Well does the apostle sum up the whole: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Having thus laid a broad and scriptural foundation for the truth of God, as set forth in our text to stand upon, I shall now, with his help and blessing, direct your mind chiefly to these three points, which you will find clearly revealed in it.

I.—*First*, the *union* which the saints of God have *with Christ Jesus*, as declared in the words, "But of him *are ye in Christ Jesus*."

II.—*Secondly*, the *benefits* and *blessings* which spring out of this personal union with Christ Jesus: that he "of God is made unto them *wisdom*, and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and *redemption*."

III.—*Thirdly*, what is *the fruit* of all these heavenly blessings? *Praising* and *blessing* the name of the Lord for what he is in himself, and for what he is to his people. "That according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him *glory in the Lord*."

I.—I have first, then, with God's help, to show you the union which the saints of God have with Christ Jesus. This union is the source and foundation of every spiritual blessing: in fact, we may broadly say, without this union with Christ, of spiritual blessing there is none.

i. But, in order clearly to trace out the foundation of this union with Christ, we must revert for a few moments to that grand and glorious truth which I just now brought before you in my introduction—I mean the *sovereignty* of God; for you will observe that the apostle does not speak as if we gave ourselves this union with Christ Jesus, if indeed we are possessed of it; but he takes it up to a higher source, and ascribes it to a more glorious and exalted will than that which can dwell in a mutable creature's breast. "Of him," he declares, "are ye in Christ Jesus." As these words are full of heavenly truth, and form indeed the grand and solid basis on which the text is built, let us see, as the Lord may enable, how this union—for union is declared by the expression "*in Christ Jesus*"—is *of God*.

1. It is, then, first *of the purpose of God*. Whatever God does, he does in harmony with his eternal purposes. This in Scripture is sometimes called "the counsel of his own will." "Who worketh all things," says Paul, "after the counsel of his own will." (Ephes.

1:11.) To the same effect the apostle speaks in the words, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself;" and in similar language he expresses himself, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." But still more plainly, if possible, and clearly does he lay down the same solemn truth where he says, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Now, if we put together these passages, we shall see in them all the sovereignty of God's *will*, and that this will determined itself in certain fixed *purposes*. Thus, whether we speak of the "good pleasure of his will," or the "counsel of his own will," or his "good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself," or "his own purpose and grace," we still come to the same point, the sovereignty and supremacy of the will of God. This, therefore, we must lay down as a foundation truth, that the will of God must be supreme, and being supreme, can never meet with any disappointment or defeat. No creature in heaven and no creature upon earth can ever stand before the execution of God's will. No creature in heaven could or would do so, for his will is there perfectly obeyed; and whatever opposition any creature upon earth may raise against it, his will must triumph over all, as he says, "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." (Isaiah 27:4.) It was, then, of this eternal will of God that his people should have a union with the Son of his love.

2. But this union of the Church with his dear Son was not only according to the will and purpose of God, for that will and that purpose embrace all events and circumstances; but it was also of the *love of God*. I have often been struck with an expression of our blessed Lord in his intercessory prayer, "And hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John 17:23.) What a view does this give us of the love of God to his people, that he loved them with the same love as that with which he loved his only begotten Son! But we must bear in mind that this love to them was only in the Son

of his love. This, therefore, made our Lord say, "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." (John 17:26.)

3. But not only was God's sovereignty displayed in the good pleasure of his will and his everlasting love, but also in the *execution* of his eternal purposes; for the good pleasure of his will can only be made known by its execution. In pursuance, therefore, of his eternal purpose and in the flowing forth of his eternal love, he gave his people a union with Christ. This is beautifully expressed by our gracious Lord: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me;" and, again, "They are thine, and all mine are thine and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." (John 17:6, 9, 10.)

4. But this sovereignty is to be made known in *manifestation*, as well as in purpose and execution; for the will of God is secret to us until it flows down the stream of time and is made known to our heart by a divine and heavenly power. Thus there is not only an eternal union with Christ Jesus in the purpose of God and in the gift of his people to him, before time began to run its course, but there is a spiritual and living union built upon it and flowing out of it, which is given to the soul when it is regenerated by the power of God's grace. The apostle tells us that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed his people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.) But these spiritual blessings depend upon and flow out of union with Christ, which made the apostle say, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Now, amongst these spiritual blessings, the greatest is a spiritual union with Christ, for in that is contained every other. Whatever then be the purposes of God, or whatever eternal union a man may have with Christ, he has no *spiritual* union until he has been made a partaker of his Spirit; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9); and, again, "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) We thus see that the saints of God are in Christ Jesus, not only in the original purpose of God, which forms the foundation as well as the source of every

other blessing; but that they are also "in Christ Jesus" by the execution of that purpose in the gift of them to be his, and also "in Christ Jesus" by the manifestation of that union by that work of grace upon their heart, whereby Christ is formed in them the hope of glory.

ii. But we have in Scripture four sweet and most expressive figures whereby this union with Christ, as a vital, experimental reality, is set forth. They all tend to the same point; they all preach the same doctrine; they all unfold the same experience; indeed, they are so graciously and divinely constructed, that each serves to illustrate and confirm the other. I shall, therefore, in endeavouring this morning to trace out more plainly and clearly the nature and effects of this heavenly union, bring forward these four figures, that we may gather from them not only a clearer view of what this union is in itself, but may also gather up some encouraging testimony that we are personal partakers of it.

1. The first figure which I shall bring forward is that which our most gracious Lord employed when he said to his disciples, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches.*" (John 15:5.) Here the Lord sets forth the union which the Church has with him by the figure of a tree, and the branches which are in it and grow out of it. Now, if you look at a tree, and especially at a vine, you will observe in a moment that the branches have no life, or growth, or indeed any being out of the stem; that they never were possessed of any independent existence; that they grew out of the stem, and had no being but what they had in union with it. Look at this point again. Set before the eyes of your mind the stem of a vine as first planted against a wall. What do you see? A solitary stem. But look a little closer: you will now see peeping out of the bark on each side of the stem little buds from top to bottom. Now, as spring advances and the sap flows, mark what follows. First, the bud swells; then it elongates itself into a branch; then as the season advances the branch becomes clothed with leaves, and flowers, and fruit. But whether bud, or branch, or clothed with leaves, flowers, or fruit, it had no existence independent of its existence in the stem. Its being was originally in the stem, and it

was gradually evolved out of it through the communication of the life and sap which were in the stem out of which it came. So it is with the members of Christ: they have no independent existence out of him. Our blessed Lord, therefore, himself says, "Without me," or, as it is in the margin, "severed from me," ye can do nothing. Thus, without a union with Christ, we have no spiritual existence; and we may boldly say that we no more have a spiritual being in the mind of God independent of Christ, than the branch of a tree has an independent existence out of the stem in which it grows. But you will observe, also, in this figure of the vine and the branches, how all the fruitfulness of the branch depends upon its union with the vine. Whatever life there is in the branch, it flows out of the stem; whatever strength there is in the branch, it comes from its union with the stem; whatever foliage, whatever fruit, all come still out of its union with the stem. And this is the case, whether the branch be great or small. From the stoutest limb of a tree to the smallest twig, all are in union with the stem and all derive life and nourishment from it. So it is in grace: not only is our very being, as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, connected with our union with Christ, but our well-being. All our knowledge, therefore, of heavenly mysteries, all our faith, all our hope, and all our love—in a word, all our grace, whether much or little, whether that of the babe, the child, the young man, or the father, flows out of a personal, spiritual, and experimental union with the Lord Jesus; for we are nothing but what we are in him, and we have nothing but what we possess by virtue of our union with him.

2. Now take another figure which the Holy Ghost has employed and sanctified to the same divine use—that of a *building* of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation, and his people living stones built upon him. This figure is very beautifully brought forward by the apostle where, speaking of the saints, he says, that they "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." You will observe that the

people of God are spoken of here, as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"—that is, the foundation which they laid, but that Jesus Christ himself is "the chief corner stone;" and they are represented as growing into a holy temple in him. From this figure we gather two things, first, that this union is a union of support, and, secondly, a union also of living and spiritual influence. For our blessed Lord is spoken of as "the corner stone," which is that stone on which the whole weight of the building rests. And as the saints "*grow* into a holy temple in Christ," it implies a communication of divine life, for life and growth always go together. But the apostle Peter opens up this figure in a still more clear and blessed way, where he says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:4, 5.) The words "*lively* stones" should have been translated "living stones," for it is in the original exactly the same word as is translated a "living stone" in the preceding verse; and I hardly know why our translators made an alteration which has rather obscured the meaning. Now what a wonderful difference there is between a building such as we this morning are assembled in, of which the stones are dead stones and the foundation a dead foundation, and that heavenly building which "groweth up into a holy temple for the habitation of God." In this spiritual house, this glorious temple, built for eternity, the foundation is a living foundation, and the stones built upon it and in union with it are living stones. Thus not only does every living stone rest upon the foundation as its only support, but from this corner stone which bears it up and on which it leans with all its weight, there flows a stream of heavenly life which diffuses itself into every stone of the spiritual building, of whatever size it be, or whatever part it occupy; and the more heavily and the more closely that each stone presses upon the foundation, the more does life flow into it. Thus to be built upon Christ is not merely to rest upon him as the foundation, as stones do in a literal building, but so to rest upon him that a sensible communication of his grace may flow into every living stone in union with it. Look at this in an experimental

point of view. If the grace of God be in your heart, there will be a resting upon the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will be leaning upon him with all the weight of your sins and sorrows; and the more heavily they press you down the more you will lean upon him. Now you will find just in proportion as you lean upon him that there will be a communication of life out of his fulness to your soul; and as this is more and more opened up to your heart there will be a more exclusive resting upon him in every doubt and difficulty, in every trial and temptation, for you will find that you cannot bear your troubles alone, for "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth." (Eccl. 4:10.) And you will also find that when you can cease from all exertions and all strivings of your own, and clasp him round in faith, as the stone embraces the foundation, there will be a communication out of his fulness to maintain in active exercise every grace of the spirit in your heart.

3. But take another figure, for I wish to open up this subject as the Scriptures have laid it down—that of *the head and members*. This we find very clearly spoken of by the apostle, both in the Epistle to the Ephesians and in that to the Colossians. I shall take the latter, as the more clear: "Not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19.) Here the blessed Lord is represented as the Head, and his people as the members of his mystical body. Now we know what an intimate union the members of our body have with the head and with each other, and that, as I pointed out in the case of the vine, our bodily members never had an independent existence; they never subsisted out of union with the head and with each other. So it is in grace: the saints of God, viewed as saints of God, never had any subsistence except in union with the Son of God. In him they were chosen, as the apostle declares, "According as he hath chosen us in him." In him they are "accepted" (Eph. 1:6); in him they obtained their inheritance. (Eph. 1:11.) But we must bear in mind that as no figure can adequately set forth the mystery of union with Christ, so this figure of Head and members falls short of the divine reality shadowed forth therein. Our literal head does not differ from our

members in nature or substance; but Christ, our glorious Head, widely differs from us, as being the eternal Son of God, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the unity of the divine Essence. He, therefore, as our spiritual Head, is more to us spiritually than our head to our body naturally, as being everything to us; for we derive from him all our life and all our fruitfulness. As our Head, he is not only over us to rule and govern, but to communicate to us out of his own fulness every spiritual gift and grace. But this communication is only by virtue of a close, intimate, and vital union with him. Thus everything which makes us and manifests us as saints of God, is derived from a union with him as close as that which our members have with our literal and natural head. Where are our eyes but in our head? our ears but in our head? our smell, our taste, our speech but in our head? Whence all our powers of thought, reflection, memory, or movement? Do not all centre in, all flow from our head? Such is Christ as "Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23.)

4. But there is another figure also which the Holy Ghost has employed to set forth this vital union between Christ and his Church—that of *man and wife*, who have one flesh, one name, one interest, and one affection, the closest of all possible unions between persons naturally distinct. Thus the apostle, exhorting husbands to love their wives, and quoting the ancient declaration that "a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh," adds, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (Eph. 5:32.) She is, therefore, called the Lamb's wife (Rev. 19:7); and the holy city, New Jerusalem, a type of the Church in its triumphant state, is said to be "prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2.) Upon this figure is built the whole of the Song of Solomon; and in many passages in the Old Testament does the Lord speak of his Church as being "betrothed" to him in that closest and tenderest of all unions, as, for instance, in Hosea, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever;" and again, "It shall be at that day saith the Lord that thou shalt call me Ishi (that is, my husband), and shall call me no longer Baali,"

that is my Lord or master. (Hosea 2:16.) This union stands in two things, a participation of the same nature whereby the Lord partakes of her flesh, and a participation of his Spirit whereby she is baptized into a spiritual union with him.

Now these four figures the Holy Ghost has made use of to set forth the union which the saint of God has with Christ Jesus; and though they differ from each other, yet one common idea runs through the whole—that of a union of a most intimate and indissoluble nature, designed, executed, and manifested as the result of infinite wisdom, love, and grace, and the only source and fountain of everything that can make us holy and happy both for time and eternity.

iii. But the question may arise, How are we brought to realize our knowledge of a *personal interest* in this union? It is not seeing it in the word, or assenting to it as a grand and glorious truth, that will give us any scriptural evidence of a personal interest in it. We must have the *witness of the Spirit* to our spirit that we are the children of God, and especially the Spirit of adoption to call God, Abba, Father. This is being baptised with the Holy Ghost into the same Spirit with Christ. As, then, you are thus made to drink into one Spirit with the Lord, and he is pleased to reveal his Person and work, blood and love, grace and glory to your soul, it gives you a sensible evidence, and I may say the highest and greatest of all evidences, of your eternal union with him. How does the branch of a tree know, so to speak, or rather manifest its union with the stem? By receiving sap out of the stem, flowing into its tissues and fibres, and clothing it with leaves and flowers and fruit. How does the stone, so to speak, know its union with the foundation? By constantly leaning upon it and feeling the support which it gives, and the strength which it communicates. How do the members of the body know their union with the head? By being directed by it, acting in obedience to it, and being continually influenced by it. How does the wife know her union with her husband? By looking back to the day on which the marriage knot was tied, and knowing that that was the means whereby they were made one flesh. So it is in grace. We have to

know our union with Christ by its sensible effects; by the experimental communication of his Spirit, as in the vine; of his support, as in the foundation; of his life and influence, as in the head; and of his love and presence, as in the husband. Thus if in him we live, as the branch in the vine; if on him we lean, as the stone on the foundation; if in him we move, as the member in the head; and if in him we embrace in love and affection, as the wife the husband—that will be the clearest evidence of our union with him.

But this union is not always thus clear to the saint of God. There may be a real union, and yet, through doubt and fear, from the weakness of faith, the temptation of Satan, and the exercise of a misgiving heart, a sense of this union may be much obscured. It is, therefore, necessary to look at what I may call *minor* evidences, signs, and tokens which the Lord has graciously given in his word to clear up these doubts and difficulties. The grand point of union with Christ is, as I have shown, the possession of his Spirit; for as he is one with us by a participation of our nature, we are one with him by a participation of his Spirit. Now, where his Spirit is, there will be certain fruits of his indwelling presence, for the Spirit is never without his fruits wherever he is by his indwelling presence and power. There will be then repentance of sin; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; a hope in his mercy; love to his name; the fear of God in a tender conscience; separation from the world; a spirit of prayer; real humility of mind and self-abasement before the Lord; there will be also at times heavenly affections and gracious desires, a sensible abhorrence of all evil, and a cleaving to all that is good. So that if you cannot always or often realise your union with Christ by the flowing in of his love and presence, and by the immediate witness of his Spirit, you may still look at these minor evidences in your favour, and as the Lord may enable, gather up from them a comfortable hope that indeed you have union with the son of God, and that he has taken possession of your heart.

II.—But I pass on now to show some of *the benefits and blessings* of this union with Christ, for it is not an unfruitful union. As a

proof of this, glance for a single moment at the figures which I have brought forward from the word of truth. Is not the union of vine and branches a fruitful union? "So shall ye bear much fruit," said our Lord to his disciples. Is not the union of foundation and living stones a fruitful union, when the result is the growing of a holy temple to the Lord? Is not the union of head and members a fruitful union, when life and health and every active movement of the body are connected with it? And is not the union of husband and wife a fruitful union, when the olive branches overspread the table? So it is by the benefits and blessings which spring out of this union with Christ, and by the possession and enjoyment of them that we are able chiefly to realise the blessed fact that we are one with him.

i. In our text, four leading benefits and blessings are declared to arise out of our union with Christ; for the apostle declares that "of God he is made unto us *wisdom*, and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and *redemption*."

I have before pointed out that the gift of Christ to us, to be in us and for us such a source of heavenly blessings, is as much an act of the sovereignty of God as giving us a union with the Son of his love. We thus see the sovereignty of God firmly fixing, and, if I may use the expression, unalterably riveting together Christ and the Church—giving and fixing them in Christ, and giving and fixing Christ in them. But now let us look at these benefits in detail, and view by the eye of faith how Christ Jesus of God is made unto us each of these heavenly blessings.

1. First, then, he is made unto us *wisdom*. The Lord knows what we are, as so deeply, so awfully sunk in the Adam fall. Adam was wise as well as upright; but with the fall both were gone as in a moment; for the same awful crash which broke to pieces his innocency wrecked and ruined his wisdom, and thus he became a fool as well as a sinner. This folly we inherit from him; for "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." God, then, as perfectly acquainted with the folly of our mind, with our wretched ignorance and inability to find out the way of salvation, or to walk

in it when found, has mercifully and graciously given to us One in the courts of bliss who shall be to us and for us far beyond all that we have lost, and has therefore made him our "wisdom." "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and therefore a fulness of heavenly wisdom as well of every other divine grace; and of this wisdom he communicates out of his fulness to his believing people. I do not like exactly to say that his wisdom is theirs by imputation, and yet there is a sense in which it may be called such. Take for instance the figure of head and members. Is not our head, in a sense, wisdom for every member of the body? Does it not bear the responsibility of every movement, so that all the wisdom or skill which any member possesses may be considered as being in the head? Does not the eye guide the hands and feet? Does not the ear hear for the whole body? Does not the brain think and the tongue speak for every member? Thus we see naturally that all our wisdom lies in our head, and the wisdom of our head is put to the account of all the members. So, spiritually, all our heavenly wisdom is in our covenant Head. The people of God see and feel their ignorance and folly; their inability to guide their own feet into the way of truth and peace. Their daily experience convinces them how easily they are entangled in the snares of sin and Satan; how dark their mind, how hard their heart, how carnal their frame, when the Lord does not communicate light, life, and power to their souls. To remedy then and overcome these miserable evils under which they groan and sigh, being burdened, Jesus Christ is of God made unto them wisdom; so that when the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon his dear Son in the courts of bliss, he views him as their representative head, and sees all the wisdom that they need stored up in his eternal fulness. Thus, as he does not impute to them their sins because of Christ's righteousness, so he does not impute unto them their follies because of Christ's wisdom. "Ye are wise in Christ," says the apostle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:10)—wise by your union with him. Now out of this wisdom which dwells in Christ without measure, he communicates to his people. They have none of their own. What they have is freely given to them liberally and bountifully, without stint and without upbraiding.

But it may be as well to glance at some of the effects of this wisdom as divinely communicated to the saints of God. To see, then, their ruined and undone estate, and to flee from the wrath to come; to sue for mercy; to cry for a manifestation of pardoning love; to be thoroughly and deeply convinced that there is no salvation by the works of the law; and to despair of being justified by their own righteousness, ever bearing in mind the day of death and of judgment after death, is a part of this wisdom; as Moses cried aloud, "O that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end." (Deut. 32:29.) To look unto Jesus by the eye of faith; to see him as the Son of God, "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" and to view the treasures of love and grace which are stored up in his blood and righteousness, is also a part of this wisdom. To depart from all evil and seek all that is good; to obey the precepts as well as believe the promises; to walk tenderly, cautiously, and circumspectly in the fear of God; to read and pray and meditate; to commune with their own heart, and be ever seeking divine teaching, is a part also of this wisdom. In fact, this wisdom is indispensable for every right movement in heart, lip, and life; for every good word and work; for our conduct in the church and in the world; and for everything becoming our holy profession. This the people of God deeply feel. Well do they know that not a single truth can they see aright except by seeing light in his light. Not a snare can they shun, or danger avoid, but by his warning voice or guiding hand; not a doctrine can they understand, not a promise believe, not a precept obey, except he who of God is made unto them wisdom, is pleased to communicate it to their heart. But, by looking to him, and receiving out of his fulness supplies of divine instruction, which he communicates to them through the word of his grace, as made life and spirit to their hearts, they are made wise unto salvation; and thus from their living and spiritual union with him, wisdom flows into their bosom out of his fulness, as in the figure of the vine, sap flows out of the stem into the branch. Thus, as he is their wisdom *representatively* in the courts of bliss, being their Counsellor and Advocate who pleads their cause, so he is their

wisdom *efficiently*, by the communication of this wisdom to their hearts, for all the wisdom they have comes out of his fulness. And he is their wisdom also, as being the *end* and *object* of all the wisdom they possess or require, for the highest, greatest, and best of all wisdom is to know him and the power of his resurrection; to know experimentally the beauty and glory of his divine Person; the efficacy of his atoning blood and of his justifying righteousness; and, above all things, to know our happy and eternal interest in all that he is, in all that he has to the Church of God.

2. But he is also made of God unto them "*righteousness*." We have all and each of us to stand before the bar of God; and how can we stand there, unless we have a righteousness wherewith the law of God shall be fully satisfied? Our own righteousness, the Scripture declares, is "as filthy rags." In that, then, we cannot appear before the throne of God. But our blessed Lord has wrought out a righteousness by a full and perfect obedience to the law which we have broken. He as thoroughly obeyed it in thought, in word, and in action; and this righteousness is imputed to those that believe. This is our wedding garment; this is our justification. We have no other in which to stand before the throne of God. But this robe of righteousness which is imputed to those that believe is perfect, because it is the obedience of the Son of God; and by it all that believe are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. I shall not dwell, however, longer on this point, as it is one which I have often brought before you, and in which, I trust, you are well established by the grace of God. I therefore pass on to the next heavenly blessing.

3. Of God he is made unto us "*sanctification*." It is a solemn declaration of the apostle, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14.) To possess this holiness, therefore, is a necessary and indispensable meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; but this meetness must be wrought in us by the power of God's grace, for I am very sure that in ourselves of it we have none. But see its necessity. What happiness could there be

in the courts of bliss unless we had a nature to enjoy it? Unless we were made capable of seeing Christ as he is, and enjoying his presence for evermore, heaven would be no heaven to us. Nothing unclean or unholy can enter there. Sanctification, therefore, must be wrought in us by the power of God, to make us meet for the heavenly inheritance.

But as this is a rather important point, let us devote a few minutes to it. The apostle declares that the Lord Jesus Christ is "of God made unto us sanctification." Now, he is so in various ways. He is so, first, as our *federal Representative*—that is, he, in the presence of God, as the covenant head of the Church, represents her as perfect in holiness. But he is also the *source* and *fountain* of all sanctification; for all the holiness ever possessed by all or any of the saints of God is received out of his fulness. And he is their sanctification also *imputatively*, in that the holiness of his nature is imputed to them; for they stand "complete in him;" and the holiness of his human nature, with the merit of his obedience and sufferings and blood-shedding, are put to the account of the people of God; in which sense he is said to have "sanctified them with his own blood." (Heb. 13:12.)

But besides this representative, imputed, and meritorious sanctification, he is so as the *root* of all holiness, for it is by being grafted into him that we partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree. He, therefore, communicates of his Spirit and grace to give us heavenly affections, holy desires, gracious thoughts, tender feelings; and above all, that love whereby he is loved as the altogether lovely. By the sanctifying operations of his Spirit, he separates us from everything evil, plants his fear deep in the heart, that it may be a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death; and works in us a conformity to his suffering image here, that we may be conformed to his glorified image hereafter. Thus there is a perfect and an imperfect sanctification—perfect by imputation, imperfect in its present operations. But the one is the pledge of the other; so that as surely as Christ now represents his people in heaven as their holy Head, so will he eventually bring them to be for ever with him in those abodes of perfect holiness and perfect happiness, which are prepared for them as

mansions of eternal light and love.

4. We now approach the last blessing of which our text speaks, "*Redemption.*"

This word implies several things.

It implies, first, a state of *captivity*; for in ancient times captives in war could only be redeemed by a price paid for their deliverance. Thus we read again and again of the children of Israel being "redeemed out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," implying their captivity under Pharaoh.

It is sometimes applied to a *deliverance* from *death*, as in the redemption of the first-born, or of unclean animals whose neck was to be broken unless redeemed.

And sometimes it is applied to a redemption from *debt*, as it was often the practice to sell a debtor for a slave.

Now in all these three senses is Christ of God "made unto us redemption;" from the captivity of sin, from the curse of the law, from the awful debt which we owe to divine justice, has the blessed Lord redeemed all who believe in his name.

Now just see, by way of retrospect, what heavenly blessings there are for those who have a living union with the Son of God. Everything is provided for them that shall be for their salvation and their sanctification: not a single blessing has God withheld that shall be for their eternal good. View them as foolish, ignorant, unable to see the way, puzzled and perplexed by a thousand difficulties, harassed by sin, tempted by Satan, far off upon the sea. How shall they reach the heavenly shore? God, by an infinite act of sovereign love, has made his dear Son to be their "*wisdom*," so that none shall err so as to err fatally; none shall miss the road for want of heavenly direction to find it or walk in it. Their glorious Head, who is in heaven, is made of God unto them wisdom on earth to bring them to their heavenly inheritance. He opens up his word to their heart; he sends down

a ray of light into their bosom, illuminating the sacred page and guiding their feet into the way of truth and peace. If they wander, he brings them back; if they stumble, he raises them up; and whatever be the difficulties that beset their path, sooner or later some kind direction or heavenly admonition comes from his gracious Majesty. Thus the wayfaring man, though a fool, does not err in the way of life, for his gracious Lord being his "wisdom" leads him safely along through every difficulty until he sets him before his face in glory.

But they want a "*righteousness.*" How can they stand before the throne, seeing they are of and in themselves such poor, filthy, defiled creatures? God has devised a way. His dear Son has wrought out for them a perfect robe of righteousness; and the Holy Spirit brings it near and clothes them with it, so that in it they stand without spot or blemish before the throne.

But besides this they are unholy; their very nature is defiled; they are worldly and carnal, and have no taste naturally, for heavenly things. The blessed Lord is of God made unto them "*sanctification,*" to impute to them not only the holiness of his nature, but also to send down the Holy Spirit into their bosom to give them a new heart and a new spirit, to supply them with heavenly graces, to raise up in their soul spiritual affections, and adorn them with every new covenant fruit.

But again, they have sold themselves to sin and Satan; are often in deep captivity to a body of sin and death; owe a thousand talents, of which they cannot pay a single farthing. The Son of God is made unto them "*redemption,*" so as to pay off their debts, to break off all their legal fetters, to set the prisoners free, and bring them into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

And all those heavenly blessings are connected with, and flow out of their union with Christ. How needful, then, it is to be able to realise some inward sense of this union; for if we can realise our personal interest in it, then all these blessings are ours. Can we realise it? Do we feel it? Are we experimentally acquainted with

it? Do we know anything of the Lord Jesus Christ by any revelation of his Person, his work, his love, his blood, and his grace; by any teaching of his blessed Spirit; by any communication of his light, life, and power to our heart; any living faith in his name, any hope in his mercy, any love toward him who is altogether lovely? As we can trace these things more or less in our bosom, it raises up an evidence of our union with the Son of God; and as we can trace this union more and more clearly, then our faith rises to embrace him as of God made unto us all these heavenly blessings. Under a deep sense of our ignorance and folly, we go to him to be taught as our "wisdom;" under a sense of our nakedness, we go to him for clothing as our "righteousness;" under a knowledge of the carnality of our heart and inability to be aught that is good, we go to him as our "sanctification;" feeling the bondage of sin and Satan, we go to him as our "redemption." This is making use of him; this is receiving of his fulness; this is believing in his name unto eternal life; and this is realising the blessedness of a personal union with the Son of God.

III.—Now, as these things are feelingly realised, then there comes a *praising* and *blessing* the name of God for these mercies, and a glorying only in the Lord. "That, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." But where is it written? Is it not in Jeremiah? "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." (Jer. 9:23, 24.) So we are allowed to glory. But in what and in whom? Not in ourselves: *that* is for ever disannulled. The Lord has purposed to pour contempt upon all human glory, that none should glory in himself, whatever he be or whatever he have. But when a man has a view of the Son of God in his beauty, in his suitability, in his heavenly grace and divine glory, then he can and may glory in the Lord. He can say, "O what a Lord there is above! How glorious is he in his excellency, in his suitability, and in his blessedness; how glorious his wisdom, his righteousness, his sanctification, and his redemption. Let my whole glory be there;

let me not take to myself a single atom of it. If I am wise, let me give him the glory of being my wisdom; if righteous, let me give him the glory of being my righteousness; if I have any fruit of the Spirit, let me give him the glory of being my sanctification; if I am redeemed from death and hell, let the glory of my redemption be his." This is doing as God would have us to do, glorying in his dear Son. And the Lord will bring all his people to this spot sooner or later. He will give them such views of the effects of the fall, of the misery of sin, and of their own helplessness; and will give them such gracious views of his dear Son, as shall wean them from glorying in the creature and make them glory in the Lord as all their salvation and all their desire. It may be by a long course of severe discipline, but the Lord will eventually bring all his people there; for he has determined to glorify his dear Son, and when we can thus glorify him, then we have the mind of Christ, and are doing the will of God.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DIVINE CHASTENING

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening, July 24, 1849.

"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked." Psalm 94:12, 13

What a different estimate men form of blessedness and happiness from that which God has declared in his word to be such! If we listen to the opinions of men about happiness, would not their language be something to this import? 'Happiness consists in health and strength: in an abundance of the comforts, luxuries, and pleasures of life; in an amiable and affectionate partner; in children healthy, obedient, and well-provided for in the world; in a long and successful life, closed by an easy and tranquil death.' I think a natural man would, if he did not use the very words, express his ideas of happiness pretty much in the substance of what I have just sketched out.

But when we come to what the Lord God Almighty has declared to be happiness; when we turn aside from the opinions of men to the expressed words and revealed ways of the Lord, what do we find 'blessedness' to consist in? Who are the characters that the unerring God of truth has pronounced to be blessed? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:3-11.) And again, in the words of our text, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." These are the unerring words of God; and by his words man will be tried. It is not the fleeting, fluctuating opinions of worms of the earth; but

it is the unerring declaration of the only true God by which these matters are to be decided.

In attempting, then, this evening to unfold what the Lord has here declared to be real "blessedness," I shall,

I. **First**, endeavour to shew in what this blessedness consists; "Blessed is **the man** whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law."

II. **Secondly**, why the man thus **chastened** and thus **taught** is really blessed; "That thou mayest **give him rest** from the days of adversity." And,

III. **Thirdly**, what is in preparation in the meantime for the ungodly. "Until the pit be digged for the wicked."

I. **First**, then, let us endeavour to look at the spiritual meaning of the words: "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law." Who is this **man**? He is one whom God has taken in hand; one to whom the Lord has special purposes of mercy; a true-born child of his heavenly Parent; for "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers" **there is no exception**, "then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Heb. 12:8). If a man, therefore, be exempt from divine chastening, his character is drawn as with a ray of light. He may congratulate himself on exemption from trouble; he may say, 'there has no evil touched me.' But his very exemption is only a proof of his bastardy—the hand-writing of his illegitimacy. If he were a true-born child, he would come under the rod; but not being such, he escapes these proofs of God's eternal adoption. We may observe this naturally. The children who are at this moment disturbing us by their noise in the street, we do not chastise; they are none of ours. But if you, as a parent, were to see your child making a noise in the street, or otherwise misconducting himself, you would bring him in and chastise him. He is your child; you are interested in him; you cannot let him act as vagrant children do, because he is your flesh and blood. And therefore, while you pass

the rest by, as having no concern in them, you bring your own children under especial chastening because they are your own. It is so spiritually. The wild vagrants, to whom the Lord has no regard, the children of Satan, who are filling up the measure of their iniquity, have no rod of chastisement; they are left, like these poor ragged children, to their own ways. But the heirs of promise, the children of the living God, those whom he is training to be with him for ever in bliss and glory, he will not suffer to go on in their own ways; for **them** he has a rod of correction.

But, we may observe in the words before us, that the Lord puts **chastening** before **teaching**. Is there not something remarkable in this? Why should chastening precede teaching? For this reason. We have no ear to hear except so far as we are chastened. Take the case I have alluded to. Your child does something wrong. Do you instruct him first, or do you chasten him first? You chasten him first. And then, when by means of the chastisement you have brought him to submission, to a proper state of mind, you tell him how wrongly he has acted. The rod smites the body before the instruction drops into the ear. So it is spiritually. In God's dealings with his children, he chastises first; and when by his chastisement they have received an ear to hear, a conscience to feel, and a heart to embrace the truth revealed to them, he drops his instruction into their soul.

1. The Lord has various ways of chastising his people; but he generally selects such chastisement as is peculiarly adapted to the individual whom he chastens. What would be a very great chastisement for you, might not be so to me; and what on the other hand might be a very severe stroke to me might not be so to you. Our dispositions, our constitutions, and our experiences may all differ; and therefore that chastening is selected which is suitable to the individual. It is as though the Lord had suspended in his heavenly wardrobe a number of rods of different sizes; and he takes out that very rod which is just adapted to the very child whom he intends to chastise, inflicting it in such a measure, at a time, and in such a way as is exactly fitted to the individual to be chastised. And here is the wisdom of God signally displayed.

i. The Lord, for instance, sees fit to chasten some **in** body. We find this in the Scriptures. In the book of Job especially it is mentioned: "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out" (Job 33:19-21). There we have an instance of an individual laid upon a sick bed, in pain of body, distress of mind, and chastened by his gracious Lord for his good. So we find the Apostle Paul speaking to the Corinthians, who had misbehaved themselves at the Lord's supper; "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30). It was their unbecoming conduct at the Lord's supper which had brought on them bodily sickness. The Lord chastened their body for the misconduct of their soul. So in the case of Hezekiah, we find the Lord took similar measures. The prophet was sent to him with this message in his mouth, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live" (2 Kings 20:1). Sickness took hold of him, and he was stretched upon the bed of death. But see how it worked in him! "He turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord." He turned away from all human help, and fixed his eyes wholly and solely on him who is able to save. It is in sickness and affliction, oftentimes, that the Lord is pleased to manifest himself to our souls, bless us with his presence, and stir up in us a spirit of prayer. I myself am a living witness of it; the greatest blessings I have ever had, the sweetest manifestations of the Lord to my soul have been upon a sick bed. Illness is often very profitable. Bodily afflictions separate us from the world, set our hearts upon heavenly things, draw our affections from the things of time and sense, when the Lord is pleased to manifest himself in them. And yet there are other times and seasons when we are laid upon a bed of sickness, and yet no blessing is given. I remember once, after the Lord had blessed my soul upon a bed of sickness, when I got a little better, and the blessing had worn off, this thought crossed me, 'O, your spiritual state of mind was not the effect of grace; you were sick and afflicted; it was that, and not anything specially from God that brought those feelings.'

Soon after, I was laid upon a bed of sickness again; had I then the same blessed feelings, the same views of Christ, the same spiritual-mindedness in my soul? Quite the contrary; all was hard, dark, dead, and barren. Then I saw that it was not the sickness that could make Christ known, loved, or precious; but the power of God made manifest in it. And thus, sometimes, we learn from our very barrenness, hardness, and deadness, profitable lessons, and are convinced thereby that we are utterly unable to raise up one spiritual feeling in our souls.

ii. Others the Lord chastens in their **families**. Our children are very near and dear to us; they are our own flesh and blood, and touch our tenderest feelings. Now the Lord sometimes may pass by ourselves personally, and afflict us in our children or our partners in life. We find this in the Scriptures. We see how Jacob suffered from his children, by losing one for a time, and others proving thorns in his side, and a grief to his soul. We see this also in David, when he wept out his soul with such bitter sorrow, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:33) We see it in the case of Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam. 13). What misery was produced by his children in his own household! We see it also in the taking away of the child which he had by the wife of Uriah the Hittite; which though it cut him to the very soul, yet he saw as the chastising hand of God for his fearful transgression.

iii. Others again are chastened in their **worldly circumstances**. We see this in the Scriptures also. Look at Job; a man who in riches exceeded all the men of the East. But how in a moment all was struck away; his flocks, his herds, and all his possessions taken away at a stroke. Ungodly persons do not see the hand of God in these things; it is all 'a chance' with them, or an 'unfortunate speculation, which did not succeed.' But when the children of God enter into speculations, or embark their money in enterprises which are not consistent; when a reverse comes, the speculation turns out to be a failure, and the money is lost, it is their blessing to receive it as a stroke from God and as a mark of divine chastisement. Their eyes are then anointed with eye-salve

to see that it is a justly deserved stroke; and though it cuts them all the more deeply, yet they receive it as from the Lord, and submit to it as a dispensation of mercy, not of wrath.

iv. Others **I may say all in their measure**, the Lord afflicts spiritually, **in their souls**. What I have hitherto been treating upon are mere **external** afflictions—afflictions of the body, in the family, and in circumstances. All these are the dispensations of God, and ought to be viewed as such; and when so viewed, they work together in the soul for good. They must not be put aside; we must not say, 'The hand of God is not in them; it is all a chance.' Nothing comes to a child of God as a matter of accident or chance; it all proceeds from God, and all is dealt out in measure and for certain purposes. If the Lord touch our bodies, it is for our spiritual good; if he bring affliction through our children, it is for our spiritual good; if he afflict us in our circumstances, it is for our spiritual good. When the eye is opened to see, the ear to hear, the heart to believe, and the conscience made tender to feel, we know and confess that these things are sent from God. Here is the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. Infidelity says 'it is a chance;' for unbelief sees the hand of God in nothing: faith says, 'it is the lord;' for faith sees the hand of God in everything.

Now though a few may escape these outward troubles, yet there are **spiritual** afflictions which we cannot and must not escape. If we do escape them, woe be to us; we are only signing our death-warrant; only proclaiming aloud, 'We are bastards.' If we are God's children, we shall have spiritual afflictions; and these will consist, proportionately to light and life in the conscience, in painful convictions of guilt; in deep repentance and grief of soul on account of our backslidings; in a discovery of our evil ways and crooked actions; in sorrow for the many things we have done which conscience bears witness against as sinful. The denial of answers to our prayers; the shutting up of the throne of grace to our cries; the darkness of mind that we labour under; the trying thoughts we may have at times concerning our state, or the dealings of God with our souls; the inability to raise up faith,

hope, and love, in our hearts—these all are to be viewed as chastisements. Is it not so naturally? Your child has done something wrong, and displeased you. Do you look upon him now as kindly as at other times? No. You keep him at a distance; you do not let him dine with you today; you abridge him perhaps a part of his food; you make him go to bed early and in the dark; and if you do not visit him with positive stripes, you manifest by your reserved countenance and serious look that you are displeased; you will not take him upon your knee, nor embrace him like his brothers and sisters, but send him to bed without a kiss. What are all these but marks to the child of your displeasure? These are chastisements; and if the child be tender, he will go sobbing to bed because his parent is displeased with him; for he knows he has brought this displeasure upon himself. It is so spiritually.

The Lord deals with us as a parent does with his children; he does not smile upon us, does not give us a kiss, will not speak kindly to us, or look upon us as in times past with looks of favour and love, and will not, as it seems, hear us when we call. You teach your child by similar means your displeasure. When you are reserved, and keep him at a distance, he knows the reason, and he feels the reserve as a mark of your displeasure. So it is with God. When he denies answers to our prayers; shuts up his manifested mercy; leaves us to wretched, desponding, and gloomy feelings, these are all chastisements, and are to be received as such; and when they are so received, they work good effects in the soul, for they produce submission, resignation, quietness, meekness, and humility.

In these, and other various ways, of which time will not suffice to mention the tenth part, God chastens his people. The Lord chastens those whom he loves; and "blessed is the man whom he chastens." There are many afflicted, but only few chastened: many have abundance of worldly trouble; but only God's people are really chastened, so as to see and feel the hand of God in the rod, and submit to it as such. Here is all the difference between a believer and an unbeliever, between a child of God and an infidel.

2. We pass on to consider the **second** part of the blessedness of the man whom God chastens. "And teachest him out of thy law." We have just hinted at the reason why **chastening** precedes **teaching**. We have no ear for instruction till we feel the stroke of God upon us. It was so with the prodigal. Until he was brought to his right mind by strokes of hunger, he did not think of his father's house; he had no heart to return; but a mighty famine sent him home. So it is with God's children; as long as they are allowed to wander in their backslidings, they have no heart to return. But let the rod come: let them be driven home with stripes; then they have an ear to listen, while God teaches them to profit, instructs them by his blessed Spirit, and speaks into their heart those lessons which are for their eternal good. "And teachest him out of thy law." We should, I think, much err from the mind of the Spirit, if we confined the meaning of the word "**law,**" as some do, to the law strictly and properly so called. "The law" in the Scriptures has a very wide signification; it means, in the original, **instruction**. The word is **Torah**, which signifies 'teaching' or 'direction.' And as the law given by Moses was the grand instruction that God gave to the children of Israel into his holiness and purity, the word **Torah**, or instruction, became fixed in a definite manner to the law as given at Sinai. But the word in itself has a far higher meaning, signifying instruction generally; and thus we find, in the New Testament, that the word "law" is not confined to the law of Moses given in thunder and lightning upon Mount Sinai. For instance, we read of "the law of the Spirit of life" in Christ Jesus, which hath "made me free from the law of sin and death." **Ro 8:2** The "law of the Spirit of life" there mentioned does not mean the law given on Mount Sinai. Again, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). "The perfect law of liberty," does not, cannot mean the law given at Mount Sinai; it is the gospel of Jesus Christ; the instruction, the **Torah**, which the Spirit has given of the Lord Jesus, and therefore called "the perfect law of liberty." So, in the Old Testament, "O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day"

(Ps. 119:97). David was not meditating all the day upon the words given upon Mount Sinai; he was not utterly consumed with terrors by meditating upon the strictness and holiness of God as revealed in that law; but he was looking into the gospel, and in that law he delighted all the day, as beholding in it the glories of the Lamb.

And thus, in our text, when it says, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law:" it does mean, I grant, in the first instance, the law strictly speaking as revealing the purity, holiness, and perfection of God; but we must not limit it, as some do, to the law definitely so called. A man, then, is blessed whom God teaches out of his law: that is, brings near those things which the law reveals, and seals them upon his heart. The law is a manifestation of God's purity, holiness, justice, majesty, greatness, and glory; and was given upon Mount Sinai in thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes, to shew forth the majesty of God. Now the Lord, in the first instance, teaches his people by shewing to them out of the law his purity, holiness, majesty, the perfection of his character, his indignation against sin, and his wrath against sinners. And every feeling of guilt produced by a manifestation of God's purity, affection, uprightness, justice, wrath, indignation against sin, and direful vengeance that burns to the lowest hell—every such conviction, and every such feeling is a teaching out of his law. But there are some living souls whom God has taught, and is teaching out of his law, who because some definite words of the law have not been applied to their heart, are full of fear that they never had the sentence of the law written in their conscience.

But there is one mark, if not more, whereby we may know whether we have ever had the application of the law strictly speaking to our conscience. What is this? The law "gendereth to bondage," that is, it generates or produces bondage in the soul. Now there may be some here this evening, who may say, 'I do not know that I ever had definite words applied to my conscience—such as, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

'But let us see whether by bringing your experience to the word of God, you cannot find that you have experienced what sometimes you fear you have not. Have you never felt bondage? Has your soul never been shut up, and unable to come forth? Have you had no slavish fear of God? Have you never been as it were bound in fetters of iron, and felt that nothing but the mighty power of God coming into your soul could set you free? Have you had no slavish fears of death? We read, that there were some who "all their life-time" were subject to this fear. Have you had no fear of death when the cholera is going about? Have you had no dread lest that awful scourge might enter your door, and you might be stricken with the fearful malady? Has no groan or sigh gone up to God through the dread of it? What is this but bondage? And what gendereth bondage but the law? Not the letter, but the spirit of the law: because it genders, that is, generates, as a father, in the soul, what the dead lifeless letter cannot possibly do, a spirit of bondage. If you have felt this bondage, this fear, these doubts, these manacles and chains, which your sins have wreathed round your neck, then you have been taught "out of the law;" aye, you have felt the law; for it has produced a spirit of bondage in your soul. Let us see whether we cannot find another mark. It is this; "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Have you any knowledge of sin? Have the sins of your evil heart ever been felt? 'Have you ever seen the purity and perfection of Jehovah; and felt the justice of God in his holy law'? Do you ever feel that had God sentenced your soul to eternal damnation, he would be just; that you had deserved it all, and brought it on your own head'? Can you say, that he would be just in condemning you to the lowest hell'? If you have felt this, you have been taught out of God's law; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." But we pass on to consider "the law," in a different point of view. The "law," as I have already noticed, signifies not merely "the law," strictly speaking as the sentence of condemnation; but it includes also the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—"the perfect law of liberty; the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus;" that law which was in the heart of the Redeemer, when he said, "I come to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Now, as the Lord teaches his children "out of the law," strictly so called, so he teaches them "out of" the gospel; and to my mind there is something exceedingly sweet and expressive in the words "out of the law." It seems to convey to my mind, not only that the law is a treasure-house of wrath, but that the gospel also is a treasure-house of mercy. And as those who know most of the law are only taught "out of the law," and not the whole of the law, only a few drops as it were, out of the inexhaustible wrath of God; so out of the heavenly treasure-house of the gospel, "the perfect law of liberty," 'it is but a little of grace and mercy that in this life can be known. As Christ said to his disciples in promising the Spirit; "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:15). He cannot take "all," and shew it unto them; for none could live under the sight. The Spirit, therefore, takes of the things of Christ, and shews here a little and there a little; some little blessedness here, and some little blessedness there; a suitable promise, a gracious testimony, a comforting text, an encouraging word, a sight of atoning blood, a smile of his countenance, a view of his Person, a discovery of his righteousness, or a glimpse of his love. This is taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the soul. And thus, the man whom the Lord takes in hand, he teaches "out of" the gospel by making Christ experimentally known, and revealing his dying love. And thus he teaches each and all "out of his law"—both the law from Sinai, and the law from Zion.

But, observe the connection between chastening and teaching. This is what I am wishing to impress upon you. Suppose you are in a carnal state of mind; say you are a man of business, have done a good stroke today, have got something which has wonderfully pleased your covetous heart, have been carried away by some worldly project. But you have come to chapel this evening. Are **you** in a fit state to hear the word of God? Is the Lord about to teach you now out of the gospel? You are not the man, nor is your soul in a fit state to receive it. But suppose it otherwise. Say, the Lord has been sorely chastening you of late; you are just recovering from a painful sickness; have lost a child;

had an affliction in your family; something trying has happened today, yesterday, or the last week in your worldly circumstances; or the Lord has set to his hand, and wrought more powerfully upon your soul than he has for months past; you have been cut up with convictions, felt your backslidings, and could scarcely bear to creep to chapel, lest you should hear your own condemnation.

You are the very person whom God is chastening that he may teach out of his law. You were not in a fit state before to hear; you were thinking how tedious the minister was, and wondering when he would finish the sermon; your mind was full of wandering thoughts, or you were cavilling at all you heard. But now you have an ear to hear; a sigh and a cry in your heart and lips when you come to chapel; and in groaning out your petition before you come, you say, 'O Lord, wilt thou speak one word to my soul tonight? Wilt thou kindly look upon a poor vile backslider? O do manifest thyself to me!' This is teaching following chastening. You must have chastening first; you must first be brought to your senses, have a heart given you to feel; have many stripes laid upon you to bring your wandering feet back to the paths of righteousness; and then the gospel is for you.

The promises of mercy, the sweet invitations, the forgivenesses with God, and all the blessings which the gospel is filled with, are for those whom the Lord brings down and chastens. And therefore, there are very few persons who are really in a state fit to hear the gospel, the precious love of God as revealed in the Person of Christ. This is the reason why we have so many hardened antinomians in our day; so many dry, doctrinal professors, whose lives, conduct, and conversation are disgraceful to the name they profess. It is because they are not chastened. And this makes them the bitterest enemies to real experimental truth, and to the men who speak out of the fulness of a believing, exercised heart. There is a connection, therefore, betwixt being chastened, afflicted, exercised, and being taught "out of the law." God does not teach, and afterwards chasten for

disobedience: but he first brings down the heart with labour, and then sows in it the seeds of instruction.

II.—But we pass on to our second branch, which is, the reason why the Lord chastens and teaches his children,—“that he may give them rest from days of adversity.” There are “days of adversity” coming; and these may be more serious than any one at present expects. We may have days of great adversity and troublous times as regards the country generally. We may have persecutions. We may have calamitous times as regards business, trade, and worldly circumstances; and these things affect all men. We are so linked together, so dependent upon each other, that what touches one touches all. If troublous times come, they will touch the church as well as the world. What a blessing, then, for God's people, if they have a rest from the “days of adversity;” if they have a God to go to, a Jesus to lean on, a lap to be dandled in, and a bosom to pillow their aching heads.

But, supposing the political horizon is not overshadowed; supposing worldly matters are peaceable and quiet, there may be “days of adversity” of another character. You may have a long and painful sickness, be brought into very trying circumstances; you that are now in comparative comfort may be brought down to poverty; you may have a very heavy affliction in your family; and see little else but “days of adversity.” These will come, and we cannot prevent them. We can no more say “the day of adversity” shall not come, than we can say, tomorrow will not be a rainy day, or that the shadow will not attend tomorrow's sunshine. The Lord, then, knowing the “days of adversity” which are in store; knowing that sickness and death are coming, has prepared a rest beforehand; “Come, my people,” he says, “enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment until the indignation be overpast.”

But how do we get this “rest?” By being chastened and by being taught. Till we are chastened, we make the world our home; and a very pleasant paradise it is. Our children, our connections, our

pursuits, our worldly ease, the many airy castles that we build up, are all very pleasant to us until strokes of chastisement come, and the Lord begins to afflict us in body, in family, or in soul. Yet how kind it is **and all the kinder for being painful** for the Lord to chasten us home. Our child may perhaps be from home; there is a storm gathering; the thunder is ready to break forth; and he is about to be exposed to the lightning's flash. If he loiter, are you dealing unkindly with him if you whip him home? Is not every stroke a kindness that brings him out of the thunderstorm? It is so spiritually. The Lord sees that there is a thunderstorm gathering; the lightnings are about to flash; the rain to pour; the hail to strike. Is not every stroke a kind stroke, a stroke of love that brings the wanderer home to find shelter under God's wing until this storm be overpast? We might be wandering abroad in the world with our heads exposed to the lightning stroke; we might hear the warning peal, and be yet too far from home to get there in time; but the Lord foreseeing "the days of adversity," comes with strokes and drives us home. He will not let us lie down in the green fields and flowery meadows, and sleep under the trees.

His strokes are strokes dipped in love; and, however cutting to the flesh, if blessed by the Spirit, they are made instrumental in driving us home, bringing us to our right mind, and shewing us where true rest is only to be found—in Christ, in his Person, love, blood, grace, and suitability; in all that he is and all that he has. What a wise and kind parent, then, he is to chasten us, though painful at the time, and to teach us out of his law and gospel, that he may give us rest from "the days of adversity."

III.—But we come to our third point; what the Lord is preparing in the meanwhile for the ungodly. There is no chastening for them; no teaching for them; no preparing a rest for them; or preparing them for rest. What, then, is doing for them? What a striking figure here the Lord makes use of! "Until the pit be digged for the wicked." What is the figure? Is it not this? In Eastern countries, the ordinary mode of catching wild beasts is to dig a pit, and fix sharp spears in the bottom: and when the pit

has been dug sufficiently deep, it is covered over with branches of trees, earth, and leaves, until all appearances of the pitfall are entirely concealed. What is the object? That the wild beast intent upon bloodshed—the tiger lying in wait for the deer, the wolf roaming after the sheep, the lion prowling for the antelope, or the elephant breaking through the jungle, not seeing the pitfall, but rushing on and over it, may not see their doom until they break through and fall upon the spears at the bottom.

What a striking figure is this! Here are the ungodly, all intent upon their purposes; prowling after evil, as the wolf after the sheep, or the tiger after the deer, thinking only of some worldly profit, some covetous plan, some lustful scheme, something the carnal mind delights in; but on they go, not seeing any danger until the moment comes when, as Job says, "they go down to the bars of the pit." The Lord has been pleased to hide their doom from them; the pit is all covered over with leaves of trees, grass, and earth. The very appearance of the pit was hidden from the wild beasts; they never knew it until they fell into it, and were transfixed. So it is with the wicked; both with the professors and the profane. There is no fear of God, no taking heed to their steps, no cry to be directed, no prayer to be shewn the way; no pausing, no turning back;—on they go, on they go; heedlessly, thoughtlessly, recklessly; pursuing some beloved object,—on they go, on they go; till in a moment they are plunged eternally and irrevocably into the pit.

There are many such both in the professing church as well as in the ungodly world. The Lord sees what they are, and where they are; he knows where the pit is; in what part of the wood; how situated in the jungle. God knows their steps; he sees them hurrying on, hurrying on, hurrying on. All is prepared for them. The Lord gives them no forewarning, no notice of their danger; no teachings, no chastenings, remonstrances, no frowns, no stripes; they are left to themselves to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until they approach the pit that has been dug for them, and then down they sink to the bottom. This will never be the case with the righteous. They are forewarned; they take heed to

their ways; the Lord chastens them betimes; he teaches them out of his law; he gives them right and deep views of his purity and holiness; and shews them also the refuge which he has prepared for them in the love and blood of the Lamb. Thus, in "the days of adversity," they have a solemn resting-place in the bosom of God, in his covenant faithfulness and love.

Now do you lay these things to heart? How have you come to chapel this evening? What has God done for your soul? Has curiosity or some other motive brought you here? Or do you come hoping to hear that which will do you good, and be spiritually and lastingly profitable? Have you found anything spoken this evening suitable to your case and state? Can you find, looking back on the dealings of God with you in providence or grace, that he has been chastening you? Do fix your eyes, you that desire to fear God, on this mark; say to yourselves, 'Lord, have I been chastened of thee? Can I see in my various afflictions the hand of God? Have they done my soul good? Have they been a voice speaking to my heart? Have they brought forth in me the fruits of holiness? Can I say, Lord, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest;" and I am that man?' If so, you are not the wicked. God is not digging a pit for you; he is chastening you betimes that he may "give you rest from the days of adversity;" you have a God to go to, and a blessed bosom to lean upon when "the days of adversity" come, and the wicked fall headlong into the pit.

The Blessedness of the Man whom the Lord hath Chosen

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, Dec. 13, 1857

"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thine holy temple." Psalm 65:4

There are many professors of religion who have the greatest horror possible of the doctrine of election. Awful indeed is the length to which the enmity of the carnal mind has carried some in their blasphemous speeches against this scriptural truth. There are those who have said, that if God has arbitrarily chosen some to salvation, and rejected others, he is no better than a tyrant or Moloch; and others have declared, that they would sooner be with Satan in hell than dwell with such a God in heaven. But I will not pollute my lips with the awful blasphemies that ungodly men, both professing and profane, have vented against this branch of divine sovereignty. In spite of all their indignation and enmity, it still stands as an immutable truth, that "the election hath obtained it, and the rest are blinded;" (Rom. 11:7,) and that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (9:16.)

Now, these very same persons who think it most unreasonable that God should exercise his election, think it very reasonable that they should exercise theirs. For instance; they think it highly reasonable that they should choose their own partners in life; yet they think it very unreasonable that Christ should choose his own Bride. What would they think if they were denied this right of election? or if they were compelled to take in marriage any woman that chose to thrust herself upon them? And is it not equally unreasonable, in a divine sense, that Christ should be forced to take into union and communion with himself every proud pharisee or presumptuous professor that chooses to make a claim upon *him*?

Again; they think it highly reasonable that they should have the right of choosing their own abode, and selecting the house where they should dwell; yet they think it highly unreasonable that God should choose the persons whom he may make his temple, and in whom he may take up his abode for ever.

So also; they would think it highly unreasonable, if they were not allowed to choose that business or profession in life, which should most display their abilities, and open up the greatest avenue for profit or praise; yet they think it highly unreasonable that God should choose a people in whom he will be glorified.

"But," they might say, "the parallel does not hold good; there is no analogy in the case. You are speaking of the things of time, in which choice may be allowed; but election regards eternity, where we certainly cannot allow it at all." But **we do [perhaps this should be, do we?]** not find that, just in proportion to the length of time, they claim to themselves the right of choice? For instance; a person might put up with a very inconvenient apartment for a night, but he would not think of choosing such a place as a habitation for life; or you might stay with a person for an hour, whose company you would not like for a month. So that just in proportion to the length of time, we claim to have a right of choice. May we not carry this into divine things? Is not God perfectly at liberty to choose the persons who shall dwell with him for ever in glory? And has he not, as a Sovereign, a clear right to select whom he will to be partakers of his happiness? Men may rebel at these doctrines, and kick at these mountains of brass; but "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" Sooner or later, all such contentions will end in the destruction of the contenders. It is our wisdom and mercy not to cavil, but to submit. And if God has given to us any testimony of our election in Christ, they will answer a hundred cavils better than any arguments, and satisfy our souls more than a thousand reasons.

We find, in the text, a blessing pronounced upon the man whom God hath chosen, "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth." We

do not find David venting his gall and enmity against election; but rather pouring out his heart in thanksgiving that God had a people in whom he would be glorified, and especially pronouncing a blessing upon the happy individual on whom that eternal choice is fixed.

With God's blessing, we will take up the text in the same order as the Holy Ghost has revealed it; and consider its different branches and various clauses, as it lies before us in the word of truth.

I.—It begins, "*Blessed is the man whom thou choosest.*" Why should this man be blessed? Because election is the root of all blessings, the source and fountain of every spiritual mercy that the soul receives. This is the ever-flowing and overflowing fountain, from which all the streams of mercy and grace come into the heart, and in which the redeemed will bathe throughout the never-ending ages of eternity.

But let us look a little closer into the nature of this choice.

1. We observe at once, that it is a *personal and individual choice* that the Holy Ghost here speaks of, "*Blessed is the man whom thou choosest.*" This makes election such a personal matter, that it is fixed, not upon nations and countries, and such loose generalities, but upon *individuals*. And in this way God always seals it upon the conscience, by bringing it home with power to the heart of each individual object of his favour.

2. It is also a choice *in Christ*; as we read, "According as he hath chosen us in him" (that is, Christ), "before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4.) The election of the people of God is in the Son of his love. He is their covenant Head, in whom they have their eternal standing. They are chosen not for any works, goodness, or worthiness in them; but they are elected in Christ, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved."

3. But this choice is *unto eternal life*; as we read (Acts 13:48), "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." And how much is summed up in this expression, "*eternal life!*" that when time shall be no more, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and this changeable scene shall have closed, then the happiness of the redeemed shall be but commencing, a happiness that will know no termination, but continue through never-ending ages.

4. But in choosing his people, the Lord has made ample provision by the way, that *they shall not*, as men say, "*live as they list*;" that they shall not abuse this doctrine unto licentiousness, or give free scope to their base lusts and passions. We, therefore, read, that they are "elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:2); and that they are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10.) So that when this precious truth of election is sealed upon the conscience, so far from relaxing the obligations to holiness, it binds a man more closely to obedience, and causes him to bring forth those fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and glory of God. Where the doctrine of election does not do this for a man, it does nothing for him. If it do not constrain him by every sweet and holy tie to yield his body, soul, and spirit, to the service of God; if it bring him not out of the world, and separate him as a vessel of honour made meet for the Master's use; if it do not bind him with cords of love, to the throne of God, it is but a doctrine floating in the head, but a speculation in the natural understanding. It is not a truth sealed upon the heart, and received into the conscience under the teachings of God the Spirit.

II.—But we pass on to consider what flows out of this eternal choice of God. "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and *causest to approach unto thee.*" The original choice is the root; the approach unto God is the fruit. The one precedes and is the cause of the other; for every one whom God chooses he causes to approach unto him.

Now, what and where are we by nature? We should never forget our base original. The Lord tells us to "look unto the rock whence we are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we are digged." (Isa. 51:1.) We must never forget our fallen condition; as the Lord bade his people confess, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." (Deut. 26:5.) Thus he bids us consider our fallen state by nature, that by looking into that horrible pit and miry clay, we may see how the hand of the Lord has mercifully brought us out.

What and where are we, then, by nature. At a distance from God, alienated from him, carnal, callous, reckless, dead in sin, without one spiritual feeling or heavenly desire, without one holy breathing or panting to know God, and to have his mercy revealed to our conscience. An impenetrable barrier closing up all spiritual access, exists between God and our soul. The Lord in choosing his people, has not chosen them to die as they were born; he has not elected them to live in ignorance, enmity, and sin, and then, when death comes, to take them to heaven without a change. That is not God's election. But God having "chosen them that they should be holy and without blame before him in love," brings them to the spiritual knowledge of himself, that they may thus be made new creatures, and made meet by a divine work upon their consciences for the inheritance of the saints in light. He therefore breaks down the barriers between himself and their souls. But he makes us feel there is a barrier before he breaks it down. What are these barriers?

1. The first barrier that stands between a just God and a guilty soul, is *the holy law*. Did you ever notice the place where the altar is first spoken of under the law, and the spot which it also occupied in the tabernacle? Where do we find an altar of burnt-offering first commanded? In Exod. 20:24, the very chapter where the law was given. No sooner had God revealed the law with thunderings and lightnings from Mount Sinai, than he speaks of the altar which they were to build for him; typically showing, that no sooner is the sinner condemned by the law, than there is the altar of Christ's atoning blood to flee to. Did you ever also notice the situation which the brazen altar occupied in the

tabernacle? It was not in the "holy of holies," where none but the High Priest entered once a year; nor "in the holy place," to which the Priests alone had access; but it was in the court, in the entrance before the holy place, in order that all Israel might see it. "And he put the altar of burnt-offering, by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation." (Ex. 40:29.) The altar of burnt-offering, with its ever burning fire, was typical of the offering of the Lord Jesus, and it was so placed, that its smoke and flame was the first sight that presented itself to the eye of the worshipper. Thus, when we first see and feel the guilt of sin under a broken law, we cannot advance till there is a sight of the altar. "We have an altar," says the Apostle. (Heb. 13:10.) But when this altar (that is, the sacrifice and propitiation for sin which Jesus made), is made known in the soul, it breaks down the partition wall, and enables the soul to draw near unto God.

2. But besides this barrier of guilt from a broken law, there is also another, which arises from the soul being penetrated with *shame*. When God the Spirit touches the conscience with his finger, and charges the sin home upon it, it not merely produces a feeling of guilt, but also confusion of face. Our first parents, till they had broken God's command knew no shame; nor do we till we know we are sinners in his sight. Now we cannot draw near with confidence unto the Lord, so long as we feel shame before him. He has, then, provided means to remove this sense of inward shame; he has appointed "the blood of sprinkling" to purge the conscience from filth, and dead works, to serve the living God. Through the one propitiation, spiritually made known, the conscience becomes cleansed, and the soul finds access to God through the blood of the Lamb; therefore we read, "For your shame ye shall have double." (Isa. 61:7); and again, "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." (Isa. 54:4.)

3. But we want something more than this. The soul convinced of sin, and deeply penetrated with shame and confusion of face,

needs something more than the sight of that atoning blood that cleanseth from all sin. It wants with it the secret drawings of the Spirit, as the Bride says, "Draw me, we will run after thee." (Sol. Song 1:4); and as the Lord speaks to the church, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) We find this sweetly set forth in the Canticles, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole in the door, and my bowels were moved for him." (5:4.) The Lord is here represented as putting forth his hand into the soul, and thus secretly drawing up the heart and affections for himself.

Under these inward drawings and secret movements of the Spirit upon the heart, the Lord causes us to approach unto him. We cannot approach him in faith and affection until he draws us with the cords of love, and the bands of a man; but when he puts forth his hand and touches the heart, he secretly yet irresistibly draws the soul near to himself.

4. But we must feel something more still to be caused to approach, for we are very backward to draw near to God. Guilt, sin, and shame darken the mind, harden the heart, and numerous things, springing from the world and the flesh together, keep us back from the Lord. So that to cause us to approach unto him, he gives some glimpses of his reconciled countenance, some intimations of his favour, some droppings-in of a gracious promise just suited to our state, or some heart melting testimony that meets every want. Under these the heart becomes broken, softened, and humbled, and is enabled to approach unto the Lord.

But *how* do we approach him? If we approach him aright, it is with confession. We cannot, if God has touched our conscience with his finger, rush recklessly and heedlessly into his presence; for there will be in the heart, under divine teachings, a reverence of his great name, a godly fear, a prostration of spirit before him, with confession and acknowledgment of sin. But this is humbling work. We find it so naturally. If we have done that which is wrong, how hard and humbling it is to make acknowledgment!

How it goes against the pride of our heart! What a humbling place it is to take, to have to confess we have acted wrongly or foolishly! So spiritually, it is a very humbling place to take, to come with confession, and acknowledge and bewail our manifold backslidings, our heart idolatries, the base and aggravated sins that our consciences at times feel and groan under. Yet after all it is sweet to confess. Humility is far sweeter than pride; confession is far sweeter than self-justification. It is so naturally. When the wife has offended the husband, or when the husband has offended the wife; when the child has offended the parent, or the servant the master; whatever secret gratification there may be in self-justification and obstinate stubbornness, it is really much sweeter to confess. Much more so spiritually. When we can confess our sins, when the tears roll down our cheeks, when the bosom heaves with sobs of genuine contrition, there is a pleasure and sweetness in this honest confession far greater than in the devilish gratification of standing out proudly and presumptuously against God and conscience. But the Lord himself must touch the heart; and when he touches it, confession will flow out. Like the rock that Moses struck, our hearts naturally are hard and impenetrable; but no sooner was it smitten by the wonder-working rod than the waters gushed out. So no sooner are our hearts struck by the word of God than brokenness, contrition, and confession flow forth. With these, there will be prayer also and supplication; as we read, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31:9.) This is the way in which the soul approaches the Lord; not with hardened presumption, but with supplication, earnest breathings, filial pantings, and desires after the manifestations of himself; so that the soul pours itself, so to speak, into the bosom of God.

5. But we cannot approach unto the Lord without some measure of divine faith, as the Apostle says, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." (Heb. 11:6.) So that when the Lord would cause us to approach unto him, he kindles and draws out into exercise a measure of faith in our hearts; and by this faith we take hold of God's strength, as we read, "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me." (Isa. 27:5.) By faith we embrace the promises; by faith we eye the Saviour at God's

right hand, on his throne of grace and glory; by faith we view the blood of sprinkling; by faith we look into the compassionate and sympathizing bosom of Jesus; by faith we believe the truth as it is revealed in him; and by faith these things are laid hold of, brought in, embraced, and in a measure enjoyed in the heart. What a mercy it is to be enabled thus to approach unto God in Christ! He is the source of light and life; every blessing for time and eternity comes from him; and by approaching unto him, we get a measure of these blessings. If we are in darkness, when the Lord causes the soul to approach unto him, light comes and dispels it. If we are in heaviness, and the Lord causes us to approach unto him, he disperses it; for though "Weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning." (Psa. 30:8.) If trials—family, bodily, or providential—if heavy weights and burdens press down, when the Lord causes us to approach unto him, and we get near that eternal and inexhaustible Source of bliss and blessedness, these afflictions become lightened, at least for a time are removed off the shoulders, crooked things become straight; and rough places are made plain. Have you not found it so? And if you know what it is to approach unto the Lord, however hard you may feel, whatever darkness covers the mind, whatever iciness may seem to freeze up every breathing of our soul, yet when the Lord gives us power to come near unto him (for we have no power to do it ourselves) a measure of relief and ease generally follow. Now, if I am parching for thirst, where must I go to alleviate it? Must I not go to the Fountain of living waters? If I am cold, shall I revive myself by dipping my hand into ice? I must go near the source of warmth and heat; I must get near the sun. And so spiritually, if I am cold, torpid, frozen, so as to have no spiritual feeling in exercise, how am I to get warmth to revive my icy and benumbed soul? By approaching the Sun of Righteousness. If I am hungry naturally, how is that hunger to be removed? Not by talking or thinking about food, but by partaking of the bread put into my hand. So if I hunger spiritually, my hunger can only be satisfied by feeding upon the bread of life. What a libel then upon the doctrine of election it is, to say, "Because a man is elected he may live as he pleases; that he may be a quickened vessel of mercy, and yet be a vile

monster of iniquity." O what a libel! The Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." If, then, the Lord chooses a man, he causes that man to approach unto him. Now is it not a libel upon the character of God, to say, that a man can approach unto a holy God, and yet live in unholiness; that he can draw near to an all-pure and blessed Jehovah, and yet wallow in sin and filth; that he can be brought nigh to a God hating and abhorring sin with perfect hatred, and yet indulge in every vile gratification. Why if I approach unto God I must get some resemblance unto him. It is so in all cases. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Prov. 13:20.) Does not worldly intercourse make us worldly; and does not spiritual intercourse tend to make us spiritual? As we draw near to gracious, well-taught people, do we not often find some measure of spirituality communicated through them to our hearts? And can we draw near unto the Fountain of light and life, as a holy sin-hating God, and then say, "we may live in sin and do the things which that holy God abhors?" I will tell you when it is we can do things which God hates. It is when we live at a distance from him, when there is no approach unto that Fountain of light and life, when the world has a firm possession of us, when we are unable to draw near through darkness of mind, and the soul is gone out after its idols. It is not by approaching near unto the Lord that we commit sin; that purifies, cleanses, and spiritualizes the heart, that destroys the power of sin; and the more we approach unto him, the more power and grace we receive out of him to mortify sin, and crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

III.—Our next point is to consider, *why* the Lord causes the man of his choice to approach unto him; "*that he may dwell in thy courts.*" What are these courts? The courts of the temple. The temple was a figure of Jesus, which shadowed forth his holy human nature. And as God dwelt visibly in the temple, by the Shekinah on the mercy-seat, so does the Godhead dwell in the Lord Jesus Christ; "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2:9.) That, then, is the reason why the

temple is so much spoken of in God's word, and why so many blessings are connected with it. And thus in the text, when it is said, "that he may dwell in thy courts," it is not meant merely the courts of the earthly temple, but to dwell in those courts which the earthly temple shadowed forth. This is why we are caused to approach unto God. It is to dwell near unto Jesus; it is to have a sense of mercy, pardon, and peace received into the conscience out of his glorious fulness.

But let us look a little at the word *dwell*—"that he may *dwell* in thy courts." It signifies a fixed habitation; so that the man whom God chooses, and causes to approach unto himself, has a fixed abode in the courts of the Lord's house. This implies, that he is brought out of the world, no more to go back; that he is cut off from a dead form of religion, to be wrapped up in it no more; that he is brought out of every thing earthly, sensual, and devilish, so as to be transformed by the renewing of his mind; that he is brought into a spiritual, holy, and experimental relationship with God, and knows something of living under the shadow of the Almighty. The courts were connected with the temple, were a part of the temple, and the sanctity of the temple were communicated to them. These courts were built after a divine pattern, as we read, "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord." (1 Chr. 27:11, 12.) None but the priests could enter into the temple, and none but the High Priest could enter into the most holy place; but the courts of the temple, which were part of the temple, were open to all the children of Israel. There is a sweet figure in this, that those who dwelt in the courts of the temple were sanctified so to speak, by the temple. It was in the court of the temple that the sacrifices were offered; in the holy place that the altar of incense and the table of shew-bread stood; and in the most holy place the ark of the covenant, with the mercy-seat, on which the Shekinah, or divine glory rested; whence God is said to "dwell between the cherubims;" (Psa. 81:1) and there too the Spirit of prophecy resided. The holy human nature of Jesus, and his mediatorial work, grace, and glory, were all shadowed forth by

the temple, (it being built after the pattern of the tabernacle in the wilderness;) and this was the reason why the believing Israelites of old so loved and looked to it. Thus Jonah, in the very belly of hell, said, "I will look unto thy holy temple" (Jonah 2:4), and Daniel, when in captivity in Babylon, though death was the penalty, opened his window three times a day towards Jerusalem, his eyes looking towards the place where the temple stood, though then in ruins. In the temple then every thing dwelt to meet the wants and necessities of spiritual worshippers. It is so in him whom the temple feebly shadowed forth. I am guilty, filthy, defiled; where shall I go, but to the temple? for there is the brazen laver, typifying the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. I am a poor guilty criminal in myself; I need mercy; where must I go for it, but to the mercy-seat sprinkled with atoning blood; I am often in great darkness of mind; I need light; where must I go for it but to the Shekinah, where the light shines, the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? I have continually enigmas to unravel, dark mysteries to be solved; where shall I go but to the temple, that the all-wise Prophet may untie those intricate knots, clear up these dark experiences, unwind the mysterious providence, and bring relief under my various exercises? In the temple too all the love of God is concentrated, for it is in Christ alone that the love of God is displayed. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.) In the temple of Christ's human nature the love of God is manifested. There is no love out of that temple. No; nothing but wrath, and indignation, and consuming fire; nothing but righteous vengeance of God against sin and unholiness out of the Person, blood and righteousness of God's dear Son. Do I want love, then, in my heart? It is to be enjoyed in the courts of the temple where alone this love is manifested. Do I want reconciliation, pardon, peace, and every gospel blessing? It is in the temple, in the courts of the temple, where God's honour dwelleth, that all these blessings are bestowed upon spiritual worshippers.

Thus it was that David could bless the man so highly favoured. He saw how favoured he was whom God had chosen to inherit

these mercies; he felt what a blessing arose from this eternal choice, in God causing the poor sinner to approach near the footstool of his mercy; he knew too what a blessing there was wrapped up in the act of coming to the courts of God's temple, and dwelling therein as a spiritual worshipper; and under these feelings he cried, in another place, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84:10.) And so says every spiritual worshipper, who has seen the glory of God in the temple; who has tasted peace, pardon, mercy, love, blood and salvation through a crucified Jesus, and felt glory dropping into his conscience under the unction of the Holy Ghost. He would rather have the meanest place in the Lord's house, and say, "A day in these courts, the courts of the Lord's house, is better than a thousand spent in vanity and sin;" he would rather occupy the meanest position in the church of God, so as to live under the anointings of the Holy Ghost in his soul, than fill the most distinguished station in the world.

IV.—And this leads David on to speak in behalf of himself and of the spiritual Israel. He says, "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Have we not tried the world? For how many years did we labour to glut our fleshly appetites with the dust and dirt that the world offered us; but did we ever reap any solid satisfaction from it? Have we not endeavoured to satisfy ourselves with the pleasures, so called, of sin? and did they ever leave anything but pain and sorrow behind them? Have we not attempted to satisfy ourselves with works, with a form of godliness, a name to live, a self-righteous religion? but was there not always something wanting? Have we not tried to satisfy ourselves with doctrines floating in the judgment, and yet reaped no satisfaction; for there was always an aching void? Guilt was not purged away, sin was not pardoned, Christ not revealed, the love of God not shed abroad, salvation not known; so that there was no satisfaction in anything; all was a blank, (and all is a blank except that,) all is vanity and vexation of spirit, except the goodness of God's house to our souls. But when the Lord has fixed his choice upon a vessel of mercy, and when, in

pursuance of that choice, cutting him off from the world, he causes him, by the internal teachings and drawing of his Spirit, to approach unto himself, brings him to dwell in the courts of his temple, and shews him something of the beauty and glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—*that* satisfies him, and there is no satisfaction until that is made known. And what are we to be satisfied with? With a mere apprehension of Gospel truth? There is no satisfaction there. With our experience? Why, if we look at it, there are so many flaws and failings, so many ins and outs, so many things that stagger us, that we cannot be fully satisfied with all of that. Can we take the opinions of men concerning us? O, we think, they may all be deceived. Can we take our own opinion of ourselves? That is worse than the opinion of others; for "he that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

With what, then, are we to be satisfied? "The goodness in God's house," that is, the goodness manifested in the Person of Christ. It is strange how spiritual persons should take such expressions as "the house of God," and apply them to a building like this in which we are assembled. You commonly hear it said in prayer, "coming up to the house of God." But what warrant is there in Scripture to call any church or chapel a house of God? I know the temple was the house of God, because God dwelt there; but "God does not now dwell in temples made with hands." The houses of God in the New Testament has but two significations—the Person of Christ, for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily:" and the other, God's saints. "But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. 4:6.) "Having a high Priest over the house of God." (10:21) But no mere collection of bricks and mortar, consecrated or unconsecrated, adorned with a steeple, or without that appendage, is worthy of the name of "the house of God." Christ is the house of God, for in him the Godhead dwells; and the saints are the house of God; for God dwells in them and walks in them. (2 Cor. 6:16.) If then, any elect vessel of mercy is to be "satisfied with the goodness of God's house," it does not mean that he is to be satisfied with the goodness of a chapel. All of some people's

religion consists in the chapel where they attend; they have a beautiful chapel, nicely fitted up, with a flourishing cause, a respectable congregation, and a talented minister. All their religion is in their chapel; and if you take that away, you take away all their religion. But a chapel, however well fitted up, however comfortable and convenient, will never satisfy the Lord's people without the presence and power of God being felt and made known, and the inward dew and savour of the Spirit resting upon the minister and the heart of the hearers. I have felt more of the presence of the Lord in some stifled-up room, where I could scarcely breathe, than in some handsome chapels. And I would sooner in my right mind speak in a little room with the presence of God, than in the most splendid chapel and to the largest congregation without it.

To be satisfied with the goodness of God's house is to be satisfied with God's goodness in the Person and work of Jesus. There all the goodness of God is seen and displayed; and O what a good God he is in Christ! What grace and mercy, what favour and love are manifested in the Person of Jesus! And when we see the goodness of God's house, and feel how good and kind, how gracious, favourable, and merciful he can be and is in the Person of Jesus, that brings satisfaction. There is in him a righteousness and atoning blood to satisfy all the demands of the law, and all the cravings of a guilty conscience; there is a power that satisfies, a love that satisfies, a salvation that satisfies; and nothing else but these will satisfy. Now, when the soul is brought near unto the Lord, so as to dwell in his courts, it begins to taste a little of the goodness of God's house; and as it tastes the goodness of God's house, that is, the goodness of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it binds the soul to this house. You know, goodness has a sweet attractive power; and as we feel goodness, mercy, grace, and favour, it binds the soul to those courts; it is satisfied with the goodness of God's house, even of his holy temple; and with it can live and die, if God is pleased to favour it with a sweet enjoyment of it.

Let us, with God's blessing, gather up the fragments of the loaf

that I have been endeavouring to break. We will look, first of all, at the point we opened with—*the original election of God*. There may be some here who kick at that doctrine; and perhaps may have gone to such awful lengths as to speak against it unbecomingly, and revile it as a doctrine horrible and hateful. Now I will ask you one question, and appeal to your natural conscience, for spiritual I fear you have none. Did not the Holy Ghost by the pen of David declare, "*Blessed* is the man that thou choosest?" Now, if you say, there is no such thing, is it not in a moment sweeping away the blessing which the Holy Ghost has pronounced? Rather look into your heart, and see why you speak against what God has so plainly revealed. But God's people know it to be the truth, that a man is blessed whom God has chosen. Many of God's dear people, who are much tried about their own election, whether God has chosen them, are perfectly satisfied that God has an elect people; their trials and exercises do not arise from doubts and fears about the truth of the doctrine; but this is the point upon which they are tried, whether they are of the elect. They are certain that God has a peculiar people; but the question is, "Am I one of them?" for they are sure that none but this people will go to glory. They say, "Has God put me among them?" And it is good to have these exercises; they establish the soul; they open the way for some sweet encouragement, because sooner or later after these exercises God's manifested mercy comes.

This, then is the root—the choice of God. The fruit is, being caused to approach unto God. There may be some here, (doubtless there are), who are saying, "O that the Lord would tell me that I am one of his chosen!" Let me ask you a few questions. Has God caused you to approach unto him? Have you felt the barrier of a broken law, the guilt and shame of sin upon your conscience; and yet at times have found all these hindrances removed out of your way? Have you ever been enabled to pour out your heart before the Lord, and vented your breathings into his bosom, confessed your sins, and bewailed them with godly sorrow? And do you ever feel any exercise of faith in your soul, whereby, though perhaps with a trembling hand, you take hold of

God's promises? Remember her who touched the hem of Jesus' garment; it was with a trembling hand; she did not rush boldly forward, and seize the hem with a firm and vigorous grasp; but she trembled as she touched, though she knew if she could but touch it she should be made perfectly whole. Perhaps some of you trembling ones have some of this faith; you could not come presumptuously forward, but trembled as you took hold of some promise lest that promise did not belong to you; and yet you longed in your soul to embrace it. You have felt and found some workings of love toward Jesus, though you could not say you were sure that he loved you; yet there were some times and seasons when you felt sure that you loved him. You could not have loved him, if he had not drawn you near to himself. Have you not found a secret strength breathed into your heart, whereby you have wrestled with God at the mercy-seat, and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?" (Gen. 32:26.) Have you not felt some secret power, whereby you were enabled to pour out your soul before him, and plead his promises? Then you were a wrestling Jacob; and you will come off some day, and that soon perhaps, a prevailing Israel. I would ask a little more, these questions sometimes bring out the life of God. Have you not found sometimes a little satisfaction in the things of the Spirit? When you have read God's word, have you not sometimes had a sweet light cast upon it, and felt a sweetness distilled out of some branch of heavenly truth? When you have heard the ministers of the Lord opening up and tracing out the experience of God's people, have you not felt a responsive echo to the things taught by the Spirit to the living family? And though perhaps it has only lasted for a short time, yet there are times and seasons when you have felt some inward happiness in the things of God, more than you ever dreamt of in the world, or have since thought it possible to enjoy, except by those who have the full assurance of faith?

Well now, if the Lord has caused you to approach unto him, caused you to dwell in his courts, and if he is satisfying your conscience that there is no real happiness but in himself, notwithstanding the darts of Satan and the workings of your base hearts, you are elected unto eternal life; God has chosen you,

though you cannot be certain that he has fixed his eternal love upon you. Do we see the root of a tree? It is hidden in the ground. We see the stem and branches, and sometimes pluck the fruit. So election is the fruit of all the blessings that the soul ever enjoys; and its approaching unto the Lord is the fruit of it.

Now, doubtless, there are some here, who cannot see the root, but yet there is the fruit which they bear to God's glory; and the Lord the Spirit has brought forth in their hearts and lives his gracious fruits, though perhaps their minds are often fearing, desponding, sinking, and fainting; and they cannot boldly say, that God has chosen them unto eternal life. We see sometimes the stream, but who can tell where the fountain rises? The noble river Thames that flows through the metropolis, we see its streams; but who here has seen the fountain whence those streams gush forth? So the streams of mercy, grace, and truth, may flow into a man's conscience, and yet he may be unable to see the fountain and source whence these streams take their eternal rise. But if there were no fountain there would be no streams; the very streams show us the reality and existence of the fountain. And thus because all here whose hearts God has touched cannot see they are chosen, it does not from thence follow they are not of the elect. It is a mercy to have the enmity of the human heart against the doctrine slain. It is a mercy to be brought to this spot, to feel that unless we are chosen we cannot be saved. It is a mercy to know guilt, shame, and confusion of face before God. It is a mercy to feel darkness of mind, and at times to have it removed by the light of God shining into the soul. It is a mercy to know one's own unbelief, infidelity, and helplessness; for by knowing those things by divine teaching a way is opened up for God to appear as removing all these obstacles, and causing these mountains to flow down at his presence. And in thus opening up a way for his grace and glory to be manifested, he secures to himself all the praise and glory, while the soul realizes its sweetness and enjoyment.

The Blessedness of Trusting in the Lord (A Posthumous Sermon)

Preached at Gower Street chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening,
July 18, 1869

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer 17:7, 8

What a dreadful thing it is to be under the curse of God; to have his curse in our body, his curse in our soul, his curse in our family, in our substance, in our goings out, in our comings in; his curse in life, his curse in death, and his curse to all eternity. And how the fear and apprehension of this curse has made the hearts of many wither like the grass, filled them with gloomy forebodings night and day, and made them sink under apprehensions of dying in despair, and lying for ever under the wrath of the Almighty. But on the other hand, what bliss and blessedness there is in being under the blessing of the Lord; his blessing in body, his blessing in soul, his blessing in our families, his blessing in our substance, his blessing in life, his blessing in death, and his blessing through all eternity. And as there are many who have feared and trembled under his curse, when events proved in the end there was no real cause for apprehension; so many have rejoiced, or thought they rejoiced in God's blessing, when it was all a delusion, for they were amongst those who said they should be blessed, though they added "drunkenness to thirst." Thus we must not altogether take our fears and feelings, nor our doubts and apprehensions, of these matters as certain indications whether we are under the curse or under the blessing. But we must come to the word of God: that is the grand arbiter; that is God's own judgment of these matters; that speaks as the voice of God, and pronounces who, according

to the mind of God and the judgment of God, are under God's curse; and who, according to the mind and judgment of God, are under his blessing. Now I do not know a more remarkable passage in the whole compass of God's word, to point out who are under the curse and who are under the blessing, than my text and the connection of it.

But the Holy Ghost, by the pen of Jeremiah, makes a contrast between those who are under the curse and those under the blessing; and he says of the former, speaking authoritatively in the name of the Lord—"Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." The Lord here does not lay down man's moral or immoral character. He does not say, "Cursed is the thief, the adulterer, the extortioner, the murderer, the man that lives in open profanity." He puts all that aside, and fixes his eye and lays his hand upon one mark, which may exist or does exist with the greatest morality, and it may be with the highest profession of godliness. "I will tell you," the Lord says, "who are under my curse. This is the man that trusteth in man, that maketh flesh his arm, and in so doing his heart departeth from the Lord." Now taking a wide and general survey, who is there free from this intimation of the Lord's eternal displeasure? Who can say he does not trust in man and make flesh his arm? Why all have done it and all will do it until they are taught better. The confidence of most stands wholly upon this ground. They trust in man, in themselves, or some other, and they make flesh their working arm, to work out their own plans of salvation, build up their own goodness, establish their own righteousness, and bring forth something in and by the creature with which they hope to pass eternity with God. But this is the point that God especially sets his hand upon as marking them, that in trusting in man and making flesh their arm, their heart departeth from the Lord; it being impossible in God's view for a man to be neutral in these matters; it being impossible in the judgment of God for a man to trust in man, and make flesh his arm in one direction; and to trust in God and make the power of God his arm in another direction. God knows no such neutrality; he winks at no such half

measures; he does not allow a man to stand with one leg upon self and one leg upon God; one foot on free will and one foot on free grace; to work with his own right arm his own righteousness, and take with his left gospel blessings. Such neutrality in the sight of God is as bad as it would be in the case of a hot war for a man, a subject of Queen Victoria, to stand neutral—be sometimes in favour of the Queen, and sometimes in favour of the invader. Such a man would deserve to be shot in the face of both armies.

"He shall be like the heath in the desert." You have seen, perhaps, at Aldershot the sorry heath, a patch of rush, the ground not being good enough to produce food for man or beast; but it can produce a little stunted leaf, a few miserable rushes that just relieve the dry sand, please the eye, but contain in them no nutriment or utility. And so this man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, is like the heath in the desert; with an appearance of verdure and something like greenness and growth, and yet, when examined, a miserable crop that benefits neither himself nor anybody else; a few stunted starved specimens of miserable heath, that cannot feed a lamb or even sustain a goat. Such a man "shall not see when good cometh." Good may come to others, but good will never come to him; a blessing may fall upon the righteous, but no blessing shall fall upon him. Trusting in man, departing from the Lord, he sets himself out of the reach of God's blessing, puts himself into a place where God's mercy falls not, and therefore never sees when good cometh, for there is no good for him.

"But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited." A religion merely in name and appearance, without anything fruitful, god-like, or God-glorifying. And thus he lives and thus he dies under the eternal curse of the Almighty, as making flesh his arm and trusting in man. Now it will be my object this evening, taking the words of our text, to contrast with such the character on whom God has pronounced his blessing; and you will see how the two differ in almost every point; how the Holy Ghost with his graphic and vigorous pen, has sketched both these characters and painted them in such life-like

colours, that each stands out as it were in contrast to the other, that we may compare the two men in the curse and in the blessing, see the dealings of God with each, and thus, if we be under the blessing, gather for ourselves some good hope through grace, and have some testimony that not the curse rests upon us, but the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich and he addeth no sorrow with it.

In opening up the text, I shall, therefore, with God's help—

I.—*First*, direct your thoughts to the blessedness of the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

II.—*Secondly*, take up the comparison which the Holy Ghost has given us: that such a man resembles "a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river."

III.—And *Thirdly*, speak of the fruits and blessings that spring out of his being thus planted by the hand of God by the waters and by the river: that he "shall not see when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

I.—I intimated in the opening of this discourse, that we were not to take our fears and feelings as certain marks and indications of our state and standing before God. If we took our fears and feelings at certain stages of our experience, we should draw altogether a false conclusion. For instance, when the Lord begins his gracious work upon a sinner's heart, he opens to him the evil of sin; he sends the Holy Spirit with power into his conscience to apply his law; and with the law comes a curse. So that whilst he is in that state and stage of experience, under a sensible feeling of the wrath of God in his conscience, under the application of a fiery law, under the dismal apprehension of wrath to come, under miserable forebodings of what his state may be for time and for eternity, that man would draw altogether wrong conclusions if he concluded he must live and die in this miserable condition; that because he is now feeling the wrath of God, he will for ever feel

the wrath of God; because now under the curse of the law, he will live and die under the curse of the law; and because he has dismal forebodings of an awful eternity, it will be so on his death-bed. We will take him at that stage, to throw a clearer light upon the whole subject, and we shall see the Lord sends his law into the man's conscience, and lets down a sense of his displeasure into his mind, for the very purpose of breaking him off from his trust in man and making flesh his arm, that he might not live and die under the curse attached to those who do trust in man and make flesh their arm. He, like others, trusted in himself; he, like others, made flesh his arm in working out, as he thought, a righteousness which would please God; in performing a number of good works, to build up a Babel tower to reach to heaven, and to satisfy the demands of a righteous law by yielding what the law demanded. But wrath still pursuing, the curse still continuing, fear still prevailing, bondage still settling upon him, he is taught eventually by those means the folly of making flesh his arm and trusting in man, in self, or anybody else. Thus preparatory to the blessing comes the curse; before the gospel comes the law; before the ceasing to trust man, and ceasing to make flesh his arm, comes the breaking of the arm and the destroying of the confidence in the flesh. Then taking him at that period, he is brought to this point, that he cannot put trust in himself nor in anybody else. Whenever he has put his trust in himself or anybody else, he has met with nothing but disappointment; whenever he has accepted anything from the creature, nothing has followed but vexation, destroyed hopes, and blighted expectations.

Now when he is in this state, the Lord begins to commune with him from off the mercy seat; he draws him near to his gracious self; he begins to open up his word to his apprehension, enlightens the eyes of his understanding, drops some sweet promise into his heart, and discovers his truth in its sweetness and blessedness; or by some such operations of his grace—for we cannot limit the Lord: he has various ways of unfolding his truth to believing hearts—he brings this poor, tried, distressed, and exercised soul to look unto him. And the more the soul is enabled

to look unto him, the more it sees in him his suitability to its wants and woes. The more we look to the creature, the worse we find it; the more we look to self, the worse we find it; the more we trust in man or in one's own self, the greater is the disappointment. But when we are drawn off from this vain-confidence and enabled by the power of grace to see who and what the Son of God is, and he is presented to our mind in the word or in the sweet revelation of his Person and work, and the Holy Ghost is pleased to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and raise up a living faith in our soul, then we begin to see and feel how worthy he is of our confidence. We see his glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us, and all the glory of God shining forth in his most beautiful and blessed countenance; and this draws forth faith and love. And we see from time to time what a wondrous work he came to do, and how he did it completely. We are led to see how he came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; to make reconciliation for iniquity; to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and to do the whole will of God. And we find as we look unto him, trust in him, and cast the weight of our weary souls upon him, there is a stay, there is a support, there is an encouragement which we could never have found anywhere else. We have tried the creature, and the more we leaned upon the creature the weaker it was. But when we are brought off the creature and begin to lean upon the Lord, he honours that faith by showing us what a strong foundation is laid in his Person and work. Thus he sweetly draws us and encourages us by his alluring grace to come out of our miserable selves, in which there is nothing but confusion and disappointment, and bondage, sin, and misery, and to come to him and find rest and peace. And as we find the benefit and blessing of so doing, and God's face begins to shine as the face of the Father in Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, then we begin to see what a suitable object of faith this dear Son of God is; and the more we believe in him, the sweeter we find him; and the more he draws forth faith upon his glorious Person and work, the more darkness is dispelled from the mind, the more bondage is loosened from the spirit, and the more peace and consolation are felt in the soul. This is trusting in

the Lord. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."

Now these lessons are taught us that we might ever make the Lord our trust. Until we have had some discovery of this nature, some bringing near of the Person and work of Christ, some sweet teaching to make him known and precious, some revelation of his Person, blood, and work, there is no trust in him, matters are so at an uncertainty. But when he has made himself known and precious, then he teaches us by these things to trust in him. Now he is determined to make us trust in him at all times and all seasons; because he won't continue these sweet feelings, nor ever indulge the soul by setting it at rest. But he will teach us to trust in him when we cannot see these manifestations. And thus it may be he will bring upon us some trial in providence, or some affliction in the family, or some circumstance in grace that shall very much try the mind. Now, perhaps, we are losing sight of our best friend by this time, and through unbelief and weakness, and the fermenting infidelity of our wretched heart, beginning again to trust in self and make flesh our arm. And what is the consequence? The Lord does not appear, and we get into bondage, confusion, and misery. Now the Lord has to teach us to trust in him, and therefore he will bring those things upon us whereby we shall have reason to trust him. If in providence we go to a friend for help and find that help withheld; or if, trusting in our own strength, we find it but weakness, our plans all disappointed, our finest schemes all turned upside down: what are we to do? Trust in the Lord; for all this is meant to bring us out of self-confidence, and leaning upon an arm of flesh, to trust in the Lord, and look to him and him alone. So it is in grace. It is easy to believe when the Lord is present; easy to walk upon the water when he upholds; but how are we in a storm? How do we get on when circumstances threaten, and conscience accuses, and temptations of various kinds start up—some to draw aside, and some to alarm and threaten? Why, like Peter, we begin to sink into the water. Now the Lord will teach us still to trust—not to live by sense nor sight, but to live by faith in the Son of God; to trust him in the dark; to look unto him, because there is nobody else that can do us any good; to hang upon him, because

look where we will, all is darkness, confusion, guilt, and bondage, except in him and through him. And thus, sometimes from sheer necessity, having no other refuge, driven out of all other hope, and having no other help—from sheer necessity, as in the case of Esther when she went to the king—from sheer necessity, having nobody else to look to, we are taught sometimes to trust in the Lord. And we shall always find, sooner or later, if we trust in the Lord and do not trust in ourselves—if we do not make flesh our arm, God will honour that faith and crown that trust with his manifested approbation. Therefore, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."

And is there not every thing in the Lord to draw forth this trust? Look at his power. "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." O what almighty power! Where can we find power in any body else?—power in ourselves or power in a friend? All their strength is weakness when it comes to the point; all their help, when it comes to the push, fails and is broken. The Lord has all power, both in providence and in grace, "The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle on a thousand hills." He has but to speak and it is done. So in grace: who can speak peace to a troubled conscience but he? Who can take a load of guilt off the mind but he? Who can calm anxious fears but he? Who can pardon sin, forgive iniquity, heal backsliding, cast all our transgressions into the depths of the sea, and reveal a sense of mercy and love, but he? Thus we see he has all power; and when we can behold by the eye of faith the heights, lengths, depths, and breadths of his dying love, and see that those whom he loveth, he loveth unto the end—that he never will leave nor forsake the objects of his eternal mercy,—this draws forth out of the heart a trust in him, a looking once more, as Jonah looked in the whale's belly—a looking once more to him, even from the very ends of the earth. Now this is a blessed man, who has the approbation of God upon him, and sometimes a sweet testimony of God himself in his conscience.

But it is said further of such a man, that the Lord is his hope; not "in the Lord," but the Lord himself is his hope; because he is the

hope of Israel. And he is worthy of that hope. Wherever there is trust, there will be hope, because hope is connected with trust, grows out of it, and is the fruit of it. And it is this hope that encourages the soul still to go on seeking his face, pleading his word, and looking to him for a fulfilment in answer to prayer. When trust begins to droop, hope droops with it; as faith becomes weak in the soul, hope also languishes. But as faith is drawn forth into living exercise, and with faith comes trust, then hope lifts up its head as a co-worker with faith and love, and strengthens itself in the Lord, as David did. Hope is compared to an anchor, sure and steadfast, entering within the veil; and it takes firm hold of the Son of God as an intercessor and mediator between God and man. And thus the Lord becomes our hope. The man who has this hope and who trusteth in the Lord, is pronounced to be blessed. And though his hope may coexist with many doubts and fears, many temptations and trials, many sinkings and givings way,—for an anchor is only of use in a storm,—yet still, the Lord being his hope, he will ride out the gale; his ship shall not drive upon the rocks, but in due time it shall enter the harbour of eternal rest. This is the man whom God has pronounced blessed.

II.—But the Lord has given us a very striking figure, which I shall now endeavour, with God's blessing, to open up. He compares the man described in the text to "a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river." In those hot eastern climes, trees cannot live or bear fruit except on mountain slopes, or else when planted by rivers; for the power of the sun is so intense, the atmosphere so dry, and the drought so lasting that a tree withers and dies away for want of nutriment. The heath may stand it in the wilderness, but the tree would die under the drought that lets the heath live. Therefore, this man whom the Lord has blessed, is compared to a tree planted by the waters. By these waters we may understand the teachings, testimonies, operations, work, and witness of the blessed Spirit, water being often in Scripture a type and figure of the Holy Ghost in his divine operations in the hearts of God's saints. And to be planted by the waters is to be brought into contact with the

operations and influences, teaching and testimony of this holy and blessed Comforter. God plants his people by these waters that they may irrigate, so to speak, the roots of their religion; that they may not dry up, wither away, and become fruitless and worthless; but be so planted by the waters of God's grace in the operations of the Holy Ghost as to keep their leaf green, make the stem grow, cause the blossom to come out on the boughs, and in due time the branch to bear fruit. And perhaps we may consider the ordinances of God's house, the operations of his grace under a preached word, the teaching of the Holy Spirit privately in the soul, and his blessed intercession in the heart at the throne of grace, as connected with these waters. It is a very blessed thing to be brought where the waters flow with any measure of purity and clearness; to be brought into contact with a gospel ministry, so that the power of God's word in the ministry may water your religion, keep your soul alive in the things of God, strengthen your faith, hope, and love, confirm the good work of God in you, bring forth the verdant leaf of profession, and crown it with gospel fruit. And as the people of God delight in the waters, as being so salutary and so refreshing, as they love their gentle murmur, and delight in the coolness and refreshment derived from them, they will bring themselves, and with themselves their religion to these waters, that they may derive from them the nutriment that God has put into them. It is because these waters, like Shiloah's stream, flow so gently and so stillly, that the Lord's people come from time to time to the house of God to get their souls refreshed by the word, read the Scriptures in private, fall upon their bended knee before the throne of grace, and seek the Lord according to his own word: "Asking ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find." And there, now and then, these waters will gently flow into their souls, and it will be found that they gently bathe the roots of their religion so that it shall not wither and come to naught, but be maintained in their soul with some degree of strength and verdure. We further read that this tree spreads out her roots by the river. This river is considered to be the river John speaks of, and which he saw in vision; the river of the water of life. And Ezekiel saw it issuing out of the Temple. It is the river of life and love. And it is a goodly

tree the Lord hath planted by the waters; it has roots—roots of faith and hope and love; and these roots are very much in love with this river, because it contains the waters of life and love which irrigate these roots, mount up through the rootlets into the branch, and make it green and verdant. The tree spreads out her roots to the river that it may suck up all the nutriment it can; for it finds there is such blessedness in having such a river of life and love flowing by it, and such blessedness in having roots that can dip into this river and draw life and love out of it into the soul, so as to fill it with all joy and peace in believing. It is never satisfied except its roots can get into the river of life and love and draw life and love out of it. When the river seems to flow scanty and low, the roots seem to dry up for want of contact with the river; and if the roots begin to dry up, every thing suffers in the tree; because the source of nutriment being cut off through the withering of the root, there is no life or love drawn up from the river into the soul, to spread itself over every spiritual faculty, as the water of the river spreads itself over the literal tree. And thus these roots take great delight in the river, because they find in the river a suitable nutriment; it being designed for that purpose and flowing out of the throne of God and the Lamb, to give life to this tree and maintain it in verdure and being.

There are times and seasons, and many such in the soul, when this river does not seem to flow into the roots: and we find the misery of it. Darkness, deadness, coldness, bondage, worldly-mindedness all creep in; and we find there is something wrong—some gracious influence suspended, some communication apparently cut off, something wanting in our religion that we cannot supply, but which has to be supplied by the river of life and love. And thus as the work is God's and not our own; as he who has begun carries on; as he who gave the river gave the roots, as he who gave the roots gave the tree from which those roots spring, and as that tree is under his special blessing as a tree of righteousness that his own right hand planted, he will take care that in due time the river of life and love shall once more flow, the roots shall once more dip into it, once more draw nutriment out of it; it shall once more feed faith, hope, and love,

and once more the tree shall be manifested as a tree of righteousness.

III.—And now to our third point: what is the fruit and consequence of this?

First, he "shall not see when heat cometh." Here he is contrasted with the man under the curse: he was not to see when good came. He saw no good, because no good was wanted; and when good came to others, good came not to him, because he was under the curse of God as trusting in man. Now take the contrast: this man is under the blessing of God. The Lord has thoughts of peace, mercy, and love toward him. He has pronounced him blessed, and he goes on to ratify this blessing by giving him good which he did not give to the other. And as when good came to others, good came not to the man under the curse, because he trusted in man; so when heat comes to others, heat does not come to the man who trusts in the Lord, or rather the consequences; for heat may come without the consequences. The heat that withers, dries up, and brings to nothing all other religion, all other hopes, and all other confidence, does not affect this man under the blessing of God, for he has a spiritual religion, the roots of which are in the river. And, therefore, when the heat cometh it dries up all religion whose roots are not in the river; but it makes that thrive all the more which is fed by the river of life and love. Instead of withering and drying up his religion, acting together with the river of life and love, the heat only makes it more fruitful. As in the man under the curse, good comes to others, not to him; so in the man under the blessing, heat comes to others to burn and dry them up; but it does not come to him to burn and dry him up, because his roots are in the river. If you took two trees, and planted one where there was no water, and planted the other by the river side in a hot country, the tree planted where there was no water would sooner or later wither and die; but the tree planted by the rivers of water would not wither and die, because the river flows by to keep it alive and make it fruitful.

Temptation may be compared to heat. "Look not upon me, because I am black." (Canticles 1:6.) The burning sun of temptation withers up everybody's religion but his who is planted by the rivers of water; sooner or later, all profession dries up and withers except that which is of the operation of God. But God takes care that neither the profession nor the possession of the religion which he gives shall dry up and wither, because he takes the tree of righteousness with his own hand, and plants that tree by the rivers of water; and he keeps his work upon the soul alive by enabling it to draw up through its roots nutriment to maintain it in vigour, and make it fruitful in every good word and work.

But "her leaf shall be green." It is a very blessed thing for the live profession to have a green leaf. How many once apparently green leaves have become brown and withered and almost ready to fall off. Is your leaf green? How stands your profession between man and man? Do your families see greenness in your leaf? Do the members of the church that you are connected with see that your leaf still is green? And those amongst whom your daily business lies, do they look to your profession and see it all withered, and brown, and dry, like a tree in autumn, before the leaves fall; or do they see a verdure and greenness about your profession that commends itself to their conscience?

Now you never can maintain the leaf in any degree of greenness or verdure, unless the roots of your religion are in contact with the river of life and love. Your leaf is sure to get speckled, spotted, brown, and withered, unless this blessed river of life and love mounts up through the roots, fills it with sap and juice, banishes the specks that would creep over it, and makes it green and verdant. It is a blessed thing, and one might almost say a rare thing, for man or woman, after many years of profession, still to stand in the house of the Lord and the courts of our God with a green leaf. Many seemed in times past to have green leaves: where are they? Their leaf has become withered, their profession dry, and they have been like the chaff which the wind has driven away. If your profession stands for a single day with any degree of verdure and greenness upon it, and is not spotted

and speckled or become brown and dry, it is only because there is a river of life and love that bathes the roots of your religion.

"And shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." "Careful" means as to the consequences of the year of drought. Last year was a year of drought; and the present season looks almost as if we shall have a season of drought. Then we feel the want of water. When the springs are low, the brooks dried up, and the rain ceases to fall, we soon see the consequence upon the parched soil. Though this may not apply to the present year, we have had already so much wet and cold, yet were the hot, dry weather long continued, we might suffer from a year of drought now as we suffered last year. But this godly man is said not to be careful in the year of drought, because he does not depend only upon the rain from heaven, but upon the river which flows by—the river of life and love. Therefore, he is not so careful in the year of drought, lest the leaf wither and the fruit drop off, and he be thrown out of the vineyard as a withered stump; because he knows that there is this blessed river of life and love, the power of which is felt in his soul; and whilst this river runs and his religion dips its roots into it, the year of drought will not utterly consume him. He may languish, as we may languish, under the burning heat; the branches may decline; there may be a temporary effect come over the whole tree. But still it will be protected more or less by the river of life and love, so that it shall not be utterly burnt up.

"Neither shall cease from yielding fruit." God looks for fruit. According to the parable, the Lord of the vineyard came every year looking for fruit. Our Lord came to the fig tree expecting to find fruit. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2) Now we never can bear fruit by trusting to an arm of flesh, or leaning upon our own doings and duties. It brings us away from the river of life and love to lean upon an arm of flesh. But when we can (to refer to the beginning of our text) trust in the Lord, and have the Lord for our hope, and then feel some flowing in of the river of life and

love, then there will be a bearing fruit; and the bearing of this fruit will prove the goodness of the tree, the goodness of him who planted the tree, the blessedness of the river that waters the roots of the tree, and the certainty that the whole is under the blessing of God. But into what a narrow compass this brings most people's religion. How it cuts down thousands as if with the heavy strokes of a broadsword. Take all those in a profession or out of a profession, who make flesh their arm and trust in themselves, and see how the curse of God is upon them, and what a sweeping of all these there is into destruction. Now take the reverse. Fix your eye upon those whom God hath blessed, and ask yourself how many you know, and whether you are one of those, who have been brought by the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart, to trust in the Lord and to make the Lord your hope. And look and see how far your religion stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God; and if it has a root to it; and if these roots of your religion are fed and nurtured by being planted by the waters, and sustained, and fed, and nourished by the river of life and love. You may receive these things or reject them; pronounce them mere babblings of narrow-minded, bigoted men, or receive them as common truths on the testimony of God's word. But my preaching, whether it be true or false, come short or not of the reality, can never alter God's testimony. He has recorded it with a "Thus saith the Lord." Those whom he has cursed must be cursed, whatever blessing man may pronounce upon them; and those whom God has blessed will remain blessed, whatever curse man may denounce against them. We must stand in one of those two positions: under the curse or under the blessing; be under God's displeasure or under his approbation. And therefore those who are anxious about their souls and want matters right between God and conscience, will be led from time to time to examine these matters in the light of divine teaching, and weigh them up in the balance of the sanctuary, that they may come to some clear understanding how they stand for eternity. And O, if they can find themselves under the blessing of the Lord, what a theme for gratitude, what a debt of endless praise will flow from their lips, that the kind and merciful Redeemer has had pity upon them and blessed them

with every spiritual blessing; and it will be their happy lot to bless him who blessed them, and put his rightful crown upon him.

BLESSINGS IMPUTED, AND MERCIES IMPARTED

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Evening, August 17 1845

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1Cor. 1:30, 31

These words, or rather a portion of them, came to my mind this morning as I was sitting in the pulpit after I had done preaching. And as I have usually found it far better that a text should come to me, than that I should go to a text, I have been induced to take them, and endeavour to speak from them this evening.

Some of my enemies, and alas, some of my professed friends, have endeavoured to make out that it was my natural ability, or my acquired learning, which enabled me to preach; though I must say that I have but slender pretensions to either. But I know, if either were the case, I should have the whole word of God, and especially this chapter and this epistle against me: and did I look to, or lean upon either, I had better have remained where I was, in Babylon, than attempt to stand up in God's name. But, through mercy, I have a witness in my conscience, which contradicts such representations.

I believe I have the same perplexities and exercises with respect to texts, and also with respect to sermons to be preached from texts, as others of my brethren in the ministry. I know what it is to be in thick darkness, and what it is to have a measure of sensible light; I know what it is to be shut up, and what it is to enjoy a degree of liberty; I know what the absence of life and feeling is, and at times what is their presence; I know **(to use an expression of Brainerd's)** 'what it is to work with stumps, and what it is to work with fingers.' So that, with respect to both my texts and sermons, I stand precisely on a level with my other

brethren. I have often to cry to the Lord to give me texts from which to preach; and when I have got the text, to cry to the Lord to give me matter out of it. For I know by experience that all wisdom which does not come down from "the Father of lights" is folly; that all strength not divinely wrought in the soul is weakness; and that all knowledge that does not spring from the Lord's own teaching in the conscience is the depth of ignorance. To him therefore do I desire to look that he would teach me this evening how and what to speak. And may he grant that a savour from his own most blessed Majesty may rest upon the words that may drop from my lips.

With respect to the text, we may observe in it three leading features.

I.—The eternal purpose and counsel of God with respect to his peculiar people—"Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

II.—The execution of that eternal purpose, in what Christ is of God made unto this peculiar people—"wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

III.—The final purpose and grand result of God's counsel, and of its execution—"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

I.—But it will be first desirable to point out who the people are, concerning whom the apostle makes this declaration, "**Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.**"

The word "ye," though it is but a monosyllable, though but two letters compose the whole of it, yet has a vast meaning connected with it. We must go to the beginning of the epistle to know who are intended by this little monosyllable. "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus

Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." These are the persons to whom the apostle addresses this epistle; these are the persons comprehended in that little monosyllable "ye"—the church of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints; with all who know what it is, by prayer and supplication, to call upon the name of Jesus Christ.

The "**ye**" then, in the text, means quickened souls, believing characters; those who, by a work of grace upon their hearts, are sanctified, and enabled, by a spirit of grace and supplication, to call upon the name of Jesus Christ as their Lord and God.

Now, in the text, the apostle traces out what brought them into this state of saintship, "**Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.**" The expression refers to two distinct things: 1. **The original purpose of God;** and 2. **The execution of that purpose.** Both are "**of Him.**"—flowing out of him, arising from him, purposed by him in eternity, and executed by him in time. "Of Him"—not of yourselves: "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth:" not by the exertion of creature intellect, not by the instrumentality of human operation, not by anything the creature has done, not by anything the creature can do. The apostle traces up the standing of Christ's people in him to its origin—the eternal purpose and counsel of God. All that takes place in time he represents as flowing out of the eternal mind, and happening according to the original purpose and covenant plan of Jehovah.

You will observe, then, that when the apostle speaks of these Corinthian believers as being "in **Christ Jesus,** " he intends thereby to set forth their personal standing in the Son of God under two distinct points of view:

1. As originating in **eternity;**

2. As taking place in **time.** In other words, every believer has a twofold union with Christ; one from all eternity, which we may call, an **eternal,** or election-union; the other in time, through the Spirit's operation in his heart, which we may call a **time,** or

regeneration-union. Let us attempt to unfold these two kinds of union separately.

1. Every soul, then, that ever had, has now, or ever will have a standing in Christ, **had this standing in Him from all eternity.** Just in the same way as the vine, according to the Lord's own figure, puts forth the branches out of the stem; not a single branch comes **out of** the stock but what previously was in the stock: so, not a single soul comes manifestatively into spiritual existence which had not first an invisible and eternal union with the Son of God. This eternal, immanent, and invisible union with the Person of Christ, God blessed his people with before all worlds, by his eternal purpose, and according to his own eternal counsel.

2. Now, out of this eternal and immanent union springs the second union that we have spoken of, which is **a time union**—a union in grace: a vital union betwixt a living soul and a living Head. Until the Lord quickens elect vessels of mercy they have eternal union, but they have not time union. Their eternal union never can be altered: that never can be dissolved: that accompanies them all through their unregenerate state: but their vital, spiritual, and experimental union takes place in time, through the teaching, and under the operations of the blessed Spirit.

But what a mercy it is for God's people that before they have a vital union with Christ, before they are grafted into him experimentally, they have an eternal, immanent union with him before all worlds. It is this eternal union that brings them into time existence. It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come into the world at such a time, at such a place, from such parents, under such circumstances, as God has appointed. It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances of their time-state are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are called; they cannot die till God has brought about a vital union with Christ. Whatever sickness they may pass through, whatever injuries they may be exposed to, whatever

perils assault them on sea or land, fall they will not, fall they cannot, till God's purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of his love. Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth, watched over their childhood, watched over their manhood, watched over them till the appointed time and spot, when "the God of all grace," according to his eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls, and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

But this time union, this vital, experimental union, we may speak of also under two distinct points of view.

1. Directly that God the Spirit is pleased to quicken the soul, there **commences a vital union** with Christ. But this vital union is not **then known** to the soul. What saith the scripture? "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17) One spirit! The Spirit that rests upon the soul to quicken it into spiritual life, by that very visitation, that very indwelling, gives a vital union to Jesus. But it is not at first known, it is not brought forth into the soul's enjoyment, it is not made manifest in our personal experience. It is, to use a figure that the scriptures have adopted, like the process of grafting. Now we know that the process of grafting is this. A scion is cut off an old stock, and grafted into a new one. Before the scion can be grafted into the new stock, it must be cut off from the old: but when it is cut off from the old, and applied to the new, union does not immediately take place. The wounded scion and the wounded stock are brought into close apposition: they are joined together: and yet a time elapses before the sap flows forth out of the new stock, so as to give the scion a union to the tree. This may throw a little light upon spiritual grafting. Though the soul is cut off from the old stock, and brought into close apposition with the Lord of life and glory, yet full union is not at once nor immediately enjoyed; though the scion is cut off from the old stock, and grafted into the new, joined together never to be separated, yet a certain time is wanting that they may coalesce, that the cut stock and the cut

scion may both grow together, that the sap out of the living stock may flow into the living scion.

2. When the Lord is pleased to bring the soul experimentally near to the Son of his love, and communicates a measure of that precious faith whereby Jesus is looked unto, leaned upon, believed in, trusted in, hoped in, and cleaved unto, and a taste of his love and blood is felt in the soul—**that produces vital union.** Then, if I may use the illustration I have before adopted, the scion and the stock are not merely in close apposition, as when first grafted; but the scion and the stock grow together—there is a coalescing between the two, a union never to be dissolved and the sap out of the stock flows out freely into the scion, so that it puts forth first its leaves of honest and tender profession, then its blossoms of faith, hope, and love, and finally those "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Now the grand struggle of a living soul before he feels this vital union is to have it made manifest in his conscience. How many of the Lord's people are in this state—cut off from the old stock, coming, as far as they are able, unto Jesus, crying to be saved by his blood and righteousness, desiring above all things to know him and the power of his resurrection; yet no divine power communicated, no inward testimony sensibly felt, no precious sap manifestatively brought into their heart, no enjoyment of the Lord of life and glory in their soul. Though there is an eye of faith to see, a hand of faith to touch, an ear of faith to hear his voice, a heart of faith to receive Jesus into its very secret chambers, yet there is not brought about a clear, manifest, experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

But wherever this vital union is brought about, it is a union of that nature which never can be broken: "**Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.**" See how the Holy Ghost, by the pen of Paul, ascribes the whole to God; nothing is given to the creature to do; not the weight of a straw is laid upon the back of freewill. God does it altogether. In eternity, God ordained and gave the

everlasting union; and in time, by a work of grace, he cut the scion off the old stock, brought it in close apposition to the new, bound them round together, that they may never more be separated, by the cords of faith and the cement of love; and in time brought about also that close coalescing, that vital junction between the two, which causes the sap to flow freely into their souls, and make them abundant in every good word and work.

II.—We pass on to consider what flows out of this eternal, and this time union—**"Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."** Observe again—we cannot observe it too often—how the whole is ascribed to the Lord; how completely the creature is set aside; how entirely man's wisdom, and man's exertions, and man's righteousness are put into the background; and how the Lord of grace and glory reigns triumphant. The apostle had ascribed the eternal and vital union, which the people of Christ have with their Head wholly to the purpose, and wholly to the execution of the Father; and now what Christ is to his people, he also ascribes wholly and solely to the same almighty and merciful God. "Who of God"—observe, **"of God"**—that is **first**, by the eternal purpose and secret determination of Jehovah; and **secondly**, by the fulfillment of his eternal counsels, in the execution of his own almighty appointment—who thus of God "is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." The **"us"** here are the same persons as the **"ye."** There is no distinction betwixt the two. We are **ye—ye** are **we**. The apostle sometimes addresses the church of God as distinct from himself, and he sometimes addresses the church of God as one with himself. But whether he uses **we** or **ye** the persons meant are the same—the saints of God, the elect unto eternal life.

Now, to these, and to these only, Christ Jesus is of God made **"wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."** The Lord knows the wants of his people. He knew in eternity what they would need in time. The fall did not take God unawares. It was not an interruption to his eternal purposes. It was not an unexpected hindrance, which God never foresaw, never provided

for. God decreed it by his own permissive decree. There are active decrees, and there are permissive decrees. There are good things which God decrees, and which he himself performs: and there are evils which God decrees, that out of them good might come. But God does not put his hands to the execution of those evils. He decrees to permit them, not himself to do them; for God is not, and never can be the author of sin. We must make this distinction, or we shall impute to God that which he hates. At the same time, we must admit, that God decrees permissively, or the whole chain of events would be thrown into a mass of confusion. The distinction is beautifully set forth in what Peter said to those that crucified the Lord: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"—there is the decree—"ye have taken, and by wicked hands"—there is the agency of man—"have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23.)

The Lord, then, foresaw what his people would be, and foreseeing what his people would be—how completely ignorant, how deeply dyed in guilt, how awfully depraved, how entirely destroyed—he took care to provide a remedy beforehand. He set up, in his own eternal counsels, the God-man Mediator, that he might be, in his fullness, all that they should need in time, and enjoy in eternity. For instance:

1. He saw that they would be sunk into utter folly: that all the wisdom of man would be foolishness with God. "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" God saw that when man fell from original righteousness, he fell from all wisdom, and became a fool, mistaking good for evil and evil for good, sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet, light for darkness and darkness for light. God knew that he would stumble upon the dark mountains, far away from peace and righteousness. Therefore, knowing how folly would be bound up in the hearts of his elect children, he beforehand appointed Jesus to be their wisdom.

Now, I think, with respect to these four things which the Lord of life and glory is said to be to his people, we may view them, **first**, as **imputed**, and **secondly**, as **imparted**. Some who hold imputed righteousness, object to imputed wisdom, imputed sanctification, and imputed redemption. But why should we stand aghast, as though this would lead us into the depths of Antinomian licentiousness? If we take care to state that there is imparted wisdom, as well as imputed wisdom; imparted sanctification, as well as imputed sanctification; imparted redemption, as well as imputed redemption; if we do not by imputation destroy impartation—I do not see why we should shrink from imputed wisdom more than from imputed righteousness. Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.) Is not wisdom a spiritual blessing? and if this be "in heavenly places in Christ," is it not a blessing by imputation? For what am I by nature? A fool: all my wisdom, out of Christ, is nothing but the height of foolishness, and all my knowledge nothing but the depth of ignorance. Can I then ever be considered as wise? I can, if Christ is made wisdom to me. If I have a standing in Christ, then I have a standing in all that Christ is to me. Is Christ wise? the only wise God? infinitely wise? unerringly wise? Is he Wisdom itself, Wisdom in the abstract, set forth by that title in the **Pr 8** 8th of Proverbs?

Then if I have a standing in him, a living union with him, I am wise in him, because his wisdom is mine. Can you find anything in the stem that is not in the branches? Penetrate the branch—does not sap ooze and flow forth? Penetrate the stem—does not sap flow forth too? Take your microscope—examine both minutely. Is not the sap in the stem and the sap in the branch identical? Is it not so with respect to Christ and his people? Have they an eternal standing in him? Have they a vital union with him? Is he wise? Then they are wise. Not indeed wise as he is, originally, eternally, intrinsically, infinitely: but wise because he of God is made unto them wisdom.

But in what sense is Christ thus made "**wisdom?**" Not as the second Person in the glorious Godhead, the eternal "Son of the Father, in truth and love." As a Person in the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the blessed Spirit, he could not be **made**. It is therefore by virtue of the eternal covenant whereby he became a glorious Mediator, the Bridegroom of the Bride, the Head of the church, and in due time by actual assumption of the flesh and blood of the children, Immanuel, God with us. In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ is made unto his people wisdom, and they are thus accounted wise before God, as having a covenant standing in Christ.

Now, how this sets all the Lord's people on a level! Some of them are educated, others uneducated: some can scarcely, perhaps, read the letters in the Bible; others have had instruction in the arts and sciences: some have had deep spiritual teachings, and the teachings of others have been more shallow. But do they not all stand on one level when we view them as wise in Christ? Are not all distinctions at once abrogated? Does not the wise man naturally come to be a fool? Does not the fool naturally come to be wise? Do not all the family of God who have a standing in Jesus, by having Christ's wisdom imputed to them, stand upon the same level—wise in Christ—because they are one in Christ?

But besides this wisdom by imputation, there is also wisdom by **impartation**. Without imparted wisdom, we have no manifested interest in imputed wisdom. Imparted wisdom is by the Holy Ghost making the soul wise unto salvation: and his first step in making the soul wise unto salvation is to convince it of its folly. The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and the wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. There must then be a complete reversal—a turning of things upside down—before we can be brought into a state to have wisdom divinely imparted. But when we are brought into that spot where, I am convinced, the Lord will bring all his people, that left to ourselves we are perfect fools: that we have no wisdom whatever to direct our feet: that we are blind, ignorant, weak, helpless, and utterly unable to find our way to the city—when by painful experience we

stumble upon the dark mountains, and grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes, **then** we value the least spark of divine wisdom communicated and dropped into our souls from those lips into which grace was poured.

We must know the value of the gem before we can really prize it. When diamonds were first discovered in Brazil, nobody knew that they were diamonds. They were handed about as pretty, shining pebbles. But directly it was known they were diamonds, they were eagerly caught hold of, and their value rose a thousandfold. So spiritually: until we are brought in our souls to prize the teachings of God and the communications of divine wisdom—until we can distinguish between the pebble of man's teaching and the diamond of divine illumination—we shall neglect, we shall despise, we shall not value divine wisdom. But when we are brought to see and feel how, in every instance, we have erred when left to ourselves; what mistakes we have made; what backslidings we have been guilty of; what foolish things we have said, and what worse than foolish things we have done;—when we see folly bound up in our hearts, and stamped upon every word and action, then how we prize any portion of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation! and how at times we long for the droppings in of that dew and power into our souls, which shed abroad a sweet and unctuous light and lead the soul unto Jesus, to find peace in him!

2. But Jesus is also made unto us "**righteousness.**" Does not this imply that we are unrighteousness? For is not all that Jesus is, in exact proportion to our wants? So far as we are God's people, we find all our wants precisely met by him. Can we find a single spot into which a child of God can sink, to which some character of the Lord of life and glory is not adapted? Does he sink down as a fool before God? Does he feel such ignorance that he scarcely knows what he is, or where he is? Are the scriptures hidden from his understanding, his experience buried in darkness, and he himself in his own eyes, the worst of fools? How suitable, that Jesus, the Son of God, should be made unto him wisdom! Is he made to feel himself a polluted wretch, and brought painfully

to know that all his righteousnesses are but filthy rags? that his iniquities, like the wind have taken him away? that he has not by nature one grain of that which is pleasing in the sight of God? that all his motives, all his thoughts, all his desires all his actions, all his words, bear upon them, bear in them, the deep-grained dye of guilt? Does he shrink into self-abasement at the sight? Does he loathe himself in dust and ashes? Does he feel that he is only fit to be trampled into hell as a polluted worm? When brought here, how suitable, how precious, is it to see that Jesus is made unto him righteousness!

Observe the word. It does not say, that the obedience of Jesus is made righteousness; but it says, that Jesus himself is made righteousness. It is perfectly true that the obedience of Christ to the law is the justifying righteousness of those that believe in his name; "for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and "by one man's obedience many are made righteous." But besides that, the Lord himself is their righteousness. Is not this the sure declaration of holy writ? "In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." "This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." What a sweet view does this give of Jesus! We look sometimes at Christ's righteousness as distinct from Christ. Shall I use a figure? We look at the garment as distinct from the Maker and Wearer of the garment. We look at the righteousness so much, that we scarcely look at him who wrought out that righteousness. Now, we must not separate Jesus from his righteousness. We must not look merely at the garment, the imputed robe, and forget him that wrought it out, that puts it on, and that keeps it to this day in firm possession. But when we can see, that not only the obedience of Christ, but Christ himself—all that Jesus is—all that Jesus has, as the head of his church, as the risen Mediator, as the great High Priest over the house of God—when we can see that this God-man, Immanuel, is made unto his people righteousness, how it expands the prospect! Then we look, not merely at the robe itself, beautiful, comely, and glorious; we look farther—we look at him that made it. We do not look merely at the robe as distinct from him. We look at him who made that

robe what it is—Jesus, who ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us.

This, to my mind, is a sweet view. If I sink down into creature sinfulness, shame, and guilt, and see Jesus made of God unto me righteousness, what need I more? Has God made him so? Who can unmake him so? Has God made the Son of his love righteousness to my soul, that I may stand in him without spot, speck, or blemish? Who is to alter it? Can sin alter it? That is atoned for. Can the devil alter it? He is chained down unto the judgment of the great day. Can the world alter it? They cannot stretch forth their finger to touch one thread of that robe, to touch one lineament of the Redeemer's countenance. If he is made unto me righteousness, what more do I want? If I can find a shield, a shelter, and a refuge in him as my righteousness, what more can I want to preserve me from the charge of men or devils?

But there is the **impartation** of righteousness, as well as the **imputation** of it; and the impartation of it is the communication of a divine nature to the soul. Not merely the sheltering of the soul from the wrath to come by a robe cast around it, and by the interposition of the Redeemer's glorious Person, but also the breathing of God's image, the raising up of a new creature, and the stamping of Christ's likeness on the heart.

3. We pass on to another thing that Christ is made to his people—that is, "**sanctification.**" What am I? What are you? Filthy, polluted, defiled; are we not? Do not some of us, more or less, daily feel altogether as an unclean thing? Is not every thought of our heart altogether vile? Does any holiness, any spirituality, any heavenly-mindedness, any purity, any resemblance to the divine image dwell in our hearts by nature? Not a grain, not an atom. How then can I, a polluted sinner, ever see the face of a holy God? How can I, a worm of earth, corrupted within and without by indwelling and committed sin, ever hope to see a holy God without shrinking into destruction? I cannot see him, except so far as the Lord of life and glory is made sanctification to me. Why should men start so at imputed sanctification?' Why should not

Christ's holiness be imputed to his people as well as Christ's righteousness? Why should they not stand sanctified in him, as well as justified? Why not? Is there anything in Jesus, as God-man Mediator, which he has not for his people? Has he any perfection, any attribute, any gift, any blessing, which is not for their use? Did he not sanctify himself that they might be sanctified by the truth? Is he not the holy Lamb of God, that they might be "holy, and without blame before him in love?" What is my holiness, even such as God may be pleased to impart to me? Is it not, to say the least, scanty? Is it not, to say the least, but little in measure? But when we view the pure and spotless holiness of Jesus imputed to his people, and view them holy in him, pure in him, without spot in him, how it does away with all the wrinkles of the creature, and makes them stand holy and spotless before God.

But there is not only **imputed** sanctification, there is also **imparted** sanctification. Have I one grain of holiness in myself? Not one. Can all the men in the world, by all their united exertions, raise up a grain of spiritual holiness in their hearts? Not an atom, with all their efforts. If all the preachers in the world were to unite together for the purpose of working a grain of holiness in one man's soul, they might strive to all eternity: they could no more by their preaching create holiness, than by their preaching they could create a lump of gold. But because, by a gracious act of God the Father, Jesus is made unto his people sanctification, he imparts a measure of his own holiness to them. He works in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure; he sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires: in a word, he communicates a nature perfectly holy, which therefore loves holiness and has communion with a holy God; a heavenly, spiritual, and divine nature, which bathes in eternal things as its element, and enjoys spiritual things as sweet and precious. It may indeed be small in measure; and he that has it is often exercised and troubled because he has so little of it; yet he has enough just to know what it is. Has not your soul, though you feel to be a defiled wretch, though every iniquity is at times working in your heart, though every worm of obscenity and

corruption is too often trailing its filthy slime upon your carnal mind—has it not felt, does it not sometimes feel, a measure of holiness Godward? Do you never feel a breathing forth of your soul into the bosom of a holy God? Heavenly desires—pure affections—singleness of eye—simplicity of purpose—a heart that longs to have the mind, image, and likeness of Jesus stamped upon it—this is a holiness such as the Lord of life and glory imparts out of his fullness to his poor and needy family.

4. But **lastly**, he is made of God unto them "**redemption.**" Now, whatever Jesus is to his people, he is to them precisely according to their wants. Are they fools? He is their **wisdom.** Are they condemned? He is their **righteousness.** Are they unholy? He is their **sanctification.** Are they captives and prisoners, who have sold themselves under sin, and become slaves to Satan? Of God he is made unto them **redemption.** His redemption is imputed to them, is put to their account, is considered as theirs. When Jesus died upon the cross, he purchased a peculiar people. What he did then, and what he did there, is put to their account. The debt that he paid is crossed out of the books. The sum that he laid down is transferred to their account. Thus of God he is made unto them redemption.

But besides that, there is **imparted redemption**, as well as **imputed redemption.** What do I know of imputed redemption unless I know something of imparted redemption? But what can I know of imparted redemption, unless I have known what it is to be a captive, in bondage, in hard chains, oppressed by cruel slavery, unable to deliver myself, chained like a galley-slave to the galling oar, bound down with fetters, so that I cannot release myself? If I never have known that, how can I desire to know Jesus Christ as of God made unto me redemption? But if I catch a sight of Christ, as made unto me redemption, that communicates a gracious feeling of redemption by impartation. No sooner does the eye of faith catch what Jesus is made unto his people, than what he is to his people comes instantaneously into their heart. What he is to them, he is by **imputation**; and when they see what he is by imputation, then they enjoy it by **impartation.** Do

I see redemption? Do I feel it, count it my own, and enjoy it? Then what does it do for me? Does it not break, in a measure, the chain of slavery? Does it not bring me out of captivity? Does it not, so long as it lasts, subdue my lusts, and overcome my pride? Does it not shatter the galling fetters of bondage? Does not faith in Christ as my redemption, communicate a measure of that redemption to my spirit? It does. This is the connecting link between imputation and impartation.

God has made Christ all these to his people. He has set him up as their eternal Head, made him the Bridegroom of their souls, that out of his fullness they may all receive. Then, just in proportion as they learn these two lessons—what **they** are, and what **he** is—they receive him into their hearts and they see actually what he is to them in the purpose of God. Am I a fool? Do I feel it and know it? Have I had painful experience of it, so that all my creature wisdom is turned into one mass of foolishness? Do I catch by the eye of faith a view of the risen Mediator, "Immanuel, God with us," and see what he is made of God to us? The moment my eye sees him as "wisdom," that moment a measure of divine wisdom flows into my conscience. Am I polluted and defiled throughout? Have I no righteousness of my own? Is all my obedience imperfect? Am I unable to fulfill the requirements of God's holy law? If once I catch by the eye of faith this glorious truth, through him who is the truth, that Jesus Christ is of God made unto me "righteousness"—the moment I see **that** by the eye of faith, that moment a measure of imparted righteousness flows into my heart? Am I an unholy, depraved, filthy wretch? Does corruption work in my heart? The moment I catch by the eye of faith Jesus made unto me of God "sanctification," that moment a measure of sanctification comes into my heart, drawing up holy affections, casting out the love of the world, curbing my reigning lusts, and bringing my soul into submission at his footstool. Am I a poor captive, entangled by Satan, by the world, and my own evil heart? The moment that I catch this glorious view, that Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father is made unto me "redemption"—if I can believe that he is made such for me, that I have a standing in him, and a union with him,

so that he is my redemption—that moment a measure of deliverance comes into my soul, and redemption imputed becomes redemption imparted; the soul receives then internally what Christ has done externally. In a word, when Christ is received as "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," he becomes all these in vital manifestation.

Now, do you see the steps? Just observe the connecting links. What do we learn first? We learn, first of all, **what we are by nature**. That is the first thing; there is no overstepping that. Then, just in proportion as we learn what we are by nature, and the Lord the Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the gospel to our understanding, and brings a sweet revelation of them into our conscience, do we see and feel **what Jesus is made unto his people**: and we see and feel that he has **everything our souls want**: that we have not a single necessity that there is not ample provision made for in the gospel—not a need unsupplied—not a malady without a remedy—not a sinking without a corresponding rising. But what is the effect of it? Why, no sooner is this seen, than a measure of it is communicated to the heart. **First**, I must see what I am; **secondly**, I must see what Christ is; **thirdly**, I must feel that Christ is all this to me: and when I see what I am, and see what Christ is, and then feel a measure of what Christ is for my soul, then Christ becomes to me inwardly what he is outwardly. He becomes in my heart what he is revealed in the word of truth; and this is the only way whereby we can have a vital and manifest union with him.

III.—But this leads me to the grand crowning point—"**According as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**" Man may glory. Yes: God has determined that man shall glory. But in what, and in whom? In himself? No; God has for ever trampled man's glory under foot. He shall glory, but he shall never glory in self; for if he glory in himself, where God is, he never will come. God's purpose is to stain the pride of human glory.

"**He that glorieth**"—yes, we may glory; we may have a song of

triumph; if the Lord do but tune our hearts to sweet melody, we may speak in accents of glory and thanksgiving—"he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Look at the words: "**Glory in the Lord.**" Not glory in himself, whatever he be—however deep his experience, however great his abilities, however consistent his conduct. No creature shall ever, in the sight of God, glory in itself; but we may glory in the Lord as of God made unto us all that he has determined he shall be. what a sweet losing of one's self there is in Christ! See how he has raised up Adam's fallen progeny! See how he has given the elect a standing in Christ which they never had in their fallen progenitor! Adam could glory. Adam had natural wisdom, creature righteousness, native strength, and created innocence. He might glory in these. Just as a horse can, without sin or shame, curve his proud neck, and glory in his strength when he paweth in the valley, as Job speaks: so Adam, in his native innocence, could glory in what God had made him. But when Adam fell to the very depths of creature depravity, all his glory was for ever lost: the pride of the creature was for ever stained.

But God has determined that men may glory still: only he has changed the **object** of that glory, and put that glory **upon**, and centered that glory **in** his only-begotten Son. He turns the eyes of his poor needy family to look to him for salvation, and to glory in him: for "in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

Sure I am, from the little I have felt (**and it is but a little**), there never can be any feeling so sweet as to glory in the Lord alone. Glory in my wisdom! Why, if I were to do so, there is a worm at the very bud of that glory. There is misery in the very feeling of self-esteem. Glory in anything I am! It is nothing but "vanity and vexation of spirit." But if I lose myself, trample myself under foot—cease from my own glory, strength, and wisdom—lose it all, put it all aside, despise it as nothing worth, and look unto him who "of God is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" to his people—I may glory then, and my glory shall be this—may it be my glory in time, and may

it be my and your glory in eternity—to glory in the Lord—to glory in his wisdom, in his righteousness, in his sanctification, in his redemption—to glory in him for what he is in himself, and glory in him for what he is to his people. This is a sweet absorption of the creature into the Lord of life and glory. This is indeed taking off the crown of human pride, and setting it upon the head of him who alone is worthy to wear it.

This is indeed a sweet loss; to lose our own wisdom and obtain divine wisdom; lose all that the flesh can boast of, and the flesh can rejoice in—and find it all again heightened, shall I say?—no, not heightened, for it is of a totally distinct nature—find it all of different and more glorious kind in the Lord Jesus, as of God made unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

THE BLOWING OF THE GOSPEL TRUMPET

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,
October 28, 1858

A POSTHUMOUS SERMON

"And it shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Isaiah 27:12

Ever since the fall, man has been so deeply sunk in ignorance of the only true God that it requires the special teaching of God in the soul to make him wise unto salvation, and this teaching is not always nor often felt to be of a very pleasant nature. Religion must be burnt in us. We have not to learn lessons of consolation, of sweet manifestations of Christ's love and blood, or sit at his feet and listen to his words, as Mary, merely; but we need frowns as well as smiles, the rod, and that very often, as well as the encouraging look.

Whatever a man may have known and felt of the sweetness and preciousness of the things of God in his soul, he soon forgets them, and except the Lord revives the work again and again in his heart, he soon slips into carelessness, carnality, and death, unless the Lord is pleased to bring him into some trial, to exercise his soul with some new rod or frown, and show him what he is as a sinner, and what God is as a Saviour. We find all the promises of the gospel made to the poor and needy. It seems as though the Holy Ghost had to give everything that he could devise in his love and infinite wisdom, to describe the state of man, and what the saints of God feel when the Lord takes them in hand, to teach them what is for their good.

We have not only a precious promise in our text, that "**the great trumpet shall be blown:**" but a description also of those to whom the promise is made; not only a description of the blowing of the great trumpet, but of the characters also who hear the

sounds of the great trumpet—what they do and where they come to **worship—"in the holy mount at Jerusalem."** But we have also their state described, so that it seems as though they were the last persons to hear, believe, and live. In opening up these words I shall, with God's blessing,

I.—First, describe the characters spoken of in our text, which are depicted in this strong expression, **"those that are ready to perish in the land of Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt."**

II.—Secondly, the blowing of the great trumpet.

III.—Thirdly, what is the effect of the blowing of the great trumpet, that **"they shall come that were ready to perish from the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt."**

IV.—And fourthly, what they shall do when they come, **"they shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."**

Now I will not say that these words have not a prophetic reference, so that they may have a bearing beyond an experimental meaning; but I shall let that pass; because we cannot have very clear notions of future events which may take place. The words are applicable to the children of God now, and instead of speculating, therefore, let us see how they bear upon things present.

The first character, then, spoken of is one **"ready to perish in the land of Assyria."** The Lord himself declares that none of his sheep shall perish, but they are within a hair's breadth of perishing; they never will sink into final despair, but they shall be so exercised in their feelings as to be on the borders of it, like that Amalekite, of whom we read, who was found after three days and three nights in the desert, and there was no breath in him; but they brought him to life, and gave him nourishment, and he was enabled to tell of what had been done in Ziklag: so

the saint of God is brought very low and is almost gone when the Lord comes and raises him up.

And what is there to prevent the Lord from casting that soul into prison? Who is to pay one mite, much more all the debt? Now when the Lord comes with power into a sinner's conscience, it brings him off from all legal hope; he sinks down into a fit of despair. He looks up and sees an angry God, and within a guilty conscience. His prayers even, are mingled with sin, and the law says, "Pay me that thou owest," and then he is ready to perish. He cannot yield the obedience the law requires. The law never knows pity nor pardon; but keeps saying, "Do and live, disobey and die," and when any old sin, or all the long black catalogue of his sins is laid upon his conscience, and he thinks how this holy God has looked upon him from the days of his infancy to the present moment, and what that eye has seen, nothing but one long course of sin from the first hour that he drew his vital breath up to the moment when his conscience feels guilty before God, what anguish takes hold of him! He looks through all his life and cannot find a single spot wherein he is not guilty, and he says of his good actions they are vile! What he did in the service of God so far from being done with an eye to God's glory was done from hypocrisy! His profession seems to be the blackest thing of all his black life. A man who feels this will feel ready to perish.

Again he is ready to perish with hunger. No one gives him aught to eat. He may sit under a legal minister, he talks to those with whom he is mixed up in profession, and as he does not know the sweetness of the gospel he is ready to perish with hunger. He is like the poor prodigal, there is bread in his father's house, enough and to spare; but he is starving. Now the dead professors never starve; for some can feed upon doctrines, others upon chaff, and others upon legal duties, ordinances, and rites, and ceremonies, duties in which the heart is not, and where there is not one gracious feeling in the whole matter; but the living soul cannot feed upon husks like these, he knows that nothing can save him but mercy revealed to his soul, and if mercy does not reach his soul, into despair he must sink, he must die an unpardoned

sinner; he is in feeling gone to despair; he cries to the Lord, but thinks the Lord cannot hear; he reads book after book, but he cannot see anything that suits him; he is a child of God in the wilderness, and there is no water, no shadow of a great rock of love, no dropping of the dew of God's favour; therefore, in this wilderness he is falling in despair; he must hang on to something about himself and he lays hold of self-righteousness.

A man will always cleave to himself, and when he is ready to perish then he lies upon the sand without power to take hold of anything; he stretches himself on the sand without power to lift up a cry, and then he is ready to perish, and if he has had his evil heart opened up to him very much, he feels that he can be nothing less than a poor miserable creature. And Satan may come in and tell him to put an end to himself. He will say, "You are only adding sin to sin; because God will never pardon a sinner like you."

This is a man ready to perish, and though all the saints of God may not go so deep in the matter as this, yet they, for the most part, are brought down to be ready to perish; for if they were never ready to perish they would never hear the great trumpet blow. Have you never fallen down before God at night and felt that before morning your soul might be in hell? distressed in your conscience, seeing what an awful sinner you were! What an awful wretch! What a foul monster! If you have been exercised with these feelings you know what it is to be ready to perish.

But there is another character. The text speaks of the outcasts in the land of Egypt. There might have been a time with you when you were thought a nice person, whether you were among the church people or among the dissenters, you were everybody's choice, hardly anybody had a better word than you, and as long as you went with them they flattered you and you flattered them, and you got on very well; but when life came unto your soul, and the fear of God with life, and your conscience became tender before God, and you began to see yourself a sinner, you found that you could not hear the minister you did before, nor mix with the people you did before, and they thought something had

happened to you, you were not so agreeable as you used to be; a change had come upon you, and now you are a very disagreeable person; you begin to find fault with the minister and the people; to you nothing seems right without or within, for when our consciences become exercised, and our eyes are in some measure opened, we begin to see things as regards others.

You may have felt an outcast yourself, and it is a very painful feeling until the Lord comes and tells us he has not cast us off; but dead professors will cast us out if we don't sanction and approve and give countenance to their deceitfulness and deceitful actions, and if we speak conscientiously in these days. If we did but know what hearts these were that are not guided by soul realities we should understand how it is they cannot bear anything that brings dissatisfaction; they would have everything covered over.

But he whose soul is brought out of itself cannot sanction anything of this kind; he must have matters straight between his own soul and others. Therefore such a person must be a troubler, and he will very soon begin to be an outcast. Now the first step is to be cast out of the profane world and then out of the professing world, even cast out by many who fear God, because perhaps they have not walked in the same temptations, nor have they been exercised by the same trials, and even if some of the saints of God would receive us, we may feel ourselves cast out. All this is a time of trial, and then there is a further and still deeper trouble than that, which consists in feeling ourselves so vile, base, and foolish as to be unfit for the notice of God or men, to be cast out of the church and congregation as unfit for anybody's notice, quite undeserving of anybody's approbation.

I don't say that all the saints of God have to feel this to the extent I have described; but as a fisherman must cast his net pretty broad to catch the fish, so the minister must cast the net pretty broad to catch all the living fish. I don't mean to say all the people of God go to the same depths of being **"ready to perish,"** or are to the same extent "outcasts." But they all must

know something of these states, and the depth of the work of God upon their soul, for the most part, will be proportionate to the experience of being ready to perish and of being an outcast.

The most painful is to be an outcast from God. What a painful feeling, to have sinned against God to such a degree that he will not take any notice of us, that he has cast us out, and will not have anything to do with us any more! It is to be forsaken apparently of God and man, and there is nothing left but to die and to be put out of the way, or but a step between us and death! And then the devil will say, "Why not take the final step? What is there to live for, no friend or acquaintance to take any notice of thee, God hiding his face!" If the saints of God are outcasts of the world, the professing church, and seem sometimes cast out of God himself, what is to hinder them then from being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone?

II.—Why, what I come to in the second place, which is the blowing of the great trumpet. It shall hinder them. The **great trumpet means the Lord's trumpet**. It is a great trumpet because God himself blows it, and he blows through it blasts that waken the dead, which reach the ears of those who were ready to perish and enter into their heart and conscience; but for this text they would give up all hope and sink into despair. It is a great trumpet, being a trumpet that will enter the ears of those ready to perish, like the trumpet that shall waken the dead at the last day. This trumpet is the trumpet of the gospel figured by the silver trumpet, and it is to have a certain sound, or else it cannot be known what is the meaning, what the trumpet sounds. It resounds "Salvation! salvation! through the blood of the Lamb!" These are the sounds that issue out of the mouth of this great trumpet when the Holy Ghost blows it and gives it sweet melody. Salvation for those who are ready to perish! Salvation for the outcasts!

Now theirs are the ears which are open to hear the notes of this great trumpet, and when the notes of the great trumpet reach their ears and make a sweet melody in their hearts it awakens

them. Even some of you may have been or are now poor outcasts of God and man, and you will know where and what you are, and how your ears are open for the way of salvation, and every note that drops into your soul causes a looking up to the source whence that sound comes; as John in heaven, when he heard the voice of the blessed Redeemer as the voice of the great trumpet, turned to see the voice that spake unto him.

So when the soul hears the trumpet blow, he looks up to see what the great trumpet announces. As you know, in a procession you hear the sound of the trumpet, which tells you that the procession is coming, and it directs your eye to where the trumpet is. So it is when men hear the trumpet of the gospel, they are all ears to hear what sound that trumpet may bring to their hearts. What news! And when that trumpet begins to tell of salvation and justification, and that salvation is all of Christ, who is the justifier from first to last of all them that believe in the work of Christ, the finished work, and mercy to poor sinners flows through the atoning blood, it begins to raise up a feeling in the soul to believe; then new life is communicated and it appears as though the trumpet's sound had communicated help to the soul.

Like the soldiers in battle, though they may be weak and faint yet as soon as they hear the trumpet's sound to call them "to battle" they form themselves into their ranks and rush upon the enemy. So in a spiritual sense, when the gospel trumpet sounds and the Holy Ghost blows it, and the sound reaches the heart, it raises up faith, hope, and love so as to move the depths of the heart and to enter into the secret recesses and feelings of the soul. But it is brought to this. There is salvation in Jesus Christ and in no other. Here the door of hope is opened for the guilty, perishing sinner, here God is seen a God full of mercy, compassion, and love; and as the trumpet is sounding more and more, it falls with more and more sweetness upon the heart, the grace, compassion, and mercy of God seem to enter the soul, with every note that the trumpet gives is Christ crucified and risen from the dead; but the voice of Christ is heard in the whole, and where he speaks there is life and power, faith and feeling, hope and love.

Has not your poor, dying, perishing, outcast soul sometimes been revived by the preached gospel? Power has reached your soul, and enabled you to believe in his blood and obedience and love; for it has come with such power and sweetness into your soul that it has raised you up and made you quite a new creature, and then you feel life communicated to your soul, that you can believe, hope, and love: it seems as though you could take one leap into the bosom of Christ, and embrace him as the very Bridegroom of your soul. The blessed trumpet makes such a sweet melody in the ears and hearts of those ready to perish, and of those poor outcasts who have neither hope nor help.

III.—And this brings me to my third point, What they shall do. **"They shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt."** They shall come: before, they could not come; they were too weak: they were ready to perish. What with the want of bread and water, and what with their terrible feelings, they were **"ready to perish."** They could scarcely lift one limb before the other to come to Jesus, and they were such **"outcasts:"** they felt so condemned, and so deserving of being cast out for ever and ever, that come they could not, they did not know how, they had scarcely a hope that he would take them, they were so afraid they should be rejected; therefore they feared that they might only add to their sin, hypocrisy, and presumption, and, therefore, they stayed away.

They feared that the invitation, "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," was not for them. But its freeness, blessedness, and sovereignty now communicate such power to their souls, and strength to their limbs, and hope and love to their hearts, that come they must and will. Hence the trumpet bids them "Come", the trumpet sounds in the ears of every miserable outcast and backslider. The trumpet sounds in the ears of all such, "Come ye to the wedding." As they hear these words, and the words seem to fall in with their feelings and to be suitable to them, then they come.

IV.—And to pass on to our fourth point, What do they do? **"They worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem."** There is a holy mount at Jerusalem, Mount Zion, where Jesus sits, and where God has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, and as the Apostle speaks, "Ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." There is a Mount Zion which represents typically and figuratively the gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation by atoning blood and justifying obedience; then they come to Mount Zion, and there they are received favourably; for in Mount Zion there is not a single frown, or anything that can terrify or fright back.

In Mount Zion the blessing is even life for evermore; so that when the poor outcasts hear the trumpet they come to Mount Zion and find every blessing that is in the power of God to bestow and in the heart of Christ to give, and which is revealed in the gospel. For this and for every other mercy to be manifested to them, they come to the holy mount at Jerusalem, and they feel it a holy mount. There God dwells in his holiness; for great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. They have been taught how great he is in a broken law; they have been taught he is a consuming fire. They revere his great and glorious name; for he is just in the law who is holy in the gospel, who is full of compassion. He is still Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabbaoth! and they find it is a holy mount; for there are the holy promises and precepts, the holy worshippers, holy enjoyments, holy affections, and holy desires.

It is a holy mount; for there holiness supremely dwells, there the holiness of God is made specially manifest. Believers who know anything of the gospel desire to have holy love, holy affections, holy desires, to be holy inwardly and outwardly, without which no man can see the Lord. When the gospel comes, it brings with it holiness and power, which the law knows nothing of, and raises up holy affections, holy desires and feelings; so that they find that Mount Zion is not only a holy mount, but there they worship the Lord in the beauty of his holiness, in the sweet enjoyment of

his manifested presence and love, and thus they worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost with a reverential awe of the great name of God, and every spiritual and holy feeling that the Holy Ghost can and does raise up in a broken heart and tender conscience.

Here we have in our text all that true religion is from first to last, beginning with being ready to perish and being an outcast. Then we have the work of the law upon the conscience, and what God does to convince a man that he is a sinner, and make him to fear his great name, then we have the middle where the trumpet is blown, where the gospel blows its melodious tones, and where the sinner comes drawn to Mount Zion by the sweet melodious notes that sound from the holy mount. Then we have the worshipping of the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem, being filled with all holy desire, producing holy fruits, serving him in the gospel of his dear Son; and here we have a sweet and most blessed end.

Now have you experienced anything in the law or in the gospel, in the precept or in the promise, in the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the whole list of what the saints of God must know so as to be saved with an everlasting salvation? Can you lay hold on any part of this in your conscience that you have experienced in your soul? Any part of it; for you may perhaps be one ready to perish or an outcast, who sees nobody so bad as yourself, and fear that you may be cast out for ever; or you may have heard with sweet appropriation the melodious notes of the gospel, and delight in what you hear as being a sound so suitable to you; or you may have got to Jesus and there found pardon and peace, and you may be at times enjoying his sweet presence and worshipping the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem; but in his own good time and way the saints will go through all these spots; and where the Lord has begun, he will carry on, and no man shall pluck them out of Jesus' hand.

THE BLOWING OF THE GREAT TRUMPET

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, August 1, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Isaiah 27:13

How continually in the prophets, and especially in Isaiah, the expression occurs—"The day of the Lord;" and sometimes, in a briefer form, as in our text, "In that day." Great and memorable events are almost always connected with "The day of the Lord," and "That day." There must then be something very noteworthy in the expression as it occurs so continually, and events so great are connected with it. And as, besides this, our text may be said to hinge almost wholly upon it, it may be desirable to spend a few moments in examining the meaning of the expression. The words convey with them this idea, that it is a day or season **for we need not limit it to a period of twenty-four hours' duration** in which the Lord will be everything, and in which he will so conspicuously manifest his greatness and power, so emphatically make bare his arm, that it will be a day wholly His own; in other words, a day in which man will be nothing, and God "all in all." The leading idea then of the expression is, that it is a **day of power**. But when we come to examine the context by the various passages in which the expression occurs, we find that it is sometimes spoken of as a day of great trouble and distress, and sometimes as a day of great mercy and deliverance. Thus we find in one of the prophets—"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?" (Am. 5:18, 20) And again, "The day of the Lord cometh; for it is nigh at hand: a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick

darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains" (Joel 2:1, 2). We find also this declaration, "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7). In other passages, and by far the most numerous, we find the day of the Lord spoken of as a day of special deliverance. "**In that day** shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." "**In that day thou shalt say**, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." So in the text, we read, "It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown;" the trumpet of deliverance.

But how can we reconcile these two different meanings of the very same word, and make the scriptures harmonious and consistent when the day of the Lord is sometimes spoken of as a day of distress, and sometimes as a day of deliverance, sometimes as a day of misery, and sometimes as a day of mercy? There is no great difficulty in reconciling them. The day of the Lord is, that special time or season, when the Lord puts forth his hand, and manifests his almighty power. It is then equally "the day of the Lord," when he brings down, and when he lifts up; when he puts his hand to wound and kill, or to heal and make alive. Thus gracious Hannah, in her sons of deliverance, ascribes both of these works to the Lord. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up." As both works are his, the day is also equally his. But we may also reconcile the conflicting passages by observing that the day of deliverance to God's friends is a day of desolation to God's enemies, as the Red Sea bore striking witness.

The prophets too, had doubtless reference to that great day which is still in the future—when there will be a greater manifestation of the power of the Lord than earth has yet seen.

But not to dwell longer on this point, let us come at once to our text, in which, I think, we may observe three distinct things;

I. The blowing of the great trumpet;

II. The **characters in whose ears and hearts this great trumpet is to be blown;**

III. The **effect which the blowing of the great trumpet produces upon them.**

I. There seems to be some reference here to the blowing of the trumpets of which we read in the law of Moses. God, you will remember (Numb. 10), bade Moses construct two silver trumpets, which were to be sounded on all great and solemn occasions. "Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps." These trumpets were sometimes to "blow an alarm." "And if you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God." Thus every day of gladness, every solemn festival, and every new moon were to be hailed with the sound of the silver trumpet. But there was one occasion on which, in a special manner, the trumpet was to so blown,—the day of jubilee. We thus read (Lev. 25:9), "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of jubilee **in the margin, 'the trumpet loud of sound,'** to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." In the text there seems to be an especial reference to the blowing of this great trumpet in the beginning of the jubilee, for the special mark of that trumpet was that it was "loud of sound, and was blown throughout all the land."

Looking at it then in a spiritual and experimental light, the blowing of this great trumpet must certainly mean the preaching of the gospel, the sweet melodious sound of sovereign grace, the

proclamation of mercy, pardon and salvation through the blood of the Lamb. No other explanation can be tolerated for a moment, for no other parallel can be found to the jubilee trumpet, at the sound of which every captive Israelite returned to his city and his family, every debt was cancelled, and every mortgaged acre reverted to its original possessor. This great trumpet is then spiritually blown when the gospel is faithfully preached. But be it borne in mind, that though man may put this trumpet to his lips, it is the Spirit of God who must blow through it. It is he that must make it speak: it is he must who make it give forth its charming notes, for no sounds but his reach the heart. II. But with God's blessing we shall see more clearly what are the notes, the sweet melodious sounds of this great trumpet, when we have viewed, as we proposed, the characters for whom it is specially sounded. These are ranked under two classes—"**Ready to perish**," and "**Outcasts**." As the trumpet is sounded especially for them, we gather by fair implication that it sounds for them only. Indeed, none other require it; none other care for its melodious sounds; on every other ear its notes do but jar discord.

But what a strange position must they be in, in soul experience, before their ears are opened to hear the notes of this gospel trumpet. "**Ready to perish!**" Many of the Lord's poor family are here; and indeed, they are all here until they hear the trump that bids them believe, rejoice, and live.

1. Some are "ready to perish" under **convictions** of sin, under deep distress and anguish of mind. They feel in their consciences that God is angry with them—that burning drops of his displeasure are falling into their souls. When the guilt and burden of sin are thus laid on their conscience they must needs feel "ready to perish," for what is there before them but the pit? "Ready to perish" indeed they are, for as David said of himself—"There is but one step betwixt them and death."

2. Others of God's people, **after** the Lord has revealed himself to their souls, and given them to feel their interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus realize a blessed assurance of his mercy, are yet

through the **power of temptation** often "ready to perish." Some doubt this statement. But look at David's case. Had not David received from God a solemn promise that he should sit upon the throne of Israel? Yet, when Saul was pursuing him, "David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." But had not God given him a testimony that he should not perish? Had not Samuel anointed him with the sacred oil, and did not David then believe as firmly as in his own existence that he should sit upon the throne? Now no man can have a stronger testimony nor a firmer assurance of his spiritual salvation than David had of his temporal salvation, for in promising him the throne, God certainly promised him deliverance from Saul. And yet David feared he should perish by his hand. Why then should not the same fears work now in the heart under similar circumstances? If David's faith could fail, who shall say his own may not? David's assurance was overborne by the imminence of the danger; and so after the Lord has assured him he shall sit upon the throne of glory, a real child of God may, through the power of temptation, the assaults of Satan, and the fiery darts that are cast into his mind, be brought into such circumstances as to feel as much ready to perish in soul as David did to perish in body.

3. Again; If the Lord permit any of his children, and he does sometimes permit them, to go astray from him, to wander after their idols, and get into a cold, dead state, they may, and often do have many doubts and fears, whether they have not been deceived and deluded altogether, and whether they are not now abandoned to their own ways. Filled with fears, these are **ready** to perish: they are, in their feelings, upon the brink of perishing. They will not, and cannot perish, for they are held up by the purpose and grace of God; but as in themselves without help, as, like Ephraim, having "destroyed themselves," they are "**ready** to perish"—all but perishing.

Now, it is for these that the great trumpet is to be blown; and it needs must be a **great** trumpet, for they are **great sinners**: it must needs proclaim mercy in very loud tones, for sin, carnality,

and Satan have so stopped their ears that they need a very powerful note to pierce them and reach their heart.

4. Others of the Lord's people are in their feelings "ready to perish," because they have not **received those manifestations** of God's pardoning love which others are indulged with. Having, therefore, no clear testimonies nor bright evidences, they feel as if they had no real standing in the things of God, and therefore are often "ready to perish." Many of the Lord's people hide these feelings deeply in their hearts. Were they free to confess all they felt and feared, many would acknowledge they were indeed "ready to perish;" but amidst the confidence of others they are afraid or ashamed to declare their fears. But besides these, we read also of "**outcasts**;" and as there are those who are "ready to perish in the land of Assyria," so there are those who are "outcasts" in the land of Egypt. What is it to be an outcast? Jonah well expressed its meaning when he said, "I am cast out of thy sight" To be cast out of God's sight then is to be an outcast. A sinner, in his feelings, is cast out of God's sight when he sees himself too loathsome, too filthy, too base, too vile to dwell with God; and, therefore, like filth or offal he is fit only to be cast out, swept away out of the presence of God, for into his presence nothing can come that is defiled. It is only as sin is opened up in the heart and conscience as exceedingly sinful, that we begin to loathe ourselves in our sight because of our manifold abominations. Here was Isaiah in the temple (Isa. 6:5); Job in the ditch (Job 9:31); Daniel by the river (Dan. 10:8); Peter in the boat (Luke 5:8); and Jonah in the whale's belly; all saw light in God's sight, and felt sin to be exceedingly sinful. Sin, sin, horrid sin makes us feel outcasts. When there is no feeling access into God's presence, when our prayers seem to be shut out, when there is no answer to our petitions, when the heavens above are as brass and iron, when there is no dropping down of the dew of his favour, and no gracious smile upon his face, then is this feeling in the soul, "I am cast out." So is God's church described (Ezek. 16); under the figure of a new-born babe "cast out in the open field;" so felt David, when he said, "Cast me not away from thy presence;" so felt Heman when he cried, "Lord, why castest

thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?" so felt Jeremiah when he exclaimed, "Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off."

The most eminent saints, when sin came between them and God, felt they were, or deserved to be, outcasts. But where this experience is in the soul towards God, it makes a man, in a measure, an outcast also, in his feelings, from the **church** and **people** of God. His language is, 'I feel too base, too vile, too loathsome, too corrupt to have anything to do with them, or for them to have anything to do with me.' To be an outcast from God is to be an outcast from his saints. Many are kept by these feelings from joining churches, or associating with the people of God; and some have even been driven away from attending the worship of God, reading the Scriptures, or using private prayer, as viewing themselves outcasts from God and man, Cast out by the world as a gloomy enthusiast, and casting himself out from the people of God, such a one may well use Hart's words—

Lord, pity outcasts, vile and base,
The poor dependants on thy grace,
Whom men disturbers call:
By sinners and by saints withstood;
For these too bad, for those too good:
Condemn'd or shunn'd by all.

These, then, are the characters,—"ready to perish," and "outcasts," for whom the great trumpet is to be blown. These hail a free grace gospel, for it opens to them their only door of hope. A duty faith gospel will never suit these. They are too deeply sunk, too far gone, and in their feelings too utterly lost for anything but mercy to reach, for anything but grace to save. It is not a little salvation, nor a little gospel, nor a little Saviour that can suit such; it must be free, sovereign, distinguishing, super-abounding, or to them it is nothing. Thus, those things that seem at first sight to set the soul farthest from God, are the very things which in their issue are calculated to bring it nearest unto God; whereas, on the contrary, those things that in men's eyes bring

them near to God, are the very thing's which in God's eyes set them farthest from him. Look at the two characters in the temple. See the proud Pharisee buoyed up with his own righteousness! Was that man, as he thought, near to God? But what set him so far from the Lord? His self-righteousness; it was that which set him far from God; the pride which he took in his doings and duties.

Now, look at the Publican, who in his own feelings was indeed far from God, for "he dare not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." But which was nearer to God, the broken hearted Publican, or the self-righteous Pharisee? So when a man may think himself nearest to God by his doings and duties, by his obedience, and consistency, by this very self-righteousness he thrusts himself from God; for he secretly despises the gospel of Christ, makes himself his own saviour, and, therefore, pours contempt on the blood and obedience of the Son of God. Thus, a poor guilty sinner, who in his own feelings is ready to perish, and but a miserable outcast, is brought near to God by the righteousness of the gospel; while the Pharisee is kept far from God by the wall of self-righteousness, which his own hands have built and plastered. It is to the perishing then and the outcast that the gospel makes such sweet melody. And why? Because it tells them the work of Christ is a finished work; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; because it assures them that his righteousness is "unto all and upon all them that believe;" because it proclaims mercy for the miserable, pardon for the guilty, salvation for the lost, and that where sin hath abounded there grace doth much more abound.

But something more is needed than the mere outward sound of the gospel. Many of God's poor children, who in their own feelings are ready to perish, may hear a free grace gospel preached in all its purity, and yet only be condemned by it, because not able to receive it, nor believe it, nor realize it. It therefore seems only to add to their misery, to feel that the gospel is enjoyed by others, while they cannot get a grain. But when the great trumpet is blown by the mouth of the Spirit, it makes sweet melody, not

merely in the ear, but in the heart. The soul is then open to receive it, and its sweet notes find a blessed echo there when the Spirit proclaims pardoning mercy.

But what is the gospel? We talk much about gospel preaching, of a free grace gospel, and so forth, and we will not hear any minister who does not preach a free grace gospel. But what is all that? We may have the gospel in our heads, and on our lips, and yet not have a grain of the Gospel in our hearts; and we never can have, and never ought to have the gospel in our hearts till we are brought into those circumstances to which the gospel is adapted. But whilst a child of God is passing through this part of experience, how distressing it is to him! how his mind is exercised, his conscience burdened, and his soul racked with a thousand doubts, fears, and apprehensions! And yet how good it is for him to be thus exercised! It gives him an ear to hear the gospel, puts him into a situation to which the gospel is adapted, and makes him feelingly and experimentally one of those characters whom the Lord Jesus came to save; for "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). Christ came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." These tidings suit him well; for he feels himself to be no common sinner, but the chief of sinners; no ordinary transgressor, but a rebel in chief; a desperate, out of the way wretch, to the depths of whose wicked heart there seems neither end nor bottom. A gospel, therefore, clogged and fettered by conditions, mangled and shorn of its fulness and freeness, diluted and lowered by the water of creature qualifications, is no gospel to him. It does not reach his heart, come into his soul, touch his conscience, melt his spirit, or raise up faith, or hope, or love. Nothing is so marvellous and mysterious as the work of grace. It is marvellous in pulling down and marvellous in raising up; and as mysterious as marvellous. Here is one "ready to perish," and an "outcast." He would be neither if he could help it; and neither has he made himself. But such he is, and he must have help or die. Now to such a one all but a free grace gospel is a mockery. It is taunting

a drowning man to stand on the bank and bid him swim for his life. Leap in and save him. When brought to shore, he will bless his deliverer. A poor guilty outcast, finds nothing so blessed as to believe the gospel, and yet nothing so hard as to receive it; for he can derive no comfort from it, except as it is applied by free, sovereign, superabounding grace. The words are easily learned—"free, sovereign, and superabounding;" but none can enter into their divine import unless they are applied by the Spirit to the heart. We hail poor souls ready to perish, outcasts in their feelings; for these are the only persons who know what a free grace ministry is; there is always some duty to be done by everybody else; some sneaking, lurking self-righteousness not rooted out. With others there is always some self at the bottom, till the trials and distressing sensations which the "outcast," and "ready to perish" feel, become brooms and besoms to rout out that miserable fellow, self-righteousness. The holes and corners have to be swept. There must be no duty faith, duty hope, duty obedience. But let a man be well exercised in his soul, sin, Satan, temptation, an evil heart, and a corrupt nature, with whole troops of lusts and corruptions speedily will be up in arms against him; and he will feel himself to be a poor miserable wretch without either hope or help.

But you will say, Is there not an easier way of learning the gospel than this? No. Must we then be "ready to perish" before the gospel saves us, and "outcasts" before the gospel takes us in? Yes, surely; for we are so already. The gospel does not make us so, but finds us so. This was the confession that the Lord himself put into the mouth of the Israelite when he stood before the altar. "A Syrian ready to perish was my father" Deut. 26:5). To see and feel ourselves "ready to perish" is but to see and feel our real condition. It is like a person ill of consumption learning for the first time the nature of his disease. To tell him so does not make him so. It is only making known to him a terrible secret. Now would not such a sinking patient hail and embrace a miraculous cure? And would he quarrel with the remedy because it perfectly healed him without his first making himself a little

better? So with the gospel. It reveals a certain, an infallible remedy; but till we are ready to perish we slight and despise it.

**"Few, if any come to Jesus,
Till reduced to self-despair,"**

III. But when the great trumpet is blown, what is the effect produced by its loud and melodious notes? "They shall **come** which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall **worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.**" They could not come before. When "ready to perish" they could only sigh, and cry, and groan; when "outcasts," there was no access to God, no power to believe, to hope, or to love; but when the blessed notes of the gospel trumpet sound in the soul, all these hindrances are removed, and there is a "**coming**" to God. Now by this we may know whether we have received the gospel into our hearts.

What does the preached gospel do for most hearers? Nothing at all. It does not move, melt, soften, turn them, or have the least divine effect upon them. Many hear the gospel preached for years, but remain the same, nay, become worse, become, as the term is, gospel-hardened. Where the hammer does not break or soften, it hardens, as in the case of the blacksmith's anvil. The weightier the blows the closer the steel. It is a sad thing to sit under the gospel without having a case for the gospel. The Pharisees who watched Christ when he healed the man with the withered hand were hardened by a miracle of mercy before their eyes; they had no case and needed no miracle. But where there is a case for mercy, the "ready to perish," the "outcast," when he hears the gospel trumpet, and it makes sweet melody in his soul, comes. This coming shows that the trumpet is heard. When the soldier hears the sound of the bugle he hurries to do what the bugle bids. If it call him to quarters, he comes without delay. So when the child of God hears the trumpet of recall, he comes; and his coming is a sign that he hears and knows what the tones mean. But **how** does he come? He comes as the gospel bids him come, unto Jesus—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are

heavy laden." "To whom **coming** as unto a living stone." This coming is "the obedience of faith." "When they hear of me they shall obey me." They come humbled, broken, prostrate, and yet with a sweet sense of acceptance in the Beloved, and are thus brought nigh unto God. Now if any poor soul here has ever felt the gospel in this way, in its freeness, fulness, and blessedness, he has heard the sound of the great trumpet. But a Galatian gospel, a mixed gospel, a free will gospel, a duty gospel, will never thus draw sinners unto God. Such a gospel cannot remove guilt from the conscience, and therefore gives no liberty of soul, and no access into God's presence. A bound and imprisoned gospel will always breathe its own spirit, which is bondage and death. It proclaims no liberty, and therefore gives none. If ever it speak of mercy it is frightened at its own words, and recalls or qualifies them as soon as uttered. It is a gospel of uncertainties, and therefore can give no sweet and blessed certainty of the pardon of our sins, or acceptance of our persons; resting half its weight on the creature, it can afford no assurance of our standing in the Lord Jesus Christ, or of being bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord the Lamb.

Now there may be some here, and they children of God, who from want of light or the workings of self-righteousness cannot altogether receive a free grace gospel. They are not enemies to truth, but from some jealousy lest grace should be abused, think we should not go so far in our statements, and that it is prudent and wise to put the break on lest the gospel should get off the rail. But let these good people examine well their experience, and they will find it defective in two most important particulars. 1. They are not ready to perish, nor outcasts. 2. They have not received the spirit of adoption. And so long as they cleave to this Galatian gospel they never will experience true liberty nor rejoice in hope of the glory of God. These are kept from hearing the melodious sounds of the gospel trumpet through self-righteousness. But there are those of a very different class and stamp, who are kept back by self-despair. Their language is: "I have been so vile and base; I have been such a backslider; I have wandered in my affections so far from God; my heart, too,

is so evil, my mind so carnal, my corruptions so powerful, what shall I do? What shall I do?" But what can you do? **Nothing** is the sum total of all you can do. Cast up all your doings and you will find you must write, **nil**—nothing, at the bottom. Where then are you brought? To this point, "ready to perish," an "outcast." Is not this your very character, your precise condition? Beg then of God to bring his gospel near, to sound the great trumpet in your heart. Tell him that you are ready to perish and that he alone can save.

Called then by the sounding of the great trumpet the perishing and the outcasts "come." And what do they when they come? Do they trifle with sin, mock God, and abuse his grace? We read not so. They "worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." They worship him in Spirit and in truth, in the beauty of holiness. With purified hearts, purged consciences, and spiritual affections, they fall down before him, and their souls are impressed with the greatness of his love. They had no such heavenly feelings before; they could not therefore worship the three one God in the holy mount, nor at Jerusalem. The great trumpet had not blown; the jubilee had not come; the chains had not been knocked off, the shackles not loosed, and the prison gates not thrown open. They could not therefore worship God freely and fully with liberty of access and freedom of spirit.

But **where** do they worship him? On the holy mount. The holy mount we may understand to signify spiritually Mount Zion, the place where Jesus sits in glory. This is the ancient declaration of the Father;

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Here Jesus ever sits with love in his heart, grace in his lips, and the gospel in his hands. He sits on a holy hill, sways a holy sceptre, and rules in the hearts of a holy people.

Men talk much of holiness; and indeed they may well talk of it, for it is a most solemn declaration, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But what sort of holiness are most seeking

after? A holiness of the flesh, a sanctity of the creature. They must **do** this and **abstain** from that; and if they do this and abstain from that, then they are holy. So many prayers must be said, so many chapters read, so many duties done. This is Popish holiness, the sanctified austerity of a St. Dominic, not that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. **That** is of a very different nature—different every way, in source, way, means, and end. The only true holiness is that which is produced by the Spirit of God in the soul. Other source or fountain there is none. And how does he produce it? By the law or the gospel? By the gospel certainly. When the great trumpet of jubilee sounds in the soul, when it listens to the notes, and comes obedient to its call, it is to worship the Lord in his holy mount at Jerusalem. True holiness is then produced in the soul; for then there are given spiritual desires, spiritual affections, spiritual views, spiritual feelings, and spiritual hearts. This is the holiness which is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, and without which no man shall see the Lord. But what a strange way it is to be made holy! Ere a poor sinner "ready to perish" will be holy, sin usually makes terrible work with him. Satan thrusts hard at him; temptation attacks him; lusts and corruptions knock him well nigh to pieces; and he is "ready to perish" miserably under the accumulated wrath of God. What holiness has now this poor wretch? Judging by his own feelings, no more than Satan has; aye, and unable to produce it, though he shed floods of tears, or to find any one on earth to produce it for him. Can this be a man for God? A man to whom the gospel is proclaimed? A man for whom Christ died? Can this be a child of God and an heir of heaven? What this poor wretch "ready to perish," this poor "outcast?" Yes, he is the very person, an heir of heaven, a co-heir with Christ, and on his way to glory.

But, you ask, is there to be no practical holiness, no obedience of the hands, no consistency in the life? Yes, surely. But do not confound cause and effect, root and fruit, source and stream. Is this holiness produced by obedience, by doings, by duties? I read not so. I find it thus—"In that day shall the great trumpet be blown," the trumpet of the gospel, which proclaims mercy to the

miserable, and pardon to the guilty, which declares that Christ has finished the work which the Father gave him to do, and washed away sin in his own precious blood. The outcast hears, believes, feels, realizes. As these heavenly notes produce sweet melody in his soul, he comes to Mount Sion and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel. There the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to his soul. He thus sanctifies him, and produces love to Jesus, and obedience to the truth. Old things pass away, and all things become new. This is spiritual holiness, a thing as different from fleshly holiness, as heaven from hell.

Have you seen the matter in this light, and felt a measure of this divine power and work? If not, I must say that you have never yet heard the gospel trumpet. Self-righteousness is still working in you. You love a Galatian gospel, because such a gospel suits your self-righteous heart. But do not condemn others, and call them Antinomians, because they believe and love a free grace gospel. I believe in my heart and conscience, that every child of God who is to be saved will experience these things, each in his measure. The gospel has not two different sounds. The silver trumpets were to be made all of one piece; and so is the gospel, all of a piece. This trumpet gives a certain sound.

Now, this may explain why the gospel in our day is so much despised. It is too pure, too free, too sovereign, too superabounding. Most people like the gospel wine to be dashed with a considerable mixture of water, because the pure wine of gospel grace is too strong for them. But who are those that love gospel wine? They are those that Lemuel's mother bade him pay special attention to. "Give strong drink," said she, "to him who is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." She was a wise woman, and she gave wise advice. What was true then is true now. The heavy in heart still love the gospel wine; and the perishing and the outcasts still come at the sound of the great trumpet, and worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

A Bold Challenge, but a Complete Answer

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 15, 1866

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8:33, 34

You find me again in the Epistles. I cannot say that as a minister I should wish to be always found in the epistles; but I can say that as a Christian I never wish to be found out of them. Let me explain my meaning. I should be very unwilling so to tie up my ministry with my own hands as to confine myself to any one portion of God's word, however precious; yet, when I consider the glorious doctrines, heavenly truths, encouraging promises, and holy precepts which shine forth so clearly and so conspicuously in the epistles, I could wish ever to live and at last to die in the enjoyment of them. Not but what other parts of God's word contain the same truths; but they are not developed with that clearness, nor set forth in that full and bright light which is shed over them as from a heavenly sun in the epistles of the New Testament. Indeed it could not be well otherwise. They are, excepting the Apocalypse, which is a prophetic book, the last revelation which God has given to the Church, much of which could not have been afforded to it at an earlier period. The gospels give us the miracles, parables, closing scenes of the life, the suffering death, and glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. There they stop. As historical records, inspired accounts of the days of our blessed Lord upon earth, and containing the only authentic testimony of his gracious words and actions when here below, they have a place in the word of unspeakable value and preciousness. But the epistles, as a fuller revelation of the truth of God, bring before us the blessings and benefits which are consequent upon his life, death, and resurrection. These blessings demanded a special revelation which was committed to the epistles as written by inspired apostles to the churches and

individuals; and when there were gradually collected together into one volume, they assumed their present shape as an integral portion of the New Testament. As such how blessed they are as containing every thing which can serve to build up the Church on her most holy faith. Where else do we find such glorious truths as salvation by free, sovereign, superabounding grace, justification by an imputed righteousness, pardon through atoning blood, sanctification by the operations and influences, work and witness of the blessed Spirit, full liberty of access to the throne of God through the Mediator at his own right hand, and a certain assurance that at the great day this corruptible body shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality? It is true that we have the elements and rudiments of all these glorious truths in the gospels; but all rudiments are necessarily imperfect; and therefore if I prefer the fuller to the scanty, the bright and clear to the comparatively dim and faint revelation, who shall blame me? We may love the epistles without ceasing to love the gospels. Both have an equal place in our heart. Do we love John 14 less because we love Rom. 8? Is there any rivalry between the teaching of the Lord and the teaching of Paul; between the parable of the prodigal son and the doctrine of superabounding grace? In the gospels we have the doctrines of grace in the bud, in the epistles in the bloom; but as the rosebud is the same flower and grows on the same branch as the full-blown rose, so truth in the gospels is the same as truth in the epistles, and falls little short of it in either beauty or fragrance.

But there is another reason why I speak much from the epistles. Ministers usually are most at home in those parts of God's word into which they have been specially led. That is the circle in which they range with the greatest ease and comfort to themselves, and generally speaking with the largest amount of profit to their hearers. Now if there be any part of God's word into which I have been specially led, and which I have chiefly read and studied, it is the epistles. There are three things in them which have made them my favourite study. First, I find that in them which so *satisfies my intellect*. I hope the Lord has enlightened the eyes of my understanding by his grace, and has thus given me a spiritual

intellect; and having cultivated it for many years by reading, prayer, study, and meditation, I want something in the word of God to satisfy my intellect thus graciously given. Do not misunderstand me. I mean my sanctified intellect, my spiritual understanding, for I am not speaking of my natural intellect, which can understand only natural things but cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, but of that wisdom which cometh from above, that anointing which teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie. Now I find in the epistles that which abundantly satisfies and feeds my sanctified intellect, and fully and graciously commends itself to my enlightened understanding. What a fund of instruction is therein for a mind enlightened from above. Take, for instance, the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. With what force of gracious reasoning, with what strength of clear and scriptural, and one might almost say cogent logical argument, has the apostle opened up the counsel of God in the free and full justification of a sinner by an imputed righteousness, and proved every point in a manner so masterly in itself, from its harmony with the Scriptures which he has advanced, and so satisfactory to an enlightened understanding, that sometimes as we follow his arguments, every word seems to carry with it the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Few persons, even ministers, speaking comparatively, *study* the epistles. They read them and doubtless get benefit from them; but they do not see the clear, connected arrangement of every link in one chain of sustained argument, and that the doctrinal portion of the epistle to the Romans is not only a most blessed revelation of heavenly truth, but even, viewed intellectually, is one of the greatest and most masterly compositions which were ever penned by the hand of man.

But secondly, I find in the epistles, that which approves itself in the highest degree to my *conscience*. There I find the blood of Christ held forth most clearly to my faith, as cleansing from all sin; there I find the way whereby God justifies a sinner set forth in the fullest and brightest light, so as to bring peace to the soul; there I see the love of God in the gift of his Son gloriously exalted and magnified; and there I behold, set before my eyes, the "new and living way which the Lord Jesus has consecrated through the

veil, that is to say, his flesh." These blessed truths approve themselves to my conscience, as obtaining no relief but by being sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb.

And I find in them, thirdly, that which approves itself to my *spiritual affections*. I love the epistles because I love the truths contained and revealed in them; and as I receive the love of the truth set forth in them, it draws up my affections to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. I must therefore speak well of that part of God's word, though not to the exclusion of other parts equally precious, equally inspired, which so specially commends itself to my sanctified intellect, to my approving conscience, and to my renewed and heavenly affections.

But I have another reason still why I preach so often to you from the epistles. In speaking to you, I address myself to a people who are, or should be, an established people. It is about twenty-three years since I first came amongst you, in my annual visit to the metropolis. Many of you have been a considerable number of years in the way, and therefore you do not stand in a position requiring the mere elements of truth. The epistles were written to churches, to those who were established in the faith. They are therefore a part of God's word which is especially suitable to a church and congregation not made up of novices, weaklings, and beginners, but of those who are in some degree matured and established in the faith as it is in Jesus.

But in fact my preaching so much from the epistles, either here or elsewhere, needs no apology. I merely explain why it is, that this morning, as on other occasions, I come before you with a portion out of the epistles of the New Testament. Let the words of our text speak for themselves. They want no apology, though they may want a little explanation.

What, then, do I see in them, just to lead my own mind into an orderly consideration of the subject, and to assist your memory? I think I see these three things in them: An inquiry, an answer, and a climax.

I.—*First*, I see an *inquiry*, double in form, though but one in substance. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that condemneth?"

II.—*Secondly*, I see an *answer* to that inquiry; like the inquiry double in form, but double also in substance. "It is God that justifieth;" "It is Christ that died."

III.—*Thirdly*, I see a *climax*, or a rising up, as the word means, like a ladder, from one grand truth to another: "Yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

I.—It seems almost as if the apostle in our text took his stand upon a kind of spiritual Pisgah. As Moses stood on Pisgah's top, and thence surveyed the whole length and breadth of the land which God gave the children of Israel for an inheritance, so Paul seems here to stand upon a spiritual Pisgah, and takes a survey of the goodly inheritance with which God has blessed his people. Like Balaam, though not a Balaam, for that false prophet loved the wages of unrighteousness—but as Balaam stood upon the high places of Baal, and thence surveying the tents of Israel, cried out in a prophetic rapture, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel;" so Paul standing, as the man of God, where Balaam stood the man of the devil, sees the family of God as Balaam saw the tents of the children of Israel; and holding up his hand and opening his mouth that all might hear, cries aloud, as with trumpet tongue, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" A bold challenge, and yet a challenge which he can meet at every point; a war note, a trumpet of defiance, a glove thrown down by the king's champion, and yet one for which he will do battle even unto death, being assured of perfect victory for the cause which he so boldly undertakes to maintain, were he even to die in its behalf.

Let us then examine this inquiry: let us see how the king's champion approves himself in this combat. You and I, and all who

love the truth are ranged upon the same side; and though we doubt not the issue, yet we will watch every turn of the fight.

i. But what word meets us at the outset of this inquiry? A word very offensive to some, but a word very precious to others; a note of war to enemies, a note of peace to friends. The word "elect" meets us at the very gate, and stands on the threshold of the inquiry. We cannot, then, pass it by, ignore it, smother it up, evade it, or beat it down. With what holy boldness the apostle holds it when he cries aloud, almost with a defiant voice, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" But why should men's bristles rise, why should men's nostrils dilate with anger, why should men's eyes almost flash fire when the word "elect" or "election" sounds in their ears? Is it so dreadful a word—so terrible a term? Why should a man be a marked man who uses the word and boldly proclaims his belief in the doctrine which it enforces? Why is the doctrine itself so much objected to, for after all it is the doctrine not the word which is so particularly obnoxious? The main ground of objection is, that it is unjust that God should have chosen some unto eternal life and passed by others, thus leaving them to eternal woe. Now let us look a little at this formidable objection, for time will not admit of my noticing others which make, as some think, an equally forcible array against the doctrine of election, especially as they may be easily disposed of by the same answer.

I will assume, then, that you are an opponent to the doctrine of election. Now let me ask you the following questions:—May you choose your own house, or must another choose it for you? "Well," you say, "I certainly think I have a right to choose my own house: nobody can know what sort of a house I want so well as myself." Do you think that anybody may choose for you your friends, associates, and companions? "No," you answer; "I think I ought to have liberty to choose my own friends and companions, or those chosen for me might be very disagreeable or unsuitable associates." Do you think that anybody has a right, if you are unmarried, to fix upon a wife for you and say, "You must take this woman for your partner in life, whether you like her or not?"

"No," you say; "I think it is part of our liberty as men to choose our own wives." Now apply my figures to the point in hand. May not God upon similar grounds choose his own house? Is not the Church God's house—the temple in which he dwells; and has he not a perfect right to choose his own habitation? Do we not read, "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation?" Had he not a right to choose Zion rather than Sinai, and inhabit Jerusalem rather than Samaria? Had not Christ a right to choose his friends and companions for all eternity? Had he a right, for instance, to choose his own disciples? Should you think it right to have let Judas choose them for him? that our Lord should not have had any will in the matter to choose Peter, John, and James, but that Judas should choose such men as he pleased, men of the same stamp as himself, and say to the Lord, "These men must be your disciples, friends, and associates on earth?" Does not the very idea shock your mind and chill your blood? Yet you are not shocked nor does your blood run cold when you would choose this or that man to be the companion of Christ to all eternity, and say it is unjust if the Lord has a choice of his own, and does not accept yours. And had not the Lord a perfect right to choose his own bride, his own spouse? Was any spouse to be put upon him, and he accused of injustice if he would not take her for time and eternity? So if you as a man are at liberty to choose your own house, your own associates, your own wife, do allow the Lord as much liberty in eternal matters as you claim for yourself in temporal.

But you say, "Those are mere temporal matters, and do not involve such important consequences. I must say still, it seems to me unjust to take some to heaven and let others go to hell." But by so speaking, you seem altogether to lose sight of the broad fact that all men are criminals and justly condemned already by their own deeds, and that there is no injustice in punishing the guilty. Take the case, for instance, of a pirate crew, like the old West Indian buccaneers, of whom we have read such tales of bloodshed and massacre in the days of our boyhood, which has been committing unheard-of atrocities, wading in blood up to the knees, and ravaging the sea in all directions. At last, after a

bloody combat, the ship is captured by an English frigate. Now every one of these pirates, with the captain at their head, deserves to be at once strung up at the yard arm. But suppose that only half of them are hung, or they are what is called decimated, that is, every tenth man executed. It may seem to fall very hard upon the victims; but is it an unjust sentence when all equally deserve to be hung? Is it unjust to spare some and hang others? So none can complain of God's injustice if all were sent to perdition. Those who are spared are spared by grace, and those who perish perish by justice. "The Judge of all the earth must do right," as much when he burns up a guilty Sodom as when he rescues a righteous Lot from the overthrow, or freely justifies a believing though once idolatrous Abraham.

But I need not take up time and attention by dwelling upon points so obvious to a spiritual mind. As to convincing those who set themselves obstinately against the doctrine, it is, for the most part, labour in vain to make even the attempt. But whether men believe it or disbelieve it, one thing is certain, that the word of God which has declared it will stand for ever, and that as no opposition to it can disannul, so no adherence can make it more certain.

But there is one important consideration, both for those who receive God's word as he has revealed it and those who oppose it, that the word "elect," according to our text, embraces and comprehends all whom God justifies, all for whom Christ died and rose again. It will, therefore, be our wisdom and mercy not to cavil at and criticise the doctrine of election, nor mutter and murmur against God's sovereignty in choosing some and passing by others, but rather to ask ourselves this one simple question, "Am I one of the elect? Have I any good ground to believe that God has justified me freely by his grace, and that for me Christ died and rose again?"

ii. But the apostle takes a prominent stand when he asks so boldly the question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" What then? Does no one lay anything to the charge

of God's elect? Yes, certainly, many do. That is an every-day fact. Publicly and privately many things are laid to their charge. The apostle, therefore, does not mean that nothing is laid to their charge, but that no charge shall so stand against them as to be eventually their downfall. These charges we may briefly class under two heads—false and true.

There are then *false charges* laid to the account of God's elect, and these have to be fully met and answered that their state and standing, honour and reputation may be clearly and fully established. I doubt not that many, if not most of you, at some time or other of your life have been subject to *false* charges. Few things are more galling indeed to our feelings or more mortifying to our mind than to be subjected to false accusations, for though we know them to be false, yet many will believe them to be true; and thus we may deeply suffer in our reputation, or a wound may be inflicted through our side upon the cause of God. But what a mercy it is when they are false; when before the face of God you stand clear of the charge, and whatever may be laid against you, you have the verdict of a good conscience that of that accusation you are innocent. So in the things of God there are false charges brought against his living family, not merely as regards their personal character and reputation but simply because they believe and receive God's truth.

1. How often, for instance, it is charged against God's people that the doctrines which they profess to believe are *dangerous* and lead to licentiousness. This is a false charge, and one which can be met by them without fear. They know perfectly, from the testimony of the word of truth and the approving verdict of their own conscience, that the doctrines of grace lead to exactly contrary effects, and that so far from leading to licentiousness, they have, when spiritually received and experimentally enjoyed, a most blessed and sanctifying influence upon their hearts, their lips, and their lives.

2. Again, it is frequently laid to their charge that what they call their *experience is visionary*, enthusiastic, comes from a brain-

sick imagination, or is but the sporting and wandering of a deluded mind. How often relations bring such charges against members of their own family, where the work of grace, to them unknown, is going on in any one who comes under their daily observation. How frequent is the insinuation that it springs from a degree of insanity, or is some strange hallucination or delusive idea which has possessed their mind. *That* is a false charge, because we, who have experienced a work of grace on the heart, know that the mind is never really sane or sober until enlightened from above; that until we have some experience of the life, power, and presence of God in our own souls we are madmen, and that it is by the grace of God we have become sound and sane. Does not the apostle expressly say, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind?" (2 Tim. 1:7.) Festus said to Paul, "Thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." But what was the noble answer of the apostle, though in bonds before his tribunal? "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25.) Thus we may turn the tables upon our accusers. It is we who are of sound mind, and they insane; theirs is the hallucination, theirs the enthusiasm, theirs the fanaticism, to dream of going to heaven without a change of heart or life. We see them maddened by the love of sin and the world, and feel for ourselves that we, as taught of God, for the first time in our lives, have right views, right thoughts, right intentions, right words, and right actions.

3. Another false charge laid to God's elect is that they *abstain from open sin* just to get a name or for fear of disgrace, yet love to walk *privately* in all ungodliness; that if they can only just keep a fair outside they think very little of the inside, whether it be clean or unclean. This is a false charge. The Lord's people desire to live free from all sin, secret as well as open, because they carry daily and hourly in their bosom a conscience which testifies against all ungodliness, private or public, open or secret, committed in thought, committed in word, or committed in action.

4. Another false charge is that they are a poor, *moping, miserable race*, who know nothing of happiness, put away from them all cheerfulness, mirth, and gladness, hang their heads down all their days like a bulrush, are full of groundless fears, and nurse the gloomiest thoughts in a kind of musing melancholy, grudging all around them the least enjoyment of pleasure and happiness, and trying to make everybody as dull and as miserable as their dull and miserable selves. Is not this a false charge? Do you not know that you never had any real happiness in the things of time and sense, that under all your assumed gaiety there was real gloom, that every sweet was drenched with bitterness, and vexation and mortification stamped upon all that is called pleasure and enjoyment; and that you never knew what real happiness was until you knew the Lord, and were blessed with his presence and some manifestation of his goodness and mercy?

But then there are *true* charges; and true charges cut very deep. If you were guilty of anything naturally that was laid to your charge, if you had committed some crime or done something manifestly wrong, your head must droop, your countenance fall, and you feel full of inward confusion and shame. So, distinct and apart from false accusations, there are true charges brought against the elect of God in the court of conscience.

1. *Moses*, for instance, brings true charges. He says, "You have not kept my law in thought, word, or deed; you have broken every commandment, and brought yourself under its curse." Now what can we say in answer to this charge? Have we kept the law or have we not kept it? Have we loved God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourself, or have we not? Let conscience give the verdict, guilty or not guilty? What does conscience say? "Guilty, my Lord: I have not loved the Lord my God with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; I have not loved my neighbour as myself; I have sinned in thought, in word, in action; I have brought myself under the stroke of God's law; I am justly condemned by its curse." Here, then, is a true charge, and one which must be met and answered,

or we shall perish without hope under the curse and condemnation of the Law.

2. Sometimes *conscience* also will bring a true charge. And, O, who can stand before the charges of a guilty conscience when it must own that the accusation is true? You may stand before a false charge and lift up your head boldly before the face of the greatest accuser if his accusation be groundless; but when your own conscience bears its inward testimony to the truth of any charge against you, at once you drop. Now conscience must register many things against us: mine does, I am sure, and that almost continually. Can you pass a single day of your life without conscience registering some sin against you? You are kept, I trust, from open evil; you are preserved, as I hope I am preserved, from doing anything outwardly of which you are ashamed, or that will bring reproach upon the cause of God; but the inward workings of your depraved heart, the bubbling, springing up, and oozing forth of that corruption which is innate in us,—who can stand against the verdict of his own conscience when it testifies against the inward evil that is ever discovering itself? We must fall under that charge and acknowledge it is true.

3. *Satan* also will often accuse us, for he is called "the accuser of the brethren." And O what charges Satan can bring against us; what a memory the prince of darkness has. How he will take his stand, as Bunyan represents Apollyon straddling across the whole way, with his fiery darts, and bring to mind this or that sin committed, this or that slip or fall, this or that backsliding; and each fiery dart would strike through your liver had you no shield of faith wherewith you could quench it. Some of his charges are false, and some of his charges are true; but so confused often is our mind, that we often cannot distinguish the true from the false. Has he never represented to you that your sins were unpardonable, or that you have committed the unpardonable sin itself? Has he never told you that your backslidings are too great to be forgiven, that no partaker of the grace of God ever sinned like you, and that though there might be hope for others who had not sinned so desperately and with so high a hand, there could be

no mercy for you? Has he not stirred up your mind by every vile suggestion, and then tried to persuade you that all these base and vile thoughts were your own, and that by them you have provoked God beyond all patience and endurance? He thus so mixes together true charges and false, that we scarcely know what to say, think, or do.

But I must not dwell farther on this part of our subject. Take all these charges in the aggregate: charges false, charges true, what shall we say to them? We cannot fully answer them; we therefore fall down before them; we dare not a word to say in our own defence; like the woman taken in adultery, we have not a plea with which to silence our accusers.

II.—Now God steps forth. The apostle, as his mouthpiece and ambassador, speaks in behalf of the guilty criminal in those magnificent words, those heart-thrilling accents which have sounded with the sweetest melody to thousands of troubled hearts and afflicted consciences: "*It is God that justifieth.*"

i. What charge need we then apprehend if it is God that justifieth? What has filled you, what may even now fill you with guilty dread? Not your sins against man, but your sins against God. Against his dread majesty, before his heart-searching eye you have sinned; his law you have broken; his commandments you have trampled under foot; his revealed will you have slighted: his precepts you have neglected; the sins of your heart, of your lips, of your life, have all been personal sins against a holy, pure, and righteous God. We may have sinned, and doubtless have done, against our fellow creatures, and would, if we could, repair any damage which they may have sustained at our hand. Some, perhaps, are dead whom we may have wronged, and others may have forgiven or forgotten what we have done or said against them. If we have wronged them in money, that we have repaired, or can repair; and for other offences, which can not be well repaired, we have felt inward grief, and confessed them before the Lord. If, then, God, against whom we have so sinned, come forward and himself freely and fully justify us, that is a full

answer to the inquiry, to the bold challenge: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" That is a full reply to every accusation, a full indemnification for every demand, and a full receipt for every debt. But it must be God that justifies us—not we justify ourselves. Only he against whom we have sinned can justify us from our sins.

But I wish you to observe the scriptural meaning for it is full of blessedness, of the word, "justify." To justify is not simply to pardon or acquit. It is something far more than to acquit, for it gives me a righteousness which I could not have by simple acquittal. To explain this a little more clearly, let us just cast a simple glance at the proceedings of our law courts. Look at a criminal arraigned for an imputed crime. Some years ago there was in Scotland a remarkable poisoning case, and the jury returned what is called a Scotch verdict: "not proven." They did not say the person charged was not suspiciously guilty; they did not say there was not a measure of proof against the criminal, but they held that the whole amount of proof brought forward was not sufficient to justify them in bringing in a clear verdict of guilty. The alleged crime was "not proven;" or, as we say, proved. I have often thought that it would be good if in our law courts it is permissible to return the same verdict, for it would often more satisfy the public mind, and relieve the conscience of the jury. "Not proven," therefore, is only just an escape from "guilty," and is the very lowest form of acquittal. But there is a step, what I may perhaps call a rise from this, as in our courts of justice, where the criminal, when acquitted, is said to be "not guilty," the jury declaring their belief that he has not been guilty of the crime laid to his charge. But in some courts, as in a court martial, there is another rise: "honourably acquitted," where the accused is not only acquitted, but acquitted in a honourable manner; or as we sometimes read, even in a criminal report, "he leaves the court without a stain upon his character." Thus you see in earthly courts there may be several degrees from "not proven" to "honourably acquitted;" but even that falls short of justification. A judge does not say, "Take that man and put a royal robe upon him." The Queen does not bid her prime minister

honour him, as King Ahasuerus bade Haman honour Mordecai: "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the royal crown which is set upon his head." (Esther 6:8.) No man, however honourably acquitted, was ever thought worthy of an honour like that. But when God justifies a man, he not only acquits him, and honourably acquits him, but puts on him a robe of righteousness, a royal robe, in which he stands before God as holy as an angel of light, spotless in the obedience, the glorious obedience of God's own dear Son. Nor will even the royal crown be withheld; for for him is prepared "a crown of righteousness," and like the four-and-twenty elders whom John saw sitting, he will be clothed, not only in white raiment, but have on his head a crown of gold, for the Lamb has made him a king and a priest by redeeming him to God by his blood. (Rev. 4:4; 5:9, 10.) O, what glory there is in this heavenly truth, that you and I, if we believe in the Son of God, though in ourselves poor, guilty criminals, are not only "not guilty" in God's sight, are not only "honourably acquitted," but are freely and fully justified by the imputation of Christ's own glorious, immaculate righteousness, and so stand before the eye of God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Such a stupendous mystery may well fill our minds with holy wonder, and as it surpasses all creature thought may seem too great to be true. But nothing else could satisfy God, and, I may add, nothing less than this could satisfy our own conscience. I should think that a criminal who went out of court with a verdict of "not proven" against him rather than for him, must hang his head down somewhat before the gazing multitude, nor would he like to meet afterwards in the street any of the jurors. Even when the verdict is "not guilty," he must go out of court with some degree of shame if the evidence bear strongly against him. Nay even if "honourably acquitted," there might be still some suspicion left in the mind of persons that there was some evidence kept back which might have been brought forward, and he himself might have felt stung with some part of the accusation as more than half true. But to be covered with a robe of righteousness and stand before a holy God as his dear Son stood, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, how this surpasses all thought of men

or conception of angels; yet, I repeat it, nothing but this can satisfy God, and nothing but this can satisfy conscience. Were there a wrinkle in our person you could not stand accepted before God; His holy eye would rest on that wrinkle as an imperfection, and you could not be admitted to his glorious presence while that spot was upon you. Nor can conscience be satisfied with anything short of that which fully satisfies God, for it is his vicegerent and speaks in his name.

ii. But the apostle asks also another question, which I shall answer at the same time with the present part of my subject. He had asked, "*Who is he that condemneth?*" Now to condemn is to go a step further than to lay a charge; for to condemn implies an actual bringing in of the criminal as guilty. A charge might have been laid, but not sustained; but a sustained charge brings him in condemned, and if a murderer, shuts him up in the condemned cell, there to abide till brought forward for execution. Now God's people not only have charges laid against them, some false and some true, but they are condemned, and justly condemned, by the verdict of the law and by the verdict of their own conscience. Still the apostle, unmoved, unshaken, stands upon the same glorious height, and cries aloud, "*Who is he that condemneth? Look around, find the man if you can who can justly condemn, effectually condemn, eternally condemn, in God's sight condemn so that there shall be no reverse, any one of God's elect.*" Men may condemn their, as they consider, dangerous doctrines, men may condemn their experience, men may condemn their bigoted views, men may condemn their uncharitable ways, men may condemn their gloomy lives, and even condemn their very souls to perdition, as our Christian poet said of Whitefield:

"The world's best comfort was, his doom was passed;
Die when he might, he must be damned at last."

But the question after all is, Does God condemn them? Does he condemn the doctrines which he has himself revealed, condemn the experience which his Spirit has wrought, condemn the life which they live as a life of faith in the Son of God, condemn them

for walking in his way, and preferring his will to the will of man or to their own, and will he in the end adjudge their souls to hell? Or if they be justly condemned, as they are condemned by a holy law and a guilty conscience, even that shall not stand. Why not? Because Christ died. That is the answer, and the all-sufficient answer. The apostle, you see, never lays the least stress upon works, beginning or end. He has but two answers. To those who lay anything to the charge of God's elect his answer is, "It is God that justifieth." To those who condemn, his answer is, "It is Christ that died."

But O how much is involved in this simple answer. How it meets every charge, and if it cannot silence every accuser it effectually quashes in the court of God every accusation.

III.—But this brings us to what I have called the *climax*. The term climax is a Greek word, which literally means a ladder, and it is used to signify that peculiar feature and striking figure in oratory whereby the speaker keeps gradually rising in ideas and language, mounting as it were from one summit to another in sublimity of thought and expression, and carrying his audience with him. Now Paul, who was by natural endowment a man of consummate ability, of highly cultivated mind, as well as eminently taught of God and writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, has given us in his epistles some beautiful instances of this figure of oratory. The end of this chapter is a noble instance of the power and beauty of climax. "I am persuaded"—see how he rises—for to be persuaded is a step above simple belief—"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers"—how he keeps rising from one point to another; first, "death," then "life," then "angels," then "principalities," then "powers," each one stronger than the other, "nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature"—how he mounts! how he takes us to the top of the ladder, the summit of the climax, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." So in our text we have a climax, a spiritual ladder rising higher and higher, its foot placed on the ground, but its top lost

amidst a blaze of heavenly glory. What are the steps? The first step is "Christ that died;" the second is, "That is risen again;" the third is, "Who is even at the right hand of God;" and the fourth is, "Who also maketh intercession for us." It is as if he would crown the whole of his argument with this beautiful climax—to give our conscience thorough peace, and impart to us the blessed assurance that whoever shall lay a charge, no charge shall be sustained; whoever shall condemn, that condemnation shall fall to the ground, and not for a moment be listened to in the courts of heaven.

i. He begins, "It is Christ *that died*," as if that were enough to answer every charge and silence every condemning tongue. For what does the death of Christ imply? It implies a sacrifice; and a sacrifice implies that the victim stands in the place of the person who offers the victim. Blood-shedding and death were integral parts of a sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood is no remission;" without the death of the victim the sacrifice would not be complete. Thus the words, "It is Christ that died," carry with them these two things: 1, The shedding of his blood to put away sins; and, 2, the laying down of his precious life, that by one offering he might perfect for ever them that are sanctified. The Holy Ghost expressly declares that "Christ once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sins by the sacrifice of himself." There was no other way whereby sin could be put away. Nothing short of the blood-shedding, sufferings, and death of the Son of God could be such a propitiation for sin as God could accept. He came to do the will of God; and that will was that he should offer up his body and soul as a sacrifice for sin. He finished the work which his Father gave him to do; nor did he bow his sacred head in death until he could say with expiring breath, "It is finished." There is no other relief but this for a guilty conscience; no other answer but this to the condemning sentence of a holy law, or the accusations of the accuser of the brethren. Now, if the sacrifice is complete, that is a sufficient answer to the inquiry, "Who is he that condemneth?" Moses condemns; but now Moses, viewing the dying Son of God, says, "I am satisfied; I required a perfect, unwavering obedience: it has been paid. To my law was attached

a solemn and tremendous curse; the Son of God has borne that curse. I am satisfied; I have all that I called for. I have now no charge to lay; I have now no condemnation to bring; I am thoroughly and fully satisfied." Justice is next asked, "What say you, Justice? Are you content?" "Yes; I am fully satisfied," answers Justice. "How so?" "All has been rendered that I could claim. An obedience was necessary, an active obedience and a passive obedience, that my demands should be fully satisfied. I have got both in the Person of the Son of God, as suffering, bleeding, and dying. His merits are infinite, for his Person is infinite as the Son of God. I am, therefore, well satisfied, and I have no further charge to bring." "Now, Conscience, what say you?" "Are you at peace; are you at rest; have you felt the application of atoning blood, and received it as from God as cleansing from all sin?" Conscience answers. "I am satisfied: all guilt is taken away; it is removed by the blood of the Lamb: I have no charge now to bring." "Satan, what say you?" But he does not wait to answer. He has skulked off long ago. The prince of darkness slinked away directly the question was put, and has not a word to mutter from his infernal den. Ask, therefore, Moses, ask justice, ask conscience, ask Satan; all are mute before a dying Christ, a bleeding Lamb, all are silenced by a finished work, an atoning blood, and an accepted sacrifice.

ii. But the apostle does not leave us there: he goes on with the climax, steps up another round of the ladder. "That is *risen again*."

Christ's resurrection was God's attesting seal to the truth and certainty of Christ's mission and to his divine Sonship. If Christ had not risen, there would have been no external, visible, manifested proof that he was the Son of God. The apostle therefore testifies that he was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." This, therefore, has made Christ's resurrection to be such a grand cardinal feature of our most holy faith; for upon it rests the grand and glorious fact, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. And if he was the Son of God, all that he did he did as the Son of God;

all that he suffered he suffered as the Son of God. His blood is the blood of the Son of God; his obedience that of the Son of God; his work the work of the Son of God; and all that he now is, and all that he now does, he is and does as the Son of God. But how do we know this? How can we prove it? What is our evidence? It is all proved to a demonstration by his resurrection from the dead. If it be blessed to view a dying Christ, it is also blessed to view a risen Christ. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." This secures our own spiritual and eternal life, as the apostle beautifully argues: "Knowing that Christ being risen from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." (Rom. 6:9, 10.) Highly do we prize, closely do we cling to the cross of Christ. As we view him by the eye of faith bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, we gather up the sweet persuasion that those sins will not be laid to our charge. But when we view him rising from the dead as a mighty conqueror over sin, death, and hell, then our faith embraces him in the power of his resurrection as justifying as well as in the meritorious efficacy of his death as atoning.

iii. But the apostle goes on to rise another step in the spiritual climax; he would take our thoughts one flight higher still: "*Who is even at the right hand of God.*" He takes us from earth to heaven, lands us within the veil where our great and glorious High Priest entered by virtue of his own blood, and shows us the glorious Son of God at the right hand of the Father. The right hand of God means the right hand of power, of dominion, of authority, and of acceptance. When our blessed Lord went back to the courts of bliss, and the gates of heaven lifted up their heads, and the everlasting doors were lifted up, and the King of glory went in, he sat down at once at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But what did this place of preeminence imply? It certified to principalities and powers, and the whole bright and glorious throng of angelic hosts, that God had accepted his work and given him for his reward that exalted place of power, of honour, and of dignity. For remember this, that our gracious Lord

went up to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God in his human nature. He did not go up to heaven as he came down from heaven only as the Son of God. He went up to heaven as the Son of Man as well as the Son of God. He went up to heaven in a human nature united to the divine, and therefore entered the courts of bliss as the God-Man, Immanuel, God with us. It is a point of the greatest importance, and to be ever borne in mind by every spiritual worshipper and by every true believer in the Son of God, that our blessed Lord sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high in the same human body which he wore upon earth—glorified indeed beyond all thought or utterance, but the same pure, spotless, holy, and immortal humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin, and which he offered as a sacrifice upon the cross. To this point the apostle would specially direct our thoughts, and bring it before us as the object and food of our faith. And what an object of faith it is, for, as viewing Jesus at the right hand of God, we see there a mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; we see an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; we see a brother, a friend, a husband enthroned in glory, there ever living, ever reigning, ever ruling, until God shall have put all enemies under his feet. He would thus encourage us if we feel guilty of charges brought against us and the stings of a condemning conscience, to look out of them all and beyond them all, and say to all our accusers, "It is Christ that died; what have I to do with your accusations, your charges, your condemnation? I have got one who will answer you.

'Does conscience lay a guilty charge
And Moses much condemn,
And bring in bills exceeding large?
Let Jesus answer them.'

I have one who can answer for me: it is he who died. But this is not all; it is he who is risen again; nay, more, it is he who is even at the right hand of God to plead my cause, to take my case in hand, to meet my accusers, to sprinkle my conscience with his blood, to shed abroad his love in my heart, to assure me that

none of these charges shall stand against me, and none of these accusations shall ever be sustained for my full and final overthrow." O, it is a faith in these divine realities which brings us into immediate contact, into some sweet communion with this glorious Mediator at the right hand of the Father. This brings us out of ourselves with all our miseries to look to him with all his mercies, and gives us to see there is more in Christ to save than there can be in sin to condemn.

But for whom is all this? For believers. "For by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." I shall have occasion, I hope, in the evening to speak from a text which has some reference to the intercession of Christ, and I shall therefore not detain you longer this morning by dwelling upon the last step of the ladder. It is equally beautiful and equally blessed; but I shall defer the consideration of it to the next assembling of ourselves together in the name of the Lord.

The Branch of the Lord Beautiful and Glorious to Them that are Escaped of Israel

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, June 20, 1869

"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel, and it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." Isaiah 4: 2, 3

The prophetic declaration of the Old Testament Scriptures are often very obscure, and, in consequence difficult to understand. For this obscurity there are various causes; but it will suffice for the present to mention two:

1. The apparently *ambiguous* language in which they are couched; so that at times it seems uncertain whether we are to understand them in a literal, or in a spiritual sense. Take, for instance, such a passage as this, which you will find in the chapter which I read this morning: "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." (Isaiah 61:4.) Is that prophetic declaration to be interpreted literally or spiritually? Will the time ever come when in the land of Canaan, which now lies waste and desolate, there will be a building up of the old wastes? Will there be a literal raising up of the former desolations? Will the returning Jews actually repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations? And will Palestine be again filled with flourishing towns and villages, so as to be restored to its ancient populousness and prosperity? Or are we entirely to ignore such an explanation, call it carnal and earthly, unworthy of the spiritual meaning of Scripture, and interpret the prediction wholly in harmony with the preceding verses, which are undoubtedly claimed by our Lord himself as descriptive of his work as anointed by the Spirit of the Lord? If

so, you would probably interpret the desolations as signifying the desolations of the soul, and the waste places that are found in spiritual experience as built up and repaired by Christ being anointed "to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3.) If, then, you adopt the literal meaning, you might find a difficulty in reconciling it with the spiritual, as explained by the Lord himself; but if, on the other hand, you wholly discard the literal meaning, you might find a difficulty in another direction in so positively denying the literal interpretation of the word of God, for you might carry out the same principle of interpretation in all other passages of similar import, and thus overthrow the literal meaning of God's word altogether. My own belief is, that the literal meaning of the prophecies does not contradict their spiritual interpretation, but that each has its place; as was the case with the prophecies concerning Christ, of which those that predicted his literal birth at Bethlehem, his being born of a pure Virgin, his literal sufferings, death, and resurrection have their place in the prophetic page, and were as much fulfilled as those which spoke of his spiritual sufferings and of the travail of his soul. Is not Isaiah 53 eminent instance of both the literal and spiritual meaning of prophecy meeting and harmonising in our blessed Lord? And why should this not be the case also in other predictions now apparently ambiguous and obscure?

2. But there is another reason for their obscurity. Very many of these prophetic declarations have *not yet* received their *fulfilment*; and therefore, until fulfilled, they will always be obscure. Look, for instance, at the many intimations that were given in the Old Testament Scriptures of Christ's sufferings and death to which I have just alluded. Were they understood by the Old Testament believers before the coming of Christ? Could they understand, for instance, and explain Psalms 22, 40, 69, or Isaiah 53, as we understand and explain them now? But when the man of sorrows came, and Messiah appeared as a suffering Messiah,

then those Old Testament Scriptures that spoke of his sufferings became plain and clear. So it will be doubtless with many prophetic declarations which are now obscure. They will one day be fulfilled to the very letter. There will be no uncertainty or discrepancy then between the literal and spiritual interpretation; but each will be seen to have its own distinct fulfilment, and all that obscurity which now arises from the apparently ambiguous language in which they are couched will then perfectly disappear.

"But," it may be asked, "If this be the case; if you say these prophetic declarations are so obscure, why do you preach from them? Why not leave them in their original obscurity? Do you think you can explain them, or give us any understanding of their true meaning? Had you not better leave them, if they are so obscure as you make them out to be, and take some plainer and simpler text in which there is no such obscurity?" Let me then answer this objection. These prophetic declarations may be obscure as regards their fulfilment prophetically, and yet may contain a vast deal of spiritual instruction. We may not understand them altogether in their prophetic, and yet may find great instruction in them in their spiritual and experimental aspect. In endeavouring, therefore, this morning, to open up the words of our text, I shall leave aside altogether their prophetic aspect, and confine myself to their spiritual and experimental meaning; and I hope you may be able, with God's help and blessing, to gather some instruction, or encouragement, or consolation, or even warning, if need be, or reproof, or admonition which may benefit your soul; for God's word is written with such infinite wisdom and depth of spiritual meaning, that, if we are taught by the Spirit, we shall always find something in it suitable to our case. Bear this in mind, then, in reading the word of prophecy, that whatever may be the fulfilment of these prophetic declarations in times to come, there will be not change as regards the fundamental verities of the everlasting gospel. Grace will always be grace, as the heart of man will always be the heart of man. Whether the Jews be restored to their own land or not, whether converted to Christ or not, God's dealings with his people, when all these prophecies are being actually fulfilled, will

always resemble his dealings with them in every age and every clime. Without redemption by the blood of Christ, without regeneration by the Holy Spirit, without faith, and hope, and love in the Lord Jesus, of what avail would be any literal restoration of the literal Israel? They would be Jews still with all their present unbelief, infidelity, and enmity against the Son of God. Whether, then, there be a literal fulfilment of our text or not, does not at all affect the spiritual instruction contained in it; for in this sense, these prophetic declarations have a daily and continual fulfilment in the soul of the believer from age to age and generation to generation, though they wait the future for their complete fulfilment. It is this peculiar feature of the prophetic Scriptures which makes them so edifying and instructive, even to those who are much in the dark as to their strictly prophetic meaning, and before whose minds the question rarely comes whether they are not as full of prophecy as they are of promise.

With these hints, which you can consider at your leisure, and which I assure you will both bear and reward your prayerful examination and meditation, I shall now take you, as the Lord may enable, into the bosom of our text; and in so doing, I shall

I.—*First*, endeavour to trace out the *character* as described by the prophet in the words before us; in which we find four marks stamped upon him, which I shall examine one by one in the following order: 1. He is *written* among *the living* in Jerusalem. 2. He is one of "the *escaped* of Israel." He is "*left* in Zion and *remaineth* in Jerusalem." 4. He shall be called "*holy*."

II.—My *second* point will be, to open, as far as I am enabled, who this "*Branch of the Lord*" is, to show *how* and *why* he is "*beautiful* and *glorious*," and what is "*the fruit of the earth*" which is "*excellent* and *comely* for them that are escaped of Israel."

I.—You will perceive that the words of the text begin with an expression, which is very common in the prophecies of the Old Testament, "In that day." My time will not allow me to explain at any length the meaning of the expression. I shall, therefore,

merely observe, that very great things are said of that day in the prophetic Scriptures; that it embraces things of judgment and things of mercy; is a day of great darkness (Amos 5:20), and a day of great light (Isaiah 30:26); a day of tribulation and anguish as the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), and a day of deliverance, joy, and singing, as a day of manifested salvation. (Isaiah 26:1.) But why should the Scriptures speak so much of that day, and use such different language of the things which are to be accomplished in it? Because with all this apparent difference, if not discrepancy of meaning, there is a primary leading idea which distinguishes this day from all other days. It is the day of the Lord inasmuch as it is the day in which the Lord displays his power. And thus, as he displays his power both in judgment and mercy, both in condemnation and salvation, it is his day, whether it be to pull down or build up, to kill or make alive, to destroy or to save. But observe, also, that as it is "the day of the Lord" with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8), it cannot be measured by time. Thus, whether that day be a day of twenty-four hours, or a day of weeks, or a day of years; whether it be the present day or a future day, *that* is the day of the Lord to every man's soul in which the Lord works with any degree of power. In fact, the whole of this present dispensation is but one day, as the Apostle speaks: "Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2); meaning, thereby, not that there is to every man a day of grace which he may use or abuse, as his free will may enable him, but that this whole time of Christ's present intercession is the accepted time, the day of salvation spoken of by the prophet. (Isaiah 49:8.) But in a spiritual and experimental sense, to every saved soul there comes a day, which is to him the day of the Lord, and to him a day of days, inasmuch as the Lord signalises and distinguishes it by the putting forth of his almighty power, whether it be to pull down or build up, wound or heal, apply the law or bring home the gospel. We shall see, by-and-by, as the Lord may lead us into our subject, what is done in that day in a way of mercy and deliverance. But I must first, as I proposed, trace out the character of whom our text specially speaks as bearing stamped

upon him four distinct marks.

i. The first mark that I shall endeavour to unfold is, that he is "*written among the living* in Jerusalem." If you will refer to the margin, which generally gives the literal meaning of the original, and is thus often more correct than the rendering found in the text, you will see it is "to life." He is written unto life. In other words, his name is written in the Lamb's book of life. To write his name in the book of life, was the first act of grace conferred upon him. Now it is a very solemn thought, and one which deeply concerns every one in this congregation, that if our names are not written in the book of life, we shall be cast into the lake of fire, according to that solemn testimony in the Revelation, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:12, 15.) In the same book we have a description given of a holy city, the new Jerusalem, and it is declared of it: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:27.) Of what amazing consequence then it is to know whether our names are written therein or not. You may wish to have some intimation or indication that your name is in that book. Is there any means of knowing it? Are its leaves so folded from all sight or observation in this life, that we must wait for eternity to look into it? If it may be known in this life, must an angel bring down the book of life and open its leaves; or take us up to the third heaven to look upon the writing? Paul, writing to the Philippians, speaks of Clement and others his fellow labourers, whose names were in the book of life. (Phil. 4:3.) It appears then Paul knew that not only his own name, but that of Clement and others, were in that book. But how can that be known? By such marks as are given in our text, and especially by their being "*written among the living* in Jerusalem."

If we adopt the literal interpretation of Jerusalem, as prophetically the city of their local habitation, or view it spiritually as representing the Jerusalem which is above and the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26), it will not much affect this particular point, which is, that "they are written among the living;" in other words, are inscribed on the roll of those who possess the life of God in their souls. Now this possession of divine and spiritual life flows from that first act of grace of which I have spoken, as writing their names in the book of life. Because they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and life was given to them in him, as their covenant Head, they are quickened into divine life, each as and when the set time comes. In the book of life their names were written from all eternity, before they had birth or being, as our Lord beautifully speaks both of himself and them in Psalm 139: "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them." (Ps. 139:16.) As the eyes of the Father saw the substance of Christ's humanity, the body which he had prepared for him (Heb. 10:5) whilst yet imperfect, that is, not yet assumed in the womb of the Virgin, so the members of his mystical body were written in God's book, the book of life, and "what days they should be fashioned," (margin,) that is, brought into both natural and spiritual existence, were all appointed, when as yet there was none of them in actual being. And as according to the fore-knowledge of God and his predestinating will, his dear Son in due time assumed that humanity into union with his own divine Person, thus fore-viewed, so are his mystical members quickened into spiritual life, each at the appointed season. We see, therefore, a connection between being "written to life," and being "written among the living," according to the two meanings of the words which I have given from the text and the margin, and that from time to time the names of those who are in the book of life are, as it were, copied out of it into the book of the living; this being so to speak, the roll-call of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in their time and state. This life, by which they thus live unto God, is the express gift of Christ, according to his own words: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal

life to as many as thou hast given him." (John 17:2.) Those, then, whose names are in the book of life, being in Christ by an eternal union, though dead in sin as the consequence of the Adam-fall, were mystically quickened together with him when God raised him from the dead, and are actually quickened when in due time life is breathed into their dead souls, out of the fulness of the Son of God. Then, and not till then, they may be said to live, as is beautifully opened in Ezekiel 16 where, when the infant is cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day it is born, the husband of the soul is represented as passing by, and saying unto it, "Live." It was with him the time of love, as he speaks: "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." (Ezek. 16:8.) It is this word of the Lord, "Live," which communicates life, for it is by the power of his word entering the heart through the animating breath of the blessed spirit that the soul lives and stands, so to speak, on its feet. (Ezek. 37:9, 10.) Until then our souls are quickened into divine life by the power of the word, and the invincible energy of the Holy Ghost, we know nothing of the movements, breathings, actings, and exercises of those who are written among the living in Jerusalem; and therefore, whatever our notions may be about election, however fluent our tongue, or strong our confidence, we have, at present, no scriptural evidence of our names being in the book of life. But when divine life enters the soul out of the fulness of the Son of God, there comes together with it an indication, an intimation, a testimony more or less clear, according to the measure in which it is felt of our being possessed of this new and heavenly life; for it is with the new-born soul as with the living infant, distinguished from the still-born babe, that where there is life there are movements of life; there is breathing, there is crying, there is getting near the mother, there is drawing the milk from her bosom, all which are proofs and indications of life in the child born alive, as contrasted with the want of breath, life, and movement in the babe that is dead. But I must not keep you longer upon this point, as it is so plain and obvious; and as there

is so much other important matter in my text to lay before you.

ii. The second mark in the character traced out by the Holy Ghost as distinctive of Him to whom the Branch of the Lord is beautiful and glorious is, that he is one of "*the escaped of Israel.*" This is the point which I shall chiefly dwell upon, as his most important and distinctive feature, touching upon the other two marks in his character as subsidiary. He is said, then, to be one of the "escaped of Israel."

Battles in ancient times were very sanguinary. They took no prisoners and gave no quarter; and as men fought hand to hand, foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder, with sword and spear, with little generalship and no such military manoeuvres as are practicable only with disciplined troops, they being only raw levies, battles in those days were attended with very great bloodshed; and, speaking comparatively, very few escaped from the field of battle. There were so few indeed who escaped unhurt from the field of a well contested battle, that there is a particular word for them in the Hebrew language; and it is here made use of, being well rendered in our admirable translation, "the escaped." You may see then how few really escaped death on the field of battle, when a certain name was attached to them as designating the happy few who came off alive, when their fellows in arms fell in the general slaughter. As if, then, to show how few they are who, as saved from the general overthrow of mankind, are written among the living in Jerusalem, the Holy Ghost has used that peculiar word, and designated them here "the escaped of Israel," as if there were as few spiritually who escaped out of the general wreck and sweeping destruction of the fall as there were few that escaped out of those bloody battles of old.

Let me now then direct your attention particularly to the word "escaped," as I have explained it; and taking the idea of a sanguinary battle, or some general and signal overthrow, as of Sodom, for the original word is used of both, let us see what those who are written among the living in Jerusalem do not escape and what they do escape; as by viewing their history and

experience under these two distinct aspects, we may gather up, with God's help and blessing, a clearer idea of what grace has rescued them from, supported them under, and delivered them out of. When a sailor escapes shipwreck, when a soldier escapes with his life from the field of battle, when in a city taken by storm a few escape the edge of the sword, it is evident that they all have passed through dangers and perils which threatened them with destruction, and from which they have been miraculously rescued. Thus it is with "the escaped of Israel." In escaping with life, they do not escape the things which threaten life, or bring with them danger and sorrow.

1. They do not then escape the *troubles, sorrows, and afflictions* of this life. Nay, they have rather a larger share of them than others. God's people, besides their spiritual troubles, which are peculiar to the elect of God, have usually a larger share of worldly sorrows than those who have their portion in this life. And, indeed, it seems almost indispensable for their safe walking and their happily reaching the heavenly shore, that they should be well weighted, well ballasted, and well afflicted, that they might instrumentally be preserved from the love and spirit of the world, and those innumerable evils which drown them in destruction and perdition. You complain sometimes of your temporal troubles; how bitter is your daily cup; how you seem even naturally to have heavier afflictions than your neighbours. But how very rarely are you led to see the benefits and blessings couched in them. You murmur, you fret, you rebel, you think yourself very hardly dealt with on account of these continued afflictions. But are there not moments with you, though perhaps rare, when you can bless God for laying upon you his heavy hand as regards the body, or the family, or circumstances, as well as bringing upon you tribulation of soul? Do you not find a benefit couched in all these painful afflictions, and do they not produce in you, through divine grace, a weaning of spirit, a separation from the world, a sense that this is not your rest nor home? Have you not found your soul more lively, your conscience more tender, your heart more drawn up in faith and love when you have been pressed down by trouble and sorrow, and had more real access unto, and

communion with, the Lord of life and glory? Many times is the soul brought near unto the Lord by the weight of temporal afflictions, as feeling that none but he can support it under them.

2. Nor do they escape the *scorn of men*, the scourge of the tongue, the arrow of slander, the back-blow of calumny, the opposition of sinners, and sometimes also that of saints. If they did, they could have neither their Master's portion, nor their Master's blessing. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt. 5:11.)

3. Nor do they escape the *snares of Satan* ever spread to entangle their feet, or his fiery darts shot into their soul, or the continual means used by him to draw them from the strait and narrow path into the broad road. If he tempted the Head he will tempt the members; but the promise is, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. 16:20.) And again, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

4. Nor do they escape the *workings of unbelief*; of doubt and fear, of guilt and bondage, of inward condemnation and shame, nor all those exercises which are a part of our experience by the way, and which God overrules in a wonderful way for our soul's good. In fact, there is scarcely a sin, or a temptation, or a peril, or a snare which takes captive and drowns men in destruction and perdition which they have not a taste, a sight, or a sense of enough to make them see and sometimes tremblingly feel that grace, and grace alone, can either keep them from it, forgive them for it, or deliver them out of it.

iii. But what are the ills and evils which they *do* escape?

1. First, they escape the *wrath of God* that burns as a consuming fire. Here they resemble Noah, who escaped the deluge by "being

warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." (Heb. 11:7.) How small a remnant escaped in that day when as Peter speaks: "Few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." (1 Pet. 3:20.) They resemble also Lot, who escaped out of Sodom when that city was burnt with fire and brimstone from heaven; and the early Christians of whom we read in Church history, that warned by the Lord's words, "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains," they fled out of the city at the last siege of Jerusalem, and thus escaped the sword of the Romans.

But what makes them escape the wrath of God? A sense of the wrath of God being let down into their consciences. No man escapes the wrath of God who does not flee from the wrath of God. No one escaped the deluge but by being warned of the deluge. Lot escaped the flames of Sodom by being warned of the judgment of God upon Sodom. So the escaped of Israel escape the wrath of God by being warned in their consciences of what that wrath is, by having some drops of it let down into their souls, whereby they see what **an God is an a [???** broken law, and how his vengeance will burn to the uttermost against every sinner whom he finds out of Christ at the great and awful day.

2. Again, they escape the *lot of the Pharisee*. There is nothing more dangerous than a proud, self-righteous, pharisaical spirit, for nothing sets us farther from the promises and blessings of the gospel. But this spirit they escape by having deep discoveries of the evils of their heart, so that they cannot boast of self, but feel all their righteousness to be as filthy rags, and that so far as they stand in self out of, and apart from Christ, they stand before God in all their nakedness, guilt, and shame. When deeply exercised with in-dwelling sin, they do not often see any benefit arising out of it; and yet by these discoveries and exercises they instrumentally escape the pride and self-righteousness of the Pharisee and perishing with a false hope.

3. Again, they escape the *vain confidence* and presumptuous assurance of the wretched antinomian, who trusts to and hangs

upon dead, dry, and naked doctrine, without knowing anything of the sweetness of experimental truth in his soul. No living soul, no tried, tempted, distressed and exercised child of God, can trust to cold, naked doctrine. This does not arise from want of faith or knowledge, want of searching the Scriptures, bowing the knee in secret, or frequenting the house of prayer, for in all these things they are both diligent and earnest. They believe all the doctrines of the gospel as firmly as those who make all their boast in them; they receive them as precious truths; and there are times and seasons when they feel the sweetness and power of them in their heart. But they must be to them something more than doctrines to do their souls any real good. They must know something more of election than seeing it revealed in the first chapter of the Ephesians, something more of predestination than reading of it in Romans 8, and something more of redemption by the blood of Christ, than by reading of it in Revelation 5, as a part of the new song. They must know the application of these things with power to their souls; and they see and feel too, that these truths of the gospel are not mere doctrines to fill the head, but precious truths of God to comfort and encourage the heart.

4. They escape also the *love and spirit of the world*, with the love of riches which is the root of all evil, and tempting and encouraging many a fair and once promising professor to put away a good conscience, often leads him concerning faith to make shipwreck. It is a solemn thought that so few escape with their life; and well may we cry aloud to all who seem anxious about their souls as the angels said to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." (Gen. 19:17.) The universal testimony of the word of God is to the fewness of the saved, compared with the number of the lost; and this should make every one who is concerned about his immortal soul beg of the Lord that he may have some clear testimony that he is amongst those happy few.

iv. But what is the effect of this escaping for life? That he is one of those who are "*left in Zion*" and "*remain in Jerusalem.*"

God's people are, if I may use the expression, a circle within a circle: they are a people taken out of a people. Thus, not to mention the vast crowd of the openly profane, there is the wide circle of the professing generation—that is the outer circle; and then within this there is the inner circle of God's living family. It is true of them, as the apostle speaks, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children," (Rom. 9:6, 7,) for there is an Israel after the flesh and an Israel after the spirit; and it is to the latter that the people of God belong. They are therefore called "a remnant according to the election of grace." (Rom. 11:5.) The apostle, to show this, cites the testimony of Isaiah: "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved," (Rom. 9:27,) that is a remnant only out of a number as the sand on the sea-shore. Those, therefore, who are "written among the living in Jerusalem" and are "the escaped of Israel," are spoken of here as "left in Zion" when all the rest have been swept away into destruction. They are elsewhere compared to gleaning grapes when the vintage is done, and to two or three olive berries left in the top of the tree after the whole of the crop has been gathered: "Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel." (Isa. 17:6.) Let us not think, then, that saving religion is such an easy matter, and that multitudes are going to heaven, but rather seek to have some clear evidence in our own bosom that we are among the escaped of Israel and the left in Zion.

2. And they "*remain in Jerusalem.*" Others fall into error: they escape it by that anointing which teacheth them of all things and is truth and no lie, and abide by truth because they know it by divine teaching and divine testimony, and because it has made them free. Others fall into open sin and disgrace the cause; these are kept more or less by the power of God, for the promise is, that sin shall not have dominion over them. Others who once

promised well sooner or later are overcome by the love of the world, fall back into it, or if they keep up their outward profession, have but a name to live when they are dead. But these remain in Jerusalem, the city of the living God, because they "are written amongst the living in Jerusalem." There is a Jerusalem above, the mother of us all, and to that new Jerusalem they belong. They are the sons and daughters who suck at her breasts; she nurtured them and cherished them in their infancy and youth, and they abide by her in their old age. It is true that a child of God who has tasted and felt the power of truth in his own soul, had the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and felt a spirit of love to the Lord's people as seeing in them the image of Christ, may be often sadly tried and tempted to give all up, may sink at times almost into despair as regards his own state and standing, and similarly may, by various circumstances that may arise, be strongly tempted to withdraw from the people of God. But "No," he says: "I can never give up truth, nor cast away my hope, nor leave the family of God. For what would become of me if I were to do any of these things? I must be a poor, wandering outcast, going here and there without home, companion, or friend, till I drop down and die. I must keep to God's truth; for nothing else can save my soul; nothing else speak liberty to my heart. I must abide also by God's people: they are sometimes very rough and rugged, and often very hard and fractious to deal with: and many a sleepless night or anxious day have I passed from some of their cruel wounds. But I cannot give them up, for after all they are the excellent of the earth in whom is all my delight." May I not speak freely on this point both from my own experience and from what I have seen and witnessed in other churches, that many a member of a Church and many a pastor has had more trouble arising from Church matters, and the fractious, inconsistent, peevish, obstinate, and determined party spirit of members, than from any other source of trouble, except his own personal salvation? Yet with all that in them which is so trying, we cannot give the people of God up. Shall we leave the Church of God, renounce all further intercourse or connection with his dear family, and go back into the world which we profess to have left, abandon truth, and embrace error? Do we not

almost shudder at the very thought of all this as if it would be rank apostasy? And do we not feel that by so doing we should be sealing our own condemnation both for time and eternity? Whatever, therefore, be the consequences, whatever be the trials, the exercises, the difficulties connected with the cause and service of God, stand fast and hard by God's truth, by God's people, God's servants, God's house, God's ways, and God's word, and you will find in the end the benefit of it.

They are said to be "*holy*," because the various things through which they pass have a sanctified effect upon their hearts, lips, and lives. If God work with a divine power in the heart of his people, it is to make them be something different from what they were before, to sanctify them for his own honour and glory, and to do something in them and for them, that shall be to his praise. It is very contradictory to the whole character of God, as revealed in the word of his grace, that you should go through seas of trouble, have wave after wave and billow after billow of affliction, go into trial after trial and temptation after temptation, and then, like Solomon's fool, who is "brayed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle," come out as you went in, your foolishness not departed from you—it may be with a broken head and a bruised body, but not a broken heart or a contrite spirit. God chastises his people to make them partakers of his holiness. He does not send afflictions, trials, and chastisements upon them to do nothing for them or in them beyond a few sighs and groans. If, then, the various trials that you speak so much about, the heavy afflictions that you seem so exercised with, and the temptations which so often press you sore, leave you just as they found you, with no sanctifying, no humbling, no softening, or subduing effect upon your spirit, it seems almost as if you were in the mortar with the fool; and that all the pounding with the pestle, and all the bruising in body or mind, in family or in circumstances, in pride or pocket, in self or in your second self, only left you just where it found you, no nearer the kingdom of heaven, no more conformed in your spirit to the image of Christ, no more separate from the world and the spirit of it, and made no more manifestly meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

II.—But having thus far traced out the character spoken of in our text as bearing stamped upon him, by the hand of God, the four distinctive marks which I have described, I shall now show who is "*the Branch of the Lord*" that is "beautiful and glorious," and what is the "*fruit of the earth*" which is "excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."

i. By "the Branch of the Lord" we must understand our Lord Jesus Christ; for this is the word which the Holy Ghost has expressly made use of to indicate him: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." (Isa. 11:1.) "Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH. He shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord." (Zech. 6:12.) "Behold I will bring forth my servant, THE BRANCH." (Zech. 3:8.) By the word Branch, then, as thus applied to our Lord, we may primarily understand the human nature of Christ; for the Branch was to come out of the stem of Jesse, and our Lord "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. 1:3.) But if we look at a remarkable passage in Jeremiah, we shall see that this title, the Branch of the Lord, comprehends both his divine and human nature; for these really never can be separated. The humanity of Christ never existed separate from his deity; for it was united to his Divine nature in the moment of conception. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch;" and then it goes on, "This is his name whereby he shall be called, the LORD our righteousness." Thus we have the Divine nature, as intimated by the word "the LORD," that is Jehovah, and the humanity as indicated by the expression "our righteousness." Thus we may take "the Branch of the Lord" to signify our blessed Lord in his complex Person as God and man in one glorious Christ.

This Branch of the Lord is "beautiful and glorious to them that are escaped of Israel." But what makes him "beautiful?" His being so suitable. I have shown you from the text that those to whom the Branch of the Lord is beautiful and glorious are the escaped of

Israel; and I have pointed out that they are such as have known something of the anger of God in a broken law, the condemnation of a guilty conscience, the taunting accusations of Satan, and their need of a better righteousness than flesh can work out. As, then, the Branch of the Lord, the Son of God and the Son of man, in his complex Person, is brought before them, revealed in them, and discovered unto them, in his Deity, in his humanity, in the efficacy of his atoning blood, and in the glory of his justifying righteousness, he becomes "beautiful" to them. They see a beauty in the Son of God altogether inexpressible. Where in heaven or on earth can there be found such a lovely Object as the Son of God? View him in his divine Sonship and eternal Deity—what beauty there is in him as thus revealed to faith. How beautiful to see all the wisdom of God, which we stand so deeply in need of to guide and direct our path; all the love of God, for God is love, to attract, charm, and bless; all the mercy of God, so suitable to poor lost sinners; all the grace of God, that saves without worth or worthiness; all the pity and compassion of God, that moved him to think upon, to pardon, and to bless poor guilty man;—to see all this glory of God shining forth in the face and Person of Jesus Christ, brought nigh to us in Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, how beautiful is he as thus revealed and seen. The attributes of the divine nature are thus not viewed at a distance, as dimly and darkly seen in a holy God; not looked upon as the children of Israel looked at Mount Sinai, amidst flames of fire and thunder and lightning, the sound of a trumpet and voice of words; but looked at in the meek and mild majesty of God's dear Son. Thus as we can look at the natural sun when it is shielded by a cloud or descending in its evening radiance, when we cannot bear to view its bright beams in the meridian day; so we can look at God in Christ, and so all the grace and glory, power and wisdom, love and mercy of God shining forth in his dear Son. As such, is he not a beautiful Object for faith to view, hope to anchor in, and love to embrace and enjoy? "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" asked the companions of the Bride. But she answers, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." If, then, you never have seen any beauty in Jesus, you have never seen Jesus; he has never

revealed himself to you; you never had a glimpse of his lovely face, nor a sense of his presence, nor a word from his lips, nor a touch from his hand. But if you have seen him by the eye of faith, and he has revealed himself to you even in a small measure, you have seen a beauty in him beyond all other beauties, for it is a holy beauty, a divine beauty, the beauty of his heavenly grace, the beauty of his uncreated and eternal glory, such as no earthly countenance can wear, nor man or woman, no, not Adam, in all his unfallen innocency, nor his fair partner Eve, with all her virtue, grace, and dignity, ever could show, for it is the beauty of the glorious Son of God, which he for ever wears as the Son of the Father in truth and love.

ii. And as he is "beautiful," so is he "*glorious*." O what a glory does faith see sometimes in his eternal Deity, in his divine Sonship, in what he is in himself as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person, and in what he is as made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. How glorious does he show himself to be in his atoning blood and dying love. Even as sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, and as hanging in torture and agony upon Calvary's cross, faith can see a beauty in the glorious Redeemer, even in the lowest depths of ignominy and shame. Was there not a glory in his meek obedience, in his suffering patience, in his submission to his Father's holy will, in his uncomplaining resignation to the heaviest strokes of vindictive justice, in bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and thus putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself? But more especially does faith see him glorious, as rising from the dead and going up on high, and sitting down at the right hand of the Father, crowned with glory and honour, and all things put under his feet.

iii. But "the fruit of the earth," it is added, "shall be excellent and comely for them that are the escaped of Israel."

By the "*fruit of the earth*" we may understand that gracious and holy fruit which grew upon the Branch: and it seems to be called "the fruit of the earth," because it appeared on earth when our Lord was there. Thus not only all his words, works, and ways, all

the parables, doctrines, precepts, and promises uttered by the mouth of the Son of God in the days of his flesh, but all the benefits and blessings that spring in the way of redemption out of his complex Person, and grow as it were, a holy fruit out of him as the Branch, such as his atoning blood, his glorious righteousness, his dying love, his resurrection and ascension, and his power to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, may all be considered as "the fruit of the earth," because wrought by him in and upon the earth, and done in the days of his flesh when his gracious feet were upon this earthly ball.

This fruit is "excellent" to the escaped of Israel. There is seen in it to be a divine excellency. Therefore, there is not a shadow of a fault to be found with it. It is perfect in all its parts; complete to the very centre, and therefore seen to be excellent, as so glorifying to God, and so adapted to every want and woe of those that are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem.

And "comely" too. In his sufferings, in his bloodshedding, obedience, holy life, and expiatory death, there is a surpassing comeliness, because in them shine forth a divine glory and a heavenly beauty. It is indeed the same word as is translated "beauty" in the holy garments made for Aaron by Moses (Exod. 28:2), and clothed in which he ministered before the Lord when he went into the holy place. So our great High Priest now ministers within the veil in the holiness and beauty of his glorified humanity; and as this is seen and apprehended by faith, the Church sings, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." "His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him." (Song 2:3; Psa. 21:5.)

May I not appeal to your conscience if these heavenly blessings have not a sanctifying effect and influence on the heart? Such at least is the mind of God in making them known to the escaped of Israel; and does he not make the Branch of the Lord beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth excellent and comely to those that are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem, that they

may be a holy people, and thus manifest by their godly life and walk that they are written among the living in Jerusalem, and are thus distinguished from the dead in sin, and the dead in a profession?

THE BREAKER

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Tuesday Evening,
May 12, 1846

"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 2:13

I should not do justice to my conviction of the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures if I did not state that I believe this passage has a prophetic as well as an experimental meaning. Let us give a glance at the context. We read in the preceding verse, "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." Now as to the prophetic meaning of this Scripture, it appears to my mind to point to a day not yet arrived, to "the latter day" of which the Old Testament prophets speak so much. When the Lord shall set his hand a second time to gather the remnant spread abroad on the earth, then this prophecy of Micah will be literally fulfilled: for there will be those difficulties in the way which none but "the Breaker" going before can remove. But the Scriptures are written with that mysterious wisdom that there is not only in the Old Testament prophecies what is strictly prophetic, but also experimental. We are not to discard the prophetic meaning as some do, for God has given it, and every word of God is pure. But on the other hand, it is the spiritual and experimental part which is food for the church of God. Therefore though we dare not pass by the literal meaning, yet we confine our attention chiefly to the spiritual. And in this way, with God's blessing, I shall view it this evening, taking the words much in the order as they now lie before me.

"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."

There are two main things here:

First. The people of whom these things are said.

Secondly. That wondrous Individual who is here pointed out by the expression, "The breaker."

I. The people here spoken of are the people of God, the remnant according to the election of grace, God's own beloved family. But we gather from the words used that they had great difficulties, for why need they to have a breaker go before them unless they were in such difficulties as nothing but an almighty hand could break down and remove? Thus we gather that the people to whom this promise is made are in such straits and difficulties, that they can never succeed in making a passage for themselves: but that this wondrous Person, this Immanuel, God with us, is to go before them; and for that reason he is called "the breaker," because with his almighty hand he breaks up and breaks down these difficulties that lie in their path, and which they themselves could not by any wisdom or strength of their own remove out of the way.

Let us look at this a little more closely, and open it a little more in detail. When the Lord is first pleased to quicken a soul dead in sin, he sets before him the narrow gate; he shews him that his sins merit eternal wrath and punishment, and he raises up in his heart a desire to flee from the wrath to come. However the circumstances of the new birth may vary, there will always be this leading feature accompanying the work of the Spirit in the heart—a fleeing from the wrath to come; a cry in the soul, "What shall I do to be saved? God be merciful to me a sinner." As Bunyan sweetly sets forth in the Pilgrim's Progress, a quickened soul, like Christian, immediately begins to run. All the difficulties that encompass him are nothing compared to the burden on his back. Wife, child, family, money, all are considered less than

nothing compared with the salvation of his soul. Therefore he begins to run, setting his face Zionward, earnestly desiring to be found saved at last with an everlasting salvation.

But no sooner does he begin to run, and move onward in the heavenly way than he begins to find difficulties. The way to heaven is described as "a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen" (Job 28:7) . "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14). We must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The Lord, therefore, knowing the difficulties of the way, on one occasion, when he saw great multitudes following him, turned and said to them, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26, 27). As though he would check this rash forwardness by shewing them that no one could run in that way except he denied himself and took up his cross; implying that the way to heaven is one of continual self-denial, a path of daily crucifixion. And what is the object of this? It is to teach a soul this great lesson—that he cannot by any wisdom, any strength, any righteousness, or any goodness of his own obtain eternal life. We are very slow learners in this school. The pride of our heart, our ignorance, and our unbelief, all conspire to make us diminish the difficulties of the way. But the Lord has to teach us by painful experience that the road to heaven is so difficult that a man can only walk in it as he is put in and kept in it by an almighty hand.

When these difficulties first begin to rise, they startle him that is first running in Zion's way. For instance, the discovery of a broken law, and of the curse that flames from Mount Sinai is an obstacle insuperable in the way to glory; for if a sinner has to get to glory by the burning mount, he must be consumed as he passes over it, for from that mount nothing but wrath comes. Again, he is startled by the discovery of the corruptions of his heart, the workings of that inward iniquity, which before was

hidden from him. He now becomes aware of secret sins that before he was utterly unacquainted with. He becomes aware too that there is such a thing as living faith, and that without faith it is impossible to please God; and he finds he has not this living faith, and is unable to raise it up in his own heart. He finds **love** also spoken of; and he finds he cannot by any power of his own raise up this love to God or to his people. He finds **hope** too spoken of; and he is sinking in the waves of despondency. He finds **prayer** spoken of; and he feels utterly unable to pour out his heart before God. He finds **submission** to God's will spoken of; and he perhaps feels little else but repining and hard thoughts of God. He finds an inward **knowledge** of Jesus spoken of, and the revelation of Christ to the soul; and he finds darkness and gloom within. He cannot bring this knowledge of Christ into the heart. A man may have all the religion of the world in his head, in the theory, and never meet with one difficulty. But if once he is put into the strait way by the hand of God, he will meet with difficulties; nay, he will feel the whole scene to be more or less a scene of difficulties. Now this prepares a man for the knowledge of "the breaker." "The breaker," we read in the text, "is gone up before them." But what use is the breaker if there be nothing to break down? no obstacles in the way? no rocks or stones in the road, all a smooth, grassy meadow with nothing to obstruct the course? The very circumstances of a breaker being wanted implies there are such difficulties in the way as nothing but an almighty hand can break down. There was a custom in primitive times which throws a still further light on the text. In those times there were no great highways as there are now. When kings wanted to go out on an expedition, men went before them to clear the way, to fill up the hollows, and dig down the mountains in order to make a path for the king. So this divine breaker has to go before, and as he goes before he breaks down those difficulties and obstacles that lie in the path.

II. **But who is this breaker?** Need I say it is the Lord of life and glory; Immanuel, God with us? Why is he called a breaker? This is one of his titles. But why is this title given him? Because he breaks down those obstacles that lie in the road. For you will

observe if you read the text, it speaks of a people coming up, and passing through the gate, and journeying onward, and the king passing before them, and the LORD, that is Jehovah, being at the head of them. And you will observe also that this breaker is Jehovah: for it is the LORD in capital letters, which always implies Jehovah. The LORD **that is Jehovah** "is at the head of them," implying that the breaker is Jehovah, and he is called a breaker because he breaks down the difficulties that lie in the path. For instance, there is **the law**; and how are we to get by that obstacle? Bunyan represents this in that invaluable work, the Pilgrim's Progress. When Christian was drawn aside from the path through the persuasion of Mr. Legality, and was going to the city pointed out to him, he saw a mountain that overhung the road, and thunder and lightning flashed from it, and he was afraid it would fall on his head. There Bunyan shews that there will be these flashes of God's wrath from the law, and the mountain will appear as if it would fall upon him, so that he dare not go by that road. But the breaker has travelled that way; he endured the curse of the law for us. He **so to speak** broke down its curse against God's people. As the Scripture speaks: "He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" and thus he so removed it that it should not be a covenant of condemnation to his dear family. In this sense he is a breaker. But not only is the law against them, but also **God's holiness, majesty, justice and purity**, what God is as an eternal Jehovah—all these things have to be removed out of the way. But when Jesus died upon the cross, he satisfied justice, and all the claims of God's holy law. By suffering himself he made such a propitiation for sin as God the Father could accept.

But besides these **external** difficulties that lie in the road there are **internal** difficulties. The Lord's people find internal difficulties as great and heavy to grapple with as external difficulties. For instance, there is an **unbelieving heart**; and what a difficulty an unbelieving heart is! If you are one that is journeying Zionward, do you not know experimentally the workings of unbelief? And is not this sometimes the sincere cry of your soul?

O could I but believe,
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot; Lord, relieve,
My help must come from thee.

Do you not find the workings of unbelief in your carnal mind? that you cannot raise up living faith in your own heart, and yet you are persuaded you must have living faith, or you can never please God? Now this glorious breaker, this Immanuel, God with us, breaks down this evil heart of unbelief by communicating precious faith; and when he communicates precious faith, this evil heart of unbelief is broken down. Unbelief does not then rule and reign, it gives way to a better principle, for the elder is to serve the younger.

But there is also a **hard heart**. And how the Lord's people have to lament and mourn continually on account of their hard heart; that they cannot feel as they would; soft, and contrite, and broken; that they cannot see and feel sin as they would see and feel it; that they cannot mourn nor sigh on account of the iniquities that work in them; that they cannot look to a crucified Saviour, and mourn over him, and grieve and groan because his holy soul and body were so afflicted for sin. "The heart of stone," as the Scripture speaks, is in them, and nothing but the power of God can take it away; for this is God's promise, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26), implying that there is a heart of stone, and implying that nothing but the hand of God can take it away. Now the breaker, when he comes up before the people of God, breaks this hard heart; he melts it, and softens it, dissolves it, and humbles it, and lays it low in holy admiration and adoration of this blessed Immanuel. And thus he breaks the heart by breaking into the heart, and breaks the soul by a sense of his dying love and atoning blood, and this breaks it all to pieces, so that it crumbles into nothing at his feet. And thus contrition, sorrow, and grief blend together with faith, hope, and love. In this sense, then, "the breaker is come up before them." Because when he

breaks their hard hearts he goes before them and leads them in the ways of truth and righteousness.

But as they journey onward they find arising **immeasurable difficulties**. What the Scripture calls, "**gates of brass and bars of iron.**" And there is a promise made to spiritual Israel, "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" (Isa. 45:2), implying that there are these difficulties which the Scripture compares to brazen gates and iron bars in the way of a believer. These are so great that the believer cannot break them himself. He needs the breaker to go before him; and when the breaker has come up before him, he has but to touch them, and the way is made plain. As when Peter was in prison, and the angel came to set him free, the gate opened of its own accord. The angel had but to look, and the iron gate opened. But what is the power of an angel, though angels are said in Scripture to "excel in strength" (Ps. 103:20), compared with the power of God himself? His power is incomprehensible. Words would fail to speak of the distance betwixt the power of the brightest seraph or the highest angel and the power of Jehovah. In a similar way, then, as the gate opened of its own accord when the angel looked or spoke, whatever the gates of brass and bars of iron a child of God feels in his own experience to be obstacles that obstruct his path, when the breaker is come up before them, he breaks them asunder and takes them out of the way. Thus there are **temptations**, and these are gates of brass and bars of iron; there are **trials**, and there is the very nature of brass and iron in them; and there are **afflictions and difficulties**, all the evils of **an evil heart, God hiding himself**, not giving an answer to their sighs and groans. The weary soul finds, through the difficulties of the way, that all these are insuperable obstacles. But the breaker goes up before them: and as he moves onward and goes before the soul, all these difficulties vanish. The good Shepherd goes before his sheep, and they follow him, for they know his voice. And so the breaker is here represented, not as following, but as going before; not waiting for his people to accept offered grace, nor waiting for them to close in with the

invitation, but as going before them, and they following in the path that he precedes them in.

III. And this leads me to consider what is contained in the next portion of the text. "They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." They have broken up. Now the word 'broken up' here means that they have left the camp where they were stationed. It is a common expression. Boys are said to break up when they go home from school, that is, a leaving the place where they are, and going home. So spiritually, a breaking up here does not mean a breaking up of the soul, but it means that they move onward from the spot in which they were standing. "And they pass through the gate, and go out by it," which implies that until the breaker goes before them, they are stationary. It is with the children of God spiritually as it was with the children of Israel. There is a sweet description in the book of Numbers of the children of Israel moving as they saw the pillar of the cloud move, and resting as the pillar of the cloud by day and of fire by night rested on the tabernacle. When it was taken up, they moved forward: and when it stood still, they stopped; where it abode, they rested: implying that the spiritual Israel can only move forward as the Lord goes before them. But directly the pillar of the cloud was taken up, they journeyed forward: but there was no stirring until that took place. So it is with the spiritual Israel. They cannot move forward until they see the pillar of the cloud move; until the Lord goes before them, they cannot stir. There they are; some full of darkness, others full of doubts and fears; others, exercised with a heart full of unbelief; others, conflicting with powerful temptations; others, well-nigh swallowed up in despair, but all feeling themselves unable to move forward. This marks the true Israel. We read in the book of Job of those who "run upon the thick bosses of God's bucklers" (Job 15:26). These are different characters from those who wait at the footstool of God. "Your strength is to sit still" (Isa. 30:7). So with the children of Israel when they were at the Red Sea; they did not rush through the waters, but they waited till God appeared; and when God appeared and Moses struck the waters with his rod, and the channel was opened, then they

passed through. Thus it is spiritually: there is no moving except as the Lord goes before the soul; and immediately that the breaker is come up and goes before, the soul goes on; when he stops, it stops; and when he moves, it moves. And then what takes place? "They pass through the gate." Here is this gate that has before stood closed against them, and they were unable to pass through; but when the breaker goes before them, then the gate is opened, and they pass through the gate just as the breaker precedes. And is not this sweetly typical and descriptive of the way in which the Lord's people move forward? This gate is not only, perhaps not chiefly, the strait and narrow gate that leads to eternal life. There are other gates besides that; for we read, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." And thus the gate here spoken of is not only, perhaps not chiefly, the strait and narrow gate, but it is also any of those difficulties that lie in the path which may be compared to a closed gate. But when the breaker goes up before them, he opens the gate. We read that the Lord will open "a door of hope in the valley of Achor," that is, he opens the gate, and when he opens it they pass through. But what is the meaning of "passing through the gate," viewed spiritually? When the Lord, for instance, does not appear to the soul, then the gate is closed; there is no going up of faith to the Lord, and there is no answer from him; there is no view of his glory such as Jacob had in Bethel when he said, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:17). What made him see that this was the gate of heaven? Because in his dream, when he had chosen stones for his pillow, he saw a ladder, and angels ascending and descending it; and he looked up and saw where the ladder was fixed. Then he saw heaven opened. This too, was what Stephen saw when the enraged populace ran upon him and stoned him to death. He said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). There was a view in his soul of heaven and the glory and blessedness of it. As his eyes looked up, he saw it, and his heart's affections flowed out to it. So with God's people; this gate is often closed; they cannot look up, or if they do, they cannot see anything for their comfort. But when God is pleased to go before

them and unbar the gate of heaven, then they look up and see such things as God is pleased to manifest to their souls. Then they "pass through the gate." And the difficulties, trials, temptations, and exercises that have lain in their path, like closed gates, are removed when the breaker comes up before them.

Some of the Lord's people are exercised with powerful temptations. And this makes access to God a closed gate. Others of the Lord's people are greatly cast down in their minds because they have not received the pardon of their sins. Others because they are not brought into the enjoyment of gospel liberty. Others because they have not had the application of Christ's blood to their consciences. These are so many closed gates; but when the breaker comes up before these gates, then they pass through the gates and enter into the sweet enjoyment of those things which are beyond the gate, such as the love of God, the salvation of their souls, and all the rich treasures of love and mercy that are beyond the gate. But the breaker goes up, the gate opens, and they pass through it. Then they pass through that gate and have some manifestation and discovery of these blessed realities to their souls.

IV. But it goes on to say, "And their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them." Now this King is the same as the Breaker; the same as the Lord. This King is King Jesus, the King of Zion, the King and Head of his covenant people. And why is this expression used? Not only because he is their King, but because they are his subjects. The titles given in Scripture to the Lord Jesus Christ are not uselessly scattered up and down God's Word, without a meaning to them. But every title that is given to the Lord Jesus Christ is not only exactly adapted to the wants of his children, but is suitable to the very text where it occurs. It is like a diamond because it exactly fits it. So every text that speaks of Jesus by any title, the text fits it, and it fits the text, and he is the glory of it, as the diamond is the glory of the setting. So he is called here "the King," not merely because he is a King, but because they follow him as obedient subjects. And we never give ourselves, our hearts and souls to Jesus; we never yield up our

affections unto him until he comes and manifests himself as a breaker. But when he comes up in this great and glorious character as breaker, to break the hard heart into contrition, humility, and love; to break down the difficulties and obstacles that lie in the road to Zion; to break down every temptation, every besetment, and every snare, every sin, and everything distressing to a living soul—when he breaks these things down by his almighty love and power, then his children go in through the gate and pass onward, and then the King passes before them.

He is a King because he is such a precious disposer of kingly power; for you know the office of a king is to rule over his subjects, and to fight their battles for them. Then when they yield to him their hearts, and fall down before his footstool, he becomes enthroned in their affections as King of Zion, and being their King, he is to be at their head. What! is not a king to be at the head of his people? What! a subject to precede the king? What an indignity to the monarch! So when the Lord Jesus Christ moves onward in royal dignity as Monarch and Prince, those who know him, believe in his name, and love him in their hearts, follow him obediently as his subjects. He says to such, "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Ps. 45:10). He addresses them tenderly as his people, and in the same way as king Ahasuerus addressed the queen when she touched the golden sceptre.

V. "And the LORD on the head of them." O what dignity is this that the Lord Jehovah should be at their head! What if the Lord is to be at your head? If he is to go before you in the way to glory, what obstacle can there be in the path that he cannot, and will not in a moment surmount? You have a hard heart. Can that stand before the almighty power of God? You have an unbelieving nature. Can that stand before the power of God put forth? You have temptations, you have trials, you have difficulties, you have hardness and darkness, and worldly-mindedness, pride, presumption, and hypocrisy, every evil, every iniquity, nameable and unnameable. But if you are God's people, the Lord Jesus Christ is your King, the King of Zion. Everything must disappear

before him. And if he is the Lord Jehovah, who is to stand against Jehovah, who can frown devils into hell in a moment, before whose word creation itself would vanish like a scroll?

What a mercy it is for God's people to have the Lord Jehovah going before them, making a way through the deep waters, as of old he made a way through the Red Sea, and made every difficulty to move, and every mountain to melt down, leading them on in the ways of peace and righteousness. But some may say, "How am I to know whether I am one of these people for whom these mercies are written?" Let me ask you two questions. First, have you found any difficulties in the way you are travelling? Have you found the way you have been taking in divine things a hard way, a difficult way, a strait and narrow way? "Why," say you, "I have found it a very hard way, but I sometimes fear lest my difficulties are natural difficulties." Now do you not need a breaker to break them down for you? But let me ask you a second question. Has the breaker ever done anything for you? Any meltings, any movings, any softenings, any humblings, any actings of faith, hope, and love; any godly fear, any goings out to him in the yieldings of your heart's worship, any subjection of spirit, any obedience to his blessed will, ways, and word? Now if you can answer these two questions; that you know by experience that the way you have been led in is a difficult way, a distressing way, an afflicting way, such a way as you never could have walked in of yourself, but God has put you in and kept you in, then you have an evidence that you are one of those to whom the promise is made. Have you not found at times that the breaker is gone up, and has melted, softened, and humbled your heart, and appeared for you, when nothing but his hand could deliver? Then you have a further testimony you are one of the Lord's people. And this breaker will go before you all your days: and you will need this breaker, for all your days you will need something to be broken down. And this breaker will go before you all your days as your King and your Lord, until he bring you safe to glory.

The Breastplate and the Helmet of the Christian Warrior

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, September 23, 1866

"And let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." 2 Thessalonians 5:8, 9, 10

It seems, in some sense, wrong to have our favourites amongst the Lord's family. Should we not, it might be justly asked, love all the Lord's people alike? Are they not all loved with the same eternal love, redeemed by the same precious blood, and made partakers of the same Spirit? And yet I suppose few gracious people are altogether exempt from favouritism. But is favouritism, as a principle, right or wrong? To clear up this point, I think we should examine the grounds of our preference of some above others, and judge from them how far it is allowable and how far not to have favourites. Some, for instance, of the Lord's family are attractive from natural amiability of temper, or some similar qualification unconnected with grace. Their unvaried kindness and affection; their noble, liberal spirit; their disinterested, unselfish conduct; their gentle, winning manners; the absence in them of pride, haughtiness, and self-conceit; the sincerity and truthfulness; even their personal attractions, and other advantages of a similar kind carry with them a strange power by which almost before we are aware they twine themselves round our natural affections. Others again are naturally disagreeable, sullen, morose, ill-tempered, obstinate, selfish, unwilling to concede, rude in speech and rough in manners, easily irritated and seemingly unable to forgive, never satisfied but in being first and foremost, and determined to carry out their own will and way with little consideration for the feelings or judgment of others. Now, such persons will repel as much as the others attract; and it is as hard not to dislike the one as it is

easy to like the other. And yet were these grounds of like and dislike fairly examined, they might be found scarcely at all connected with grace, and to rest almost wholly upon nature. The naturally disagreeable, though I have drawn the lines strongly to make the contrast greater, may have more real grace than those who are naturally agreeable, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and viewed as members of the mystical body of Christ, may have a much stronger claim upon our esteem and affection, for some of the most amiable beings in the world have no grace at all. If then your peculiar favourites even amongst the Lord's family are so upon the ground of mere natural qualifications, that reason of favouritism seems clearly wrong, for we should love the Lord's people because they are his, and because he has made them partakers of his Spirit and grace.

But now I think I can show you a true ground of favouritism as well as a false one—one that is justified by the example of our Lord and his apostles. Is it, then, wrong to love those most who manifest most of the image of Christ, who seem most deeply imbued with the spirit of their master, who walk most tenderly and affectionately in the fear of God, who display most of the grace of the gospel, and bear most fruits to the honour, praise, and glory of God? Was there not one of the disciples whom the Lord specially loved, who lay in his bosom at the last supper, and to whom upon the cross he confided the care of his mother? And does there not seem to have been a peculiar affection entertained by Paul to his "dearly beloved son Timothy?"

But to what do these remarks tend and what connection have they with the subject before us? They tend to this point: It seems to me that as Timothy was one of Paul's favourite disciples, so the church of Thessalonica was one of Paul's favourite churches. If you will carefully read his two epistles to that church, bearing at the same time in mind the remark that I have made, for we do not always see a thing till our attention is called to it, you will find a spirit of peculiar affection breathing through them both. And I think you will find also evident reasons for this peculiarly affectionate spirit manifested by the apostle toward the Thessalonian believers. To show this more clearly, let me for a

moment compare the Thessalonian church with some of the other churches of the New Testament. They were, then, much free from that spirit of strife and division which almost rent to pieces the Corinthian church. They had not the legal, Pharisaic spirit which so tarnished the Galatians. They had not the vacillating spirit which brought such discredit upon the Hebrews. Being young in grace they might not have had, it is true, the strong faith of the Romans which was "spoken of throughout the whole world," nor the liberality of the Philippians who, when Paul was even in Thessalonica, sent once and again unto his necessity; nor the knowledge and wisdom of the Ephesians and Colossians which qualified them to receive such deep truths as the apostle unfolds to them in those remarkable epistles. They were a very young church, for the epistle was not only the first which the apostle wrote, but it was sent to them within a year after their call by grace, and when they were yet in their first love. There was, therefore, at this time in them such a spirit of brotherly kindness and affection; their faith grew so exceedingly; their love of every one toward each other so conspicuously abounded that in these points they were a pattern to all the other churches. They were also under very heavy persecutions from their own countrymen; and yet in the midst of these outward trials the graces of faith and patience shone so eminently forth that the apostle could say, "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." (2 Thess. 1: 4.) There thus appear to have been some good grounds in the case of this church why Paul should write to it in a more loving, tender, and affectionate spirit than to any other of the churches.

Thus there may be wrong and right grounds of favouritism. If, therefore, the apostle had (as I cannot but think he had) a favourite church, let us not condemn him as if he were influenced by natural considerations, or as if he had favourites in the wrong and invidious sense of the word; for if he had a special love to the Thessalonian church, it was because the graces of the Spirit shone forth most conspicuously in them, and because the very persecutions which they were suffering for Christ's sake drew his

heart more lovingly and affectionately out towards them.

With a heart, then, overflowing with love and affection, he brings before them the exhortation contained in our text, which you will observe is closely connected with their character and privileges. It is this spirit of tenderness and affection on the part of the exhorter, and this spirit of loving obedience on the part of the exhorted, which make the exhortations of the gospel so powerful and effectual. But let us look at our text in connection with the context.

The chapter begins thus: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. 5:1, 2, 3.) Among other subjects of his preaching Paul had laid before the Thessalonians the coming of the Lord, and that the day of his coming would be as sudden and as unexpected by the world as that of a thief in the night. He therefore contrasts the knowledge and faith of believers with the ignorance and unbelief of the world at large. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." A day was approaching when sudden destruction would fall upon the ungodly, for the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; and when that day came upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, they should not escape. But, writing to these warm-hearted, spiritually minded, affectionate converts, he could say, "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." What, then? How ought we to act? If we are the children of light, if we are the children of the day, if we are not of the night nor of darkness, what should be our conduct? "Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Then come the words of our text: "But let us, who are of the day, be sober,

putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

In opening up these words, I shall endeavour to consider our subject under four leading points:—

I shall set before you four things as constituting and determining a Christian—

I.—*First, his character: he is "of the day."*

II.—*Secondly, his conduct: he is sober.*

III.—*Thirdly, his weapons: he puts on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.*

IV.—*Fourthly, his watchword: that "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."*

I.—The distinguishing character here given by the apostle of a Christian, of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, is that he is "*of the day.*"

We shall see more clearly the meaning and force of this expression, by contrasting it with the description of those who are of the night. There are children of light, and there are children of the day. There are children of the night, and there are children of darkness. The saint of God is especially characterised as a child of light and a child of the day, as distinct from those who are children of the night and children of darkness. I do not know that the two terms, light and day, much differ from each other; and yet, as the apostle has distinguished them, we may trace out a difference between them. This difference, I think, at once strikes the mind, the light is before the day and makes it. If there were no light there could be no day; we therefore call that period of

time day which consists in the presence and enjoyment of light, as we call that period of time night which is the presence and effect of darkness.

i. In this sense, therefore, we are "children of the *light*" before we are "children of the day." This light is what the Lord calls "the light of life," that light which is produced by the creative act of God in the new creation, as originally in the old, as the apostle testifies: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) Until he that once said: "Let there be light," and there was light, is pleased thus to shine into the soul of man, he is still in darkness. It is, then, the possession of this peculiar and heavenly light which stamps and distinguishes the partaker of heavenly grace, and makes him to be of the day. The apostle therefore says: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8.) Peter speaks of it as God's "marvellous light:" "That ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.) Paul was sent to the Gentiles "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light." (Acts 26:18.) John also speaks of "walking in the light as God is in the light." (1 John 1:7.)

ii. Now the effect of this light in grace, as in nature, is to give birth to *the day*. He, therefore, that is born of God is a child of day, because he is a child of light. This is his mark. He is one, then, whose eyes have been opened by the power of the Spirit of God; whose mind has been enlightened; on whom the clean water of which I spoke this morning has been sprinkled, so as to cleanse his understanding from the old, inveterate crust of ignorance and prejudice. He is also of the day, because the day-star has risen in his heart; because beams and rays of the Sun of righteousness have shone into his soul; because he is enlightened with the light of the living; because he sees light in God's light; and is brought out of nature's darkness and nature's death into the light of God's countenance.

Now, when day dawns upon the earth, it discovers all the things that are upon the face of the earth. When night brooded with its sable wings over the face of creation, all was obscure, all was hidden from view. All things were there, just as much as they are in the full light of day; but they were not seen on account of the veil of darkness which was spread over them. As in nature, so in grace. Our state by nature, the wretched condition to which the fall has reduced us, the evil of sin, the holiness of God, the purity of his righteous character, the curse and condemnation of a holy law, the dread realities of eternity, the bar of God before which all must stand,—all these things, though realities, and in one sense, tremendous realities, are hidden from view from the generality of men, because over the heart of man rests the veil of darkness. Is not this the testimony of God? When he speaks to his Zion, telling her to "arise and shine," how he contrasts the glory of her light with the gross, universal darkness which rests generally upon men. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." (Isa. 40:1, 2.) So again: "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." (Psa. 82:5.) Our Lord declares: "He that followeth him shall not walk in darkness;" and that "whosoever believeth in him shall not abide in darkness" (John 8:12; 12:46); clearly implying thereby, that those who do not believe in him, and follow him, walk and abide in darkness. He tells us also, why it is that men love darkness, and what is the just cause of their condemnation. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19.) Now, in this darkness all live and walk until they are enlightened with what Elihu calls, "the light of the living" (Job 33:30); until, "through the tender mercy of God, the dayspring from on high visits them, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78, 79.) Then they are "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of

God's dear Son." (Col.1:13.) It is, then, when divine light enters into the understanding, according to the word, "The entrance of thy words giveth light," that we are brought out of that state of darkness, in which we should have continued until we had sunk into the blackness of darkness for ever.

But what are the effects of this entrance of heavenly light? Its first effect is to show us the being of God, who he is, and, as a necessary consequence, what we are before him. We now see the majesty, purity, holiness, and justice of that great and glorious God in whose presence we feel to stand, and before whose heart-searching eye we lie naked and open. We behold how righteous he is in all his words, in all his works, in all his ways with the sons of men. We see the tremendous evil of sin, and ourselves amenable to the righteous law of God. We view the eye of Justice fixed upon us, and we know we cannot escape that all-seeing glance; we can neither evade it nor shun it, nor get anywhere away from it and we feel ourselves to be within the reach of the everlasting arm which can send us in a moment to a deserved hell. We thus come into the experience of Psalm 139. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." (Psa. 139:1, 2, 3, 4.) We feel that we cannot flee from his presence, that even "the darkness hideth not from him, and that the darkness and the light to him are both alike." Such thoughts and feelings bring about a wonderful revolution in the mind, for we have not now to deal with man but with God; not with the things of time, but the solemn realities of eternity.

It is, then, this divine light shining into his heart which manifests the living saint of God to be of the day. He is now truly and emphatically a child of the day. Day has come to him, a day of days, a day whose light is as the light of seven days, for all other days have been with him days of darkness. Having come, then, into the light of day, and being a child of the day, he will have

such discoveries made to him as will make it more or less the day of the Lord with his soul. At first, indeed, he has to learn his base original, the depth of the fall, the dreadful evil of sin, and how dreadfully and awfully he has often been entangled therein. He has to learn the holiness of God, the purity of his righteous character, the unbending severity of his holy law, and his special case as amenable thereto in body and soul for time and eternity. A sense of these things will teach him his inability and helplessness to save and deliver himself, and make him feel that if saved, it must be by pure mercy and sovereign grace. Here, perhaps, he may abide for months or even years without any clear assurance of his salvation, though not without hopes and expectations. But having opened his eyes, brought him thus far into light, and made him a child of day, God will not leave him here, but will perfect that which concerneth him. There are blessed truths stored up in the everlasting gospel relating to the Person, work, blood, and righteousness of his dear Son which will in due time be revealed to his faith. The same Spirit who convinced him of sin, will in due time bring peace and consolation into his breast. The same Spirit who opens up the purity of God in a holy law, shows the love and grace of God in the everlasting gospel; and the same divine teaching which makes the child of light believe that he is a sinner condemned by the law gives him to believe he is a saint saved by the blood of Christ, and has an interest in the perfect obedience of the Son of God. Thus, as the child of light is gradually led along, the day opens more and more with brightness, clearness, and blessedness to his view; the glorious truths of the gospel become more discovered in their beauty and blessedness; the Lord Jesus Christ is more plainly revealed; the work of grace upon the soul is made more manifest, and the teachings of the Spirit become more clear until it may be said: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.)

II.—But now, let me pass on to show what the *conduct* of that man is who is thus of the day. What was he by contrast when he was a child of night, a child of darkness?

i. When a child of night, he did those things which are done in the night. We know that sins of every kind are chiefly transacted under the veil of darkness. Men do not usually come abroad in open day with their evil deeds. They seek to shroud their crimes beneath the veil of night, little thinking that the eye of God is upon them as much by night as by day. Now while we were children of darkness, we might have been in some good measure kept from those gross immoralities and open sins in which so many walk without fear or shame. We might have preserved a consistent character before the world, and not only no gross deviations from moral conduct might have stained us with outward reproach, but we might have been generally esteemed and admired for our uprightness and conscientiousness. But all this time we had no regard to inward sins; we paid no attention to the secret movements of our fallen nature towards evil. Nor indeed did we know that many things were sinful which we now see to be highly so. Pride, ambition, covetousness, fondness of dress and outward appearance, love of gaiety and amusement, conformity to the fashions, customs, maxims, opinions, and general spirit of the world, seeking our own advantage, despising the family of God, dislike to and contempt of the truths of the gospel, a general habit of prayerlessness and carelessness, and a determined and unceasing living to ourselves and the things of time and sense without regard to the word of God—in these sins which held us fast we saw no evil, nor did we know, or at least feel that they were displeasing in the eyes of God. Nor did we see that secret sin was, in the sight of God, as much sin as open sin; and that the indulgence of evil without check or restraint in the mind was little less criminal before the eyes of infinite purity than the indulgence of actual transgression. I do not by this make all sins equal or that transgressions in thought are to be compared with transgressions in deed, for every man's conscience will tell him the contrary. But as long as we could enjoy the various objects in which our carnal mind delighted, and a decent veil was thrown over our own outward conduct, we were well satisfied; and were little careful about the inside of the cup and platter, if the outside were but decently clean, or at least kept as smooth

and as bright as that of our neighbours. And if sometimes conscience sharply rapped us for an occasional breaking out into what was felt to be positively wrong, we thought all might be washed away with a few tears of repentance; and that all we had to do was to confess our sins before God, go a little oftener to church, or receive the sacrament, and then we should easily get remission for sins not of any very grave character. In this smooth, easy, self-deceptive path, not, perhaps, without some occasional desires and attempts to be different and act otherwise, we went on filling up the measure of our iniquities, until but for the all-prevailing grace of God we should have fallen victims to everlasting flame.

ii. But the apostle gives us another mark of the children of darkness: they *sleep*. "Let us not sleep," he says, "as do others, for they that sleep sleep in the night."

Night is the time for sleep; and this sleep of the body, which is natural and healthful, the apostle transfers to the sleep of the soul, which is its disease, not its needful rest or means of health. By the sleep of the soul he means its insensible state, the idea being taken from the state of the body during sleep. This sleep of the soul is its destruction. Solomon speaks of one who "lieth down in the midst of the sea," and of another that "lieth upon the top of a mast," as an illustration of the man who tarries long at his wine, whose eyes behold strange women, and whose heart utters perverse things. By this forcible illustration he intimates the reckless, insensible, and therefore perilous state of the drunkard. "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Prov. 23:35.) Now, this illustration we may apply to such a drunken sleep as buries in insensibility the children of darkness. They have no sense of the awful position in which they stand. They do not see there is but a step between them and death; how a moment might plunge them into an awful eternity; how a falling tile, an accident on a railway, a horse running away, an apoplectic fit, might in a moment launch them into an eternal state without repentance of their sins or even a

cry for mercy. Their sleep, then, is the sleep of the drunkard, during which he is exposed to a thousand dangers, against which he has neither will nor power to guard himself.

Now, God's people, as distinct from them, are shown in our text to be "*sober*." "Let us watch and be sober." And as if he would, by repeating it, urge it more upon their spiritual attention, he says again, "But let us who are of the day be sober."

Sobriety is, therefore, a distinguishing mark of a child of grace; by which we are to understand not merely natural sobriety, not merely freedom from the prevalence of those intoxicating habits and customs which are such a foul blot on the face of society, which are England's greatest curse, and have been a cause of death to thousands, and of incalculable ruin to widows and children. Christian sobriety is not merely that sobriety which is becoming to all, and indispensable to every one who names the name of Jesus, but Christian sobriety, spiritual sobriety, soberness of mind as distinct from soberness of body. There is a vast deal of meaning comprehended in the expression "Be ye sober," for it is of very extensive application. It is much the same as that "soundness of mind" which the apostle speaks of as God's special gift, together with the spirit of power and of love. (I Tim. 1:7.) And it is observable that in bidding Titus "speak the things which become sound doctrine," he urges him to exhort both old and young, male and female, to sobriety of mind and conduct. (Titus 2:1-7.) Men often accuse those who profess the doctrines of grace of enthusiasm, of fanaticism, of embracing wild doctrines, and being led aside by visionary delusions. I do not deny that there are enthusiasts and fanatics, and that Satan can deceive and delude as an angel of light; and I admit that some even of the people of God are inclined to be visionary, both in their experience and their expectations. But fanatics and enthusiasts, in the true sense of the words, are not usually nor often found in the ranks of those who are truly taught of God. Indeed, it would be a libel upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit to assert that his instruction is either fanatical or enthusiastic. Nay, I would rather retort the charge and assert that the real fanatics

and enthusiasts are those who dream of serving at the same time sin and God, who are looking for heaven as the reward of their works, when all those works are evil. And as to true sobriety of mind, and calm collectedness of judgment, I believe, myself, that none are so sober-minded as the real partakers of grace. Before the light of God's teaching illuminated their understanding, before the grace of God in its regenerating influence took possession of their hearts, they were out of their minds. There was no real sanity in them, for, like insane persons, they were madly bent upon their own destruction. They spent their lives in insane hopes, in wild and visionary dreams of happiness, ever stretching forth their hands to grasp what always eluded their reach, and, like madmen, alternately laughed and wept, danced and sang as on the brink of a precipice or the deck of a sinking ship. But when grace came to illuminate their mind, regenerate their soul, and begin that work which should fit and prepare them for eternity, they became sober. They were awakened from that state of intoxication in which they had spent their former life; they were sobered out of that drunkenness, so to speak, in the indulgence of which they had drunk down large draughts of intoxicating pleasure, and became for the first time morally and spiritually sober.

iii. You will observe, that the apostle says: "They that be drunken are drunken in the night;" and contrasting their drunkenness with their Christian sobriety, he adds: "But let us, who are of the day, be sober." We find, then, here drunkenness contrasted with sobriety. There are, therefore, other forms and modes of drunkenness besides that of being intoxicated with strong drink. Let me point out some of these points of contrast, for men may be drunk, mentally and morally, whose brain does not reel with the cups of the drunkard. As the Lord says: "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink." And why? Because the "Lord had poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep," which was as the drunken sleep of those actually overcome with wine. (Isai. 29:9, 10.) Similarly, the woman in the Revelation is represented, as "drunken with the blood of the saints." So we read of "the drunkards of Ephraim" who are to be

"trodden under feet."

Of these drunkards, some are drunk with the love of sin, others with the love of the world, others through having imbibed some pernicious error, others with enmity against the saints of God, others with pride, Pharisaism, and self-righteousness—steeped up to the very lips, as a drunkard is, with vain ideas of their own strength and ability. As strong drink stupefies some and inflames others; as it makes some sleep and others contentious; so it is with these drunkards of Ephraim, who are out of the way through strong drink, who err in vision and stumble in judgment. But all their glorious beauty is a "fading flower," for "the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, will one day cast them down to the earth." (Isa. 28:1-3.)

1. Now opposed to these drunkards—drunken, as I have explained, in a spiritual sense, and not necessarily with strong drink, are the sober-minded children of God. By sobriety, in a spiritual sense, we may understand every thought and feeling, word and work, state of soul and experience of the power of truth which is contrary to that spiritual drunkenness which I have described. Grace sobers a man, and it does it in this way. Its first effect is to make him put away the intoxicating draught. This, we know, is the first step, literally and naturally, to make a drunkard a sober man. Nothing can be done until the strong drink is given up. "Put away thy wine from thee," was the exhortation given to Hannah by Eli, when, misjudging her, he thought she had been drunken. So grace, when it visits the heart, beats out of the hand the cup of error. Error suits our carnal mind as strong drink suits the palate of the drunkard; some it inflames and some it stupefies; some it sets a preaching and some it sets a fighting. The excitement it produces, the wild dreams and delusions to which it gives birth, the scenes of novelty it brings before the mind make error to be the very cup of the spiritual drunkard. The first thing that grace does is to give us a knowledge of the truth, as I explained when I was speaking upon the entrance of divine light. Light and truth go together. "Send forth," says David, "thy

light and thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles." (Psa. 43:3.) Wherever, then, light and truth come, they detect error and make it hateful; and there is no longer seeking "mixed wine," no longer "looking upon it when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moves itself aright;" for it is found "at the last, to bite like a serpent and sting like an adder." Having, therefore, once tasted the power and sweetness of the truth which he has drawn from the pure word of God, if error come before him, the child of the light and of the day regards it with abhorrence.

2. In a similar way, he can no longer be drunk with the love of *sin*. If he sin it is contrary to his will, to his inclination, to his prayers, his groans, and his honest and sincere confessions. He may be entangled in it, but he does not love it as the ungodly do, with all his heart and soul. He is not like the drunkard who seeks his cup because he loves it; and though stricken and beaten in his drunken sleep, yet says: "They have beaten me and I felt it not, when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again!" If he is entangled in the snares of sin and Satan, he is overcome by them contrary to a thousand cries and struggles of his labouring breast.

3. Nor is he drunk with *enmity* to God's *will and way*, though it may cross his own, for he desires God's will to be his will; and his greatest grief is, that he cannot do the will of God through the weakness and opposition of the flesh.

4. Nor is he drunk with *enmity to the Lord's people*, with that intoxicating spirit, which, at its greatest height, is called being "drunken with the blood of the saints," because he loves the people of God, and would almost sooner shed his blood for them than shed theirs.

5. Nor is he drunk with the spirit of the *world*, because he knows how it is opposed to everything good and godly; and what he has felt, both of the severity and goodness of God, has made him see and feel the difference between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of Christ.

6. Nor is he drunk with worldly *ambition*, worldly pride, worldly projects, or worldly prospects, for he sees how opposed all these things are to the mind of Christ, and though they may be sweet to the carnal mind, yet he knows that there is poison in the draught, and death in the cup.

iv. Again, he is sober as respects *watchfulness*. We find the apostle uniting sobriety and watchfulness as both equally necessary to the child of day. Sobriety, therefore, includes not merely abstaining from everything which intoxicates, but also that alertness and watchfulness of mind, and that spirit of carefulness which are opposed to the carelessness of the sleepy, slumbering drunkard. The Christian is a soldier who must not sleep upon his post; a sentinel who must not fall asleep in the sentry box. He is in an enemy's country, is placed in an advanced post that he may be alert and on the watch, listening to every noise and every movement, and keeping his eyes well open, so as at once to give an alarm and not suffer the camp to be surprised. A Christian who is not watchful is sure to be surprised and overcome; and as the past experience of the evils of drunkenness will sometimes make a drunkard sober, so his past experience of the dangers of carelessness will make a believer watchful. He knows how often he has been entangled by some evil of his heart through want of due care, and what an advantage Satan has gained over him through a want of watchfulness. He is almost like a sentinel who has charge over a powder magazine and has to watch every comer. He knows what combustible material he carries in his own bosom, and how soon this material is set on fire by the fiery darts of hell; and he sees what consequences might be produced by his giving way to the first inclinations to evil. Grace also has made him tender of the cause of God, and jealous of his honour and glory. He sees what a dreadful thing it would be to bring an open reproach upon the truth of God and the people with whom he is connected; and that he himself might go with broken bones all his days, might darken and becloud all his evidences, and make every body suspect him of hypocrisy, and none more so than himself. It is the union of these various motives and feelings working together in his breast,

which, under the good hand of God, makes and keeps him sober and watchful, and to stand daily and continually upon his watch tower, lest any enemy unwarily surprise him.

III.—But I pass on to show the Christian's *armour*. The Lord, who has bidden him watch and be sober, has not left him without equipping him with suitable armour against every foe. It would not be sufficient for a sentry to be merely watchful, merely sober. He must be armed as well as watchful; he must carry his rifle, and well know the use of it,—to shoot down the approaching enemy if he meditate attack as well as see him in the distance and give the alarm. So it is in grace. The Lord does not send his people forth to fight the good fight and give them no weapons wherewith to approve themselves as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

But you will observe, that in our text *defensive*, and not offensive, weapons are mentioned. In the corresponding list of spiritual armour given, Eph. 6, "the sword of the Spirit," an offensive weapon, is mentioned. But as here none but defensive are named, we will confine our attention to them. "Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." Let us examine these weapons severally.

i. The first is "the *breastplate* of faith and love." This seems to be the same breastplate as the apostle speaks of in Eph. 6, though he calls it there "the breastplate of righteousness," that is, Christ's righteousness, for it is *his* not *ours* which can alone protect us. As Hart justly says:

"Righteousness within thee rooted,
May appear to take thy part;
But let righteousness imputed,
Be the breastplate of thine heart."

But, why should the apostle call it here "the breastplate of faith and love?" I think we may explain it by considering that the breastplate of righteousness is put on by faith, and firmly

fastened to the breast by love. Scripture figures must not be interpreted too rigidly. They are intended more as illustrations than positive declarations of the truth; and thus the blessed Spirit may use different figures to unfold and explain the same truth, holding it up, as it were, in different lights, and presenting it to us under different aspects. Bearing this in mind, let us now take a view of the Christian soldier. He stands sober and watchful at his post, stands upon his tower looking watchfully around; he knows that he is surrounded by enemies; and as he casts his eyes here and there with keen, scrutinising looks, that he may not be surprised unawares, how soon he sees one bending a bow here, another holding a spear there, and a third ready to spring upon him with a drawn sword. Now, how is he to be preserved from their attacks when he knows that they are all thirsting for his life? God has provided for him in his dear Son a breastplate, the breastplate of righteousness; and as he views this imputed righteousness of the Son of God to all who believe as a part of the spiritual armour provided for them he sees what a suitable protection it is for himself. Faith, therefore, as acting in the strength and by the power of God, embraces and puts this breastplate on; and as faith works by love, this grace of the Spirit binds it closely round his bosom with the strongest clasps.

Now, observe, what the breastplate is to guard. There are two important organs in the human body, each of which has its seat in what we now call the chest, but what was formerly spoken of as the breast. These are the heart and the lungs. These are two vital organs, two of the most important of the whole system. From our heart issues the blood which feeds every member of our body. How important, how vital is this organ! So, spiritually, by our heart we live, by our heart we believe, and by our heart we love. Every tender sensation, every gracious movement, every inward experience of the goodness and mercy of God which prompts the falling tear, and heaving sigh, may all be traced to the heart. The heart of man, naturally and spiritually, is the very seat and centre of life; and when it beats strongly and firmly in the breast, every movement is felt to the remotest extremities. We may feel it even now in the pulse of our wrist, if you put your

finger upon it, for as our heart beats strongly or weakly, so does that beat in unison with it. A strong, vigorous heart sends blood to every part of the body, and is the strength of every muscle and of every limb. So, when the heart beats strongly and firmly in faith and love to the Lord Jesus, when he dwells in the heart by faith, and occupying the seat of our affections, makes himself near, dear and precious, it sends a vigorous tide of healthy blood to every part of our spiritual frame. Do you not feel at times as if animated with fresh warmth and spirit to fight the good fight of faith, that you, by his grace, may come off more than conqueror through him who hath loved you? But the heart, spiritually, as well as literally, wants protection. Satan aims at the heart his most fiery darts. O, if he can but quench our faith; if he can but overcome our love; if he can but strike a dart through the very seat and centre of our religion; if he can but succeed in aiming a deadly blow against that vital organ, that heart whereby we believe unto righteousness, how he would triumph in our destruction. Here is the need and value of the breastplate. When, then, we are enabled by faith to take hold of Christ's righteousness, apply it to our breast, and gird it round with bands of love, how this breastplate meets and repels every fiery dart. Satan will sometimes urge: "Your sins are too great to be forgiven; no one who truly fears God ever sinned like you," There is a fiery dart; how can it be met but by the breastplate of imputed righteousness? At another time he will say: "Your backslidings are too great to be healed; indeed they are not backslidings, but the sins of a hypocrite and a reprobate." How can this fiery dart be repelled but by the breastplate of Christ's righteousness? Is not that sufficient to justify us before the throne of God? Do we not read, that "by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses?" And does not the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse from all sin? Is not this enough? Can any fiery dart of the wicked pierce this corslet, find its way through this breastplate? Was not this breastplate wrought out by the sufferings and obedience of the Son of God? And is it not given to protect the breast of God's people, and to shield them from every fiery dart of the enemy?

Sometimes, again, Satan stirs up every wicked thought of your heart, inflames every dormant lust, stirs up every vile imagination, nay, will invent crimes if he cannot find them ready made to his hand. Has he never tried to persuade you that you have said what you have never said, and done what you have never done; or troubled you with dreams in which you have committed all manner of sins, and taken advantage of the night season, when you have awoke, trembling and distressed out of them, to bring every gloomy thought before your eyes, as if you had actually committed what you have but dreamed of? How can you meet this foe when he is thus aiming his darts at your heart, by night as well as by day, in dreaming hours as well as wakeful moments? Only by putting on the breastplate of righteousness by the hand of faith, and girding it on by the bands of love.

ii. Then our *lungs*. How important, how vital an organ naturally are they. By them we inhale and exhale the vital air. By them is our blood purified and life preserved in our frame. This may represent spiritually, prayer, which is the very life of the soul; for by prayer we draw in the vital breath of heaven, and again give out what is thus drawn in. This Satan well knows. He, therefore, aims his darts against the spirit of prayer in a believer's breast. How, sometimes, when upon our bended knees, Satan will throw in a fiery dart. How he will stir up some vile lust or raise up some foul imagination, seeking to distract our attention and fill our minds with horror. Sometimes he will bring worldly things into the mind to carry our thoughts away, we know not where. How he will suggest all manner of things as taking place that never have occurred and never will occur, or that something of the greatest importance must be attended to immediately. In these, and various ways, he will seek to bring into a state of confusion, in which not a single prayer seems to rise out of our heart or any true worship of God. Here, then, we need the breastplate of righteousness to cover and shield that vital organ by which we draw in the breath of heaven, and from which the same breath, as being of his own inspiration, mounts upward and enters the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

iii. But we have another piece of armour provided, and that, you will observe, is to guard *our head*, another vital part, not less so than heart and lungs. No part of the body is naturally more unprotected or more needs protection. This cover is provided for us by a spiritual helmet, as our text speaks: "And for a helmet, the hope of salvation."

The head is the seat of all our knowledge, as the heart is the seat of all our faith and feeling. Does not life eternal consist in a knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? This knowledge, therefore, may be said to be our salvation, and a good hope through grace, which the Lord kindles in a believer's breast assures him that a true knowledge of the Lord in which is eternal life is therefore connected with his salvation. But whence arises this good hope through grace? Does it not spring out of some discovery of the Lord's goodness and love, some whisper of his favour, or intimation of his kindness, some gracious token, some sips, tastes, and drops of his abundant mercy and grace? Here, then, we see the advantage of the helmet. Satan aims a deadly blow at your religion. He tells you that you were never called by grace, that what you thought was a work of grace, had no reality in it, that your experience is not genuine or saving, and that it was merely something which nature furnished you with. He intimates that your joys were visionary, and your delight in the Lord was only natural excitement; that in your convictions there was no depth, no reality, no genuineness, and for your consolations no solid foundation; for if they had been of God, he tells you, they would have been continued, and you would not have lost them; they would have been permanent and you would not be where you now are, so cold, dead, stupid, and indifferent. Thus Satan comes in with his suggestions, aiming a deadly blow at your head—the very seat of all our understanding and knowledge of the truth—the very centre of our spiritual senses, of the eyes we see with, the ears we hear with, the nose we smell with, the lips we speak with, and almost every other guiding, directing sense. Against these deadly blows is provided the helmet of a good hope through grace.

But let us now see how it is put on, and how it wards off these deadly thrusts. Does not a good hope enable you to meet Satan sometimes thus? "Aye, but God has told me, and so made me to believe that he has done something for my soul! Have I not had that sweet promise, that gracious manifestation, that token for good, that faith in the Lord which I am sure nature never could have given me, which I am sure must have been from the Lord, from the effects it produced?" This is a putting on of the helmet, and as thus put on, it shields the head in the day of battle.

IV.—Now the *watchword*. The Christian sentinel does not stand upon the watch without a watchword given him by his great commander, the Lord of hosts. But what is the watchword? I call it the watchword, though it consists of several words, and yet all breathing the same language and expressing the same idea. Let us, then, listen to it, and see whether we can find it suitable for ourselves, as having reason to hope that we have been called to fight this great battle, and as such, to stand diligently upon the watch. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

i. The first portion of this watchword we may divide into two parts; one *negative*, the other *positive*,—one what God has not done, the other what God has done. Hear, then, the first notes.

1. "God hath not appointed us to wrath." This is meant for our encouragement, to strengthen our faith and hope, and keep us sober and vigilant. How different might it have been with us. How just and righteous would God have been if his thoughts towards us had not been thoughts of peace, but of evil. And O, where might we even now have been if God had appointed us to wrath? Even now, instead of being in the house of prayer and still upon hoping, praying ground, we might have been lifting up our eyes in hell, being in torment. Thus a child of God sometimes gathers up a good hope by his being spared in life and being. He sees what a mercy it is that he is still on praying ground; that God did not cut him down, as he deserved, when he was an open foe, and

daily adding to the catalogue of his sins; nor abandoned him to utter impenitence, unbelief, and carelessness. From this *longsuffering* and tender forbearance of God, hope is sometimes gathered up, that God has not appointed him to wrath.

2. But again, if God had appointed him to wrath, he feels that he would have been left unconcerned as before, in darkness as before, in death as before; he would never have known or experienced any *inclination* toward the good way; never had a sigh or cry put into his heart; that the Lord would never have convinced him of sin, brought him upon his knees, given him a place or name among the sons and daughters of the Most High, if he were altogether a vessel of wrath filling up the measure of his iniquities. Thence he gathers a good hope that he is not appointed to wrath. You will remember how the wife of Manoah encouraged him on these grounds: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands; neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these." (Judges 13:23.)

3. So also the various interpositions of *Providence*, the various instances in which God has signally appeared for him, the many answers to prayer when under very distressing circumstances, will sometimes raise up in a Christian's breast a hope that God has not appointed him to wrath, or else he would have not been so kind to him in the mingled events of life. He looks at his past life, sees how he has been raised up time after time from beds of sickness, when others have fallen and, perhaps, died without hope. Thus he stands and marvels at the goodness of God in sparing him and removing others, and gathers up a good hope that these are marks of the Lord's favour to him.

4. He finds sometimes also his heart *broken* and *dissolved* under a sense of God's unmerited mercy, and says, "Surely, these are not marks of an alien and an enemy; surely these are not signs of one who is dead in sin, of one who is a stranger to God and godliness." Enemies to God do not want to be friends with him;

foes do not long for reconciliation; lovers of the world do not seek to be lovers of God, and those that love sin do not want to walk in holiness.

5. He gathers up also a good hope through grace if he finds in himself marks and evidences of a clearer and more positive nature than those which I have just named, such as *breakings* into his soul of the goodness and mercy of God; and when he hears those evidences traced out by men of God, when he plainly sees them marked down also in the word as intimations of grace possessed, he gathers up a good hope, if no further, that the Lord has been merciful to him, and has not appointed him to wrath.

ii. But let me now come to the *positive* portion of our watchword. God has appointed us to *obtain salvation*.

Let us see, then, how this part of the watchword encourages and consoles the Christian soldier. A view is given to him of salvation, and he sees plainly and clearly that it is a full and free salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, by his blood and righteousness, by his meritorious work upon the cross, by his blood-shedding and sacrifice there. He has a view by faith of salvation in all its fulness, freeness, suitability, and blessedness. He despairs of salvation in and by himself; he knows he is lost if he has no other righteousness but his own. He has no dependence upon the works of the law, no confidence in the flesh; but he does see a glorious salvation wrought out by the Son of God. He does view the atoning blood: he does see a righteousness wrought out by the obedience of the Son of God; and he knows there is an obtaining of this salvation as a personal, enjoyed, and felt reality when freely given by the hand of God. As, then, he stretches forth the trembling hand of his faith to lay hold of this salvation, and finds a measure of sweetness, blessedness, calm and peace, tranquility and happiness, distilling over the secret chambers of his soul as he lays hold of and embraces it, it confirms him still more in the blessed persuasion that God has not appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is thus strengthened with strength in his soul to press more and

more after salvation, that he may have its sweets distilled more and more fully, more and more abundantly into his breast, the joys of salvation more powerfully opened up in his soul, the blessedness of salvation more clearly sealed upon his heart. He views it all in Christ, stored up there; and he puts forth the hand of faith to obtain that salvation as a personal reality sealed upon his heart by the witnessing power of God the Holy Spirit. As, then, the power of these things is made manifest in his heart, he feels a sweet persuasion that God has not given him up nor abandoned him to sin and self, nor appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. He now sees who it was that made him a child of day; who it was that brought him out of night and darkness; who it was that made him sober and watchful in prayer; who it was that gave him a breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. Thus gathering up strength and consolation in his soul from viewing these marks and tokens of a gracious God, he presses on more and more to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; and every opening view of salvation renews his strength, encourages his faith, enlarges his hope, and swells his affection, until he obtains as a precious boon in his own bosom a full, free salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

iii. But now for the second portion of the watchword—not less encouraging: who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Here is the second part of the watchword: the certainty of the death of Christ, and of our living together with him because he died and now lives for us. But, observe how tenderly the apostle speaks here. Sometimes we wake, and alas, we often sleep; sometimes we are sober, and alas, often we are unwatchful. The apostle meets this case, which seems to be so against us as sentinels and watchmen. "Well," he would say, as if speaking for the Lord, "thou hast not been so watchful as thou shouldst have been; thou hast been sleeping on thy post; thou hast not now that measure of godly sobriety which thou hadst in days past; thou hast wandered a little from thy first love. Shalt thou, then,

perish? Must this be for thy destruction? Does it prove thee a deserter, and that thou art a traitor? As a slumbering sentinel, thou deservest to die the death. But thou didst not surrender thy arms, and thou art still faithful to thy post, yet wert overcome by nodding when thou shouldst have been wakeful. Shalt thou be carried off and exposed to the murderous shot according to the articles of war? No, I will spare thee; because though thou didst deserve death, thou still art not a traitor to me. Thou wert sleeping when thou shouldst have been watchful; thou wert not so sober as thou shouldst have been; but I will not take advantage of thee, cut thee off and send thee to hell, nor adjudge thee to die the traitor's death, nor hang thee up as a deserter for an example to others. Christ died for thee, and therefore thou art spared. But let this be a lesson for the time to come. Be more sober; look more to the enemy. I will not take advantage of thy sleeping, but be thou more cautious for the future."

Thus whether we sleep or wake, we equally shall live together with him, because he died for us. Now, to live together with him, is to live in this life a life of faith, and to live in the life to come a life of enjoyment; to live whilst here below a life of grace, Christ being, our life, that we may live a life of glory and happiness above.

Thus have I shown you the Christian's character, the Christian's conduct, the Christian's weapons, and the Christian's watchword. Can I say of you, can you say of yourself, you are a Christian in character, a Christian in conduct, a Christian by your weapons, and a Christian by your watchword? Look at these things: they are the solemn truth of God; and if the Lord is pleased to seal his word with any measure of power upon your soul; if from my description this afternoon you can read your character as a Christian, your conduct as a Christian, your warfare as a Christian, and your watchword as a Christian, make it manifest you are what you profess to be, a Christian indeed, and then you will have no cause to fear when Christ appears a second time without sin unto salvation, when he shall come to be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe.

THE BRUISED REED AND SMOKING FLAX

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, on Lord's Day Evening, August 10, 1851

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Matthew 12:20

A child of God in himself is all weakness. Others may boast of their strength; he has none, and feels to have none. But it is one thing to subscribe to this truth as a matter of doctrine, and another to be acquainted with it as a matter of inward, personal experience. It must be learnt, painfully for the most part, inwardly learnt under the teachings of the Spirit. Now it is this weakness, experimentally, known and felt, that opens the way for a personal experience of the strength of Christ; for when Paul was groaning under the buffetings of Satan and the festering throbs of the thorn in the flesh, the Lord himself said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." If, therefore, we know not experimentally what weakness is, we cannot know experimentally what it is to have the strength of Christ made perfect in that weakness.

In our text a tried Christian is set forth under two striking similitudes. He is compared,

1. to a "**bruised reed;**" and

2. to "**smoking flax.**" And of the Lord it is most graciously said, that this "bruised reed" he will not "break," and this "smoking flax" he will not "quench." Nay more, so far from breaking the one, or quenching the other, he will never leave his gracious work in the soul until he "send forth judgment unto victory."

In looking, then, at the words this evening, I shall, as far as the Lord may enable:

I.—Consider the **character** of the tried Christian under these two similitudes—"A bruised reed," and "**smoking flax.**"

II.—Shew that the gracious Redeemer will not "break" the one, nor "quench" the other; but

III.—That he will eventually "**send forth judgment unto victory.**"

I.—Can we find a more striking emblem of weakness than a reed? A Christian is not here compared to an oak that spreads its roots deep in the soil, and tosses its sturdy arms abroad into the sky, that stands the brunt of a thousand storms, and outlives revolving centuries. That were an inappropriate emblem of so feeble, so frail a creature as a needy, necessitous sinner. But when the blessed Spirit would use a similitude most strikingly descriptive of a dependant upon grace, of a pauper upon alms, he takes that simple yet familiar figure of a reed. Let us examine the points of resemblance:

1. A reed, though mean, humble, despicable, unknown, and unnoticed by the eye that rests with admiration on the towering oak or spreading cedar, is yet a partaker of **life**; and this life is deep down in the root. But the bed in which this root lies, the soil in which and out of which it thrives, spreads, and grows, is not the rich soil of the garden, but the mud and slime of the ditch. Yet, buried as it is in, and overwhelmed beneath this slimy bed, the very region of coldness and death, it is utterly and entirely, in its nature and essence, distinct from it. It is **in** the ditch, yet not **of** it; surrounded with its slime, but uncontaminated with its filth; ever in contact with its mire, but clean to the heart's core, and without one particle of mud penetrating into its living tissues.

Such is the life of God in the soul; surrounded with all the mud and mire of nature's corruption, yet not only distinct from it, but uncontaminated by it; Did deadness mortify, did temptation smother, did sin corrupt the pure, holy life of God in the soul,

long, long ago would it have dropped limb from limb, like the gangrened body of a leper.

2. But **secondly**, in its first growth the seed pushes its infant stem, its tender bud, through the mud and mire in which it finds its root into the pure light and genial warmth of day. It does not, like a stone, lie dead and motionless at the bottom of the ditch, but presses onward and upward into a purer, brighter atmosphere. So, in the first teachings of grace, does the infant germ of divine life rear its head above the corruptions by which it is surrounded. And, as the reed seeks the light of day, and though flooded with water, and often buried by it, yet lifts up its infant head to catch the warm vivifying beams of the sun; so the life of God in the soul, though oft overborne by the swelling tides of corruption, lifts up its infant head to catch the warm beams of the Sun of righteousness.

What a blessed moment is that when grace first lifts up its head above the slime of corruption and the waters of darkness! when the green shoot is for the first time blown upon by the southern breeze, and basks in the vivifying beams of spring! when after a long struggle with the suffocating mire of sin, and the waves of temptation and guilt, it emerges into day! What a start it then makes in growth, and how it seems when the head is lifted up, to have forgotten the mud and mire in which the root lies, as well as the waves that once beat over its head!

Such is a young Christian, who, after many doubts, fears, temptations, and exercises, is indulged with some manifestations of the Lord's mercy and love! I compare sometimes young Christians to hedge-rows in spring. How verdant they are; how tender every leaf! how full of sap and juice every shoot! how bright and refreshing the hawthorn blossom to the eye! And how, when the rays of the sun play upon the green leaves, they reflect its hues, and shine forth with transparent brightness!

But let a few weeks or months pass; let there be a long season of drought; let the dust of the road settle in thick clouds upon the

leaves, ah! what a change! how fallen the flower! how shrivelled up, how burnt and dried the branches! Yet is the change more apparent than real; nay, a change for the better rather than the worse. The hedge is stronger in autumn than it was in spring. Though it looked then so beautiful, and every leaf and shoot were so tender, there was little strength in it. But rain and storm, and heat and drought, with revolving nights and days, have produced an effect.

When winter comes, the wood is ripened; and though the leaves are burnt and shrivelled, yet the hedge-row is all the stronger for having experienced the midday heat and the midnight cold, the summer sun and the autumn frost. So with the Christian. When he has lived some years, gone through some storms, been dusted over by the world, got burnt and blackened, like the bride (Song 1:6), by the sun of temptation, and been chilled by the cold of desertion, he is ripened and matured. What he has lost in comeliness he has gained in strength; and though the wintry blast may howl through his branches, it does not break them off, nor freeze them up as it would the immature juicy roots of spring. Yes, after all, there is a strength in him, and a ripening, which the young wood has not.

But to revert to our figure. Hitherto we have traced the progress of our "reed," from the struggling of the germ beneath the mud till the tender shoot emerges from the water. Having reached the region of light, warmth, and air, it makes rapid progress. Every ray of the sun draws it up day by day into more vigorous growth.

i.—But a change takes place. The text speaks of a "**bruised** reed;" and the reed we have been considering is not yet bruised. Nothing yet has taken place to bruise or crush it. The mud, it is true, seemed to impede its progress, the depth of the water prevented its emerging easily, and its infant head had sometimes to buffet with the wave. But it grew up thus far without serious injury. But now bruising comes. A Christian, then, must pass through a certain experience in order to bring him into the position spoken of in the text, and make him the character there

intimated, "a bruised reed." For what is a bruised reed? It is not a **broken** reed; the head does not fall off, nor does it sink under the water and die. But it **is bruised**.

Whence arises this experience? What makes a Christian "a bruised reed?" Several things:

1. **The holy Law** of God. It is true, that usually the law is applied to the conscience in the very first convictions of sin. But it is not always so, or at least not with the same power. When did Paul learn the experience contained in Rom. 7:9-11? Was it during the three days at Damascus, or afterwards in the deserts of Arabia? (Gal. 1:17) It would seem that his distress of soul at Damascus arose chiefly from his having kicked against the pricks of conscience in persecuting the saints. Stephen's murder lay heavy on his soul. But in Arabia "the commandment came, and he died;" and in those gloomy deserts, "sin taking occasion by the law wrought in him all manner of concupiscence." There the law bruised him. It bruised the holy Lamb of God; and, by bruising the reed, bruises it into conformity to the suffering Man of Sorrows in the garden and on the cross.

2. But **Affliction** also bruises. Let a Christian man pass through much trouble in mind, family, body or circumstances; let him in that trouble be denied the sweet presence of God; let trial upon trial beat on his head, like wave after wave on the ocean shore. It will bruise him. He will not have the strength of mind or body, the light step, the cheerful countenance, the buoyant spirits that he had before. Though it does not break him utterly, nor crush him into despair, yet it bruises his spirit. And this is the purpose of God in sending affliction. He means to bruise him thereby.

His own dear Son was bruised by grief and trouble, for he was a "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Grief and he were not strangers; they were intimate acquaintances; and by grief was he bruised, so as to be "a worm, and no man." This indeed was "the affliction of the afflicted" (Ps. 22:4). Grief broke his heart, bruised him into obedience and resignation to the will of

God; for "though he was a Son, yet learnt he obedience by the things that he suffered." If, then, we are to have fellowship with the Son of God in his sorrows, we must have our measure of the same afflictions, that we may have some sympathy with the broken-hearted Lord. Without this we can have neither union nor communion with Him; for, as Hart says,

Union can be none
Betwixt a heart as soft as wax,
And hearts as hard as stone:
Betwixt a head diffusing blood,
And members sound and whole;
Betwixt an agonizing God, And an unfeeling soul.

We perhaps sometimes long after closer union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, lament our distance from him, and the alienation of our affections toward him. But do we ever think of the way whereby we are to be brought near—that affliction is the appointed path? That to enter into union and communion with a broken-hearted Lord, we also must have broken hearts; that to be brought into intimate relationship and acquaintance with the Man of Sorrows, we too must have sorrows? We dare not, we must not pray for affliction; that were too venturesome a prayer; but if we pray for union with the Lord Jesus Christ, we are indirectly praying for it. I would counsel no man to pray for affliction. Young Christians have done so till the answer has made them tremble. But if we pray for union with the Lord Jesus Christ, we are really praying for a path of tribulation.

3. But **Temptation** also sadly bruises the "reed." There are few things that bruise it more. But why should the "reed" be thus bruised? Why should powerful and painful temptations fall upon it to crush it? Because unbruised, it is too strong. It needs to be taught, sensibly taught, its weakness; and there is nothing, I believe, which makes us feel that weakness so much as an acquaintance with temptation. Temptation brings to light the evils of the heart. These are, for the most part, unnoticed and unknown till temptation discovers them. David's adulterous,

murderous nature, Hezekiah's pride, Job's peevishness, Jonah's rebellion. Peter's cowardice, all lay hid and concealed in their bosoms till temptation drew them forth. Temptation did not put them there, but found them there.

Our nature is the fuel to which temptation is the fire. But the shavings lie harmless enough in the grate till the lucifer match touches them. It is this ready-laid fuel that makes temptation so dangerous. Well therefore is the prayer and the precept, "Lead us not into temptation; Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Were there in us no sin, we should be like Jesus, when he said, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." But he hath everything in us; and therefore when temptation is presented by him, it sets the carnal mind all on fire. This grieves and distresses the new man of grace, bruises the tender heart, and chafes and galls the conscience. But these temptations also bruise our own strength, wisdom and righteousness. Did not Job come out of his temptations with his self-righteousness bruised? And what but this mallet crushed David's pride, Hezekiah's ostentation, Jonah's rebellion, and Peter's strength?

But when the reed is bruised, it impedes the flow of sap. So under temptation and the guilt that it produces, there is less flowing into the soul of the sensible presence and grace of God. And this makes temptation doubly trying.

4. But **Satan**, especially, is permitted in God's wonderful providence to bruise the "reed." It was declared in the first promise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" but it was added, that "the serpent should bruise his heel." The very part that trod upon him the serpent was allowed to bruise. And if he was allowed to bruise "the seed of the woman," much more, much more may he bruise us. And bruise us he will to some purpose. How the apostle Paul had a painful experience of this! Satan, we read, buffeted him (2 Cor. 12:7). The word "buffet" means to beat with the fist. Satan's assaults are knock-down blows, not gentle taps. He strikes with the

strength and skill of the pugilist; his blows therefore stun. Sometimes, for instance, he strikes us with an infidel suggestion. How this stuns and confuses the mind! Sometimes with a blasphemous insinuation. How this bruises the tender conscience! Sometimes with enmity, rebellion, or despair. How these wound and distress the feelings! But by these and similar temptations two effects are produced:

1. Pride, strength, and self-righteousness are more or less crushed.

2. The heart is bruised and made tender. Thus, as in the smitten reed the outer coat and the inner pith are bruised by the same blow, so in the exercised believer, the outer life and the inner life, the outward rind of creature religion and the inward heart of vital godliness, are bruised by the same trials and temptations.

5. But **Sin**, too—I mean the guilt of it, when laid on the conscience—sadly bruises. You get entangled perhaps in a snare, you are overtaken by some stratagem of Satan, or some besetment from within. And what is the consequence? Guilt lies hard and heavy upon your conscience. This bruises it, makes it tender and sore, often cuts deeply into it till it bleeds at well-nigh every pore.

6. **God**, too, not only indirectly and permissively through Satan and temptation, but directly and immediately bruises the reed. "Thine hand," cries the Psalmist, "presseth me sore." "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." "Remove thy stroke from me, I am consumed by the blow of thine hand." We read, too, of Christ, that "it **pleased the Lord** to bruise him." And as he bruises the Head, so he bruises the members. By his reproofs, his frowns, his terrible majesty, his unspeakable holiness, he bruises them into contrition before him.

Here, then, is the "bruised reed," drooping its head over the water, ready to sink beneath the wave, and fall down into its native corruption there to die. Is this bruised, tottering, trembling

thing the emblem of a Christian? blown by the wind, washed by the wave, hanging over the stream only by the skin, sometimes in and sometimes out as the gust swells or sinks? Who would think that this was a Christian? Who would credit that this was the way to prove experimentally the love and power of the Saviour? Who would suppose, till taught of God, that this is the way to get at right religion, true religion, a feeling knowledge of the work of God upon the soul, an experimental acquaintance with the Man of Sorrows, inward union and communion with the Lord of life and glory? If we were called upon to choose a path, this is the last we should think of. Our view would be this: every day to get better and better, holier and holier, more and more spiritual, and thus by degrees grow up into a deeper and closer knowledge of Jesus Christ. But God has not appointed such a way. His way is to make "strength perfect in weakness," and therefore he makes a Christian feel himself "a bruised reed," that in him his mighty power may be made known.

ii.—But the blessed Spirit, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ and his work, compares a tried Christian also to the **"smoking flax."** **The word "flax"** here rather means what we call **tow**, that is, the refuse of the hemp, or of the flax. This refuse it seems to have been the custom to set on fire; and, as there was much dirt and filth in it, the flame burnt in a very smouldering manner. This smoking flax is the figure, then, that the Holy Spirit has employed to set forth the life and work in a Christian's bosom. What is this "flax?" Is it not the filth and corruptions of our evil nature, the refuse, the scum, as it were, of the Adam fall? And what is the fire that makes the smoke? Is it not the life of God within—that fire which is kindled by a live coal from off the altar?

A Christian, then, is spoken of, not as breathing forth into a bright and shining flame; but "as smoking flax," just so much of the life of God in the soul as to make a smoke without much flame or heat. Many, many of God's children are here; feeling, deeply feeling their corruptions, and yet burning in the midst of their heart, a fire, a blessed fire of God's own kindling. They would, if they could, burst forth into a holy flame; they would not

have their eyes so continually annoyed with the smoke of their own corruptions; they would flame up unto God in the sweet breakings forth of faith, hope, and love. But their corruptions and unbelief, their sin and shame, all seem to press down the life of God in the soul. As in the smoking flax, the filth and refuse so choke the fire that it smokes and smoulders, but cannot break forth into a lively flame, so the filth and folly of our corrupt nature seem to stifle the holy flame of grace in the soul.

What heaps of rubbish overspread the inward life of God! You whose souls are exercised, do not you find how family cares, occupation in business, crowds of foolish and worldly thoughts, sinful and sensual desires, and a whole dust-bin of vain, idle imaginations, all suffocate the flame that is struggling upwards. Thus days and weeks are spent in a dying life, and a living death. The fire neither goes out, nor burns up. Sometimes the smoke rises up thicker and higher; sometimes it dies away so as scarcely to be seen: and sometimes a passing breeze wafts it up into a transient flame. But its general character is to smoulder. Where there is this in the soul, there is life. There is a struggle now against corruption, as the fire in the midst of the smoking flax struggles against the refuse by which it is surrounded; but, alas! it wants a vigorous breath to make it brightly glow; it wants the south wind from the mountains of spices to burn through the superincumbent mass of corruption, and mount up like the flame in which the angel of the Lord ascended when Manoah and his wife looked on. But there is life where there is even smoke. Where it merely smoulders and smoulders, there is fire. It is not merely a heap of dead refuse; there is a holy fire beneath that causes the flax to smoke.

Such is very much the experience of the day. Things are low for the most part in Zion. Take almost any Christian, and you will find that he is at best but a "smoking flax;" and especially perhaps in London. I do believe in my very conscience there is more real religion in the country than in London—more feeling in the heart, more life in the soul. The people are less cumbered with worldly anxieties, and less overborne by the broad, deep,

rapid stream of carnality. But Zion, generally, in town or country, is in a low place; the flax is smoking, and that is all. There is enough fire to shew that the life of God is within, and yet not enough to break forth into a glowing flame.

II.—But we pass on to consider how the blessed Redeemer "will not break" the "bruised reed," nor "quench" the "smoking flax." "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Here, then, is a "bruised reed," a poor child of God, ready to give up all hope, to sink beneath the wave no more to rise, expecting that the next blow will sever the stem, or suffocate and bury him in his native mire and mud.

But O how graciously, how tenderly and gently does the Redeemer deal with this timid, tried member of his mystical body! He deals with him neither according to his merits nor his fears. The "bruised reed" deserves to be broken again and again; and it fears it because it deserves it. But the gracious, tender-hearted Redeemer, so far from breaking gently binds. And how he can in a moment bind up the "bruised reed!" By one word, one look, one touch, one smile, he can in a moment rear up the drooping head. This is his blessed office. The disciples would have broken the bruised Syrophenician woman, when they said, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." But not so their heavenly Master. He dealt not so with her. His holiness, his purity, his hatred of sin, his zeal for the glory of his Father, would indeed all lead him to break; but his mercy, grace, compassion, and love, all lead him to bind.

You may perhaps feel yourself a poor "bruised reed"—bruised by afflictions, by temptations, by guilt, by Satan, ready to perish, to give up all hope, and droop away and die. O remember—the Lord give us ever to remember—that this blessed Man of Sorrows "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "Being touched with the feeling of our infirmities," he can sympathize and succour, and therefore will never, no, never break a "bruised reed." If our poor soul is bruised by affliction, by temptation, by doubt and fear, by Satan's suggestions, be it known for our comfort and encouragement, that the condescending and tender-

hearted Redeemer will never, no, never break that "bruised reed," but will most graciously, in his own time and way, bind it up.

"The smoking flax," it is said also of Him, that "he will not quench." O what does the "smoking flax" not deserve! Does it not merit that the foot of God should stamp it out? When you think for a moment how filthy and abominable your corruptions are; how strong and powerful your lusts and passions; how many and grievous your slips and falls; how carnal your mind; how cold and lifeless too often your frame; how wandering your prayers; how worldly your inclinations; how earthly and sensual your desires— is it not sometimes a wonder to you, that the Almighty God does not in righteous wrath put his foot upon you and crush you into hell, as we crush a spider? We deserve it every day that we live. I might almost say, that with well-nigh every breath that we draw we deserve, deeply deserve, to be stamped out of life, and crushed into a never-ending hell. But herein is manifested the tender condescending mercy and grace of the compassionate Redeemer, that "he will not quench the smoking flax," but will keep the flame alive which he himself so mercifully in the first instance kindled. The hand that brought the spark must keep alive the flame; for as no man can quicken, so no man can keep alive his own soul.

How it is kept alive is indeed most mysterious; but kept alive it is. Does it not sometimes seem to you as though you had no life of God in your soul, not a spark of grace in your heart? Where is your religion? where is your faith and hope and love? Where your spirituality and tenderness of heart, conscience, and affections? where your breathings after God? Gone, gone, gone! And gone all would be utterly, irrecoverably, if it were in your own hands, and consigned to your own keeping. But it is in better hands and better keeping than yours, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life." "My sheep shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of my hand." Christ is our life; it is hid with him in God.

And thus it comes to pass, that the "smoking flax" is never quenched. O how quickly would Satan throw water upon it! He would soon, if permitted, pour forth the flood of his temptations, as he is said to do against the church in the wilderness (Rev. 12:15), to extinguish the holy flame that smoulders within. How sin, too, again and again pours forth a whole flood of corruption to overcome and extinguish the life of God in the soul! The world, too, without, and the worse world within, would soon drown it in his destruction and perdition, were the Lord to keep back his protecting hand. But he revives his own work.

Have you not wondered sometimes that when you have been so cold, dead, stupid, hardened, as if you had not one spark of true religion or one grain of real grace, yet all of a sudden you have found your heart softened, melted, moved, stirred, watered, and blest, and you have felt an inward persuasion that in spite of all your corruptions and sins and sorrows there is the life of God within. It is thus that the blessed Lord keeps alive the holy flame which he himself has kindled. It would soon else go out; nay, it must go out, unless he keep it alive.

The very dust and dirt of the tow would suffocate it, unless he again and again stirred it up and kept it smouldering in the soul. The very words, that "he will not quench it," connected with what is afterwards said, shew that he will one day make it burst forth, for he keeps it smouldering on till it flames out. And when it bursts forth into a holy flame, it burns up the corruptions, devours them, swallows them up, and suffers not one to live.

Let the Lord sweetly bless the soul; let the holy flame of his love and grace burn in the heart; this flame, like the fire that fell down from heaven in the days of Elijah, licks up all the waters in the trench, and consumes, whilst it lasts, the filth and corruption whereby it was surrounded. But alas, alas! it soon gathers again. The cares of business, the things of time and sense, an evil heart, a defiled imagination, soon gather together the dust and refuse; and then it has to go on smoking and smouldering as before. It

cannot, no, it cannot of itself break forth into a holy flame. But it will one day burn brightly in a blessed eternity, when there shall be no refuse of sin and corruption to stifle the ever-mounting flame of praise, adoration, and love.

III.—But we pass on to our **third** and last **point—What the Lord will eventually do**, and what he will never desist from till he has completely done. This last clause seems to cast a gleam of light upon the whole of the preceding, "**Till he send forth judgment unto victory.**" Whilst the reed is being "bruised," and whilst the flax is "dimly burning" **as we read in the margin**, or smouldering, "**judgment**" is going on; that is, the court of judgment is set up in the conscience, and verdicts are passing against the soul. Wherever there is the life of God within, there will be a bar at which and before which the soul will be arraigned—the bar of a tender conscience. God's Vicegerent, the blessed Spirit, sits there, and with the word of God in his hands and its spiritual application in his lips, he summons the soul to stand before him.

Do you not find something of this going on daily? You speak a word amiss; does not the Vicegerent bring you to the bar, and condemn you for it? There is a rising up or breaking forth of unseemly temper. The father or the mother, the master or the mistress, gives vent to some ebullition of anger, mastered, overmastered by the impetuosity of natural temper. Does the Vicegerent of God pass this by, and take no notice? He brings up the delinquent, summons him to the bar, condemns him, and casts him. Or there may be a word spoken in business which is not the strict truth. You would not, you cannot, must not tell a lie; but still there is something not very, not very unlike it. There are these goods to be recommended, or this customer not to be turned away; and by some little delicate manoeuvring the whole affair is managed very nicely, as a Regent Street tradesman would say. No lie has been told, but a little equivocation has been practised. Ah! where is conscience? The Vicegerent has seen all, marked all, and now brings the criminal to feel and confess all.

Or the eye has been wandering and lusting after some evil thing, or, not to particularize too minutely, in some way or other sin and temptation have got the better of you. Is God's Vicegerent dumb? Does Mr. Recorder **as Bunyan calls him** keep silence? No; he speaks, and loudly too; and when he speaks, all the city trembles. During this time as the reed is bruised with these exercises, and the flax smoulders amidst these temptations, judgment is going on, condemnation is felt; there is guilt of conscience, a writing of bitter things against one's self, with a whole host of doubts and fears for, as Hart most truly says,

"Sin engenders doubt."

It is our slipping and being overcome by temptation which opens a way for a whole army of doubts and fears to push in through the breach. Were the sentry duly on guard, were the soldiers on the battlements pointing their artillery heavenwards, and, above all, were the great Captain of their salvation at their head, no enemy would dare to attack. But when the sentry is asleep, the artillery silenced, the Captain gone, and a breach made, a whole troop pours in from the black camp to storm and plunder the city.

But, to revert to the figure of our text: O how tenderly is the blessed Lord watching all this time! Here is a "bruised reed," bruised by the law, sin, Satan, sorrow, and temptation; without strength, ready to sink and die. Jesus does not, as he might justly do, crush it with a blast of his awful displeasure. Again: Here is a "smoking flax" who deserves a thousand times a day to be stamped under foot. But the gracious Man of Sorrows "will never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." It is true, that "he sends forth judgment," for he means to bring the soul down into the dust; but whilst this judgment is going on, he secretly supports; for he kills that he may make alive; he brings down to the grave that he may bring up. But in sending forth this "judgment," it is "unto victory." Conquest is at the end; victory is sure. There may be a long conflict; a hard and fearful battle, with the garments rolled in sweat and blood; but victory is sure at last. For he will never rest till he fully gains the day.

O how Satan would triumph if any saint ever fell out of the embraces of the good Shepherd; if he could point his derisive finger up to heaven's gate and to its risen King, and say, 'Thy blood was shed in vain for this wretch; he is mine, he is mine!' Such a boast would fill hell with a yell of triumph. But no, no; it never will be so; the "blood that cleanseth from all sin" never was, never can be shed in vain. Though the reed is "bruised," it will never be broken; though the flax "smokes," it will never be extinguished; for He that "sends forth judgment" sends it "unto victory."

Long indeed may the battle fluctuate; again and again may the enemy charge; again and again may the event seem doubtful. Victory may be delayed even unto a late hour, till evening is drawing on and the shades of night are about to fall; but it is sure at last. And it is the Lord that does the whole. We have no power to turn the battle to the gate. Is there one temptation that you can master? Is there any one sin that you can, without divine help, crucify? one lust that you can, without special grace, subdue? We are perfect weakness in this matter. But the blessed Lord makes his strength perfect in this weakness. We may and indeed must be bruised, and under painful feelings may think no one was so hardly dealt with, and that our case is singular. But without this we should not judge ourselves; and "if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord." If you justify yourself, the Lord will condemn you; if you condemn yourself, the Lord will justify you. Exalt yourself, and the Lord will humble you; humble yourself, and the Lord will exalt you.

This ought to encourage every one that feels bruised in spirit, and to smoke and smoulder. I do not mean to say, I can give the encouragement; I am not the man to say that either I can give, or that you can take it. But if you are the character here pointed out, all your questionings of what the Lord has done, or what he will do, does not alter the case. Questionings do not make Jesus not to be Jesus; they do not make the word of God not to be the

word of the most High. "If we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself."

You, as a "bruised reed," may write a thousand bitter things against yourself; you, as a "smoking flax," may fear there is no life of God in your soul. But Jesus, if he has made you a "bruised reed," or "smoking flax," will carry on his own work; for we read, in connection with the very passage in the prophet Isaiah, "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:4). The words are remarkable. They shew that he has, so to speak, amazing difficulties to encounter. But he will not fail in what he has undertaken; he will not be discouraged by all the opposition he may meet with, till he has accomplished his holy purpose. For it is "his own right arm which hath gotten him the victory." Ever bear in mind, that as the Lord said of old, "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake;" so it is not for your sake, base, poor, and vile sinners, but for his own name's sake, truth's sake, word's sake, and eternal honour and glory's sake that he "sends forth judgment unto victory!"

What a mercy it is that the fulfilment of the Lord's promise depends upon his own veracity; that it does not depend upon our feelings; no, nor upon our experience, but upon his own veracity: "Hath he said, and will he not do it?" And therefore here is ground for hope and faith, not in ourselves who are always poor, weak, miserable creatures, but in the Lord's mercy, goodness, and truth. The foundation of our trust is in the character of the Son of God, that he is what he is, a blessed Jesus, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He who puts his trust in Him will never be confounded; he that hopes through grace in his mercy will never be put to shame; and he that believes in Him will surely reap the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.

CALLED UNTO DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, Lord's Day Afternoon,
9th November, 1845

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor.1:9

Everything in this world is changing and changeable. We ourselves are perpetually fluctuating and wavering. The things of time and sense are as fluctuating and wavering as we. Our friends are fluctuating and wavering too. All things are in a continual state of transition and change. Seeing, then, that all earthly things are passing away, and the things of time and sense vanishing like a cloud of the night, the Scripture leads us to rest upon something that is immutable and unchangeable, a foundation to stand upon which shall not waver and fluctuate with earthly, perishing things. For instance, Jesus Christ is held forth as "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb.13:8), and therefore a foundation on which to stand for eternity. Again, we read that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas.1:17). In these passages the unchangeableness and immutability of God are held forth as a foundation for our wavering, halting feet to stand upon.

In the same way the text holds forth the faithfulness and unchangeableness of Jehovah. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." The faithfulness of God to his Word and to his work is here pointed out as a foundation on which to rest. Now, unless a man rest upon this, he is continually wavering. Until he is brought to anchor in immutability, he is perpetually tossed up and down with every wind and wave of doctrine; but when he is brought to rest on things which cannot change, then he has an anchor to his soul "both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb.6:19).

There are two things worthy of notice in the text:

I. One is *the declaration of God's faithfulness*: "God is faithful;" and, II. *What God does in order to manifest his faithfulness*: "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." In considering these words I shall, with God's blessing, change their order, and look first at what is contained in the words, "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." And then, secondly, at God's faithfulness and unchangeability as made manifest in this special calling.

I. All God's purposes run underground until they are manifested and brought forth; for his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known (Psa.77:19). "It is the glory of God," we read, "to conceal a thing " (Prov.25:2). Thus God has hidden his own eternal counsels in his own bosom, and they are only brought forth in time in such a way and such a season as he has appointed. We have a wonderful instance of this in the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory. It was the eternal purpose of the Three-One Jehovah that the Son of God should die, and by dying offer up a ransom price to save the elect from the ruins of the fall. This lay hid in the bosom of God. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, he came for that special purpose; but it was hidden from the eyes of man, hidden from the eyes of his disciples, and hidden from the eyes of the Jews. Now, so it is with respect to the work of grace upon the soul. What is God's purpose in beginning and carrying on a work of grace in the soul? It is set forth in the text, "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." That is the object; that is the purpose of the work of grace upon the soul, to call God's people unto a fellowship with the Son of God; to bring them into living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory. Now this work must go on; for "God is faithful." It must go on until it result in the accomplishment of what God has purposed.

Let me explain myself a little more fully. Say (for example), you

are a vessel of mercy, that God has chosen you in Christ from before the foundation of the world, and has loved you with an everlasting love in the Person of his dear Son. Jesus came and laid down his life for you. He died on the cross that you might live for ever. He bore your sins in his own body on the tree. He reconciled you to God, and cast all your transgressions into the depths of the sea. Now, the object in calling you by his grace, is to bring you into the fellowship of his dear Son.

But when a work of grace is first begun upon the heart, the subject of it is not aware what God's purposes are. The Lord does not reveal them; nay, rather, he hides them from his eyes. His purpose is to bring the soul into the personal knowledge, spiritual enjoyment of, and divine communion with his own dear Son. But where does he find us? He finds us in what I sometimes call a *sensual* communion; that is, a fellowship with sensible objects. The fellowship and communion that we are to enjoy, if called by grace, is a spiritual communion with invisible, insensible objects. But the Lord finds us in a state of nature, having communion with sensible objects, buried in a sensual, as distinct from a spiritual communion. We are imbued with a spirit of the world, the things of time and sense are our element, the world is our home, and we are so swallowed up in it that we have no other object, delight, or purpose. This I call a sensual communion; that is, there is a fellowship, an intimacy, and intercourse in our carnal mind with sin, the world, and all that is evil. But this intimacy and intercourse must be broken up, that spiritual communion with the Lord of life and glory may be set up in its place. Our communion with the world, with everything short of Christ, is all to be broken in pieces, that we may be led up into union and communion with Jesus. For instance, we have in our carnal state communion with sin, we have an intimacy with it, it is our bosom companion. It is like the lamb in the parable of Nathan; it lies in our bosom, drinks of our cup, and is to us as a daughter. We fondle it as a parent does a child, we cleave to it in love. Thus there is a sensual intercourse with sin and all its baseness and filth. This, then, is to be broken.

But what is to break it? The entrance of God's holy commandment so as to manifest his purity, and holiness, and righteous anger against sin; and this breaks to pieces that sensual communion which we have with iniquity. This is the first thing God uses, his holy commandment, his pure precept, the spirituality of his law opened up in the soul. Sin is then discovered to be sin, its evil nature is then manifested, the wrath of God is revealed against it, and the wages of sin, which is eternal death, are brought to light. The soul is thus cut off and cut away from sin by the sharp entrance of that sword which the apostle speaks of, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Heb.4:12). The sharp Word of God entering into the conscience cuts asunder the former communion betwixt the soul and sin.

But there is also communion *with the world*. We love the world by nature, our heart is in it, our affections are altogether worldly, all that our natural heart delights in is sublunary, earthly. This sensual communion, then, with the world must be broken to pieces; we must be divorced from it in order that we may have communion with holy and heavenly things. When God makes himself known as a consuming fire, and the breadth and spirituality of the precepts are opened up, the world is seen as the apostle saw it, lying in wickedness, or in the wicked one (1 John 5:19), and all but God's people are beheld as walking in the broad road that leads to eternal perdition. We thus become separated from it, and our feet are turned out of the broad into the narrow way. The Holy Spirit sets the face towards the heavenly Jerusalem; and thus our communion with the world is broken to pieces.

But there is also communion *with our own righteousness*. There is a delighting in what we think we have done or can do for the Lord. Our freewill, our natural strength, our creature piety, our fleshly religion, cleave closely to us; we have a sensual union with them all. Now this likewise must be broken to pieces, or else we cannot have communion with the Lord of life and glory. And this too begins to be destroyed by the entrance of the precept of

God's Word, by the spirituality of God's law; our own righteousness is made known to us as filthy rags, and we abhor and loathe ourselves in dust and ashes as the vilest of the vile. And so also there is a sensual communion with deceit, hypocrisy, and delusion; for the heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer.17:9), and out of this wicked heart there springs a wicked intimacy with all manner of lies, hypocrisy, deceit, and delusion. By nature we drink down lies like water, our hypocritical heart wallows in hypocrisy as the swine on a hot summer's day wallows in the mud; to deceive ourselves and others is the very element of our deceitful heart. This intercourse, then, with lies, hypocrisy, and delusion, must all be cut asunder by the entrance of the light of God's Word into the soul.

When a pure and holy God shines forth into the conscience, our hypocrisy, lies, and delusion are made manifest, and our intercourse with them begins to be dissolved. If you read Isaiah 28, you will see how the Lord speaks there of breaking up this sensual communion: "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place" (verses 15-17). This covenant with death and agreement with hell is a communion and intercourse with death and hell; and this is broken up by the hail sweeping away the refuges of lies, and the waters overflowing the hiding-place.

Only, therefore, as this covenant with death and agreement with hell, that is, this sensual communion, is broken to pieces, can there be spiritual communion with the Lord of life and glory. Now, in this God's people are distinguished from all others on the face of the earth, in that they are seeking communion with the Son of

God, fellowship with Jesus in the knowledge and enjoyment of him in their hearts. This distinguishes a work of grace upon the heart from all fleshly counterfeits.

Now as the Lord breaks up this sensual communion, he goes on to fulfil his own eternal purpose; which is, to bring a soul into communion with his dear Son. Observe the words of the text, "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." It is God therefore who calls his people unto "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." Now he has lodged in his dear Son everything needful for our wants. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col.1:19). And again we read, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). We read also, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col.2:9). The Lord of life and glory is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person. All that God is shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ. In bringing, therefore, his people into fellowship with his dear Son, he brings them into fellowship with the Three-One God. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. None can see him and live. God is invisible. He is said to "dwell in thick darkness" (1 Kings 8:12), and also "in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim.6:16). But if we have not fellowship with God we shall one day be of all men most miserable. And the way to have fellowship with God is to have fellowship with his Son; for he is the Mediator. He stands betwixt God and us; through him we have access to God, by him we are reconciled to God, and thus by him we have fellowship and communion with a Three-One Jehovah. Oh, what a mercy it is to have a Mediator to cover with blood and righteousness the guilty head of a fallen child of Adam! Not to have to deal immediately with God as a consuming fire, whose infinite holiness and eternal justice must consume us; but that there is a Mediator, one who has taken the flesh and blood of the children into union with his glorious Person, a Daysman through whom we may have access to God, one who has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). The grand object of divine teaching in the soul is to bring us to Jesus. What says the Lord himself? "It is

written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). That is the effect of divine teaching, a coming unto Jesus. As the text says, "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son."

Now, every obstacle that interferes with or prevents this fellowship, God will remove. That is the reason why we have so many trials, so many sharp thorns, so many bitter afflictions, such painful exercises, such distressing temptations. They are to encourage communion with Jesus by removing out of the way all that is in opposition to it. For instance, there is the world; when this creeps in, it shuts out fellowship with the Lord Jesus. It has therefore to be removed; and is done by means of painful trials. Again, there is carnality, lightness, frivolity, worldly-mindedness; to all of which we are sadly prone. Now when these evils get possession of us, they shut out communion with Jesus. Therefore we need scourging with sharp thorns and briers, as the men of Succoth were torn by the thorns and briers of the wilderness (Judges 8:7,16), that this carnality and lightness may be torn away out of the heart. So afflictions in body, in providence, in the family, temptations from Satan, the burden of an evil heart of unbelief, the corruption that we are more or less plagued with, all these things are made profitable, in order to bring us into fellowship with God's dear Son by emptying us of self. God's dear Son is only suitable for sinners; all that he is and has is for such; all his glorious fulness, all his precious attributes, all his dying love, all the riches of his atoning blood, the beauty and glory of his justifying righteousness, all are for sinners, for feeling, sensible, sin-plagued, Satan-harassed sinners. As, then, we sink into felt sinnership, it leads us up into communion with Jesus. Pride, worldly-mindedness, covetousness, self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-exaltation, carnality, and lightness, all unfit a man for communion with Christ.

Jesus is a brokenhearted Lord, the Spirit of God was given him without measure, his heart is full of tenderness, sympathy, and compassion, he is a holy Jesus; therefore there can be no communion on his part with sin. For "what concord hath Christ

with Belial?" (2 Cor.6:15). What intercourse can there be, then, on the part of Christ with sin which he hates, with the world that crucified him, with Satan his implacable enemy, with that evil heart in man that is utterly opposed to his holy and pure nature? In order, therefore, to bring us into fellowship with Jesus, we need trials, exercises, afflictions, and temptations, to remove out of the way those things that hinder communion, and to bring us down to lie as low as possible in our own eyes. This fits us for Jesus. But it may be asked, "When are we fit for Jesus?" When we are all nakedness, all rags, all misery, all guilt, and all helplessness, and sink down at his feet unworthy of a single smile from his face, then we are fit for him. We are unfit for him when we are proud and covetous, when we have no sorrows, nor burdens, nor griefs, nor troubles, when sin does not lie on the conscience, when we can be cheerful and happy with the things of time and sense. All these things set us at a distance from Christ. But sorrows, griefs, burdens, exercises, doubts, cares, perplexities, and distresses, these are helps that God uses to bring us to Jesus. One is the ebbing wave that takes us away from the rock, and the other is the flowing wave that drives us on to it. One is the adverse wind that blows against the ship when she is making for the harbour, the other is the prosperous gale that urges her forward into the haven. So that the things that seem against us are really for us; and the things that seem for us are really against us.

But what is communion and "fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?" It is a sweet and blessed intimacy betwixt Jesus and the soul. How is this produced? It is produced by the Spirit through the Word; not by the Spirit without the Word, but by the Spirit of God making use of the Word as the living instrument to raise up faith in the soul, whereby through the Word are communicated power, unction, and sweetness to the conscience. If ever you have felt anything like fellowship, communion with God's dear Son, it has been in this way: the Spirit of God worked through the Scriptures upon your heart, secretly applying to your soul some precious truth concerning Jesus, giving you faith to receive it in simplicity and love, and then drawing your heart

upward through the Word into the presence of him who sits and reigns behind the veil. This is communion with God's dear Son, what the Scripture calls the "communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor.13:14); because the Holy Ghost alone can lead us up into this fellowship. Now this is what God calls his people to, this is what God makes all his people intensely long for.

The Lord's people are all dissatisfied with everything short of communion with God's dear Son. Give them the doctrines of truth without the Spirit's sealing these truths upon their hearts, they bring no sweet communion. They cannot, therefore, rest upon them. Give them their own righteousness, it produces no communion with the Lord. Let them have the world, it does not lead their soul into communion with him. Give them sin, it draws them away from the Lord. Let them fall into darkness, and be beset with fears, doubts, perplexities, and temptations, these bring them no communion with the Lord. What they want, then, is that Jesus would sweetly whisper into their souls: Thou art mine; fear not, I have redeemed thee. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isa.49:16). Thus to have our souls raised up into the very bosom of the Lord, so as to clasp him and embrace him in the arms of affection and love, as a lover breathes his love-tale into the ears of his beloved one, that we may be able to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psa.73:25), this alone satisfies a living soul. Now when a soul has enjoyed a measure of this, then it has enjoyed what God has called it to, the "fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the life of religion.

But if we have fellowship with the Son, it will bring into our hearts every fruit and grace of the Spirit. Jesus has left us an example that we should walk in his steps, and the Scripture sets forth his holy love, his humility of spirit, his meekness, his gentleness, his separation from the world, the image of God shining forth in him. Now when God calls us into the fellowship of his dear Son, it is that we may walk in his steps, it is that the image and likeness of Jesus may be impressed upon our souls. It is that we may be

conformed to the image of the Firstborn, and that the mind and likeness of the blessed Lord may be stamped upon our hearts, lips, and lives. If we are not called to this, we are called to nothing.

II. But the text adds, and it is a great mercy that it is added, "God is faithful." For consider how many things there are to interrupt this fellowship. What an evil nature you carry in your bosom, which is averse to communion with this blessed Lord! How many enemies surround your soul! What an adversary you have by night and by day to grapple with! But "God is faithful." Do you see the connection? As though the Holy Spirit implied this: God has called you unto the fellowship of his Son. That is his object; and he is faithful. His purposes are immutable. He hath purposed, and shall he not accomplish his purpose? He is faithful, and has determined you shall enjoy that fellowship unto which he hath called you. Now this, by setting forth God's eternal will and pleasure, shows that in us there is everything against that fellowship, and that God's faithfulness alone overcomes that evil tendency, perfects and completes his purposes. For instance, our carnal mind is altogether opposed to communion with the Son of God. What is the scriptural description of it? It is summed up in one expression: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be " (Rom.8:7). If that be the case, can there be any fellowship or communion in our carnal mind with God? If it is enmity against him? If it is not subject to the law of God? If it is opposed to all his will, and Word, and ways? Can there be any union between our carnal mind and God's dear Son? Impossible! Now just in proportion as our natural mind works, will there be a turning away from communion with Jesus, a plunging into communion with the world and the world's sins, a cleaving to the things of time and sense, as riches, honour, pride, and worldly pleasures. Our carnal mind understands all these things; it is the very breath that it draws into its lungs, the very element in which it swims. Its whole being is intense, implacable enmity to God and his dear Son, and therefore can never be reconciled to him. But God is a pure and holy God, and must ever regard sin with the utmost hatred and

abhorrence. Do we not feel it? What is the greatest grief and burden to a living soul? Is it not the workings of his natural mind? Does not this wicked mind continually stir up unbelief, infidelity, rebellion, and fretfulness? Does it not drag him into the world? Does it not draw him away from the Lord? Does it not fill him with everything base, earthly, sensual, and devilish? But "God is faithful." And he will not suffer the carnal mind to overcome a believer. God, being faithful, has called his people unto the fellowship of his dear Son: he therefore communicates power to the soul whereby this carnal mind is overcome. There are times and seasons when it is blessedly overcome. When sharp exercises and troubles work with power in the mind for a time, the Lord at such seasons communicates a sweet spirit of faith. And where this spirit of faith is, it goes up after the living Lord. And thus "God is faithful," who will not suffer the carnal mind to prevail altogether, but gives his blessed Spirit to draw the heart up to him.

Then there is the world, and the world is opposed to communion with God's dear Son. It calls it rank enthusiasm, a bitter spirit; it is horrible in the eyes of the profane world. What! To have communion with Jesus; there is nothing that they scorn more, nothing from which the world more revolts. And the world in our hearts is just as bad. The news and gossip, politics, the chit-chat of the day, and the scandal of the town, the carnal mind has plenty of communion with that; it drinks it all down as a thirsty ox drinks down water; but the world outward and the world inward never can have communion with Jesus. He is too holy, too heavenly for the world or for our worldly heart to love. Therefore we need crosses, losses, trials, temptations, and exercises. These embitter the world, they show us the world cannot satisfy us. And then the Lord takes occasion to drop a measure of divine sweetness into the heart, and gives it that solid satisfaction in Jesus which the world can neither give nor take away. Thus "God is faithful."

Then there is temptation. There is constant temptation in a living soul, and these temptations are all against communion. Have you

not had all sorts of evil thoughts injected into your mind against Jesus? Nothing too bad to think about him, nothing too base, nothing too horrible. And what was the object of it all but to harass your soul, distract your mind, and destroy communion with the Son of God? And if God were not faithful, these temptations would do it effectually. But "God is faithful." He has not allowed you to be tempted more than you can bear. When enemies come in like a flood, the Spirit of God holds up the standard against them, and brings that faith into your soul whereby Jesus is looked up to, rested upon, and loved, in spite of all these suggestions against him with which the devil fills your heart. Be not surprised if you find in your heart everything whispered against the Son of God. Satan hates him with mortal enmity, and your mind is enmity against him. It is the lot of God's children thus to be tempted; but "God is faithful." He will not let you be overcome. He will in time subdue and conquer these temptations, and bring your soul into fellowship with his dear Son. Sometimes despair works powerfully, and despondency suggests that you have committed such sins as God cannot forgive; and when you give way to this temptation it hinders communion, it shuts up prayer, stops the reading of the Word, and seals up the spirit of supplication within. Then there are doubts and fears, perplexities, harassings of Satan as to the work of grace upon the heart, whether we have felt right, begun right, and continued right. All these various workings in the mind hinder communion with God's dear Son. But "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son." God's purpose in calling you is not to build up your own righteousness, not to make you think anything of yourself, not to set you to work, nor make you in love with what you think you can do. He has but one purpose in view, and that is, to bring your soul into sweet communion with his dear Son, to stamp his likeness upon you, and to fill your soul with joy and peace in believing, "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet.1:8).

Now, how is this to be attained? Not by looking into our own hearts to find anything good there. But in a spirit of faith, by looking up to Jesus, resting upon his blood and righteousness,

and receiving a communication out of his fulness. If you are a poor, needy sinner, if you are a guilty criminal, a brokenhearted wretch, if you are a vessel of mercy, and God the Spirit has humbled you in your own eyes, you want nothing but these divine blessings to bring your soul into communion with God's dear Son. It is with these he has communion, with those who need him, with those who are troubled, harassed, and plagued without him; and all that you want is God's faithfulness, who will give you your desire in his own time and way. All that you want is for the Lord of life and glory to come into your heart with savour; and when God the Spirit raises up faith in your soul to receive the blessing in love, this lifts you up to the bosom of Christ himself, and fills you with joy and peace in believing; and this is what it is to have fellowship with the Son of God. God has called you for that very purpose. It is his object in calling you next to his own glory, he has no other. He has not shown you your sins to condemn you, and send you to hell; he does not so deal with those he has called. But he makes you feel sin here, that you may not feel it hereafter; he makes you seek for mercy here and cry unto him for pardon, that he may fill your soul out of the fulness of Jesus and give you communion with him here. That is God's eternal purpose. He lets you have a little communion here, to be a foretaste and prelude of eternal communion with him hereafter, "God is faithful." If he has given you any communion here, he will give you eternal communion with his dear Son in realms of endless joy and peace. And for that purpose he takes his people out of the course of this world, that he may give them a measure of communion here, and enlarge their souls with full communion hereafter.

THE CHANNEL OF GOSPEL BLESSINGS

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, June 27, 1841, at Zoar Chapel,
Great Alie Street

"The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."
Romans 11:7

The doctrines of discriminating grace always have been, and to a certain extent always will be, opposed by the generality of the professing world. They are so humbling to the pride of man, they are so exclusive of human merit, they so beat down creature righteousness, they so cut up all the boasted freedom of the will, that the great majority of those who profess religion will hate and resist them. But we should greatly err if we supposed that all who received them were the children of the living God. We have this strikingly set forth in the history of Gideon. Gideon was raised up by the Lord as an instrument to deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites; and a large army gathered together under his banner. But the Lord commanded a solemn proclamation to be made, that every one "who was fearful and afraid should return, and depart early from Mount Gilead" (Jud. 7:3). In obedience to this proclamation, out of this vast number two and twenty thousand left the camp, forsook the banners of the Lord, and returned to their own homes: striking emblem, apt illustration of all who make a nominal profession of religion, and endure not to the end, but, though "armed, and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle," and belong to those of whom the Lord says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him!" But the army of Gideon was too numerous still. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts;" and the assembled multitude were yet so numerous, that had they all continued under Gideon's banner, it would have taken from the Lord's glory. The Lord therefore commanded Gideon to try them by bringing them down to the water and to take notice how this assembled multitude partook of the flowing stream to which he led them down. The trial which the Lord gave was this: those that

knelt down, and lapped with their tongues, and those that partook of the water by taking of it in their hands. Of this assembled multitude ten thousand lapped with their tongues as a dog lappeth; and three hundred only satisfied their thirst by dipping their hands into the stream, and drinking the water out of the palms of their hands. This seems to be a striking illustration of the different way in which the truth is received by the mere nominal professor and the living soul. The one lapped as a dog lappeth. They threw themselves with their bodies all along upon the earth amid the mud and mire, and thrust their "unclean lips" **Isa 6:5** into the water, so as to drink it down, without anything to intervene betwixt their mouth and the stream that flowed at their feet; and thus lapping as a dog lappeth, they showed that they were those characters spoken of in Scripture, "without are dogs" (Rev. 22:15). But there was a small company that bowed down upon their knees, and partook of the water by using their hands as a medium to bring it to their lips; doubtless implying the posture of reverence and godly fear, and the hand of faith whereby the truth is received in the love of it; showing that they did not receive the waters of truth in a natural manner, did not fall headlong in the mud and mire, did not eagerly and greedily swallow it down as the dog lappeth; but that there was godly fear in exercise, as well as the intervention of living faith; and that they did not gulp down at one unintermitted draught enough to satisfy thirst, but partook of it little by little, at intervals, receiving only just so much as repeated acts of faith procured them. Thus in our day there is a vast multitude of those who profess the name of the Lord, who are bitterly opposed to the truth as it is in Jesus, who are "fearful and afraid" of the cross; and as such, if they live and die in their cowardice, will have their part amongst "the fearful **literally 'cowards'** and unbelieving," who shall be cast into "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). And yet of those who seem to stand by the Lord's banner, there is a very large assemblage who receive the truth, not by the intervention of faith, not by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, but receive it in a carnal manner into their judgment, without the feeling application and spiritual revelation of it to their souls. "The election hath obtained it, and

the rest were blinded." Solemn words! It should indeed be a matter of heart inquiry, whether those of us who profess to fear the name of the Lord are included in this small remnant; whether we really belong to that "election" which "hath obtained it." For if we do not belong to that number whom God hath chosen in Christ before all worlds, we shall die in our sins, and be thrust down into that fearful place where hope never enters. It is therefore a matter of solemn inquiry with one that fears God, who knows what it is to have divine realities commended to his conscience, who stands at times on the brink of eternity—it is with such a matter of deep inquiry, of earnest questioning, of anxious thought, whether he has a well-grounded scriptural evidence that he belongs to that happy number whom God hath chosen in Christ before all worlds; and there will be many anxious struggles, many fervent wrestlings, many vehement cries, before it is powerfully and sweetly ratified in the court of conscience, that we belong to that "number which no man can number;" that we have an interest in the blood and love of the Redeemer.

The apostle had been speaking in the preceding chapters concerning righteousness. For this is his grand topic in the epistle to the Romans—the way in which a sinner is accounted righteous before God. He draws a sketch of the difference betwixt those who were really accounted righteous in God's sight, and those who were seeking to obtain righteousness by the works of the law; and he shows that those who sought righteousness by the works of the law, stumbled at that stumbling-stone, that they obtained not that which they sought, and that the Gentiles who sought not after righteousness, had obtained righteousness. Nor does he leave it there, but traces it all up to the sovereignty of God, "in having mercy on whom he will have mercy," and "having compassion on whom he will have compassion." And when one replies in a fit of passionate rebellion, "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" he meets him in a moment with this appeal to his conscience, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

We will, then, with God's blessing, endeavour to show what the election hath obtained; and how the rest are blinded. By the word "election" here, the apostle means, not the choice of God, but those who are the objects of that choice. It is a Hebrew idiom, substantives being often used in that language instead of adjectives; for instance, "We are the true **circumcision**," instead of those that are truly circumcised. So again, "The mountain of my holiness," instead of, "My holy mountain." The writers of the New Testament were Jews by birth, and often use Hebrew idioms, though they wrote in Greek. Thus, when the apostle speaks of the "**election**" having "obtained it," he means, not that the choice of God had obtained it, but that the chosen vessels of mercy, the objects, the favoured objects of that election had obtained it; and thus the word "election" here means simply the elect. The elect, then, have obtained certain blessings, and they are the only persons who have obtained them. Let us see what these blessings are, and how they obtain them.

1. The grand point which the apostle speaks of here is, that they have obtained **righteousness**. This must always be a matter of anxious inquiry with a convinced sinner, how he can be righteous before God; because wherever sin is opened up in a man, and laid as a burden upon his conscience, the effect will be a discovery of unrighteousness, and a deep conviction working with power in his soul, that unless he can stand righteous before God, he never can enter into the abode of him who is perfect righteousness and complete purity. The "election," then, "hath obtained righteousness," that is, through the imputation of Christ's obedience, they stand righteous and accepted before God, "without spot or blemish, or any such thing;" the garment of the Redeemer's obedience covering them and shrouding them from the eye of God, so that he beholds not iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel (Num. 23:21). This all the elect have obtained, freely given to them by their God and Father in the Son of his love. But the word "obtained" seems also to point to some personal reception of it. It is one thing to be righteous before God in his eyes; it is another thing to have received the manifestation of this righteousness in our conscience. Now, however true and

glorious the doctrine is, that all the elect of God stand righteous in Christ's righteousness, the living soul can never be satisfied with the doctrine in the letter, nor can he ever rest until he has the manifestation and discovery of it with power to his heart by the Holy Ghost. And here is that eternal line which separates the living from the dead; here is that narrow, narrow path which distinguishes the heaven-born children from those who are wrapped up in a nominal profession, that the living family must have power, whilst others are satisfied with form, that the living family must have heavenly teaching, whilst those that are dead in sin can be contented with seeing truth In the Scriptures, without a feeling application of it with dew and savour to their hearts. All the living family, then, are brought into a state, wherein they are made to need righteousness. The Lord opened his ministry with, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." The holy law of God, applied with power to their consciences, discovers to them what sin is, and slays them as having personally transgressed his righteous commandments. When the Lord has thus slaughtered them in their consciences, he raises up in their souls a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness; he pours out upon them a Spirit of grace and of supplications; he opens up to their understanding that there is a righteousness stored up in Christ; he casts a light upon the Scriptures of truth, and shows to them that there is no way of justification but that by Christ. And setting before their eyes this glorious object, he kindles, by his secret work upon their hearts, longings, desires, hungerings, thirstings, and breathings after the manifestation of this righteousness. No man ever got a feeling enjoyment of Christ's righteousness imputed to him, who has not passed under solemn convictions of his guilt before God; and if ever you got at Christ's righteousness without travelling in the path of condemnation, be assured that you have never arrived where you are by the Spirit's teaching. How deep these convictions shall be, or how long these convictions shall last, the Scripture does not tell us, nor do I deem it possible to set up a standard to measure them by; but they shall be so deep as to empty a man completely of all his own righteousness, and they

shall last so long as to strip him of everything in which he can boast, and to which he can look with satisfaction.

2 Again the elect have obtained **pardon of their sins**. For God will pardon all those whom he reserves. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." This is the grand doctrine of the Scriptures; to this all the types bear witness; of this all the prophecies are full; the enjoyment of this is that which constitutes a foretaste of eternal bliss. All the living family then will be brought, before they close their eyes in death, to a sweet manifestation of the pardon of their sins. If a man lives and dies without a discovery to his soul of the blotting out of his iniquities, he will never enter into the presence of God after death. But in order to obtain a manifestation of this pardon, we must travel in that path which God has traced out in the Scriptures of truth. The blood of Jesus is not to be approached with presumptuous hands. His blessed sacrifice and propitiation is not to be looked upon with the eyes of the flesh. He will have in his sanctuary no intruding worshippers; the veil shall be over the Holy of Holies, and none but "a priest unto God" shall ever enter "by the new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," to look at the ark of the covenant, sprinkled with atoning blood. Before the soul can know anything by a divine revelation of the pardon of its sins, it must have the fear of God implanted from above, whereby it approaches him with holy reverence and trembling apprehension of the wrath to come. The conscience must be made tender and alive, so as to feel the weight and evil of transgression; sin must be opened up in its awful colours, discovered in its guilt, and laid upon the soul as a heavy burden; and if a man has not travelled in that path he has never yet arrived at that secret sanctuary where God manifests himself in the face of Jesus Christ, nor has he ever looked with anointed eyes upon the mercy-seat, and the Shechinah, the divine cloud that rests upon it. This is the grand struggle, the painful conflict which exercises so many of the quickened family of God "Has the Lord pardoned my sins? Am I an accepted worshipper? Has the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed

me? Do I stand before God, with all my sins cast into the depths of the sea?" This will be a point of solemn inquiry, anxious meditation, midnight wrestling, and a pouring out of the soul, at times, in vehement cries, that the Lord would reveal it, and apply it, and manifest it, by his own Spirit with power to the conscience. Where pardon of sin is manifested, the conscience is purged "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Try yourselves by that test. Say you, "I have no doubt my sins are pardoned?" Look in the mirror of God's word. Have the fruits followed? Have the effects that God has pointed out been visible? Was conscience ever purged, that is, was all guilt taken away? Were you able to come before God, without guilt, without condemnation without slavish fear, without a sensation of his wrath? That is the test, to try whether the pardon of sin has been felt in your soul, whether your conscience was purified from guilt, filth, and fear, and you could come before God without any spot of guilt upon you, whether you were able to draw near with the feelings of a son and felt the Spirit of adoption enabling you to cry, "Abba, Father." But, says some living soul, "I cannot come there; it would seem presumption in me to say 'Abba Father.' I have not felt what you have been speaking of, the pardon of my sins. When I come before God, I have guilt on my conscience; I often fear I shall be cast into eternal perdition; if I were to die tonight, I could not say that I should be sure to go to glory, and see Christ as he is." Well, it is better to be there than resting in a presumptuous confidence. You had better be in spiritual bondage than in carnal liberty. You had better be under the rod of God's law in your conscience, suffering under the sensation of his anger, and knowing experimentally the meaning of those words, "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth" (Ps. 39:11); you had better be under the distressing feelings of guilt and bondage and wrath in your conscience, than sitting at ease in Zion, flattering yourself in false liberty, and believing that you are a pardoned, accepted child, when the Holy Ghost bears not his witness with your spirit that you are born of God.

3. **Love** is another blessing which the election have obtained; the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that love which hath lengths and breadths and depths and heights, and yet such lengths, breadths, depths, and heights as pass all creature measure. The "election" hath obtained love; it is the free gift of God to them,—for he has loved them everlastingly; and a measure of this love be sheds abroad in the heart of every child of his, sooner or later. As the apostle speaks, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Have you ever felt the love of God in your souls? If you have felt it shed abroad there, I will tell you what it has done for you. It has made your soul burn with love to him in return; it has drawn forth the affections of your heart to embrace Jesus as your "all in all;" it has deadened the world, and all that the world can offer, in your estimation; and it has made you earnestly long to be with Christ, that you may bathe in his love, see him as he is, and enjoy him for ever. But say some, "You are setting up a standard that I cannot reach. It is true, that at times, I have felt what I have thought to have been something like love to Christ; I do think that his name has been to me at seasons like the ointment poured forth. I can say from my heart, honestly in the sight of God, that there have been moments when Christ has been precious to my soul! but to speak of the love of God being shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, that is a standard which I cannot reach." If you have received but a drop of love, it came from the heavenly fountain; if you have had but a passing visit from Jesus, it is a testimony that you are redeemed by his blood; if his name has ever been to you as "ointment poured forth," it was the blessed Spirit who shed that fragrance abroad; and if ever, for a few fleeting moments, he has been experimentally precious to your soul, he is everlastingly yours, and you are everlastingly his. But I will put another question to you. "How are you when you have not the manifestation of his love? Can you be satisfied without it? Is it all the same to you whether you have a visitation of Christ to your soul or not? Are you as happy on the day that you receive it not, as on the day that you receive it? Can you be really at peace and rest in your

soul without some testimony of it?" Then, if you say, "Yes, I can be as happy the day I receive it not, as the day I receive it; it is all one with me whether Christ manifests himself, or whether he does not manifest himself; I should be happy and cheerful without Christ, just as much as with him;" if you say that, you prove that the love of Christ was never really dropped into your heart by the Holy Spirit's manifestation; for if that love had been really shed abroad and made known to your soul by the Holy Spirit, there would be at seasons a restlessness, a dissatisfaction, in its absence; there would be an anxious sigh, a groaning inquiry, an earnest cry, and at times, as the Spirit works it, a fervent wrestling, that that love should be revealed to your heart again. But there may be some who say, "I cannot get even so far as a taste or a sip; I do not know whether I have ever tasted the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; nor can I positively say that I have really felt Christ precious to my soul; but this I feel, my deep need of him, that I am a ruined wretch without him, that he must be my salvation or I shall utterly perish, and that without him there is nothing that I can do acceptable in God's sight." I will put to you a question also: It is easy enough to say all this, it is easy enough to use the words, but what the Lord looks at is the heart. If you are in this state spiritually, there will be, at times, in your soul, earnest sighs and cries and panting desires to know Jesus. You cannot rest upon want, poverty, and destitution as evidences, and say, "I have heard it described from the pulpit that all the people of God are not in the enjoyment of gospel liberty, do not walk in the light of God's countenance, and that many of them, if not most, have doubts and fears and disquietudes; therefore, as I have all these evidences, pardon and love will all come in good time; I can take my rest, I need not be so very anxious nor troubled." These are plague-spots, marks of death, not the spot of God's children. Where the conscience is really touched by God's finger, and brought into the searching light of his countenance, there will be the pouring out, at times, of the will unto God! that he would manifest himself; there will be the anxious inquiry whether the heart is right before him; and a restless dissatisfaction with

everything short of the manifestation of Christ, and the enjoyment of his blood and love.

4. They have obtained also **deliverance**; deliverance from the wrath to come, deliverance from the present evil world, and from every evil word and work so as to bring them into eternal condemnation. As a testimony of this, they from time to time receive deliverances from God; and no man has a real heart-felt persuasion that he is interested in the deliverance from the wrath to come, who has not received, and does not receive some deliverances now. Every deliverance in time is an earnest of a deliverance for eternity; and if we have never received any deliverance from God, our soul must hang in doubt, and there must be room for earnest inquiry whether we are interested in the deliverance from eternal wrath. Now there are deliverances which are short of a full deliverance into gospel light and liberty; there are testimonies which leave the soul short of "peace in believing," and the enjoyment of that "perfect love which casteth out fear." For instance, there are deliverances from temptation by the removal of the temptation; by power being given to resist it; by its edge being abated; by our being enabled to confess the sins that press upon our conscience, and by confession finding relief. So, also, there is at times dropped into the soul some sweetness out of Christ, which yet does not amount to a full deliverance from the temptation under which we may happen to labour. Says some soul, "I think I can come in here; I have had some deliverances; have found some manifest answers to prayer; I have been in great straits, and cried to the Lord, and the Lord has delivered me; I have passed through severe exercises, and in those exercises I have, for a few moments, or for a short season, felt the Lord's light and power; I have had tokens that he has heard my feeble cries." Well, these are deliverances, and if you have had but one deliverance, one answer to prayer, one testimony from the mouth of God, one soft word spoken to your soul, it is an earnest of your deliverance in Christ from eternal perdition.

These, then, are some of the blessings which the elect obtain; but God has prescribed a certain channel through which they shall obtain them. Jesus himself obtained salvation for his people through suffering. He did not come into the world as a mighty conqueror carrying all before him, accomplishing the salvation of his people without a sigh or a groan or a tear, without much anguish of body, and without much tribulation of soul; but he was a sufferer every moment of his existence upon earth, and he wrought out the salvation of his dear people through the medium of most poignant suffering. The "election," then, has obtained God's blessings; but, though these mercies are freely given by God, though they are irreversibly granted for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" **upon his part**, though they are freely given, yet the Lord has appointed a certain channel through which they flow. The channel is not the cause of them. None would mistake the course of a stream for its origin and source, and yet the river must flow in a certain channel, or it would cease to flow at all. So the Lord has appointed a certain channel for his blessings to flow in; this channel is not the procuring cause of the blessings, but it is the mode in which the Lord bestows those blessings upon his elect. For instance, the Lord, usually speaking, does not communicate blessings to his people, except through the channel of sighs and cries and groans and wrestlings with him for the blessing. It is true that, in the first communications of grace, those find it who seek it not, for did the communication of grace to our souls depend upon our seeking it, none of the elect would receive it at all. "I am found of them that sought me not." But the Lord has appointed that his people, when quickened by his Spirit, should seek the blessings he means to bestow: "For all these things," he says, "will I, be inquired of by the house of Israel." "With supplications will I lead them." The Lord, then, has appointed prayer and supplication as a means through which he is pleased to communicate these blessings. Thus it is not a matter of freewill on our parts whether we will pray or not; nor is it a matter of duty, but it is a matter of divine teaching. We pray because the Lord himself kindles in our hearts the spirit of prayer. The Lord himself puts certain desires into our souls, pours into our hearts a Spirit of grace and

supplications, and then we freely pour out what the Lord pours in. The Lord, then, before he communicates his manifested blessings to his people, works in them **for the most part** these two feelings, a necessity of the blessing that they want, and a hungering and thirsting and panting desire after the manifestation of that blessing. These two ideas are conveyed by the comparison of hunger. Hunger is a painful feeling; there is an absolute necessity connected with it, for if food be not supplied, the man must die. But connected with this necessity, there is a longing after food. It is not merely a painful sensation of emptiness and want; but there is a longing, a desire, an intense craving after the gratification of that want. Thus this expression, "hunger," conveys the two feelings that are wrought by the Spirit in living souls. They are brought to a feeling of want and destitution, a sense of emptiness and sinking, unless the blessings are communicated to them. But there is something more than the necessity. Together with the want, there is a craving to enjoy food. And out of the working together of these combined feelings, there springs a fervent wrestling with the Lord, that he would communicate, and manifest, and bestow his pardon upon the soul. But the children of God may have a long season of spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst before their desires are fully satisfied. The "election" hath obtained righteousness, everlasting righteousness in Christ; but the Lord has appointed that his people should obtain the manifestation of it through deep want and through fervent intercession. So that, though the blessing is theirs already in the mind of God; though they stand righteous and accepted in Christ before all worlds; though they are freely justified from all things, yet the manifestation of it, the enjoyment of it, the rich experimental revelation of it, they may be, and often are, destitute of for weeks and months and years. Yea, many of God's pilgrims go toiling on through life, and the desired blessing is communicated only a little time before their souls are taken into the eternal enjoyment of it. The Lord sees fit that his people shall be kept humble; he will not suffer them to be deeply entangled in that awful sin of presumption, that is so rife; and, therefore, he sees good that many of his family shall, by painful exercises, be kept in a state of bondage, darkness, and

unbelief; and they shall no more be able to deliver their souls out of guilt and condemnation than they would be to create a new sun. But all for wise purposes, that they may be kept back from presumptuous sins, that they may taste somewhat of the wormwood and the gall, that they may be baptized with that baptism with which the Lord himself was baptized, and drink of the cup that he drank of; and thus, when righteousness is revealed and salvation manifested, they learn what it really is, and what a power and blessedness there is in it. Many of the Lord's people go on for weeks and months and years without a clear manifestation of the pardon of their sins; and sometimes, when death stares them in the face, or when the wrath of God against sin is deeply felt, or when things in providence takes a frowning turn, or when their souls are exercised with powerful temptations, they are cast well nigh into despair, and fear lest the blessing should never be communicated to their hearts. These very exercises, under the Spirit's teaching, work in them so as to make them dissatisfied with everything short of a manifestation. The guilt that they feel brings them to this spot, that pardon must be "something known and felt," that it must be an enjoyed manifestation from God himself, that there is a divine reality in it; and that nothing but the discovery of it with power can really bring their souls into happiness and peace. They could not learn this lesson in any other way; they could not value it. The Lord never bestows his gifts upon unthankful hearts. He prepares and exercises the souls of his children that, when the blessing comes, they shall prize it; shall estimate it, in some measure, at its due worth; and shall thank, bless, and praise God for his goodness to them, the very chief of sinners, and the basest of all wretches. So with respect to the **love of God**; he will teach all his people to sigh and cry and groan and plead and wrestle vehemently for the manifestation of his love to their souls; they know that it is a reality; not mere lip-language, not an unknown something just casually mentioned in God's word; but that there is a spiritual enjoyment of it through divine manifestation, and that all the elect of God have it shed abroad in their hearts before they die. Short of it, therefore, they cannot rest satisfied; short of it, they feel themselves destitute of salvation; and, therefore, until the

love of God is experimentally realised and made known by the Holy Ghost to their souls, they cannot be fully persuaded that they are interested in that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. So, with respect to **deliverances**, the Lord has appointed a channel for them to come in, and this channel is temptation. Thus, all the elect are exercised, more or less, by temptations. From these temptations they seek for deliverance. And, as the temptation is real, so must the deliverance be real too. It is one thing to see a porter staggering under a heavy burden in the street, and another thing to have the burden upon our own back. We might see the burden taken off, it would convey no relief to us; but were we in his place, were we staggering and sinking under the weight, the removal of the burden would be a sensible relief, and we should know the moment when we were relieved, and feel there was a hand that relieved us. So those that are burdened in their consciences with temptations and exercises, must have relief. To read how David was relieved, how Paul was relieved, how Peter was relieved, brings them no comfort; they want it as a personal matter, as a realised thing, as what is made known in their consciences, and felt with power in their hearts. The election hath obtained eternal deliverance in Christ; but when the Lord gives a deliverance in time, seals a testimony, brings in some timely help which delivers the soul, it is the sure evidence of its eternal deliverance, and ratifies and manifests it in the heart.

These, then, are some of the things which the election hath obtained; and all the elect of God who are quickened into spiritual life, are in one of these two states; they have either obtained the manifestation of these things in their consciences, or else they are travailing after the obtaining of them. God has none of those in his dear family, who are always at ease, careless and carnal, and utterly reckless whether he will bless them or not. All of his quickened children, in their measure, some more, some less, some to a deeper, others in a more shallow degree, but all of his quickened family are exercised with the things of eternity: and those of the quickened elect who have not been brought into the enjoyment of the things of Christ in their hearts and consciences,

are at times, as the Spirit of the Lord works upon them, earnestly seeking that they may taste and feel and handle these divine realities in their soul. Election, then, in eternity, is the source of every blessing in time: out of it, as out of a root, grow all the branches of life in the soul. But the way in which the Lord's people get at election, and taste the sweetness of it as sealed upon their souls, is, by passing through those straits and severe exercises, whereby they are brought to this solemn conclusion, that none but the elect are saved; and that if their names are not in the book of life, and their personal election is not experimentally made known, they are lost and ruined for ever.

II. "And the rest were blinded." Solemn words! awful declaration! Look at this assembled congregation, this large multitude. All here present are either elect or non-elect. Your names, each of you, as individuals, were either written in the Lamb's book of life before all worlds, or were written up to eternal perdition. Now, if you are a living soul, you will be exercised with this matter, and you will have a conviction in your conscience, that salvation must be revealed to you from the mouth of God; and until you get that sweet testimony in your heart, you can never feel fully persuaded of your interest in eternal realities.

"And **the rest** were blinded." What a multitude this comprehends! Look at God's ancient family, those who live in the vicinity of this place of worship, who dwell so thickly in streets and alleys within a circle of half a mile from this chapel—God's ancient people, the Jews! How blinded they are! We, standing in their privileges, are grafted as Gentiles into the olive tree; and they, on account of disobedience, are cut off. What a striking memorial that "the rest are blinded!" Every Jew that we meet with in the street is a standing testimony that God had "blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart" (John 12:40).

But when we come within the pale of the visible church, especially when we come more immediately to those whom we know, and with whom we stand in connexion; how many of these, too, are blinded! Who is so blind as the self-righteous

Pharisee that expects to be saved by his own virtues! Blind he must indeed be, as the Scriptures speak, "smitten with blindness of heart (Deut. 28:28), and madness and astonishment." Blind indeed must he be, to think he can work out a righteousness that shall satisfy God. But, if it be possible, blinder still are those who have the form of godliness, whilst they deny the power thereof. Jude speaks of certain characters as "twice dead," and we might reasonably say of unsanctified professors, that they are "twice blind," because they have the eyes of their natural understanding open to see truth in the letter, but the "veil is still upon their heart;" they are still blind towards God, blind to the supernatural manifestation and experimental realisation of the truth as it is in Jesus. If it were not so, if they were not twice blinded, they would have such a sight of themselves as would drive them into madness or despair. If those who are destitute of the fear of God, and yet have the form of godliness, could see themselves as God sees them, playing with mere baubles, amusing their vain minds with speculations, whilst under the wrath of God, under the curse of his law, doomed to eternal perdition,—if they could only have one moment's sight of themselves as God sees them, they would plunge headlong into hell to escape, if it were possible, his vengeful eye. But they are blinded. They cannot see, they do not know where they are. Blindness hath come upon them, and they walking in blindness see not who God is, nor what they are; they see not their real state before God, nor do they know the things that God's people are mysteriously led into. And are not some of you afraid that this is your case? Does not your heart sometimes quake with fear lest you belong to this "rest;" lest the God of this world be blinding you; lest you have nothing but a nominal profession, and lest your conscience be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. It is good to have such fears. He who feareth not, who has no solemn apprehensions, who has no anxious inquires, who is never exercised with some internal trepidation of soul, it is much to be feared has never known what it is to have "the candle of the Lord searching the hidden parts of the belly." The children of God are often earnestly questioning whether they belong to this band of nominal professors; and their very anxious inquiries, their very searchings of heart, their very appeals to God

with fervent importunity, is an evidence that they are not blinded. Those that are blinded by the god of this world, have no acquaintance with what power and feeling and savour and dew are; they see not these things, they are blind to their reality, they are dead to their importance; but the living family, who are brought by God's blessed Spirit into some apprehension of eternal realities, have eyes to see what power, is, and hearts too, to desire to feel its manifestation. Nay, it is the very seeing what reality and power are, which makes them desire to experience the savour of eternal things in their conscience; and because they do not feel them as they wish, it makes them often fear that they are blind altogether. They are thus brought into that state described, Isa 59:10: "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes." It does not say they had no eyes, but "**as if** they had no eyes"—that is, they fear that they are the characters; they seem so to stagger here and there like a drunken man, and to be at their wit's end, that they are exercised in their minds whether they are not blind altogether. But the very inquiry, the very anxious cry, the very groaning desire, the very fervent supplication to the Lord that he would not let them live and die without a testimony from himself, that he would lift up the light of his countenance and the life of his favour—these very cries are a proof of life. Were you blind, you would not see these things; were you deaf, you would not spiritually hear these things; were you dead, you would not feel these things. And therefore, that which you seem to take as an evidence against you, is in reality an evidence for you; and the very sensations of trepidation, anxious inquiry, godly tear, and the crying out before the Lord that he would search you and try you, and really make your heart right in his sight—these very things are the symptoms of life, the evidences of a work of grace upon the heart, and are the spiritual breathings of the quickened soul, the Lord himself having communicated these feelings unto it. The blind, hardened, dead, conscience-seared professor has no anxiety, no holy fear, no trembling awe, no godly reverence, no solemn searching before God, whether his heart is right before him; he is shut up in unbelief; he has no inward trepidation of spirit before God, because his eyes being blind as to who God is, and to what he is

before him, all is at peace within him. Like the man spoken of in the parable of the strong man armed, "his goods are at peace;" the strong man keepeth the palace, and as long as the strong man keeps possession, he deadens the conscience, hardens the heart blinds the eyes, and thus represses any conviction that may seem to start up in the natural mind.

If God, then, has quickened your soul into spiritual life, and you have ears to hear, I would just put to you two questions before I conclude. Have you obtained these blessings? Have you obtained righteousness by a manifestation of Christ's righteousness; pardon, by the application of Christ's blood; love, by a shedding abroad of love, deliverance, by a discovery of God's outstretched hand? My other question is this—if you have not, and let conscience bear its honest testimony—if you have never experienced righteousness, pardon, love, and deliverance, is there a cry in your soul after them? Is there anything like fervent supplication that God would bestow them? Is there anything of a groan in the depth of your spirit that the Lord would reveal them? These are marks of life; and he that has these marks will have the blessing, because God has quickened him into spiritual life. It may be long delayed but it will come at last; "it will surely come, it will not tarry." It may be withheld for wise purposes, and you may have to travel through many a dark season and many an anxious hour, but deliverance is sure; it is reserved for you in Christ, and you are reserved for it, kept by God himself unto salvation, ready to be delivered in the last time. I cannot speak to the blind. They have no eyes to see, no ears to hear; no hearts to feel. I speak to the living; for the living alone can receive the testimony of God; and "the living, the living he shall praise him." (Isa. 38:19).