

# SERMONS

## VOLUME VI



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## Living Complaints

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden St., Hampstead Rd., on Lord's Day Morning, August 23, 1846

"Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. My heart panteth: my strength faileth me; as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me." Psa. 38:9, 10

If I were to say, that a living soul *never* has desires, groanings, or pantings; that his strength *never* fails; and that the light of his eyes is *never* withdrawn, (all which things are contained in the text), I should speak not only contrary to the experience of God's people, but contrary to the express word of truth. But, on the other hand, if I were to say, that the Lord's people are *always* filled with desires; that they are perpetually groaning after God; that their heart is ever panting after his presence; that their strength is always failing, and the light of their eyes is continually gone, I should speak just as contrary to the teachings of God's Spirit in the hearts of God's people, and contrary to the express word of inspiration.

Change and fluctuation are stamped upon everything in nature; and change and fluctuation are stamped upon everything in experience. Spring succeeds winter, summer spring, autumn summer, and winter autumn. Day follows night, rain comes after drought, and drought succeeds rain. Moons wax and wane; the tides of the ocean ebb and flow. Man is born a babe, grows up a child, becomes a youth, and finally dies. Thus, change and fluctuation are stamped universally upon nature. And so, in the kingdom of grace—change and fluctuation are perpetually going on; as we read, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." (Psalm 45:19.)

The Psalms are a manual of Christian experience. In them we see the ebbings and flowings, the changes and fluctuations of living souls; and in them, so far as the Lord may have taught us, do we

find from time to time our own experience traced out by the finger of the Spirit.

The Lord's people are very subject to carnality and darkness, to hardness, deadness, barrenness, and lukewarmness; and sometimes there seems to be only just so much life in their souls as to feel these things, and groan under them. Under these feelings, therefore, they cry to the Lord; they cannot bear that carnality and darkness, barrenness and death, which seem to have taken possession of them. They come with these burdens to the throne of grace, beseeching the Lord to revive his work in their hearts. And how does the Lord answer their prayer? Not in the way, for the most part, which they expect. He answers them by some heavy affliction, some stroke in providence, or some stroke in grace, which falls very heavily upon them; but the effect is, to stir up their souls, to make them more earnest, and thus remove that darkness, deadness, and barrenness under which they have been previously groaning.

David, in this Psalm, is pouring out the feelings of his soul before God; he is lying under a sense of God's displeasure; his sins are brought to view; his iniquities are discovered in all their loathsome and horrible character; his heart is bowed down within him under a discovery of the corruptions of his fallen nature. He cries, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure: for thine arrows stick fast in me, and thine hand presseth me sore. 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." (ver. 1-4). Here we have the experience of a living soul when sin is laid upon the conscience; when its iniquities are opened up in the light and life of the Spirit's teachings, and it sinks down before God under a feeling sense of its wretchedness and ruin.

But is no other feeling there than of shame, guilt, and sorrow? Are no other sensations alive in the heart than self-loathing and self-abhorrence on account of manifested iniquity? Here is the

grand distinction between the sorrow of the world that worketh death, and the sorrow of God's people that worketh unto life. In carnal, earthly sorrow there is no crying unto the Lord, no panting after his manifested presence, no desires after the light of his countenance; no movings, no breakings, no meltings of heart at his blessed feet: but a dark cloud of sorrow takes possession of the mind, and through this dark cloud no gleam of light breaks. But it is not so where there is the light and life of God in the heart. *There*, however dark the cloud may be that rests over it, there is divine life in the soul, which heaves up below this superincumbent load, struggles underneath this burden that presses it down, and cannot be satisfied without some manifestation of the Lord's presence and favour.

This we see in the words of the text. We find David not merely bowed down with a sense of sin and shame, not merely troubled and distressed on account of the workings of inward corruption, and the bringing to light of the hidden evils of his heart; but in the midst of these burdens there is a cry and sigh in his soul that the Lord would appear to and for him: "Lord," he says, "all my desire is before thee," &c.

These words then, with God's blessing, I shall take up in the order that they lie before me; and endeavour from them to trace out something of *the experience of a living soul in its pantings and longings after God's manifested favour*.

I.—One strong mark of a quickened man is this—the deep conviction which ever dwells in his conscience, that he is *living under the eye of an all-seeing God*. We do not find this deep-seated conviction in the heart of any but those whom the finger of God has touched. Man may naturally recognize an overruling and all-seeing Providence; but it is not deeply rooted in his conscience; he does not live under a feeling sense that the eye of God is upon him. There is no fear of the Lord in his bosom, that "fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." But wherever the Lord shines into the soul, he there raises up, by the light of heavenly teaching, this conviction, which he ever

maintains, and which is rather a growing than a decreasing feeling, "Thou, God, seest me!" This we find in the words before us. "Lord, all my desire is before thee." As though David thus appealed to the heart-searching God: Lord, thou canst read my heart; Lord, there is not a desire in my soul which thine eye does not behold; Lord, there is not a feeling within me that thine omniscient eye does not see. Every thought of my heart, every desire of my soul, every feeling in my conscience—all are so open before thy heart-searching eye, that I need not tell thee what I have been, what I am, and what I desire to be. Such is the feeling of every living soul in which the Spirit of God dwells. He gives to that soul such a deep sense of God's omniscience and omnipresence, that it knows the eye of God is ever looking into the depths of the heart.

But what were these *desires*? "Lord," he says, "*all* my desire is before thee." There were then certain desires that were working in David's soul, that were springing up from the bottom of his heart. These desires are such as will be found, more or less, in all living souls.

1. One desire was, *for the Lord's manifested favour*. David at this time was labouring under a sense of guilt; the corruptions of his heart were laid open and bare; the Lord was manifesting his solemn displeasure against his iniquities; and he was bowed down greatly by a sense of sin upon his conscience. The blessed Spirit raised up in his soul, under these heavy loads, a desire for God's manifested favour. And is not this the feeling of every living soul—earnest breathings after God's manifested favour and mercy? It will not satisfy him to see these things in God's word; it will not content him to hear them explained from the mouths of ministers; it will not satisfy him to hear them spoken of as felt in the hearts of God's people. He desires to have a sense of this manifested favour imparted to *his own* bosom, that it may come powerfully into *his own* soul that he may receive some sweet testimony of the mercy of God by the shedding abroad of that divine favour in *his own* heart. He desires thus to have God's mercy manifested to his soul by the discovery of his personal lovingkindness to him as a guilty sinner before him. And what is

all religion that does not stand in the enjoyment of this? It leaves the soul needy and naked, unless from time to time there is some discovery of God's manifested mercy and favour. And what brings us to this point? Is it not guilt, shame, and sorrow? Is it not a feeling sense of our vileness and iniquity before God? Is it not seeing and feeling that "in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing?"

2. Another desire that was then springing up in David's heart was, *for the Lord's manifested presence*; that presence in his bosom which makes crooked things straight and rough places plain; that presence which had so often cheered his heart when drooping down in this vale of tears; that manifested presence, which, like the sun, illumines the soul into which it comes with its heavenly beams, and enables it still to press forward and hope to the end.

3. He desired also to experience *the sweet revivings of God in his heart*; that he might not be carnal, cold, dead, stupid, lifeless, barren, and unfeeling; but that there might be those gracious revivals in his soul, those divine refreshings, that heavenly dew and unction falling into his heart, whereby he would live under a feeling sense of God's manifested favour, and enjoy that love which alone can cheer the down-cast spirit.

4. He desired too that the Lord would bless him from time to time with those *discoveries of his interest in the love and blood of the Lamb*, which alone can purge a guilty conscience; that he might receive the sprinkling of atoning blood upon his heart; feel Jesus to be his surety and sin-bearer; see his name cut deep upon his heart and worn upon his shoulder; look into his sympathizing bosom, and there see love engraved in living characters—characters never to be erased.

"Lord," he says, "*all my desire is before thee*;" all the cravings of my heart, all the longings of my soul, all the heavings of my bosom; everything that passes to and fro in the secret chambers within. "All my desire is before thee." Thou knowest it; thou seest it; for thou canst read my heart; there is not a single breath of

living prayer in me, nor is there a going forth of a single desire, which thine eye does not behold.

Now many of the Lord's people cannot clearly read their names in the book of life; many are the doubts and fears that work in their bosom whether the Lord really has begun a work of grace upon their souls, and whether they truly are among the living family. But this thing they must know—whether at times and seasons they can lie in humility at the footstool of mercy, and appeal to a heart-searching God—"All my desire is before thee." They must know whether they ever fell down in humility and brokenness of heart before the divine Majesty, and felt those living desires going out of their bosom into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; and whether they can, with honesty, uprightness, and godly sincerity, say to God in the language before us, "'O Lord, all my desire is before thee.' Thou seest my heart, and knowest every thing that passes in my troubled breast." If you can say *that*, it is a mark of life. If that has been the feeling of your heart from time to time, you find it was the same feeling that worked in the bosom of David. And God saw fit that it should be written by the finger of the Spirit, and placed upon solemn record for the consolation and encouragement of souls in similar circumstances.

II.—"*And my groaning is not hid from thee.*" What is implied in this expression, "*My groaning!*" Do we not groan under a sense of pain? It is the most natural expression of our feelings when we are under acute suffering. The woman in travail, the patient under the keen knife of the surgeon, the man afflicted with some painful internal disease, can only give vent to their distressing feelings by groaning. And is it not so spiritually? When the Lord's people groan, it shows there is some painful sensation experienced within them; and these painful feelings they can only express by groaning aloud before the footstool of mercy.

How many things there are that cause pain in a living conscience! 1. One frequent cause of pain is, *backsliding from God*; and when our base backslidings are laid with guilt upon our conscience, it makes us groan. When a man sees how his covetous heart, his



idolatrous nature, his adulterous eye, draws him aside on the right hand and the left, it makes him groan with internal pain. When he sees and feels what a wretch he is; how, when he has been left but five minutes to himself, immediately he has turned aside into some forbidden path; and if he has not fallen into sin, has walked upon the very borders of temptation; it will make him groan through his internal sensations of guilt and shame before a heart-searching God. Those that are dead in sin, or dead in a profession, know nothing of the painful sensations that are produced by a sense of the inward backslidings, idolatries, and adulteries of our deeply fallen nature. But whenever God's monitor takes up his abode in the bosom—a conscience made honest and tender in God's fear; and when that living monitor in a man's bosom goes where he goes, stays where he stays, maintains its continual watch, keeps a check-book in which it writes down every transgression of the heart, the lip, or the hand, and brings a solemn reckoning before the eyes of a heart-searching God—it will make him groan. He will not be able to go to bed with smiles upon his face; it will so haunt him when he comes before God's footstool, that he will be compelled to sigh and groan because he has been what he has been. And thus God's monitor, whose voice never can be silenced, tells him how he has transgressed, and in how many ways he has backslidden from the Lord.

2. But persons groan who have *to carry hurry burdens*. The very paviers, to use a common illustration, who are engaged in the laborious occupation of paving our streets, can hardly bring their mallet down without a groan, so hard is the occupation. And those who have to labour under the corruptions of their nature and the evils of their hearts, will often have to groan on account of the heavy labour that they are thus put to.

3. Groaning also implies *a desire to be relieved* from the pain endured; as a patient from the keen knife of the surgeon, or a woman in travail from the source of her distress. Thus groans not merely express a sense of inward suffering, but they also testify to a desire for deliverance. Remove the pain, and you remove the

groaning; take away the cause, and the groans cease immediately. So that, the silent, or to speak more correctly, the speechless language of groans, signifies there is some deliverance looked for, wanted, or expected. And do we not find this character stamped upon living groans in the 8th chapter of Romans, where the Apostle says, "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body?" (verse 22, 23.) And then, to shew that these groanings after deliverance are not the language of nature, the Apostle traces them up to their heavenly origin. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (ver. 26.) How he traces up every living groan to the power of God! It is, he says, the Spirit of God in a sinner's bosom, speaking in him, and for him, interceding in his heart before the footstool of mercy. Some of the Lord's people are tried because their prayers are not better put together. They have "no language," they say, "to express their wants; when they fall down upon their knees before the Lord, they cannot put sentences together in good order." It is a good thing they cannot. This dove-tailed prayer suits hypocrites, and those whose religion lies on the tip of their tongue, but who know nothing of the work of the Spirit upon the heart. When sentence is nicely fitted into sentence, it suits those whose religion never sinks below their throats. But the prayers of God's people, the sighs and groans that come out of their bosom, are living testimonies that they have something more to come to the Lord with than lip service, something more weighty to pour out before him than mere head notions and the language of man. It is the feeling desires of their souls which they are thus obliged, from deep necessity, to pour out before the footstool of mercy in broken cries.

Now David knew, from soul experience, that these groanings were not hid from God. He knew that the Searcher of hearts, when he looked down from his sanctuary into his bosom, saw

there were groans there. Do you know it? You must know if there be these groans. No man can deceive you on this point. Some of you, who are the Lord's people, may not have a clear testimony of it; you may not see your names clearly written in the book of life, and not be able to rejoice in the full assurance of faith. But no man can deceive you on this point, neither can you deceive yourself, whether there are not from time to time desires working in your bosom after God; whether there are not from time to time groanings in your soul under a sense of grief and shame; longings in your heart for the appearance of the Son of God. All the persons in the world can never beat you out of this. And if you have experienced something of this feeling you can say with David, "My groaning is not hid from thee." "Thou knowest how I groan by day, and how I groan by night! How when I get into bed I have groaned to thee! and how when I wake in the morning I have still to groan to thee! Thou knowest (I can appeal to thee, for thou art acquainted with all the feelings of my soul)," "My groanings are not hid from thee." If you can say that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, there is a mark of divine life in your soul. It was in David's heart, and it is in your heart also. And God has recorded it for the encouragement and consolation of those who know something of these things by divine teaching.

III:—"*My heart panteth.*" There is something here which seems to require a little explanation. The Psalmist, or rather, the Holy Ghost by the Psalmist, brings forward a striking figure. "As the hart" (or stag) "panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." (Psalm 42:1.) Now, we may fancy for a moment what is intended by that figure. Here is a poor hunted stag flying from the dogs who are fast pursuing him to tear him to pieces; he, overcome by fatigue, all gasping and panting, sees before him a river. How he longs to reach it! and how he pants with agonizing desire to lave his limbs in that cool stream, and satiate his thirst by drinking its waters! So spiritually. The Lord's people are often hunted up and down, as David was by Saul, "like a partridge upon the mountains." How often they are hunted by Satan, hunted by their sins! how often pursued by guilt, and how often haunted by shame! How these hell-hounds are perpetually

dogging their heels! And those things make them pant after the refreshing streams of the "water of life." These exercises make them desire to drink of the brook of Siloam, and have some draught out of Bethlehem's well.

Thus, the very word "*pant*" implies that the soul is pursued by the enemies of its peace. Being all weary, all thirsty, it longs after the water of life. Is it not so with your soul sometimes? It is not when you are at ease, when you are settled upon your lees, when you can indulge in carnality and worldly pleasure; you are not then panting after God. But when something takes place that alarms and affrights your soul, something that pursues you as it were on the wings of the wind; and you are exercised, troubled, and distressed in your mind—*then* it is that you begin to pant after God. Say we are (where we are frequently) in carnal ease, and temptation attacks us, it seems then as though we had no more power to cope with it, than the very pavement on which we tread; so dark, so dead, so stupid, so lifeless, so weak are we then. But it is not always so with us. So far as we have the fear of God in our bosoms, there are times and seasons when there is some revival; and these revivals, for the most part, spring from the Lord bringing some affliction, trial, or temptation upon us. These things pursue us, as it were, and hunt us out of every false refuge, till, like the distracted hart, we are made to cry out and pant after those draughts of living water which alone can satiate our thirst. The effect of the painful sensations that the soul labours under is, as David says, "My heart panteth." You see a person sometimes, who has been labouring hard, how he pants, as though he could not get his breath! Is not this so in the experience of the Lord's people? When labouring under hard and heavy burdens, how their breath seems to fail them! When temptations attack them, does it not seem as though they must altogether faint and drop down? They are so overcome with labour that they pant and gasp for breath.

But what do they *pant after*? They pant after the Lord's manifested presence; they pant after a sense of his lovingkindness shed abroad in their soul; they pant after some

sweet testimony that the Lord is their God; they pant after some views of Christ as their Saviour; they pant after the application of his atoning blood, and some discovery of his preciousness and beauty to their hearts. Thus they "pant" after him. The word is expressive of the most earnest and intense desire—a desire that nothing can satisfy but the Lord himself. And thus the Lord's people are distinguished from all other people that dwell upon the face of the earth—that they want the Lord himself, and none but he can satisfy their longing souls. Unless the Lord himself hear their prayer, to them it is of no value; unless the Lord himself be the author of their religion, it gives them no satisfaction; unless the Lord speak to their souls, it removes no burden; unless the Lord smile upon them, their trouble and sorrow are undiminished; unless the Lord whisper, they still have to struggle with doubts and fears, and all the turmoil of their troubled bosom. So that the Lord's people are distinguished by this mark from all others—that they want the Lord himself to be all *to* them, and all *in* them; that he may have all the glory, and they all the sweet and blessed consolations. Others can be satisfied with opinions, notions, speculations, and what they are doing for the Lord. But the people of God, seeing and feeling what they are, and being deeply convinced of their lost and ruined state by nature, must have the Lord himself to be the light of their countenance, their heavenly teacher, their blessed guide, their only Saviour, their all in all here, and their all in all hereafter. After these things their hearts pant.

But is it *always* so? Are there no long seasons of carnality and barrenness? when there is no desire, no longing, no hungering, no thirsting, no panting? but a long tract of barrenness between these fruitful fields? There are long wastes of dreary wilderness between these sips and tastes; long seasons of spiritual hunger and thirst between these refreshments; long intervals in which the Lord does not appear as the light of their countenance. But, even then, the Lord's people are distinctly marked by this feature, that none but the Lord can satisfy their souls, none but the Lord can speak peace to their hearts, none but the Lord is still their salvation, none but the Lord is still their desire. And when they

have him not, they seem to themselves to have no religion worth the name; and feel as destitute, needy, naked, and barren, as if they never had one testimony from the Lord, never known his presence, never basked in the beams of his love.

IV.—*"My strength faileth."* And a good thing it did. What made David's strength fail him? It was because he could not in his own strength bear up under the heavy burdens that lay upon his heart. Depend upon it, a man will bear his burdens as long as he can; he will not give up till he is forced. Man will do all that he can to merit heaven; he will never receive superabounding grace into his heart and conscience until he has known something of the aboundings of sin. No man will ever prize salvation by the merit of another, until all his own merits have been scattered like chaff before the wind. No man will ever prize the manifestations of dying love to his soul until he is completely out of love with himself. No man will ever look up to heaven to be saved by a word from heaven, until he has first seen the depths of hell. So that it is a good thing, however painful, for a man's strength to fail him. And it is the Lord's purpose that our strength should fail us, that his strength may be made perfect in our weakness. It is a very painful point to come to in our soul's experience—to have no strength at all; to be where the Lord brings his people, as set forth Psalm 107:12; "He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help." To be in that place where we must have some deliverance from God, and yet to feel unable to work it in our own souls, must needs be a painful, trying spot. To feel ourselves on the brink of hell, and to know that none but an almighty hand can pluck us thence; to sink in our minds, and know that none but God himself can raise us up and bring us safe to glory, is a very trying place. But the Lord brings all his people there, sooner or later. He thus weans them from self-strength, self-wisdom, and self-righteousness. He breaks the arm of creature strength, that he may have the honour of laying the everlasting arms underneath the soul; he strips them of everything, that he may have the glory, and we the comfort of being clothed by him from head to foot. So that, however painful it may be to say, "My strength faileth me;" it is a

spot into which all the Lord's people must come, and come the more certainly and thoroughly as the corruptions of their heart are laid bare.

I doubt not there was a time with the Lord's people here, when all their strength was not completely gone, when they could make some *little* head against temptation, could stand against sin, could do something to put away God's displeasure and gain his approval. But what painful lessons have they learnt since then! Now they know that nothing but the power of God can keep them every moment from falling; nothing but the hand of God can hold them from running headlong into temptation; nothing but the work of God can bring forth in heart, lip, and life any one fruit or grace of the Spirit. All their strength has so completely failed them, that they have to lie as clay in the hands of the Potter that he may make them what he would have them to be; and their desire is, to feel the heavenly fingers moulding them into vessels fit for the Master's use.

"My strength faileth." I am unable to raise up one divine thought or feeling. "My strength faileth me" so completely, that I can never fight against Satan, never overcome the world, never crucify the flesh, never subdue sin, never keep my heart out of temptation, nor temptation out of my heart. "My strength altogether faileth me." But what is the effect? It glorifies the Lord thereby; it makes this text sweet and precious to our heart; "Help is laid on One that is mighty." And when we can firmly believe that Jesus is our strength, then are we beginning to look up to the Lord to feel his strength made perfect in our weakness; and then we see the object and the blessedness of our strength failing us, that we may know the power of his resurrection, and give him all the glory of our complete and everlasting salvation.

"My strength faileth me." How does a man learn this? By having burdens put upon his back, which he cannot carry in his own power; having temptations to grapple with, which he cannot overcome; feeling corruptions working in his heart, which he cannot subdue; finding the cravings of lusts, which he cannot

deny; discovering the whole body of sin and death to be perpetually running after evil, and he unable to control it one moment. He learns it also by his thorough inability to bring into his soul any testimony from God, any one whisper from the Lord's lips, any one smile from his countenance, or any one clear and certain mark that he is interested in the love and blood of the Lamb. Thus, when he says, "My strength faileth me," his strength fails him to do anything that he desires to have done in him and for him; and thus he sinks down before the footstool of mercy a ruined and helpless sinner. But is not this the very time for the Lord to appear? The Lord never appears till our strength fails. When our strength fails, he makes *his* strength known; when we droop, he raises; when we die, he revives; when we are cast down, he lifts up; and when all things are against us, he shews us that all are for us. Thus, it is absolutely indispensable that the Lord's people should walk in this path, that their strength should entirely fail them, that they may enter into the riches of a Saviour's love and blood, and find him suitable and precious to their soul.

V.—"*As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.*" There was a time when there was light with you, and others of the Lord's family. There was a time with you when you could see the truths in God's word, and even see they were all yours, and your name in the book of life. But have you not found the light of your eyes gone from you? You see the doctrines as plainly as ever; but cannot feel the power of those doctrines. There was a time when you could go to God's footstool, see Jesus by the eye of faith, and have the affections of your heart flowing out unto him; could take hold of his strength, believe his word, enjoy his promises, and receive him as made unto you all that your soul desires. But have you not found since with David, "as for the light of mine eyes, it is also gone from me?" It is withdrawn. You now "would see Jesus." There was a time when you saw him in every chapter; you could see him in creation, see him in providence, and see him in grace; see him in hearing; see him in prayer; see him as the Son of God standing at the right hand of the Father, interceding for your soul. But light is gone from us. Have we not had often



since to walk in darkness, when there was no light, unable to see our signs, or read our evidences and testimonies?

There was a time too when you had light to see the path in which you were walking, and had no doubt you were one of the living family; you could see the track in which the Lord was leading you, and believed it would land you safe in glory. Looking also on the path of providence, you saw how the Lord had appeared in *this way* and *that way*, and believed all would end well at last. But, alas, alas! a change has come over your soul. Now you have to say, "the light of my eyes is also gone from me." You cannot see the things you once saw, believe the things you once believed, feel the things you once felt, nor enjoy the things you once enjoyed. The days of darkness are now many. "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head; and when by his light I walked through darkness." (Job 29:2, 3.)

Is this the case with you? But is your case singular? Is it not to be found in God's word? Is it not to be felt in the experience of God's saints? Are you the only child of God thus? Are you the only believer who cannot see his signs, or read his testimonies? the only living soul who is walking in darkness, and without light? the only one who has lost sweet testimonies and consolations, and mourned after those things he once enjoyed, but fears he shall never enjoy again? Was not Job? was not David? was not Jeremiah? was not Hezekiah here? Here these saints of God were, looking back upon the days that were passed, and wishing those days might once more return. Yea, the Lord himself told his disciples, that they would long to see one day of the Son of Man. When they were near Jesus, they could look upon him by the eye of sense, as well as by the eye of faith; they could listen to the gracious words that fell from his lips, sit with him at the same board, and look upon his Person. But he was taken from them up to heaven; and then this was the feeling of their hearts, "O that we could see the Lord as once we saw him!" And this is the spot in which many of the Lord's people are. The dearest and most highly favoured of the family of God are often brought to this

spot, where they can only say, "the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me."

Is their case, then, so bad as they think? Have they not fellow travellers who are walking in the same chequered path? fellow mourners who are shedding the same solitary tear? fellow pilgrims tacking the same thorny road, sinking in the same miry clay? If they doubt it, let them read what the Holy Ghost has here recorded, and see whether the feelings of their heart and their experience are not written here as with a ray of light, "Lord, all my desire is before thee." Are not these the very feelings of your heart, those of you who know what it is to sigh, cry, and mourn with David under a sense of the hiding of God's face, and the workings of your own wretched heart, full of guilt, sin, and shame? But with it all, there are blessed marks of the life of God at work in your soul. It is better for you to have some of these painful exercises, these perplexing things in your minds, than be at ease in Zion. The Lord might have left you, as he has left thousands of dead professors—at the same level, never sinking, never rising—never ebbing, never flowing—never waxing, never waning. Where they were in January, there they are in December; where they were in 1836, there they are in 1846, and there they will be, if they live, in 1856. They resemble those stone images we see in the New Road. These have all the features of a man; the lips, the ears, the nose, and the eyes. Come by twenty years hence, you will see the old statue standing where it did—in all the rigidity of marble—a little more dirty and soiled; but still standing there just as it was twenty years ago. Is not this the picture of a man with a name to live while dead, with the doctrines of grace in his head, and none of the power of it in his heart? What was he twenty years ago? What he is now. Like the statue I have been describing, a little more soiled perhaps and dirty with the corruptions of the world; but just in 1846 what he was in 1826—dead then, and dead now. Is it not better to be a living man moulded by the divine fingers, though perhaps rather more dwarfish than these gigantic statues, which look down so frowningly upon us from the stone-cutter's yard? Is it not better to be little and low, but alive to God, than to be one of these tall

images that have merely the outward appearance of a man?

If there be grace in our hearts, there will be more or less of these fluctuations, these movings to and fro of the divine and hidden life. But it is far better, however painful it may be, to have these perplexities and exercises, than to be settled upon our lees, and be at ease in Zion. It is these exercises that keep the soul alive. Remove them, and the man sinks into death. The water of the sea, by ebbing to and fro, is kept fresh and sweet. But shut these waters up in a dock—how stagnant they become! they lose all their freshness, and become little else than a mass of filth and corruption. So, leave you who fear God's name without these exercises, without the workings of the Spirit upon your heart, without these movings to and fro, without these ebbings and flowings of divine life in your soul, and you would soon be like the stagnant water in the dock—without any pleadings with God in prayer, any breathings of life after him, anything that manifests you as a living monument of God's mercy. Therefore, however painful, trying, and perplexing—however contradictory to flesh and blood and reason the path may be; yet it is far better to be a living soul, with sharp exercises, cutting temptations, severe afflictions and sorrows, than to be let alone by God; to have no painful exercises, nor pleasurable emotions; no frowns from God's face, nor smiles from his loving countenance; no tears of sorrow, nor tears of joy; to have nothing from the Lord, but everything from self. To be left—to be left to ourselves—to our pride—to our carnality, to our wickedness! It is far better to be one of the Lord's poor, tried, tempted family, whom he thus takes in his hand, whom he thus mysteriously and mercifully exercises, than to live as many do, without care or any fear, and never know their state before God till they drop into the burning lake.

## Living and Dying with the Lord Jesus

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,  
November 25, 1858

(A Posthumous Sermon)

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." 2 Tim. 2:11-13

These striking words are introduced by an expression which occurs two or three times in the epistles of Paul, and always bearing with it something remarkable. For instance, in the 1st chapter of the 1st epistle, *"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." And in the 3rd chapter *"This is a true saying,* If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." What is the import of the expression, *"It is a faithful saying?"* It means, *"The word I am about to speak unto you is faithful,"* in other words, *it is to be relied upon, worthy of all credit.* It is not a matter you may set aside as of little importance whether you attend to it or not. But the matter I lay before you is a matter of the greatest weight and deepest importance, and must have your implicit attention. So we may well listen to a word heralded by such a declaration. If you came to me or I to you, and you were to say to me or I were to say to you, "I have something to tell you of importance," I or you would naturally think it was not a mere trifle, but that there was a deep importance in it. So when the Holy Ghost says by the pen of Paul, *"It is a faithful saying,"* he evidently means something of importance. Thus we ought to take the more earnest heed to them lest at any time we should let them slip. If the Holy Ghost has seen fit, by the pen of Paul, to usher in these words by such an important declaration, the least we can do is to give the more earnest heed. In opening up these words, I shall take the clauses as they are revealed by the Spirit, and as the Lord may give me

ability and feeling in my soul I shall endeavour to lay them before you. "It is a faithful saying: For if we be *dead with him, we shall also live with him.*" We hope to live with him. There are times and seasons in your soul when you look beyond the narrow isthmus of time into eternity, and hope to be with Jesus; and you say with Job, "I would not live always;" and fixing your eyes upon the eternal weight of glory, you hope to live with Jesus. The thought would almost kill you that when your body sinks into the grave, your soul will lie under the wrath of God; that you will not be with Jesus when body and soul are separated. But what is necessary in order that we should live with Jesus? That we should die with Jesus, as I was endeavouring to open up in the exposition. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." For a little while he was made a little lower than the angels that he might taste death; so if we are to be conformed to Christ's image hereafter, we must be conformed in a measure to it here below. We must die with him in this time and state. Well, let us see how Jesus died. I was showing you in my exposition that he did not die by the violence of man, not by the nails or spear; nor did the pains that he endured in body or mind separate the body and soul of the Redeemer on the cross. But he died. How? Under the law, because he bore its curse and penalty. As it is written, "The soul that sinneth shall die." Jesus had to endure the penalty. He stood as his people's representative with all their sins upon his head, and thus enduring the law's curse and penalty, he died under the law. So the saints of God must die under the law as the Lord Jesus Christ died under the law. The law must *kill* him as it did Jesus Christ, and it kills him when it takes hold of his heart with a killing sentence, and to use the expression of the inspired apostle, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I *died.*" When the law works, the soul becomes guilty before God, when the commandment comes, and the soul dies under the sentence, condemnation and curse of that most holy law, it dies with Christ; for it is in the conscience the curse came that the Lord Jesus Christ endured, when he was made a curse for us. And as Jesus died under the curse of the law, so does the soul die virtually

when it is killed, as to any hopes of righteousness, as to any legal obedience. When he died under the law, he died also to the law, it never could have harassed him again; when it had spent upon him all its violence it could do no more. Just as in a natural sense the criminal having endured the sentence of the law is discharged; so the Lord Jesus Christ died under the law, and then to the law. As the Apostle says, "I through the law am dead unto the law," the curse, the spirituality of it, "that I might live unto God." We are also to die with Christ by dying under the wrath of God, not but what the wrath of God was taken away by the death of Christ; for it was expiated by the sacrifices and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and viewed by the eye of man he died under the wrath of God, the wrath of God as revealed against sin; but what the saint of God endures in his conscience and soul, every killing feeling in the soul, every condemning sense of guilt, and everything whereby the soul is slaughtered and killed as to any hope of salvation by legal obedience, is dying under the wrath of God, as Jesus died under the wrath of God.

Again, Jesus died under the wrath of man. Guilt, shame and ignominy were the attendants of the last moments of the Saviour himself, the scorn of ungodly men, and his disciples even forsaking him, as though the enemy had gained his last victory. Again, he died apart from all human consolation, so the saint of God has to die in the same manner. He has to die alone as the Lord Jesus Christ died alone on the cross. Again, he has to die to the world as the Apostle speaks, to the strength and power of sin, the gratification of the flesh in a thousand forms, he has to die to all that the world calls good and great, to everything which is the world's life, and so far as he does that, he dies with Christ. When a man is taking no more interest in the things of time and sense than a man upon a cross, carrying his life in his hand, and dying to everything, then that man has died with Christ. If we have no union and communion, no sympathy or feeling with a dying Christ, so as to die virtually as he died actually, experimentally and feelingly as he died in open act, if we do not die with Christ we never can sit at the cross and receive blood and love into our conscience. We cannot live with Christ as long as we are boasting of anything in the flesh: as long as sin and the world move and

act in our hearts, and the things of time and sense have the chief direction of our affections, there is no dying with Christ. And if there is no dying with Christ, where is there any evidence of living with Christ? "Death and resurrection" go together. We must know both. We must know what it is to die more or less daily, and that is the reason the Lord sends so many afflictions, this is why he strips his children of property, allows sickness to come upon their body, and suffers Satan to harass their souls. It is all to show them they must die with Christ, and then they find as they die with Christ they live with Christ, they gain heaven, even in this time and state, for he who lives at God's right hand says, "As I live, ye shall live also." We begin then to live with Christ, as we die with Christ. Life is opened up on the ruins of death. To die is to give up sin daily, to die with Christ crucified is to learn the mystery of living, and in the same proportion as we die with Christ we shall also live with him. Life cannot be known except as we learn to die. We have to learn first to die, then to live. We have to learn first what the misery of sin is, and then the blessedness of salvation. We have to learn first how deeply fallen and awfully sunk in ruin we are, and then what a hidden life there is in Christ, and thus it is that we begin to live the life of faith in the lion of God. The Apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Here he speaks of himself as being *crucified* with Christ, in other words dying with Christ, and he adds elsewhere, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is a crucifixion and mortification of the old man of sin and death, and as the soul gets into the death of the Lord Jesus Christ it begins to live with him. This is the true life of a believer, *to die and live*. And if we have anything of this life of faith, this union and communion with Christ, prayer and spiritual joyfulness in the things of God, any goings out after the Lord Jesus Christ, we live with him. But unless we know what it is to live a life of faith, grace, hope and love, what right have we to think that we shall live with him in life everlasting. Heaven begins below, and the life that is to be consummated in heaven is given here below; therefore, "He that

believeth in him *hath* everlasting life" not, *shall have*. Why? Because life eternal begins in the soul now. *Spiritual* life and *eternal* life are the same, and only as we know what it is to die with Christ do we know what a living with Christ is. Have not you been surprised that when you were most pressed, and when most harassed, you cried most? When pressed in circumstances, low in body, and the things of time and sense were most against you, just in proportion the life of faith began to spring up. But when the things of time and sense went on well with you, and providence was blessing you with prosperity, then you got careless. It was because you were living to the world, and thus you knew less what it was to live with Jesus. "*If we be dead with him we shall also live with him.*" How opposed to the flesh! How it wants ease and comfort! How unwilling to die! Willing to do anything rather than carry the weighty cross! "*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.*" You hope to reign with Christ. Does not that fill your soul with the anticipation of blessedness? Poor christian, though harassed by Satan, trampled down in your soul, a poor sufferer in mind, body and circumstances, and it may be in soul, yet you can look forward to a day when you will live and reign with Christ. Now your path is a path of suffering, then you will be out of the way of suffering, you will be reigning with Christ. No cross, no crown. We often mistake that matter, we think we suffer with Christ when we suffer not, and we think we do not suffer with Christ when we really do. To suffer with Christ is to suffer in union with Christ, in a measure as Christ suffered. But Christ suffered from the assaults of Satan. Do you suffer from the assaults of Satan? Christ suffered persecution. Do you suffer persecution on christian grounds? Christ suffered the hidings of God's face. Do you suffer the hidings of God's face? Was Christ cast out as evil, was he reviled, and persecuted by men? Are you cast out as evil, reviled and persecuted for his sake? Do you suffer with Christ by experiencing in your souls what the Lord Jesus Christ experienced in his soul? This is having a union and communion with him. Did he suffer in the garden under a sense of God's wrath? Do you suffer in your soul? Satan tempted him and bid him to turn the stones into bread, to worship him, and taking him to a pinnacle of the temple tempted him to commit



suicide. Do you suffer from Satan's temptations, suggestions, and awful artillery? And do your sufferings bring you nearer to a suffering Christ? Is a suffering Jesus very near and dear to your soul? Because he is a suffering Christ, his sufferings are the best claims to your faith, hope and love; so that the more you see his sufferings the more he is endeared to your soul, as being so suitable to you, in all your wants and woes. Now if a man goes through life and suffers nothing, has no losses, no trials, has no measure of suffering to assimilate him to the Lord Jesus Christ, what hope has he of reigning with Christ? What a delusion must he be under, what presumption! to think that he shall reign with Christ, and cannot look back to a single day or hour's cross, and never knew anything of sin, the contempt of the world, the malice of Satan, and everything that tries and crucifies the flesh! There are those who would fain make us believe that their names are written in the book of life, and yet when you come to talk to them about crucifying the flesh, walking in the path of trial, temptation and exercises, you soon find out they know little about it. Such persons are deceiving themselves. Their prospects in Christ must end in delusion. But take a poor saint of God who is suffering under guilt of conscience, under the fears of death, the assaults of Satan and the frown of man, the world pouring shame, contempt, and ignominy upon him, take this poor suffering child of God, and you will find he is the last person to say "I shall reign with Christ:" for every temptation seems to bring a dark cloud over him. While one christian is speaking in the sure confidence of going to heaven, he is doubting and fearing. Yet look at the man, he is evidently bearing the marks of his suffering Head. So that although people may be deceived in suffering with him; on the other hand presumptuous Pharisees or hypocrites will believe that they will reign with Christ when they do not suffer with him. As we are conformed to his suffering image here we shall be conformed to his glorified image hereafter. This is the sweet cordial; the refreshing balm to the wounded spirits of the saints here below. They need it and all the support that God can give. They need every drop of the cordial, and there is nothing like this to revive their drooping spirits, nothing like a sweet faith in the souls that when their sufferings are ended here below, they shall

reign with the Lord Jesus Christ. How many there are who seem fairly, I might say fully ashamed of their profession, who like Nicodemus are ashamed of being seen where truth is preached, or consorting with the saints of God. How can such persons expect to look up when the books are opened and the judge is set upon the throne, who said when upon earth, "He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father and his holy angels, and him that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." There are those who deny Christ by their life and talk, by doing those things which are hateful in his pure eyes; who offend him by their lives and lips. If you are openly living in things that the Lord abhors, how can you expect to reign with Christ? But there is a denying him through shame. Even a child of God may be entangled here. He denies him through shame, he cannot bear this weighty cross; and as Peter denied the Lord, so may the child of God deny for a moment his Lord and Master, but the Lord denies him his presence, smile, and the lifting up of his countenance upon him. You may be placed in circumstances where you may find it exceedingly difficult to confess Jesus; you may have ungodly companions, and many other things may tempt you to deny him. I have been tempted again and again to deny him. But after you have denied your Lord and Master, how do you feel when you get upon your knees? How is conscience? Do you not lose for a time the sweet realization of his testimony that you are his; therefore if we deny him, he also will deny us. But if you are enabled with all meekness to confess him, he also will confess you before his Father. You need not bring out your religion everywhere, you need not say in every railway carriage, "I am a Particular Baptist," but you are to show it by your life and conversation. To bring it out when uncalled for is one thing, to deny it is another. If you deny him, he will deny you at the last day, and here is the sweet consolation of his presence. How hard it is to maintain a christian profession. If you go into any change of situation, any change of circumstances; make a stand at first. To go on fearing this man, and the other man, what your master may say, or what your fellow-workmen will think, by all this you will bring contempt upon yourself, and how can you tell whether the Lord will not

deny you. *"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself."* There are those who believe not, and the apostle puts himself amongst them. "Ah! they say, what is this about?" In reply to which he says, "If you believe not, it makes no difference, the thing is true, it does not alter the matter, there is no change in him, whatever you may think, do, or say, that will not alter him, he abideth faithful to his own word. True, you may bring destruction upon your own head; but you will never turn the Lord Jesus Christ from his purposes." Well, what are you to believe? You need to believe that you are suffering with Christ when doubts and fears cover your mind with darkness, and guilt fills your soul. These doubts and fears do not alter your state and condition, nor the Lord's dealings towards you. If you are in the covenant, if your name is written in the book of life, and your sins are washed away in his atoning blood, he cannot deny himself or his work of grace and his work of love upon the heart. He abideth faithful. If our salvation depended upon the durability of man, no one would be saved. But he abideth faithful, and here is our standing. If he has called you to die with him, you shall live with him, if he has called you to suffer with him, you shall reign with him; if he has called you to bear the cross with him, you shall wear the crown with him. If he has guided your feet into the ways of truth and peace, he will guide you safe home to glory. You will have your sufferings, you must have them, your inward denials, your thoughts of unbelief, doubts, fears, suspicions, and darkness of mind; all these are the way in which you have to walk. Yet he abideth faithful, he cannot alter, he will bring home all the saints to glory, not a hoof shall be left behind. Then shall all appear before God in Zion.

## THE LIVING MAN'S COMPLAINT

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, October 16th, 1842, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester.

"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." Lamentations 3:39-41

In all this congregation there is perhaps not a single individual who is not possessed of some kind of religion, and who has not some hope that **that** religion will take him safe to heaven. But were we to examine into the foundation of this religion, were we to dig deep in order to see the pillars on which it stands, it is to be feared that the hope of very few would be found to rest on a solid basis.

Most persons take their religion upon trust, without any scrutiny or examination. Men do not act thus in natural things; they do not take things upon trust in the affairs of time and sense. Knowing the wide and almost universal prevalence of fraud and deception, most persons examine with great minuteness whatever they purchase; and generally speaking, in proportion to the value of the article will it be more minutely scrutinized, and the greater pains be taken to detect the real from the counterfeit. Yet in the case of religion, that important thing on which eternity depends, men will take it up without examination as to its foundation in their own souls, and pass through life well satisfied that they are bound for heaven, without one heart-searching cry to God whether it be His work in their hearts or not.

If then the value set upon a thing is exhibited by the scrutiny exercised upon it, religion, taking the great majority of cases, would appear to have no value at all. It is taken up at random by hundreds, without any personal knowledge of what vital godliness

is, and therefore no inquiry is ever made in the soul, whether it be of that kind which will stand in the trying hour.

Yet God in His Word has not left us altogether destitute of marks whereby the state of the soul may be examined and scrutinized; but He has in His blessed Scriptures laid down certain unerring tests, the possession or non-possession of which determines the possession or non-possession of vital godliness. Nor can it be said that a minister stands up faithfully who does not bring these marks and tests to bear upon the consciences of the people to whom he preaches, that his hearers may have an evidence whether their religion came down from the Father of lights, or was stolen by their own pilfering fingers, and was palmed upon them by the craft of Satan. I think our text, if the Lord enable me rightly to handle it, will furnish us with some such tests and marks as I have alluded to, and thus be a means in the Spirit's hands whereby we may come to some decision whether or not the work of grace is begun, and is being carried on in our souls.

The prophet, speaking in the name of the Church, says, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

I. Now there is one word on which the text turns, one pin or pivot on which the truth contained in it revolves, and that is the word "**living**". "Wherefore doth a **living** man complain?" If this be the case, we cannot move a single step forward until we have examined this little word, and come to some decision as to what is meant by it. Who then is "a living man?" That question must be settled at the outset. I believe then that by the expression is meant a **spiritually** living man, one into whom the Holy Ghost has breathed a new and divine nature, and brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light—a man whom He has made eternally alive, and by His sovereign and supernatural operation has quickened from a death in trespasses and sins.

But this great, unspeakably great and mighty revolution cannot take place in a man without his being more or less sensible of it.

How sensible our bodies are to even the minutest touch! Not a pain can affect any member without some sensation being communicated to the whole. The heart cannot palpitate, the head cannot ache, the cheek cannot flush, the hands cannot burn, without distinct feeling and perceptible consciousness. Shall our bodies then have all these distinct perceptions of everything that affects them and shall our souls have a divine operation carried on in them by the hand of God, and yet not be conscious of any feeling at all? Shall a man be tremblingly alive to every minute thing that affects his body, and yet not alive to that mighty revolution which the Holy Ghost effects in his soul? No; depend upon it, whatever work there be going on in the soul, there must be some distinct and perceptible feeling precisely corresponding to the work so carried on. If the work be deep and powerful, equally deep and powerful will be the feelings; if the work be less decided and less intense, the weaker and more indistinct will be the spiritual sensations; and if the work be utterly absent, then will there be an utter absence of feeling.

Now among the many feelings and sensations which exist in every divinely quickened soul, we may specially instance **complaint** as one, and as such it is clearly pointed out in our text. "Wherefore should a living man complain?" As though **complaint** was the mark of life, and as if he who never complained was dead in trespasses and sins. But the text says, "**Wherefore** should a living man complain?" as though it asked, "What causes this complaint? Whence does it spring, and what is its ground?"

To this inquiry we may reply,

1. He complains **of his sins**; and this complaint on account of sin is one of the first marks of the spiritual existence of the life of God in his soul. The spiritual feeling of sin is indispensable to the feeling of salvation. A sense of the malady must ever precede, and prepare the soul for a believing reception and due apprehension of the remedy. Wherever God intends to reveal His Son with power, wherever He intends to make the gospel to be "a

joyful sound," He makes the conscience feel and groan under the burden of sin. Sure I am that when a man is labouring under the burden of sin, he will be full of complaint.

The Bible records hundreds of the complaints of God's people under the burden of sin. "My wounds stink and are corrupt," cries one, "because of my foolishness. I am troubled: I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long" **Ps 38:5,6**. "My soul," cries another, "is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave" **Ps 88:3**. "He hath led me," groans out a third, "and brought me into darkness, but not into light" **La 3:2**. A living man needs must cry under such circumstances. He cannot carry the burden without complaining of its weight. He cannot feel the arrow sticking in his conscience without groaning under the pain. He cannot have the worm gnawing his vitals without complaining of its venomous tooth. He cannot feel that God is incensed against him, without bitterly complaining that the Lord is his enemy.

Spiritual complaint then is a mark of spiritual life, and is one which God recognises as such. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself" **Jer 31:18**. It shows that he has something to mourn over, something to make him groan being burdened; that sin has been opened up to him in its hateful malignancy; that it is a trouble and distress to his soul; that he cannot roll it like a sweet morsel under his tongue, but that it is found out by the penetrating eye, and punished by the chastening hand of God.

2. But the living man will complain not only of sin, but **on account of the absence of those things which he desires to feel**. Thus he will complain that God hides His face from him; that the groans and sighs of his heart never appear to reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth; that the Lord does not appear in his soul; that He does not sweetly reveal His peace in his conscience; that He does not favour him with testimonies that he is eternally His, and is interested in the blood and love of His dear Son; and that, with all his sighs and cries, he cannot bring down

the anxiously desired blessing into his heart, nor feel Christ formed in him the hope of glory.

3. He will complain too **of the inward workings of his base nature, and of the deep corruption of his desperately wicked heart.** He will groan under the temptations and fiery darts of the wicked one, and the dreadful thoughts that are so violently injected into his mind. And at other times, he will complain of hardness of heart, of darkness of mind, of barrenness of soul, of complete helplessness and impotency to anything spiritually good. He will complain that sin will work in him; that, do what he will, he cannot do anything to please himself, and therefore he can do nothing to please God. The living man will be always a complaining man. He will be more or less one of those of whom the prophet speaks, who "sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" **Eze 9:4**. Like righteous Lot in Sodom, he will "vex his righteous soul day by day" with a sight and sense of his internal wickedness.

II. But the prophet in the text asks a question, "**Wherefore** doth a living man complain?" As though he would remonstrate with him for complaining, and assure him that he had after all no good ground nor solid foundation for his complaint; for he adds, "a man for the punishment of his sins?" As though he should say, "Let a living man be full of sorrows. Are they not all richly deserved? Have not his sins merited every affliction bodily or mental that can come upon him?"

But we must not understand by the word "punishment," anything of a vindictive nature. God never punishes the sins of His elect penally; that is, not as He punishes the sins of the reprobate. The eternal covenant forbids this. "Fury is not in Me," saith the Lord **Isa 27:4**. The elect are accepted in Jesus, are pardoned in Him, are complete in Him. This is their eternal and unalterable covenant standing—the fruit and effect of their everlasting union with the Son of God. But though this forbids punishment in its strictly penal sense, it by no means excludes **chastisement**. Thus we are not to understand by the word "punishment" in the



text, the infliction of God's righteous wrath—that foretaste of eternal damnation with which, sometimes even in this life, He visits the ungodly; but it signifies that chastisement which is the privilege of the heir, and distinguishes him from the bastard. It is under this chastisement, then, that the living man is brought to complain, and he will often see in the afflictions that befall him, the rod of the Lord as the chastisement of sin. When he thus sees light in God's light, he may justly say, "**Wherefore** doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Are they not chastisements, not punishments; the rod of a Father's correction, not the vindictive stroke of offended justice?

Perhaps his property is lost through unlooked-for circumstances, or the roguery of others; and he is brought down from comparative affluence to be a poor man. When he can see that this is a chastisement for his pride and carnality in former days, he is able to put his mouth in the dust. Or if the Lord afflict him in his body so that he shall scarcely enjoy a day's health, when he sees and feels how he abused his health and strength when he possessed them, and at the same time perceives from how many hurtful snares his bodily affliction instrumentally preserves him, he is able at times to bear it meekly and patiently. He may have, too, serious afflictions in his family, or find, like David, "his house not so with God" as he could wish; but when he sees that a sickly wife or disobedient children are but so many strokes of chastisement, and far lighter than his sins demand; when he sees that they come from the hand of love, and not from eternal wrath—that they are the stripes of a Father, not the vindictive strokes of an angry Judge, he feels then that love is mingled with chastisement, and his spirit is meekened, and his heart softened, and he is brought down to say, "Wherefore should a living man complain?" Why should he complain, when these very severe stripes are chastisements inseparable from heirship, and when they come from a kind hand which is thus conforming him to the image of Jesus Christ?

Now, until a man gets there he cannot but complain. Until he is brought spiritually to see that all his afflictions, griefs and sorrows

are chastisements and not punishments, and is able to receive them as the stripes of love, he must and will complain. But, generally speaking, before the Lord lifts up the light of His countenance upon him, before He gives him a sense of peace in his conscience, He will bring him "to accept," as the Scripture speaks **Le 26:41**, "of the punishment of his iniquity". He will thus receive these strokes of chastisement with a subdued spirit; he will confess that they are justly deserved; and his obstinacy and rebelliousness being in a measure broken, he will lie as a poor and needy supplicant at the foot of the cross.

III. But we pass on to show from the words of the text what is the effect of this chastisement. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."

Now, I believe in my conscience that there are hundreds, I might say thousands, of professors who have never known in the whole course of their religious profession what it is to have "searched and tried their ways;" to have been put into the balances and weighed in the scales of divine justice; or to have stood cast and condemned in their own feelings before God as the heart-searching Jehovah. From such a trying test, from such an unerring touchstone, they have ever shrunk. And why? Because they have an inward consciousness that their religion will not bear a strict and scrutinizing examination. Like the deceitful tradesman, who allures his customers into the back shop where the light of the sun does not shine, in order to elude detection when he spreads his flimsy madeup goods before them, so those who have an inward consciousness that their religion is not of heavenly origin, shun the light. As the Lord says, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" **Joh 3:20,21**. I desire on this point to speak to your consciences. If you know nothing of having from time to time your ways searched and tried by God's Word, or if you rise up with bitterness against an experimental, heart-searching ministry that would try them for you, it shows that there is some rotten spot in

you—something that you dare not bring to the light. The candle of the Lord has not searched the hidden secrets of your heart; nor have you cried with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." **Ps 139:23,24**

The effect, then, of the chastisement spoken of in the text is to produce this self-examination. "Let us search and try our ways." The man under divine chastisement begins to examine the root of his religion. He can no longer take it upon credit, but he looks into the very foundation of his profession—into its commencement and progress, and at all the circumstances connected with his first setting out, to try whether he received his religion from God or from man.

But the text speaks of "ways". "Let us search and try our ways." What are these ways? Some of these are **ways of the flesh**. The man has fallen perhaps into circumstances of temptation; Satan has spread snares for his feet, and he has become entangled in the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life **1Jo 2:16**. Chastisements are sent to bring him out of these snares; and their effect is that he begins to "search his ways;" and as the Spirit of the Lord as a Spirit of judgment and of godly fear operates in his conscience, he finds that these ways were not good, but were ways of sin and death.

But as he searches and tries his ways, he begins to find that not only his **worldly** ways, but that his **religious** ways also will not bear a strict investigation. As the light of truth falls into his conscience, and is attended with a divine quickening in God's way **Ps 119:37**, everything is brought under the strict scrutiny of this light. As the apostle says, "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" **Eph 5:13**.

When a man thus begins to examine his ways since he first spiritually felt the power of eternal realities, they are all weighed

up in his conscience one by one. He begins by examining the root of his religious profession, and looks at its very first commencement—at the time and manner of his first setting out. Did he begin with the Lord, or did the Lord begin with him? What was the foundation and origin of that profession of vital godliness in which he now finds himself? Was it taken up from worldly motives? Was any pecuniary advantage gained thereby? Was it founded on personal affection? Did it proceed from the persuasion of father, or mother, or Sunday school teacher? If conscience is here on his side, and he finds no corrupt root at the foundation, he is encouraged to proceed a little further. He will look at his first convictions, and he is encouraged to believe from their nature and effects that they were of God. This leads him on to look at his reception of the gospel. How did he receive the gospel? Was it "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power?" **1Co 2:4** Did he "receive it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh in those that believe?" **1Th 2:13**. And how did he receive the doctrines of grace? Did he get them from men? Did he receive them with the outward ear only, or did they drop into his soul with dew, unction, and power? And what was their effect upon him? Did they bring contrition into his soul? Did faith receive them, love embrace them, and hope anchor in them? If he has attended to the ordinance of baptism, and is a member of a gospel church, he will search and examine how he was led into that ordinance, and what induced him to make a public profession. He will thus search and try his ways, and bring to the test of truth and conscience the whole of his religious course, that he may have some satisfactory testimony whether his ways have been directed by the leadings of the Spirit, and have sprung from the inward teachings of that divine Instructor, or whether they are from the self-will of the flesh, from nature under the garb of religion, or from Satan's delusions as an angel of light. This is "making straight paths for our feet," as the Holy Ghost directs **Heb 12:13**; "examining ourselves whether we be in the faith" **2Co 13:5**; "judging ourselves that we might not be judged" **1Co 11:31**. Thus the soul of David was engaged when he appealed to

the Lord **Ps 139:1**, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me."

But the Lord must search and try us by His Spirit before we shall search and try ourselves. As the prophet speaks, "It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees" **Zep 1:12**. And the Lord often makes use of trials and afflictions to bring His candle to search all the inward parts **Pr 20:27**. It is from some experience of these searchings that I am led to search others. I cannot take my own religion upon trust, and therefore I cannot take other people's. I cannot receive for myself any religion except that which the Lord is pleased with His own blessed mouth to drop into my soul, and with His own hand to work in my heart; and why should I receive yours if it do not come in the same way? I am well satisfied that no religion but what came **from** heaven can **take** a man to heaven; that there is no solid hope but that which God imparts, no genuine love but that which God sheds abroad in the heart, no filial confidence but such as arises from the light of God's countenance. I am perfectly satisfied that nothing else can support a man in the trying hour—nothing else can take him through the dark valley, or land him safe on Canaan's shore. Therefore I should not be honest to you if I did not weigh up your religion in the same scale in which I weigh mine, and apply the same standard to it as to my own. I know such will be the effect when the Lord begins to search us, and there will be a cry in the soul, "Let us search and try our ways."  
**La 3:40**

And what, for the most part, will be the fruit and result of a man's thus searching and trying his ways, but that he will find his ways not good, that he has backslidden from the Lord, that he has taken much upon credit, that in thousands of instances he has put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter? He will find too that he has invariably been deceived, except when the Lord has been pleased to instruct him; cast down, except when the Lord was pleased to uphold him; deluded by the devil and his own heart, except when the Lord was pleased mercifully to undeceive him,

and show him Satan's devices. And the end of all his searching will be that "in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

IV. But we gather from the text another effect of this humbling experience. It leads him to cry, "Let us **turn again to the Lord:**" as though he had done nothing else but turn from Him; as though every way not of God's instruction in the soul had been a way of death; every path not of God's leading, a way of error. When he is brought here, to be feelingly destitute of creature righteousness, wisdom, and strength, to see that he has shown himself to be a fool every time he trusted in his own wisdom, that he has fallen every time he trusted in his own strength—when he is brought to be thus feelingly destitute, thus experimentally helpless, then there will be this sincere and hearty turning to the Lord. "I will arise and go to my father," said the repenting prodigal. Thus the effect of these exercises is to bring him to personal dealings with Jehovah. He must now have a religion not to be cloaked over and taken for granted, but a close, personal, individual religion before God, and in his own conscience. Nothing else will ever satisfy me. I would sooner be taking my full swing in the world than have a name to live and be dead—with a form of godliness while I denied its power; and I believe, if you are honest men and women, such are your feelings also.

When the soul then is brought to this point, there will be a turning again to the Lord, as to the only source of all vital godliness—the whole and sole Saviour from the wrath to come. The soul feels that in His favour is life, and that His lovingkindness is better than life itself; that in the smiles of His countenance peace and joy alone are to be found, and that the manifestations of His presence is a begun happiness—a begun heaven below. But until there is this complaining on account of sin, and this searching of our ways, there is not a "turning again to the Lord." O how people deceive themselves! O the depth of human hypocrisy! A man may kneel down and offer up what he sincerely believes to be prayer, and may call **that** personal dealing with God, when all the time the Spirit of grace and supplications has never visited his heart. To have personal

dealings with God is to be taken by the Spirit into the presence of His heart-searching eye, to be stripped of the hypocrisy of the flesh, to be emptied, for the time, of superstition and self-righteousness, and to feel as though there were not a single individual on the face of the globe but yourself and God; as if you were standing on some solitary spot, and communing with God, and He with you. To be brought here is to know something of close work. I do not believe that a man will be saved who does not know more or less of this; he will never know anything of the sweetness and preciousness of a revealed Jesus, until he is brought to this close work; to feel as though he stood alone with the eye of God fixed upon him, as if there were no other object, and as if that look penetrated through all the covers of nature and hypocrisy into those depths of conscience, into which the eye of God alone can come. When a man is brought to this, he is not to be fobbed off any longer with pretences; he is brought to such close quarters that nothing can satisfy him but a testimony from God's own lips breathed into his soul, to raise up faith, hope, love, and confidence in his heart.

Now, look through all your religion. I speak to those who make a profession. Is there any of this work going on in your conscience? Believe me, there must be some heart-and-conscience-work of this kind before a man can have a testimony that he is a child of God. And this will be repeatedly taking place in the soul. After long seasons of deadness and carelessness when life seems well-nigh extinct, there will be a turning again to the Lord, a casting our back upon the world and the flesh, and a setting of the face toward Zion.

V. But the prophet goes on to say, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands." As though there was a great deal of lifting up the hands without the lifting up of the heart, and as though the prophet felt there had been too much of this even in his own case, for though he speaks here in the name of the Church, he includes himself also as one of the offending parties. When, then, the Lord lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, when He makes the living man complain on account of

deserved chastisement for his sins, and thus brings him to search and try his ways, He raises up an earnest cry in his soul. "Let us lift up our heart with our hands," and not the hands without the heart; not the mere bended knee; not the mere grave and solemn countenance, that easiest and most frequent cover of hypocrisy; not the mere form of prayer, that increasing idol of the day, but the lifting up of the heart with the hand.

This is the only true prayer, when the heart is poured out before the throne of grace, the Spirit interceding for us and within us with groanings that cannot be uttered. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." **Joh 4:24** He is not to be pleased with man-made prayer, nor the "vain repetitions" of daily liturgies. Garments, postures, forms and ceremonies of man's invention draw not down His approbation. The contrite heart and broken spirit, the inward panting of the soul after His manifested presence, the heaving sigh and penitential tear will be regarded by Him when He will turn away from lip service and "bodily exercise." **1Ti 4:8**

VI. But there is much also implied in the words, "**God in the heavens**" This expression represents Him as seated far above all heavens, enthroned in light, majesty, and glory unspeakable; and yet sitting on His throne of mercy and grace to bless the soul that waits upon Him, full of love and compassion for the poor and needy who lifts up his heart together with the hand, that he may receive pardon and peace out of Jesus' fulness, and pants with unutterable longings that the lord Himself would graciously smile and beam love and favour into his soul. This lifting up of the heart—the only true and acceptable prayer—no man can create in himself. God, who works all things after the counsel of His own will, can alone work in us thus "to will and to do of His own good pleasure." Nature cannot, with all her efforts, and all her counterfeit imitations of vital godliness, accomplish this spiritual sacrifice. She may cut her flesh with lancets, and cry, "Baal, hear us!" from morning till evening, but she cannot bring down the holy fire from heaven. She can lift the hand, but she cannot lift up the heart. Depend upon it, that in this spiritual intercourse



with the living God, out of sight and out of reach of the most refined hypocrite and self-deceiver, much of the power of vital godliness lies. This lifting up of the heart when no eye sees and no ear hears, in the daily and often hourly transactions of life, in the lonely chamber, and on the midnight bed, surrounded perhaps by the world, and yet in spirit separate from it—is a secret known only to the living family of God.

Here, then, that I may recapitulate the outline of what has been said, are some marks and testimonies which God has laid down in His Word by which the present state of every man may be more or less clearly determined. Now if you do not wish to deceive yourselves, if God has made you honest, if He has planted His fear in your heart, if He has begun and is carrying on a good work in you, there will be evidences of the existence of the life of God within. **Life** is the commencement of salvation as an inward reality, for whatever the eternal purposes of God are, or whatever standing the vessel of mercy has in Christ previous to effectual calling, there is no more movement in the soul Godward till life is imparted, than there is natural life and motion in a breathless corpse that lies interred in the churchyard. But wherever divine life is implanted, there will be certain fruits and feelings that spring out of this life. One fruit will be **complaint**, and this will arise sometimes from a feeling of the burden of sin, and at others from a sense of merited chastisement from God on account of it. But wherever this complaining is spiritual, there will be accompanying it "an accepting the punishment of our iniquity," and "a putting of our mouth in the dust." Thus where there is spiritual life there will be complaint, confession, and submission; the effect being meekness, brokenness, and humility. This breaks to pieces self-conceit and self-justification, and the result is a searching and trying our ways whether they are of God. The fruit of this search will be, for the most part, a solemn and painful conviction that the greater part have been in the flesh: or, at least, there will be many anxious suspicions which cannot be relieved except by an express testimony from the Lord Himself. This produces a going out of soul unto Him, the cry now being, "Let us turn again to the Lord;" and towards Him the heart turns

as to the only source and author of every good and perfect gift. As the quickened soul knows that He is a heart-searching God, this appeal will purge away much hypocrisy and insincerity, and deepen uprightness, sincerity, and godly integrity. And the blessed fruit and end of all this sifting work will be a coming down of gracious answers, divine testimonies, smiles of the Saviour's loving countenance, soft whispers of God's eternal favour, and the blessed witness of the Spirit within.

Thus I think we have laid down in the text a clear outline of the path in which the redeemed walk. And if so, may I not from these words of inspired truth make an appeal to your hearts and consciences whether the Lord has led you at all in this path? Or have you taken up your religion as a man takes up a glove in a hosier's shop—after trying a good many, selecting that which best fits his hand? Thus some here, perhaps, out of the numerous sects and parties spread upon the counter of the religious world, have taken up the Arminian, or the Calvinist, the Independent, or the Baptist glove, and wear their profession as some external distinction. But, my friends, true religion is not to be thus taken up or laid down, where it springs from what God Himself has wrought with divine power in the conscience. And wherever He works, there will be fruits and effects following.

But some perhaps here cannot at present get much beyond complaint. But this is a mark of life; and He "who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." **Php 1:6** He will never leave the soul to die in its complaint. This is "a sickness not unto death," for "the Lord will bring health and cure." He who accepts the punishment of sins here shall never be punished hereafter. He who is brought to search and try his ways—who is made honest by God's internal teaching, will in the end find his ways to be indeed "issues from death." He who is brought to lift up the heart together with the hands to heaven, will bring down **from** heaven what his heart goes after. God will answer his desire, and fill his heart with His blessed favours even to overflowing.

But we may, by way of conclusion, give another turn to the first clause of our text, "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" With all his trials and temptations, troubles and exercises, has he any real cause to "murmur," as the margin reads? Is he not ten thousand times better off than those whose eyes stand out with fatness, and who have more than heart can wish? Say that he is a poor afflicted creature—sin tormenting and harassing him every day, and that he meets continually with trouble at home and abroad, so that he thinks no poor wretch is altogether so miserable. But after he has exhausted all his piteous tale, it may still be said to him, "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" Has he not eternal life in his soul? Is he not an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ? Surely instead of complaining he has reason to rejoice—reason to say, with all his burdens, all his sorrows, all his diseases, "Wherefore should I complain? Is it not better to suffer with Jesus, that I may reign with Him? Is it not better "through much tribulation to enter the kingdom," than to enjoy all that the world calls good and great, and find eternal perdition at the end?"

## **THE LIVING SACRIFICE PRESENTED, AND THE WILL OF GOD PROVED ACCEPTABLE**

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, August 10th, 1856, at Gower Street Chapel, London

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:1, 2

The precepts of the gospel are, or should be, as dear to the child of God as the promises. They form part of the same inspired testimony, rest upon the same immutable basis, and are applied to the heart, as needed, by the same blessed Spirit. But, as the promises, if they are intermixed with legal conditions, lose all their sweetness and blessedness, so the precepts, if blended with, or suspended upon, any supposed creature strength, are thrust out of the place which they occupy in the gospel, and become mere legal duties. It can never be too much insisted upon, that promise and precept belong to, and are integral parts of, the same gospel, are alike unconditional, and that the same Spirit who applies the promise gives power to perform the precept. If we stray from this simple line of truth we fall, on the one hand, either into Antinomianism, by neglecting or despising the precepts altogether, or, on the other, into Pharisaism, by making them legal observances. Betwixt the barren heights of Antinomianism and the deep morass of Pharisaism, there lies a very narrow line. It is something like the paths in the Swiss Alps, where on one side a steep rock rises into a mountain height, and on the other a perpendicular precipice sinks into an unfathomable depth, whilst the line of safety runs as a thread between the two.

See how this blessed Apostle, Paul, handles the precept here: "I beseech you by the mercies of God." "I do not come," he would

say, "with a rod, to flog you into obedience: I do not hold over your heads the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, to frighten you into a performance of the gospel, but I come before you almost upon my knees of supplication; and I beseech you, dear Christian friends, by the mercies of God felt in your souls, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." This is the only way by which any minister of truth can safely and soundly enforce gospel precepts. He must set them forth utterly untainted with legality and self-righteousness, and base them—as the gospel and all that is connected with it is based, upon the free grace of God. With God's blessing, then, in attempting, with His help, to address you from the words before us, I shall endeavour,

I. First, to open up a little of those mercies of God, which form the basis of the precept.

II. Secondly, to show you what it is to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."

III. Thirdly, to point out what the Apostle means by the solemn warning, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

IV. Fourthly, how we thus "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

I. We are surrounded with mercies—mercies for the body, and mercies for the soul. But, in order to arrange them somewhat more clearly, I shall look at them, first, as belonging to the Church of God at large; and, secondly, as personal and individual.

i. In looking at mercies as belonging to the Church collectively, let us cast our eyes back to the spring head, go at once to the original fountain, where we see mercy welling forth from the bosom of the Triune God. Mercy presided at those eternal councils, wherein salvation was planned by the holy Three-in-One. The sure promise is, "Mercy shall be built up for ever;" but

the foundation was then laid in the predestinated incarnation of the Son of God. We pass onward, and see this mercy revealed in the garden of Eden. Directly man sinned and fell, mercy stepped forth out of the bosom of God into visible manifestation, in the first promise, that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." What God promised in the garden He fulfilled at the cross, when "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Would we see and feel the mercies of God, we must see them in the sufferings and sorrows of the Lord Jesus, and hear Him whispering to our souls, "Sinner, I suffered all this for thee."

But the mercies that chiefly concern us are those which are personal and special, which come into our own hearts, and are made manifest to our own individual consciences. And who here present, that fears God, has not mercies, many mercies, to revolve in his bosom? Who has not a catalogue, and some a long catalogue, to be thankful for? We may bless the mercy of God for preserving us during our days of unregeneracy, raising us up, many of us, from beds of sickness, when death stared us in the face; keeping us up to the time and moment when His grace entered into our heart, and quickened us into spiritual life. We see the mercy of God in giving us to feel the weight and burden of sin; in sending into our soul the Spirit of grace and supplication, enabling us to pour out our hearts before Him with groans, and sighs, and tears. We see the mercy of God in making known to us the plan of salvation; discovering unto us that wondrous way whereby His jarring attributes were all harmonised in the incarnation and death of His dear Son, giving us to see that salvation was all of grace, and thus raising up a blessed hope in our soul. We can see the mercy of God in revealing Christ to us, making Him known by a divine power, holding Him up to our believing eye, and raising up that special faith which takes hold of His blood and righteousness, and shelters itself beneath the skirt of His dying love. We can see the mercy of God in establishing us in His truth, when so many are left to believe a lie, to drink down delusion, to be entangled in every error that Satan spreads before them. We see His mercy also in carrying on the work

begun, in maintaining the faith He imparted, cherishing the hope He inspired, reviving the love He shed abroad. It is one of the choicest mercies bestowed on us that we love the gospel, because we have felt its power and tasted its sweetness in our soul. Nor is it merely in His grace that we see and feel the mercy of God. We are daily surrounded with them in providence. The bread we eat, the raiment we wear, the house we live in, the kind friends that God has raised up for us, the social ties and intimate relationships with which He has blessed us, as husbands, wives, or children—what daily mercies are there in all these daily providences! And if our lot be rough and thorny in providence, or His mercies in this channel be hidden from our eyes, this may only enhance the more His mercies in grace in providing for the afflicted and distressed a throne of grace, giving us a mercy-seat, seating there a Mediator to whom we may approach, and freely tell our wants and woes; thus amply compensating for every loss and bereavement by a larger portion of spiritual consolation.

There are, indeed, times and seasons when all the mercies of God, both in providence and grace, seem hidden from our eyes, when what with the workings of sin, rebellion, and unbelief, with a thorny path in the world and a rough, trying road in the soul, we see little of the mercies of God, though surrounded by them. Like Elisha's servant, though the mountain is surrounded by the horses and chariots of fire, and the angels of God are round about us, yet our eyes are holden, we cannot see them; and at the very moment when God is already showering mercies upon us, and preparing others in reserve, through some trying dispensation, we are filled perhaps with murmuring and rebellion, and cry, "Is His mercy clean gone for ever? will He be favourable no more?" This is our infirmity, our weakness; but it no more arrests the shower of God's mercies than the parched field arrests the falling rain. The mercies of God, like Himself, are infinite, and He showers them in rich profusion upon His Church and people. They come freely as the beams of the sun shining in the sky; as the breezes of the air we breathe; as the river that never ceases to flow. Everything testifies of the mercy of God to those whose eyes are anointed to see it, and are interested in it. To them all

things in nature, in providence, and in grace, proclaim with one united harmonious voice, "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever."

Now, as these mercies of God are sensibly felt in the soul they soften, meeken, and subdue the spirit, melt it into the obedience of faith, and raise up in it the tenderness of love. By this we are prepared to enter into the beauty and blessedness of the precept as an integral part of the gospel. If I take a review of the mercies of God, and feel no interest in them; if they are not personally and individually mine, I slight, perhaps even rebel against the precept as too hard and severe. The yoke is too heavy for my neck to bear. My Jewish mind, my stiff-necked disposition, shrinks from obedience to God's word. But let my soul be favoured with a sweet discovery of the mercies of God; let them reach my heart, soften and subdue my spirit; then there is no cross too heavy to be taken up, no trial too hard to be endured, no path of suffering and sorrow in which we cannot patiently, if not gladly, walk. The reason why the precepts are not obeyed is because the mercies of God are not felt. Love and obedience attend each other as the shadow waits upon the sun.

II. But I pass on from considering the precepts generally, to examine *the particular precept*, as it stands revealed here for our obedience by the pen of the Holy Ghost, "*That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*" My friends, if the Son of God has redeemed us by His blood, all that we are and have belongs to Him; our body, soul, and spirit are His. Nothing is our own; we are bought with a price. In laying down His precious life for us, He has redeemed us unto Himself, that we should be His peculiar people, and not only render to Him the calves of our lips, but give Him body, soul, spirit, substance, life itself; all that we are and have being His by sovereign right. He lays claim to them all, not only as our Creator, but as our Redeemer, having bought them by His precious blood. When we feel this mercy warm in our soul, can we keep body or soul back? Look at Abraham. When God called to him, and said, "Abraham!" what was his answer? "Here I am."



"Here is my body, here is my soul, here is my substance, here is my wife, here is my son; all are at Thy disposal. What shall I do, Lord? Take them; they are all Thine. Thou hast a right to them, and Thou must do with them, and Thou must do with me, what seemeth good in Thy sight."

i. Under these feelings, then, we should "*present our bodies,*" not indeed, leaving our souls behind. For what is the casket without the jewel? what is the body without the soul? Will God accept the body if the soul be left behind? That is popery; to give the body and keep back the soul. Not so with the dear family of God; they present their bodies, but with their bodies they present the soul that lodges in their body—the house with its tenant, the jewel case with the jewels in it. But what is it to *present their bodies*? They must be presented as "*a living sacrifice.*" God accepts no dead sacrifices. You will recollect, under the Jewish law the sacrifice was to be a living animal, and that without spot or blemish. No dead lamb or kid, but a living animal, perfect in its kind, was to be the victim sacrificed. So if we are to present our bodies, there must be "a living sacrifice." It may well be asked, what have we sacrificed for the Lord's sake? Have we been called upon to sacrifice our property, prospects, idols, affections, name, fame, and worldly interests; and have we obeyed the call? Abraham did not offer Isaac until the voice of the Lord called him to make the sacrifice; but when the Lord called him to do so, Abraham at once rendered obedience to the voice. So must it be with those that walk in the steps of faithful Abraham. If they are called upon as all are, sooner or later—to make sacrifices, those sacrifices they must make. Their *good name* certainly will be sacrificed. Or, you may be called upon to sacrifice even your worldly substance. God may require this at your hands. You may be in some position of life, some occupation or profession, which you cannot carry on consistently with the requirements of the gospel; of this, then, you must make a sacrifice. Or if not called upon, as I and others have been, to make these personal sacrifices, you will have to sacrifice your pride and self-righteousness. Many of your fondly cherished schemes, many of your airy castles, and even things that you might legitimately and

with a good conscience enjoy, but which would stumble others you must give up; in a word, everything that interferes with the claims of God upon your Christian obedience.

ii. Now, in thus presenting our bodies "a living sacrifice," it becomes also a "*holy*" offering, because what is done in faith is accepted of God as being sanctified by His blessed Spirit. If we make a sacrifice without the blessed Spirit's operation upon our heart, it is a dead sacrifice. Men go into monasteries, deluded women enter convents, become sisters of mercy, and what not, offer their bodies a sacrifice to God, but it is not a living sacrifice, because there is no spiritual life in either offerer or offering. But when we sacrifice our warmest affections, our prospects in life, everything that flesh loves, because the gospel claims it at our hands, and we do it through the constraining love of Christ, *that* is a living sacrifice, and is "*holy*," because springing out of the sanctifying influences and operations of the Holy Spirit. We indeed, looking at ourselves, see nothing holy in it, for sin is mingled with all we do, but God's eye discerns the precious from the vile. He sees the purity of His own work; and He can separate what we cannot, the acting of the Spirit and the working of the flesh. God looks at that which His own Spirit inspires, and His own grace produces, and He accepts that as holy.

iii. And, therefore, it is "*acceptable*" unto God. Let us not suppose that God looks idly on, whether men live to His glory or not. Let us not think He is such a God as the Epicureans imagined Him to be, that sits enthroned upon some cloud, and takes no notice of the inhabitants of the earth. Was it the same thing in God's sight whether David committed adultery and murder, or whether he spared the life of Saul, when that life was in his hand? It would make God an immoral Being, it would make Him worse than ourselves, to say that this holy God who sits enthroned in glory takes no notice of the deeds of man upon earth, and that it is indifferent to Him whether His children live to themselves or live to His glory. This would be abusing the truth of God: using one part of God's truth to wrest out of His hand that which He dearly loves—His own holiness, His hatred of sin, and flaming

indignation against transgression. When the widow dropped her two mites into the treasury, it was acceptable unto God; when the disciples forsook all things and followed Jesus, it was acceptable to Him. So what you are enabled to do by the grace of God; the sacrifices that you have made or are making; the tears, sighs, groans, cries, longings, and breathings that you experience, springing out of His grace—these are acceptable unto God.

iv. It is also "a *reasonable* service." Does He not rightfully claim all the powers of our mind, all the obedience of our heart? Is it not reasonable that we should give Him all that we are and have? Is true religion not consistent with the highest dictates of enlightened reason? It is true that our reasoning mind, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, does set itself against the truth of God; but when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, the truth of God is commended to our reasoning faculties. I can say for myself that I at times see with my enlightened understanding the greatest beauty and glory in the Word of God. The truth of God is not only dear to my heart's affection, and is commended to my inmost conscience, but my enlightened understanding, my reasoning powers influenced by grace, can see in it an inexpressible beauty and glory. The service, therefore, I render on that ground, is a "reasonable" service; and may it ever be such! Our prayers, when they are dictated by the Spirit of God, are not effusions of nonsense, but petitions agreeable to the Scripture and an enlightened understanding. Our preaching, too, if we are taught of God, if we have a ministerial gift, if we can open God's precious truth, will commend itself to the enlightened understanding of the children of God. The world, it is true, will count these things idle tales, and despise and ridicule both us and them; but the children of God, if we preach the truth with purity and power, are sufficient judges that what we speak is commended to their understanding, as well as approved of by their conscience, and embraced by their affections. Why should I have this evening so large a congregation? To hear falsehood or nonsense? I should insult you, and you would cast insult upon me, unless we met together

this evening for a reasonable service—for prayer, for praise, for the preached gospel, such as our understanding, as illuminated by the Spirit's teaching, is satisfied with. We speak the words of soberness and truth, things known, felt, handled, and tasted. We preach truth commended to our understanding by the Spirit of God, and enshrined in our warmest and tenderest affections. We love God's truth, because we have felt its power; and we preach God's truth to you who have felt the same power, who understand it, feel it, and love it; nor would I wish to preach to any people who do not spiritually understand and experimentally feel what I lay before them.

III. But I proceed to what the Apostle enforces as to not being "*conformed to this world, but to be transformed in the renewing of our mind.*" Now, why does this immediately follow? For this reason. Because, in proportion as we are conformed to the spirit of this world, our understanding becomes dull in the things of God, our affections cold and torpid, and our consciences less tender and sensitive. There is an eternal opposition between God and the world lying in wickedness. In order, then, that our spiritual experience of the truth of God should maintain its ground, it must not be dulled and deadened by conformity to the world. It is like the sabre that the soldier carries into battle; it must not trail unsheathed upon the ground lest point and edge be dulled; both must be kept keen and sharp, that execution may be done upon the foe. So it is with our enlightened understanding, with our tender conscience, and our heavenly affections. If we let them fall upon the world, it is like a soldier trailing his sabre upon the pavement; every step he takes dulls both edge and point. If we are conformed to this world, we lose the sweet understanding that we had before of the precious truth of God; we lose that tender sensitiveness of conscience, whereby sin—any sin—becomes a grief and a burden to the soul. A Christian should be what was said of an ancient knight, "without fear and without reproach." The least suspicion of either would have been a blot upon Bayard's scutcheon. So the Christian's shield should be without a stain, his reputation without a blot. His character should not only be free from blemish, but even from suspicion—

as untarnished as the modesty of a woman, or the honour and bravery of a man.

Now, we often get into this worldly conformity, and run the risk of dulling the sword and sullyng the shield, by degrees. We give way in this and that thing. We are hedged in, it is true, by the precepts of the gospel, the alarms of a tender conscience, and many powerful restraints—so many banks and dykes to keep out the sea of the world; but, as in Holland, if one breach be made in the dyke, the sea at once rushes in, so, if one gap be made in the conscience, then the sea of worldliness rushes through the breach, and but for God's grace would soon deluge the soul. But even apart from having any peculiar temptation to make a wide breach like this, our social ties, our daily occupation, the friends and relations whom we love in the flesh, all, through their power over our natural affections, draw us aside from time to time into this worldly conformity. Here, then, is the point where we have to make our chief stand; for if we are conformed to the maxims, the principles, the customs, and the spirit of the world, we so far lose that spiritual position which is a believer's highest blessing and privilege. We descend from the mount of communion with the Lord, and fall into a cold, miserable spot, where the life of God, though not extinct, is reduced to its lowest ebb. The Apostle therefore says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." As worldly conformity is subdued and departed from, there is the transforming process of which the Apostle here speaks, whereby we become renewed in the spirit of our mind. In other words, the Holy Spirit, by His work upon the soul, renews the life of God, revives faith, hope, love, prayer, praise, spirituality of mind, with every tender feeling and every godly sensation that stirs and moves in a living heart. As, then, the Spirit of God renews His work upon the heart, He brings us out of this worldly conformity. He discovers to us the evil of it; He makes and keeps the conscience tender and sensitive; He shows us that if we get conformed to the world we lose our evidences; that they become dulled and obscured; that we are soon deprived of communion with God, of comfortable access to our best, our heavenly Friend;

that our taste and appetite for spiritual things get palled: and that our very profession itself becomes a burden. As the conscience then gets more and more awakened to see and feel these things, we become convinced that we do but reap what we have sown; and the Spirit of God, by pressing the charge more closely home, shows us, and sometimes by painful experience, such as long days of darkness and heavy, dragging nights of desertion, the evil of worldly conformity. Now, as He thus brings us out of worldly conformity, by showing us the evil of it, and that by this miserable cleaving to earth we rob ourselves of our happiest hours, our sweetest hopes, and our dearest enjoyments, He draws the soul nearer to Christ; and as He keeps renewing us in the spirit of our mind, by dropping one precious truth after another into the heart, He revives faith, renews hope, communicates love, draws forth prayer, bestows spirituality of mind and affection; and by these means a transforming process takes place, whereby the soul is brought out of worldly conformity, and is transformed into the likeness of a suffering Jesus.

To produce this conformity is the work of the blessed Spirit, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to the heart. Thus He takes of His blood, His righteousness, His holy life, His agonizing death, brings to the garden of Gethsemane, carries to the cross at Calvary, and by opening up the sorrows and sufferings of "Immanuel, God with us," conforms the soul to His marred image. In proportion, then, as the blessed Spirit brings us out of worldly conformity, He renews us in the spirit of our mind, and transforms us into the image of Christ. The understanding now becomes more enlightened, the conscience more sensitive, the affections more fixed on heavenly things; there is more peace in believing, and the soul rejoices more "in hope of the glory of God." But take the converse. As we get into the world, we become gradually conformed to it, and soon lose that spirituality of mind, that tenderness of conscience, those heavenly affections that formerly prevailed. We get cold, stupid, lifeless, sink into a barren spot, where we are of little comfort to ourselves, and of little use to the Church of God. How we need,

then, the blessed Spirit of God to be renewing us daily in the spirit of our minds, and thus transforming us into the suffering image of the sorrowing Son of God. For there is no medium between spirituality and carnality, between the image of Christ and conformity to the world. As there is no middle path between the strait road and the broad one, so there is no middle way between fruitfulness and barrenness, prayerfulness and prayerlessness, watchfulness and carelessness, repentance and hardness, faith and unbelief, the life of a Christian and the life of a worldling.

IV. I now proceed to show you the connection of this being renewed in the spirit of our mind with "*proving what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.*" The will of God is "good, perfect, and acceptable." How are we to prove personally and experimentally that it is all this? That good and perfect will runs counter, over and over again, to my natural inclinations, sets itself firmly against my fleshly desires. God's will calls for self-denial, but I want self-gratification; it requires obedience, but my carnal mind is the essence of disobedience; it demands many sacrifices, but my coward flesh revolts from them; it bids me walk in the path of suffering, sorrow, and tribulation, but my fleshly mind shrinks back, and says, "No, I cannot tread in that path!" As long, then, as I am conformed to the world, I cannot see the path, for this worldly conformity has thrown a veil over my eyes; or if I do dimly and faintly see it, I am not willing or able to walk in it, because my carnal mind rebels against all trouble or self-denial, or anything connected with the cross of Christ. But, on the other hand, if by any gracious operations of the Spirit on my heart I am drawn out of this worldly conformity, am renewed in the spirit of my mind, and transformed into the likeness of the suffering Son of God, then "that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God," becomes commended to my conscience.

1. First, I see how "*good*" that will is. It may be, nay, it is very contrary to my will; it points out a very rough and rugged path, in which it bids me walk; it calls for crucifixion of the flesh in every direction; it overturns scheme after scheme, destroys castle after castle, pulls down all lofty buildings and fond imaginations with a

long succession of fairy paradises, and loved, almost idolised plans and dreams of earthly happiness; but still, it is a "good" will, as issuing and emanating from Him who is supreme in goodness and mercy, yea, goodness itself. But we only see, acknowledge, and submit to it as a good will when we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, cast into the mould of the gospel, and conformed to the suffering image of Jesus. What said the suffering, agonising Lord in Gethsemane's gloomy garden? "Father, let this cup pass from Me!" But how at once His holy soul, in the midst of agony and suffering, resolved itself into obedience! "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." There we see how the suffering Son of God accepted His Father's will as a "good" will, though that will led Him through agonies unutterable.

2. Again, it is a "*perfect*" will. There is no spot, stain, or shadow of weakness, error, or instability in it. It is and indeed must be necessarily as perfect as God Himself; for it emanates from Him who is all perfection—a discovery of His mind and character. But when this will sets itself against our flesh, thwarts our dearest hopes, and overturns our fondest schemes, we cannot see that it is a perfect will, but are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it. That "perfect" will may take a child out of your bosom; may strike down a dear husband, or tear from your arms a beloved wife; may strip you of all your worldly goods; may put your feet into a path of suffering, and lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing; cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods, and make your life almost a burden to yourself. How then, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, can you say, "It is a perfect will. I acknowledge and submit to it as such. Let that will be my will, and reign and rule in my heart without a murmur of resistance to it"? It is certainly impossible to do so as long as the world is conformed to, for the very spirit of that is opposition to the perfect will of God. Until, therefore, the soul is brought out of worldly conformity to view things, not with carnal but with spiritual eyes, it cannot be reconciled to it, acknowledge it as a "perfect" will, and as such submit to it.

3. And "*acceptable*," too; not, indeed, to our natural reason or to



our carnal heart, which see no glory in anything heavenly or divine; not to our earthly affections, which it continually thwarts and crosses; but acceptable to our renewed mind, to our enlightened understanding, to our spiritual will, as they are melted and moulded into conformity with God's will. This good, and acceptable, and perfect will is far, far out of the sight of the carnal eye, out of the sound of the worldly ear, out of the touch of the worldly hand; but is made manifest to the spiritual eye, listened to by the spiritual ear, and laid hold of by the spiritual hand. To realise this for ourselves, we shall find it good sometimes to look back and see how that divine will has, in previous instances, proved itself acceptable to our renewed mind. We can see too how supremely that will has reigned, and yet how supreme in all points for our good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amidst a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to our injury, but all things, according to the promise, have worked together for our good. Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away; whatever property, or comfort, or friends, or health, or earthly happiness we have been deprived of, it was better for us to lose than to retain them. Was your dear child taken away? It might be to be safely housed, or to teach you resignation to God's sacred will. Has a dear partner been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend. Was any portion of your worldly substance taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith, not only on the grace, but on the providence of God. Have your fondest schemes been marred, your youthful hopes blighted, and you struck in the warmest affections of your heart? It was to remove an idol, to dethrone a rival of Christ, to crucify the object of earthly love, that a purer, holier, and more enduring affection might be enshrined in its stead. All this we can now see, looking back on the past; but the present is dark and obscure. How shall we find the will of God acceptable now? Only as we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are transformed and conformed to the suffering image of the sorrowing Son of God. How fearful, then, how dangerous, and yet how ensnaring, is that worldly conformity which sets us in deadly opposition to that good and

perfect will of God which was, and is "acceptable" to His dear Son, to all the holy angels round the throne, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to His spiritually-minded people upon earth, and hateful to none but devils and carnal, ungodly men. And how truly blessed to be brought out of the power and prevailing influence of this worldly spirit, and to be cast into the gospel mould, where, being renewed in the spirit of our mind, we prove that the will of God is not only "good," pure goodness, and "perfect," worthy of all His glorious perfections, but "acceptable" to our heart and affections, which therefore tenderly embrace it, and thus, as it were, incorporate it into our will, making the two wills one. To bring us to this point is the grand object of all gospel discipline; and one may say that the ultimatum of gospel obedience is,

"To lie passive in His hand,  
And know no will but His."

Here then only can we fully enter into the beauty and blessedness of gospel truth; here only can we submit to the weight of a daily cross, glory in tribulation, patiently endure afflictions, feel the sweetness of the promises, walk in obedience to the precepts, and tread the path that leads to endless glory. Here only is our rebellious will silenced; our carnal affections restrained, the raging strength of sin curbed, and the heart softened and melted into an obedient acquiescence with the will and word of God. Now view the contrast. If we begin by degrees to drink into the spirit of the world; if the things of time and sense engross all our thoughts, cares, and affections, and if we gradually drift into a course of carnality and slothfulness, carried away by a flood of earthly pursuits and cares, how rugged, steep, and up-hill the path of obedience becomes. Prayer and supplication, reading and meditation, converse with the exercised people of God, the very house of prayer itself, and the hearing of the gospel, those blessed privileges so dear to a child of God in a spiritual frame, become a weariness when the heart is in the world.

But one thing we must deeply bear in mind, that as we cannot

deliver ourselves from worldly conformity, so we cannot renew ourselves in the spirit of our mind. The blessed Spirit must do both for us, and work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. But as we are led to feel the misery of the one state, and the blessedness of the other, we shall seek after these gracious operations and divine influences; and as the blessed Spirit from time to time brings the soul out of this worldly conformity any transforms it into the suffering image of Christ, it sees more and more the beauty and blessedness of walking in this path; and cleaving to Christ and His cross with its tenderest affections proves for itself the goodness, acceptability, and perfection of the will of God.

## **A Longing Soul in a Thirsty Land**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, November 15, 1857

"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Psalm 63:1, 2

Every saint of God is blessed with faith, but not every saint of God is blessed with appropriating faith. Every partaker of grace is a child of God, but not every partaker of grace has received the Spirit of adoption so as to cry, "Abba, Father." David was a man eminently blessed and specially favoured with this appropriating faith, for he could say, "O God, thou art my God;" but we must consider that David was signally distinguished, for he was a man "after God's own heart." In his early days, when but a youth keeping sheep, the Lord had signally blessed him with the grace of faith, for we read that "after Samuel had anointed him, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward." (1 Sam. 16:13.) By the help of this Spirit he slew the lion and the bear that came and took a lamb out of the flock; and by the same help he went out against Goliath single-handed, and achieved a glorious victory. Nor was the Lord less with him afterwards when he "took him from the sheepfolds to feed Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance." (Psal. 78:70, 71.) He led him safely through many paths of persecution and distress; preserved him from Saul's spear and bloodthirsty violence; fully accomplished every promise that he had given him; set him down upon the throne of Israel; and, in addition to great temporal prosperity and power, repeatedly blessed his soul with manifestations of his love. We must not, therefore, altogether take David as an example of every child of God, and conclude that unless a man can rise up into the heights of David's faith, he is not a saint at all. Yet we should not be satisfied with anything short of appropriating faith. Nothing should content us but to be able to say, from the sweet Spirit of adoption, "Abba, Father;" nor should

we feel as if we could die in peace without being able to say, in the full language of holy triumph, "My Lord and my God." It is one thing not to be favoured with it; it is another to be satisfied without it. It is one thing to be asking the blessing which God alone can bestow; it is another to settle down in quiet security without the prayer being answered. So that though I would not say for a single moment that a saint of God is always or often blessed with appropriating faith, I would say it is a saint's highest privilege and the greatest blessing that God can confer, wherever real and genuine, for if not so it is but a delusion; as it can only spring from the manifestation of God's love to the soul. We can only call him "our Father" as he calls us his child; we can only view him as accepting us in Christ as he is pleased to make Christ known to our soul; nor can we believe in, or love him as our sin-pardoning God, except through the application of the atoning blood of his dear Son to our conscience.

But we see, from the language of the Psalmist, not only here but elsewhere, in these holy breathings and utterances of his heart to God, that the strongest appropriating faith did not secure him from severe trials and deep exercises. Though he was blessed with the full assurance of faith to call God his God, that faith did not enable him to appropriate, at all times and under all circumstances, his power, his help, his presence, his smile, and the shedding abroad of his love. Thus we see in his case, as in that of many other saints of God, though he uses the language of appropriation, he is still hungering, thirsting, seeking, begging, imploring of the Lord to be gracious to his soul.

With God's blessing, in opening up these words this afternoon, I shall

I.—First, show what it is to *seek, to thirst, and to long after God*; for these three things the Psalmist speaks of his soul as experiencing.

II.—Secondly, the spot in which David was when he thus sought, thus thirsted, and thus longed: he describes it as "*a dry and*

*thirsty land where no water is."*

III.—Thirdly, what David *desired to see: the power and the glory of God.*

IV.—And fourthly, *the reason* especially why he desired so to see them: *he had seen them before in the sanctuary,* and he desired to have a sight of them now as he had been favoured with a sight then.

I.—Desire is not enjoyment; but it is the high road to it. Seeking is not finding; but there is no finding without it. Knocking is not having the door opened; but the door of grace is only opened to those who do knock. Thirsting is not drinking; yet drinking, in a spiritual sense, is only suitable to the thirsty. So that though those wants and desires are very distinct from the possession of the blessings, yet as they are indispensable to the possession of those blessings, and beyond all question are wrought by a divine hand in the soul, they may be laid down as special marks of grace. In this way I shall now consider them.

i. And first, David's *holy resolution*, "*Early will I seek thee,*"—a resolution not made in the flesh, but prompted by the teaching and power of the Holy Ghost in his heart. I expressly name this, because when we read resolutions of this kind made by David and other saints of God in the word we might, unless better taught, think they were resolutions made in the strength of the flesh. They were not so. Such resolutions drop off the heart that makes them, like the leaves of autumn before the wintry blast; they have no more endurance than the morning cloud or the early dew. Resolutions made in the flesh end in the flesh, for, in this sense, as in every other, "he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." (Gal. 6:8.) But we find in the Scriptures, scattered there by the fingers of the Holy Ghost, holy resolutions, formed by the saints of old, which were made in the Lord's strength, and emanated from the work and teaching of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Under this power and influence, as the blessed Spirit moved upon his heart, kindling now life and feeling there,

he speaks out what he feels that he must do, and that at once without further delay, "*Early* will I seek thee."

1. The allusion here is to not lying in bed, there sleeping and slumbering away precious time and opportunity when spiritual work is to be done; there letting every spiritual faculty of the soul grow torpid and benumbed like a foot asleep. "No," says David, "I will not thus sleep all my strength away." It is surprising how much is said in the Scripture of holy men of old rising early in the morning; I mean literally, not figuratively, and especially in the case of the patriarch Abraham. Early in the morning he got up to visit the place where he stood before the Lord to plead for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:27); early in the morning he rose up to send away Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21:14); and early in the morning he rose up when at God's bidding he went with Isaac into the land of Moriah to offer him there for a burnt offering. (Gen. 22:3.) There must be some meaning in all this; it would seem to be expressive of alacrity of his obedience, and that he could not rest in his bed from his earnest desire to serve the Lord and do his manifested will.

2. But we may attach another meaning to the word. It is good to be found seeking the Lord *early in youth*, for that is the time when the Lord usually calls by his grace. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." (Lam. 3:27.) Paul bids Timothy "flee youthful lusts;" but the best way of fleeing them is by fleeing to the Lord from them by the power of his grace. By seeking the Lord "early" we may also understand seeking him in the *beginnings of divine teaching*; in the quickening and awakening of the new man of grace, and in the arousing of the sleeping faculties of the soul or the slumbering graces of the Spirit that often are overborne with weariness and by the weakness of the flesh.

3. But yet whatever peculiar or distinct meaning we may attach to the expression, its general drift and purport are evidently to denote *earnestness, eagerness*, and the resolute bent of the soul to seek the living God. In expressing, then, the earnest desires of

his soul in seeking the Lord, it is evident that David know there was something to be found in him which could be nowhere else obtained. If you happen to drop a piece of money in the street or upon the carpet, you search for it, and as long as there is any hope of finding it you continue the search; nor till all hope of recovering the piece of money is gone, do you give up anxiously looking for it in every direction. This is the Lord's own figure in the parable of the woman who lost a piece of silver. "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?" (Luke 15:8.) The woman knew what she was looking for, nor could she rest until she found it. So it is in grace: before we can seek, we must know what we have lost, or what we want to find. Now what is it that a seeking soul has lost and must find it or die? It has lost the favour and the image of God; has sunk through the full into a state of alienation, enmity, and death; is under the curse of the law, the wrath of God, the bondage of sin, the accusations of Satan, and the condemnation of a guilty conscience. A convinced sinner, fleeing from all this, seeks, as the first and greatest thing, the salvation of his soul. What can be so important to a man as his own soul? Weighed in the balance, what is everything compared with that? O, how light! As the Lord said, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Put your soul in one scale and put all that the world calls good and great in the other. Think of everything that the heart of man can desire—riches, honour, pleasure, power: heap it well up; fill the scale until there is no room for more. Put in all the gold of Australia, all the diamonds of India, all the delights of youthful love, all the pleasures of wife and home, of children and friends, of health and strength, of name and fame; put in all that the natural mind of man deems the height of happiness, and everything that may weigh the scale down. Now, when you have filled the scale, put your soul into the other—the state of your soul for all eternity. Represent to yourself your deathbed; hold the scales with dying hands as lying just at the brink of eternity. See how the scales now hang. What if you had the whole world that you have put into the scale, and could call it all your own, but at that solemn hour felt that your soul was for



ever lost, that you were dying under the wrath of God, and there was nothing before you but an eternity of misery! At such a moment as this what could you put in the scale equal to the weight of your immortal soul? Take the scales again: put into one every affliction, trial, sorrow, and distress that imagination can conceive or tongue express: let them all be yours. Distress of mind, pain of body, poverty of circumstances, contempt from man, assaults from Satan, Job's afflictions, Jacob's bereavements, David's persecutions, Jeremiah's prison, Hezekiah's sickness—put into one scale everything that makes life naturally miserable; and then put into the other scale a saved soul. Surely, as in the case of worldly honours, and riches, and happiness, a lost soul must weigh them all down; so in the case of afflictions and sorrows and troubles, a saved soul must weigh them all down too. It is by working these feelings and convictions that God puts a soul to seek after him; for as he alone can save the soul, in seeking him it seeks salvation in and from him; for it knows that in finding him, it will find the salvation of itself in him. It therefore seeks pardon at his hands. Knowing the guilt, filth, and condemnation of sin; seeing its own ruined, desperate case as a transgressor of God's holy and righteous law, it craves pardon as a manifested blessing, for it knows it cannot die in peace unless pardon be sealed upon the conscience. To live and die an unpardoned sinner, the quickened sinner knows and feels is to live and die under the wrath of God. And knowing that manifested pardon is not a name or a notion, an enthusiast's dream, or a fanatic's fancy, but a divine reality and a gospel blessing, it craves to have this pardon revealed by God's own witnessing voice, the atoning blood of Christ applied and sprinkled by the Holy Spirit to purge the conscience from filth, guilt, and dead works to serve the living God.

4. But David speaks of seeking God for what *he is in himself* as distinct from what he has to give. His gifts are one thing; himself is another. Therefore he says, "O God, thou art my God: early will I seek *thee*;" thee as distinct from thy gifts. The bride may value her bridegroom's costly gifts; but what are his gifts apart from himself? So the Church highly prizes her royal Husband's gifts

and blessings; but what are these compared to him who in her admiring eyes is the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely? Thus, as seen by the eye of faith, there is that in his most blessed Majesty which alone can satisfy the soul, taught by his Spirit and influenced by his grace. The soul was made *for* him: it was gifted with immortality *by* him. Powers and faculties were given to it that might be expanded into an infinite capacity to know and to enjoy him. So that being created for God, nothing but God can really satisfy its cravings and desires. But there is that in him, as revealed to a believing heart, which can satisfy. His favour is life; his presence heaven begun; his love a foretaste of eternal bliss. Thus in seeking the blessings he has to bestow, we do not seek them independent of the Giver. We love the gift, but we prize the Giver more. Without the Giver, the gift would be worthless. The bridal ring is the pledge of union. But what would be the ring without the bridegroom? Mockery. So all the favours and blessings which the Lord has to bestow, if he gave all and withheld himself, would be but to mock us. But in giving them, he gives himself. As when the bridegroom puts the ring on the finger of his betrothed he gives himself with the gift; so when the Lord seals a sense of his espousal upon the heart of his beloved one, in giving his love he gives himself. Nor can anything else satisfy the desires of an awakened soul. "It is Jesus," it says, "that I want; without him, heaven itself would be hell; without him, life would not be life, nor glory be glory, nor immortality be immortality;" As without the sun, the earth could not exist; so the church could not exist without Jesus. And as in the absence of the sun, no tapers could take the place of heaven's own glorious light; so no sparks, however bright, of fires kindled by human hands, could make up to the church for the absence of the Sun of righteousness. He must be, as he is, our all; having him, we have everything; not having him, we have nothing. The Lord the Spirit write that truth deeply upon your heart that you may take it wherever you go and make it ever your bosom companion. If you have Jesus, you have everything; if you have not him, you have nothing. This continual feeling of happiness in and with him, and of misery out of and without him, as maintained in your breast by the power of the blessed Spirit, will be leading you to seek him

perpetually. This made David say, "Early will I seek thee." It is an inestimable mercy to have these earnest desires and fervent wrestlings kept alive in the breast until the Lord is pleased to manifest himself in love and mercy to the soul. He is worth seeking, for he is the pearl of great price; but he will be sought unto as well as sought after. Solomon speaks of this when he says, "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures" (Prov. 2:3, 4); and, again, "Wisdom," which is Christ, for he "of God is made unto us wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:30), "is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." (Prov. 4:7.) In this way Jacob wrestled with the angel; and when he found him saying, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," he cried out almost in an agony of wrestling despair, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." (Gen. 32:26.) And what encouragement there is thus to wrestle! Has not the Lord himself declared, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain?" (Isai. 45:19.) But he must be sought unto diligently; and it may be long before he is found to the joy of the soul. Precious things are not easily found. Stones and mud and dirt may be gathered from every road; but diamonds, pearls, rubies, and sapphires are not to be found lying in every street. Pebbles lie by thousands on the sea-shore; but the pearl of great price, hidden in the sand, is very rarely found.

lii. But David speaks of another feeling of his soul, for one word was insufficient to express the cravings of his heart; and he uses a word which the Scripture has very much consecrated to set forth Spiritual desire. "My soul," he says, "*thirsteth* for thee." Of all painful feelings—I mean all such painful feelings as admit of a natural and prescribed alleviation—none can exceed that of severe and protracted thirst. We can bear hunger. Shipwrecked sailors or wanderers in a desert have lived for days without food, but not without water. The dying can do without a morsel of food, but even the dying want the lips touched with liquid. The universal cry over the battle-field where the wounded are lying midst the heaps of dead, is for water; and as life drains away, if fainter the cry yet more intense the feeling. In hot climates

especially—as we ourselves may gather from our scanty experience in our late hot summer—the feelings of thirst are in some proportion to the degree of heat; and all eastern travellers assure us that from no other source when water cannot be obtained is there suffering so great. The craving for water, then, when a supply is denied, is one of the most painful feelings that the body can experience. But does not the intensity of this feeling all the more aptly signify the spiritual craving of the soul for the water of life? To a man perishing of thirst in a wilderness, you might offer gold, silver, precious stones, heaps of merchandise, and all the camels with all their burdens on their backs in one hand, and a cup of water in the other. But would he not at once say, "One thing only, one thing only, I want: the cup of cold water: give me that, I am saved; deny me that, I sink and perish in the sand?" So in grace. Let God give his child everything the world loves; riches, honour, power, health, strength, and worldly happiness; and he will say, when brought into distress and trouble of soul, or lying upon a dying bed, "This is not Jesus. This does not take away the guilt from my conscience under which it grieves and groans; this does not fill my heart with peace, without which I cannot live or die; this removes not the sting of Death, who even now stands before me with his uplifted dart; this closes not the gate of hell which seems gaping at my feet, nor opens the door of heaven whither my soul longs to fly. I feel myself a poor, perishing sinner, and all these worldly things only torture my mind; I cannot bear to think of them: they only plague and distress me. It is Jesus I want, in the manifestations to my soul of his blood, obedience, and love." This is thirsting for God, for the living God; and the more that you are enabled thus to crave him; the more simply, sincerely, and strongly that your soul goes out in desires after him for what he is in himself, the more do you come to the Scriptural description of "thirsting" after him. What a striking figure has David made use of, where he says, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Conceive a wounded stag, with the arrow in his flank or pursued by a crowd of hunters and hounds, all eager to pull him down; conceive him to have run for some space of time under a burning sun and over heaps of sand; and

conceive that at a distance this poor wounded or hunted animal sees water gently flowing along. Oh, how it pants! How its heaving sides gasp, and how it longs for the cooling stream, not only that it may drink large draughts of the fresh waters and lave its panting flank and weary parched limbs, but, by swimming across, may haply escape the dogs and hunters at its heels. How strong, how striking the figure! And yet, strong as it is, how earnestly does David employ it to set forth the panting of his soul after God. We cannot, perhaps, rise up into the fulness of this figure; we cannot, we dare not lay our feelings stretched fully out side by side with his, or use the same burning, vehement, ardent expressions. But we may at least see from them what the saints of God have experienced in times of temptation and trial in days of old; and we may in some measure compare the feelings of our soul with theirs—sometimes to fill us with shame and confusion at our short comings, sometimes to stimulate and encourage us so far as we experience a degree of similar teachings; for these things are written for our instruction, "upon whom the ends of the world are come." Thus in various ways and to various ends we may, with God's help and blessing, look at and into such expressions as we find in our text, "My soul thirsteth after thee," and in the fear of God search our hearts to see if we can find anything there corresponding to the work of grace that the Holy Ghost describes as existing in David's soul. Nor be utterly cast down nor wholly discouraged if you cannot find a full or close similarity. Can you find *any*? If so, take encouragement, for the Lord despises not the day of small things. It is his own work upon the heart and his own work alone to which he has regard, as David felt when he said, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands." (Psal. 138:8.) And that work will ever be a copy in full or in miniature, a complete or reduced photograph, of the work of grace described in the Scripture as carried on by the Spirit in the hearts of God's saints of old.

iii. But David speaks also of "*longing*" for God. We know what the word means in a natural sense, and indeed sometimes we know the meaning of the word too well; for we often, like children, long

for things that were they given to us, so far from doing us good, would only do us a deal of harm. As a child will long for unripe fruit, rich food, or highly seasoned dishes, and cry for them, so that it can hardly be satisfied except the parent give them, though they are injurious to his health; so we have many longings that our heavenly Parent knows are but unhealthy cravings, the gratification of which would do us mischief instead of good. Sickly, unhealthy children generally long most for green fruit; and therefore we take these unnatural longings as marks of ill health and depraved appetite. To see them in our children fills us, therefore, with apprehension. But longing for healthy food we like to see in them; for as sickly longings manifest a depraved appetite, so healthy hunger shows vigorous health; nor can a child hunger too much in a parent's eyes for good food, if he has it to bestow. So in grace. Your unhealthy longings; your sickly cravings for self-indulgence, fleshly ease, and a larger measure of earthly good; your lustings after wealth, worldly prosperity, respectability, with all the desires of the carnal mind for the enjoyments, such as they are, of sin,—all such base inclinations the Lord sees to be marks of disease, and as a kind as well as a wise Parent, in his providence or by his grace, denies you their gratification. But he does love a longing after himself, for he has inspired the feeling; he has himself created the desire; nor does anything please him more than to see a saint on earth longing for intercourse with himself as the God of heaven. It must be his grace to produce this feeling of desire toward him. He is invisible to the eye of sense; for he "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto." We have not heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. Whence, then, this longing in your bosom? What makes you at times, when you lie awake in the silent watches of the night, look up with anxious eye and wrestling heart, and long after God? What makes you fall upon your knees before the footstool of mercy, and cry with such vehement desires that he would come down and bless you? Why at other seasons, every now and then through the day, does a sigh or a groan burst forth from your soul that the Lord would manifest himself in love and mercy to your heart? Are these cries the product of nature? Are these longings and breathings so earnest, so continual, so

spread, it may be, through days and weeks and months and years, the fruits of the flesh? Let me give you one proof that they are not. Do carnal, unregenerate men know anything of these holy longings and spiritual breathings after an invisible God, or after a manifestation of the blood and love of Christ? Though you feel them to be in your breast, you cannot perhaps take them altogether to yourself as so many clear and indubitable marks of grace, for you find so much sin and carnality working in you that when you would grasp them as marks of grace, your hand seems palsied, and they drop out of your fingers before you can plant them firmly in your bosom as the Lord's work. But they are such, though you cannot take the comfort of them. Depend upon this, that no unregenerated man ever longed truly and really for God. He might desire to have his sins pardoned, under the convictions and stings of his natural conscience; he might even wish to go to heaven that he might escape hell; but he never desired God for what he is in himself. He is too pure and holy, too great and glorious a Being for a natural heart to love, or a carnal mind to desire. Even a convinced sinner often feels with Job, "For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness, I could not endure." (Job. 31:23.) But every unregenerate sinner says unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job 21:14.) There must be a new nature raised up in the soul, a new heart and a new spirit, before God can be desired for his own sake. So that though you may not be able to take these desires and longings after God as gracious evidences; and so far it is a mercy that you cannot, as otherwise you would be satisfied without revealed blessings and sweet manifestations of pardoning love, yet they are marks of grace and tokens for good; and for this very reason the Lord has recorded them in his word, that they might be for the encouragement of his people. Just, then, before we pass on any further, compare what takes place at various times in the depths of your own soul with what David describes as taking place in his: "Early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee." If there are in your soul breathings similar, if not so deep, you have so far marks and evidences that God is your God, though you may not be able, in the sweet approbation

of faith, to say with unfaltering lips, "*O God, thou art my God!*" I fully grant were you able to say this, it would put more life into your longing, more earnestness into your seeking, and more power into your wrestling; for it is this appropriating faith which holds the Lord so firmly in the arms of wrestling prayer. But though you cannot, from various internal hindrances, rise up into the sweet appropriation of faith, yet, as having these longings, seekings, and desires, you have so far an indubitable, because scriptural, evidence that God has not left you devoid of a work of grace upon your heart.

II.—But I pass on to show the spot where David was when he uttered these words, "*A dry and thirsty land where no water is.*" We must not suppose for a single moment that David had respect to any local circumstances in which he then was placed. We have no reason to believe that he was at that time in a natural desert, or that his tongue literally cleaved to the roof of his mouth for the want of a flowing brook or a cooling stream; but the literal desert, of which there is no lack even in the very vicinity of Jerusalem, presented itself as a figure to his soul, to express his spiritual feelings. Viewed in this light, there is something very expressive in the words, "a dry and thirsty land where no water is." Thus looking at it as a figure, and seeking to gather from it spiritual instruction, we may enquire from the Scriptures and the records of inward experience, What is this "dry and thirsty land?"

1. First, we may explain the words as referring to the earth on which our lot is cast; this vale of tears in which we at present dwell. Now this to the natural eye is not a dry and thirsty land. The natural eye, especially when undimmed by sickness or sorrow, sees much beauty in it; and, indeed, in a sense, earth is still beautiful, though the fall has sadly marred its primitive and original beauty. But as this is not seen except by the believing soul, the natural eye gazes with delight upon the rich pastures, the verdant hedges, the blooming meads, and the smiling rivers of our home scenery; and with still greater delight upon the lofty mountains and rich valleys of Alpine lands. Looking at these romantic prospects, many a heart swells with emotion; and at



such seasons earth to the natural eye seems full of beauty and glory. But O, amidst all these scenes of earthly beauty, what does the spiritual eye see? Misery and wretchedness, and all flowing from one source—sin. It has often been remarked, that the fairest scenes hide the foulest sins; and that the most blooming portions of our earth are most polluted with crime; as if to show the greater contrast between the works of God and man. But whatever beauty earth may wear to the eye, sin, sin, horrid sin, has marred it all; the curse of God rests upon the whole, for the original sentence still remains unremoved and unalleviated, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." (Gen. 3:17.)

David, then, viewing the prospect around him, spoke of earth as a "dry and thirsty land," as expressive of the feelings of his soul towards it. What did he want? What earth could not give. The earth, then, to him was "dry." What charm has a beautiful prospect to a dying man? What attraction has mountain or valley to a guilty conscience? Or, to use David's figure, what water to relieve a parched soul can gush from a romantic landscape? Earth could not give the Lord's presence to David's heart. Could it have given him what he longed so ardently to feel and enjoy, earth then would not have been "dry;" it would have been full of water, such a land spiritually as Moses described the promised land to be, "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." (Deut. 8:7.) But earth could not give him what he wanted. He wanted God for what he was in himself, that he might personally enjoy the manifestations of his love, the blessedness of his presence, the smiles of his countenance, the whispers of his favour. Especially he coveted God as his Father and his Friend, as his Rock and his Fortress and his Deliverer; his God, his strength; "his buckler and the horn of his salvation and his high tower." (Psalm 18:2.) These heavenly streams he thirsted to enjoy; but earth could not give him a drop of what he thus longed to drink. To him, therefore, it was "*dry*," because it did not give him that which his soul thirsted for. It might give him everything else; and we know that, as king of Israel, he had the largest share possible of earthly good. But that

was not what he wanted. There was one thing his heart was fixed upon; and not having that, he felt he had nothing. Look at a poor widow just bereaved of her husband: she walks out in the flush of early spring, but is solitary and desolate, for she has lost the arm upon which she leaned; and sees the meadows clothed with beauty, and children gathering flowers in the mead; but what is all this to her? How looks earth to her dimmed, weeping eyes? Clad in sackcloth, dressed in the same mourning weeds in which she herself is clothed. Or look at a mother who has lost her only child; perhaps mourning over a daughter who perished in a miserable manner in India—hurled down the well at Cawnpore, or dragged naked through the streets of Delhi. She walks through London streets, where all is gaiety and splendour; she sees rolling carriages carry maidens which now are what her daughter once was. What is their beauty, or rank, or dress to her? As she sees these daughters of pride and fashion, she inwardly cries, "Oh, my daughter! my daughter!" The very contrast only fills her heart with racking thoughts of her miserable child, who perished far away from her in a way that chills her very blood. Now, why should not the fields in spring give to the widow the same delight they yield to others; and why should not the London gaieties afford the same pleasure to the mother sorrowing over her lost daughter that they do to so many spectators? Why but because her soul is filled with bitterness and grief? So it is in its spiritual sense: the world is full of trouble and sorrow to distressed consciences and mourning pilgrims. The things of time and sense cannot amuse them as they amuse others; for they feel with David—"The troubles of my heart are enlarged:" "my spirit is overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate." (Psalm 25:17; 143:4.) God is absent; the Comforter withdrawn; Jesus not there; and this makes earth to be a dry land where there is no water.

And what a mercy it is that it should be so. Unless earth be dry, heaven will not unfold to you its rich stores of wine and milk and honey. If you are full of earth, heaven has no charms for your soul. Drink in sin as the ox drinketh down water; take your fill of pleasure, and gaiety, and amusement, and all the things that

delight the carnal mind; drink them all in; drink them all in! You have now no heart for Jesus or his love. But find all things dry, and barrenness and death stamped upon all below the skies, and wherever you cast your eyes earth a sterile desert because Jesus and his love and blood are not there: *then* you can enter into the feelings of the Psalmist, when he said "in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."

2. But he calls the land "*thirsty*" as well as "dry." How can the land be thirsty? The figure is borrowed from our natural thirst, and the expression implies a quality of never being able to be satiated. "The thirsty land" is one of such a porous and sandy nature that through it all the showers of heaven run away; ever insatiable, yet never fertilised, for no amount of rain can communicate the moisture necessary to impart fertility. Such is *the world* in its cravings for happiness. All the bounties of God in his kind providence cannot enrich the world, and especially *the worldly heart* that still dwells in the saint's breast. The craving desires of the carnal mind are like the two daughters of the horse leech, which are ever crying, "Give, give!" "Give, give!" cries covetousness. "Give, give!" cries pride. "Give, give!" cries every carnal desire of the earthly mind as its various lusts and passions are stirred up. But could all be given that sin could lust after, the result would be still the same: satiety for a time, but insatiability for the future. Sin is like a man in a dropsy, ever craving, ever craving liquid; or like a drunkard, who the more he drinks the more he wants to drink: ever craving, ever craving stronger and stronger drink, as if nothing but drink, drink, could cool his parched tongue or wind up his sinking spirits; and so he drinks till he dies, a poor miserable, drunken suicide. Such, as opened up by divine light, is the natural heart of man to himself—a "thirsty land, where no water is."

3. But taking the words in a wider signification, we may say that *wherever the love, mercy, and goodness of God are not to be found*, that place is to a child of God "a thirsty land." You may have providential mercies showered upon you; but like "the thirsty land," all these showers run through and run away, and

leave your heart a barren desert. In fact, to a child of God all is "a thirsty land" where God is not. Search the world from pole to pole; rove and roam from land to land; cross seas and oceans; and whether you live in the crowded haunts of men, or inhabit a hut in an Australian wilderness, if the Lord's presence and power be not in your soul, every clime and country will be a thirsty land where no water is. As the same sun shines in every clime; as the same wind everywhere blows, and the same rain everywhere falls, so is man the same in every country, in every state, and every condition; and the heart that beats under the purple and fine linen is the same as that which beats under rags and dirt. Nor can the whole range of human intellect, or human knowledge, or the advance of human society, in any of its varied forms, take God's curse off the earth. It is the pressure of this upon a spiritual mind and the view of this with a spiritual eye, which brings every one taught of God to the same conclusion as to what this world really is, and that it truly is to every believing heart a "thirsty land, where no water is."

4. But the words are not only expressive of what the earth is to the saint of God, but descriptive also of the dry and thirsty land of *his own soul*; for *there* we want the streams to flow; there we wish the springs to rise, and there we desire the water of eternal life to come. "Spring up, O well!" is the cry of the soul to the Lord continually that has ever felt his presence and his power, had a taste of his grace, or a view of his glory. To be then in those spots into which we sometimes sink; to have nothing within that seems like life; no enjoyment of his presence, no sweet peace or joy in believing, no feeling of love to the Lord, or to his people, no satisfaction or contentment with his dealings in providence or grace; to be thus in the feelings of the heart is to be in a "dry and thirsty land, where no water is."

The marginal reading gives us a very expressive term, descriptive of this state of mind, "a *weary land*." Is not this very expressive of the feelings of your heart when you are weary of everything and of everybody, and weary of nothing so much as your miserable self; weary of saints, weary of sinners; weary of

professors and weary of possessors; weary of earth and weary of everything upon earth, but after all weary of nothing so much as your own miserable heart. "But," you say, "is it possible that a child of God can ever be in that state of mind?" May I not meet this question by another? How came the Psalmist so to describe it, if it were not so? For he could not mean that the land itself was "weary," but that he was weary in it; as we say, sometimes, "what a weary road," or "what a weary journey," when the weariness is not in them but in us. Nor do I think that I have deviated from the teaching of the Holy Spirit in thus opening up the experience of the Psalmist's soul, as pointed out by the expression, "a weary land." Does not the Lord use the same language where he speaks of his dear Son as man, being "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land?" Oh, it is not the land that is weary, but the traveller in it; and "the shadow of a great rock" is only acceptable to the weary traveller. The Lord himself says, "the Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isai. 50:4); and again, "I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." (Jer. 31:25.) And we may well ask why should the Holy Spirit have recorded these characters and these promises in the Scriptures of truth except the saints of God, and highly favoured saints of God too, were at times in the condition of mind, described in the character and addressed in the promise?

III.—But I pass on to our next point, which is, what David, in this dry and thirsty land, longed to see: "*To see thy power and thy glory.*" He had done with the power of man; at least as far as regards the things of God. If this psalm was written when he was driven from Jerusalem by the rebellion of Absalom, he had been a powerful monarch; he had sat upon the throne of Israel; thousands upon thousands had bowed before his sceptre; and his word had been law over a vast tract of country. But now in the wilderness he was not longing to see his own power re-established. That never had and never could satisfy his soul; and now in his eyes was nothing. What he now wanted to see was the power of God, and that by no external display of his greatness

and majesty, but by the revelation of this power to his heart. As regards earthly power, we are but humble subjects compared to this mighty king as he sat upon his throne at Jerusalem. But in spiritual things, we may have the same feelings as he experienced in the wilderness. We feel with him that it is not our own power, the power of the flesh, that we wish to see displayed. If any lesson has been written upon our heart by the finger of God, has not this been deeply printed there: our want of power to believe, to hope, to love, to obey; that there is no strength, wisdom, or goodness in the creature; in a word, that man by nature has neither will nor power to seek or serve God? As this sense of creature helplessness is felt in the heart and made known in the conscience, there is created by the same blessed Spirit, who gives us to feel our helplessness, a longing to see the power of God, and that as especially put forth in the Person, the work, the blood, the obedience, and the love of Jesus; for he is "the power of God" as well as "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24); and "the kingdom of God," of which he is the Lord and Head, "is not in word but in power." (1 Cor. 4:20.) It was "the power of God" that raised Christ from the dead; and the same power is put forth in every believing heart, according to those words of the apostle, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places?" (Ephes. 1:19, 20.) Is not the gospel itself "the power of God unto salvation?" (Rom. 1:16.) Does not all true faith "stand in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4)? and does not God give "the spirit of power and love" to those who fear his great name? (2 Tim. 1:7.) In fact, we know nothing of true faith if we know nothing of "the power of God," for it is "the work of faith with power." (2 Thess. 1:11.) In longing, therefore, to see God's "power," we long to see first that power as displayed in the Person, work, and resurrection of Christ; and then to feel that power put forth in our own soul. Thus the desire of Paul was that he might "know Christ, and the power of his resurrection," as a most blessed experimental reality in his own soul. (Phil. 3:10.)

Salvation by grace is the greatest act that the mind of God ever conceived, or the power of God ever accomplished. It was easy to create the world. God had but to speak, and the sun started in the sky; when he said "Let there be light," there was light. But to save a sinner, a rebel, a transgressor, taxed, if I may use the expression, God's wisdom to the utmost. And view the power displayed in the putting away, the blotting out, and the thorough removal of sin, and I may add, of millions of sins. Look at what sin has done! How one proud thought hurled thousands of bright spirits from heaven into hell, and turned holy seraphs into the foulest fiends, the implacable foes of God and man. Look at the Deluge; look at Sodom and Gomorrah; look at the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; look into the abyss of an ever opening hell; or to bring the matter nearer home, look at the weight of sin upon the conscience of one guilty sinner; and then, take the weight of all the sins of the innumerable millions redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and view them all charged upon the head of Jesus! What a power was put forth in him to sustain the weight of all those sins, and thus reconcile and harmonise all God's inherent attributes—that mercy should not triumph at the expense of justice; that justice should maintain all her claims, and yet mercy have her fullest exercise; that the Law should sustain to the utmost its rigid, unbending rights, and yet that the Gospel should hang around it its glorious trophies. What a display, too, of wisdom and power is continually manifested in the personal salvation and sanctification of every redeemed, regenerated child of grace. Fully, freely, everlastingly to save a poor, miserable, guilty sinner from the depths of the fall; to change him by the power of divine grace into a saint; to prepare him for the eternal participation and enjoyment of the glory which the Son of God had with the Father before the foundation of the world; to make him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light by giving him a nature capable of enjoying all the holy perfections of a Triune God, as displayed in the glorious Person of Immanuel, and that to all eternity! What a power is displayed here! What is creation with all its wonders to this? What are seas, with all their strange, innumerable inhabitants; what is earth, with all its mineral, animal, or vegetable marvels; what is sun, or moon, or

stars, however great or glorious this mighty host, compared with hosts of millions of sinners, all saved by sovereign grace, all washed in atoning blood, all clothed in Immanuel's righteousness, and all sanctified by the Spirit's work upon their hearts? Is not every saved soul a miracle of almighty power? Are not all the dealings of the Lord with him and for him acts of omnipotence? The way in which the Lord defeats Satan, with all his wiles and snares, overcomes the strength of sin, and delivers the believer from its dominion, a miracle which none but he can effect; begins, carries on, and completes the work of grace in his heart; overrules all events and circumstances, and makes them work together for his good; delivers out of every trial; subdues and subjugates every evil; and eventually brings him unto the eternal enjoyment of himself—O what a display of infinite power is revealed in every vessel of mercy! David longed to see this power, as the right arm of the Lord, displayed and especially put forth in his own case. For is it not in our own case that we want to see that power displayed; in our own heart that power made experimentally known? Have not unbelief and sin and guilt power there? And where should we want to see and feel the power of God but in the same heart, that he there might be stronger than they? I am very sure that if a man know nothing of the power of God in his soul he can know nothing of true religion or vital godliness. The strong man armed will keep the palace till the stronger than he comes upon him, overcomes him, and takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted. Either sin must reign or grace; unbelief or faith; the flesh or the Spirit; Belial or Christ. Every true Christian is sighing, I may say daily, after the power of God; and the more that divine life springs up in his heart the more he longs after its felt, enjoyed manifestations; nor does he ever feel his need of it more than when he is in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.

ii. But David desired to see also "*glory*" as well as "power:" "*To see thy glory.*" Was not this also the desire of Moses? "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." And what is this but the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? for this is that which God gives and the soul sees when he shines into the heart, 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.) The Lord Jesus Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person" (Heb. 1:3); and this was the glory which his disciples saw and which drew their heart toward him, as John speaks, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) It was in this way faith was raised up in their heart, as we read, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." (John 2:11.) To see this glory by the eye of faith has a transforming efficacy, for by a view of it we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) The glory of Christ, in his suffering manhood, was veiled from the eyes of all but those who were taught by the blessed Spirit and enlightened to see it. And what glory is still to be seen by believing eyes in an incarnate God! The grandeur of Deity, tempered by the weakness of humanity, and yet shining through it, as the noonday sun shines through the clouds, which so far veil his rays that though they permit him to be seen they do not dazzle nor blind the eye! The Son of God in the babe of Bethlehem; the "only begotten of the Father," sweating great drops of blood in the Garden, and hanging upon the cross at Calvary; yet in his lowest state, when covered to man's eye with ignominy and shame, glory streaming from every pore of his sacred body, majesty and beauty shining forth from every lineament of his marred countenance; and love and mercy characterizing every word issuing from his languid lips! None will ever see the glory of a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ in the open bliss of heaven who do not first see him on earth in his humiliation as a suffering Christ; and indeed it is his suffering glory which is now so blessed and so suitable to a guilty sinner. To see this suffering glory of the Son of God revealed to his soul by a divine power, made over to him as his salvation, and

containing in it the essence of all his present and future happiness; this is the glory that a redeemed and regenerated saint longs to see and feel. What glory can "the world give compared with the glory of the marred countenance of the suffering Son of God? By the side of his cross all earthly glory pales, withers, and dies; for death puts an end to everything naturally bright and glorious. Well has God spoken of the end of all human glory; "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it." (Isai. 5:14.) But that glory which begins with the cross ends with the crown; for "if we suffer with him we shall also be glorified together." (Rom. 8:17.) To see this glory of a suffering Christ by the eye of faith; to feel the heart deeply penetrated and inwardly possessed by it; to have it for our daily bread and our daily drink; to come as led by the Spirit to this ever-spread table of the flesh of Christ, this ever-flowing fountain of his atoning blood, and hear the Lord himself saying, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved. Here is food to feed your immortal soul; here are streams of pardon and peace; here the rivers of eternal life: Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely;"—to see, to enjoy, to feel, and experience this in his own dry, thirsty, and weary bosom, this is to see the glory of God, as revealed in the Person, work, blood, obedience, and love of his dear Son.

IV.—But I pass on to our last point, which is, the remembrance that came over the Psalmist's soul of what he had seen and felt in time past, and the *place* where he had enjoyed it, "To see thy power and thy glory, so *as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*" We may understand by the "sanctuary" here not merely the tabernacle set up in the wilderness, or the temple afterwards erected at Jerusalem, though we have reason to believe that the Lord did specially manifest his power and glory there to believing Israel; but taking a wider view of the subject, we may say that every place in which the Lord manifests himself, is a sanctuary to a child of God. Thus the Lord promised to his scattered people that "he himself would be as a little sanctuary in the countries

where they should come." (Ezekiel 11:16.) Jesus is now our sanctuary; for he is "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man." The tabernacle of the wilderness was but a shadow, and the substance having come, the shadow is gone. As, then, David saw the power and glory of God in the sanctuary, so we see that power and that glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we may give a further sense to the word. Every place is a "sanctuary" where God manifests himself in power and glory to the soul. Moses, doubtless, had often passed by the bush which grew in Horeb; it was but a common hawthorn bush, in no way distinguished from the other bushes of the copse; but on one solemn occasion it was all "in a flame of fire," for "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire" out of the midst; and though it burnt with fire, it was not consumed. God being in the bush, the ground round about was holy, and Moses was bidden to put off his shoes from off his feet. (Exodus 3:2, 5.) Was not this a sanctuary to Moses? It was, for a holy God was there. Thus wherever God manifests himself, that becomes a sanctuary to a believing soul. We want not places made holy by the ceremonies of man, but places made holy by the presence of God. Then a stable, a hovel, a hedge, any homely corner may be, and is a sanctuary, when God fills your heart with his sacred presence, and causes every holy feeling and gracious affection to spring up in your soul. If ever you have seen this in times past, you have seen God in the sanctuary; for then your heart becomes the sanctuary of God, according to his own words, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." (2 Cor. 4:16.) Are not your very bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost? (1 Cor. 6:19.) Does not Christ dwell in the heart by faith? (Ephes. 3:17); and is he not formed there, the hope of glory? (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27.) It is then not only in Christ *without* but in Christ *within* that we see the power and glory of God. It is in this way that we become consecrated to the service and glory of God, set our affections upon heavenly things, and obtain a foretaste of eternal joy.

But, alas! the soul is not often or long here. We lose sight of

these blessed realities and get into a "dry and thirsty land where no water is." But the Lord in mercy again revives his work upon the heart, and then springs up afresh the longing desire to see his power and his glory. If we have once seen it, we shall long to see it again: if we have once enjoyed it, we shall desire to enjoy it again. Nor will the Lord deny the earnest desires or turn a deaf ear to the cries of his people. Every visit of his presence is a pledge for another; for whom the Lord loveth, he loveth to the end, and the grace that he gives he will most certainly crown with glory.

## **THE LIVING STONE, DISALLOWED OF MEN, BUT CHOSEN OF GOD AND PRECIOUS**

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, August 14th, 1853, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"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, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:4, 5

He that will build a house must build it upon a rock. This is the Lord's own figure and the Lord's own declaration: "Every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock." We are all immortal beings. When born, we are born for eternity; for we carry in this frail tabernacle an undying soul, capable of enjoying unspeakable bliss, and capable of enduring unspeakable woe. These weighty considerations may well make us pause and ask ourselves, What is the foundation of our hope? As regards our prospects for eternity, they all hinge on this point—whether we are building upon the sand, or whether we are building on the rock. If we are building upon the rock, we shall live for ever; but if we are building on the sand, we shall fall, and great will that fall be, for it will be for ever and ever.

You will observe how these thoughts are connected with the text, in which we read of Christ as the living stone, and of believers as lively stones that are built upon Him.

In preaching the Word of God I aim mainly at two points. 1. To make my statements as clear as possible; and, 2. To speak to the heart as directly and forcibly as I am able. By the first I address myself to the understanding; by the second I appeal to the conscience. The application of the word to the heart by the Holy Spirit, I well know, can alone make the word effectual; but as far

as man is concerned as an instrument, unless he speak clearly, who can understand? and unless he appeal to the conscience, who can feel? I shall, therefore, for the sake of clearness of statement and force of application, divide my subject into four leading branches.

I. Christ, the living stone disallowed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

II. Believers as lively stones coming unto this living stone.

III. How they are built up upon the Lord Jesus Christ as a spiritual house.

IV. How as a holy priesthood they offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I. The whole strength and permanence of a building depend upon the foundation. If the foundation be right, the building upon that foundation is right; if the foundation be wrong, the building, however ornamental to the eye, however beautiful in situation or decorated in architecture, is radically wrong; and all its architectural ornament, by its additional weight, only tends to hasten its downfall.

Christ is here spoken of by the unerring Spirit as a "stone;" in other words, a rock, the foundation on which the Church of God is built; and He is called "a *living* stone," as opposed to a dead foundation. Now, in what marked characteristics is He a living stone?

In viewing the Lord Jesus as a living Mediator at the right hand of the Father, we must make a distinction between Him as God, and as Man, and as God-Man. Thus viewed we shall see there are, so to speak, three different lives in the glorious Redeemer.

1. As God, He has a *self-existent* life; for He is a Person of the glorious Jehovah, the Son of the Father in truth and love. His own

words were: "If ye believe not that I am"—that is, the great and glorious I AM THAT I AM—"ye shall die in your sins." This life is eternal, unoriginated, self-existent.

2. But there is His life as Man, the life which He lived when He was upon earth; this is a *created* life, for it was created when the Son of God took body and soul at the same instant of time in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing operations of the Holy Ghost. Of this life He speaks, John 10:17, 18: "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." This is the life He took; it therefore had a beginning; and this life He laid down; it therefore had a temporary end. But His life as God was neither taken nor laid down; it had no beginning, and can have no cessation.

3. There is, thirdly, the life which He now lives at God's right hand. This is a *given* life, according to these words—"As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given the Son to have life in Himself." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "Because I live ye shall live also." This is His mediatorial life, His risen life, His present life, as the Head of influence to His Church and people. Let me make these points a little clearer and plainer to your mind. Look up and see Jesus at God's right hand. Is He not there as God? Cannot you see in Him, as God, a divine, self-existent life? "Yes," you answer. Look again. Can you not see Him wearing our nature, having a human body and a human soul? Is that—I speak with all reverence—a dead body or a living body? You say, "Living, certainly." And if living, is it not a human life, animating human members? Here is His assumed, created life. Now look again. Has He not life to impart to His members below? This is not His divine life, for that He cannot give; nor is it His human life, for that is limited to His own human nature; but it is a mediatorial life, whereby as the second Adam He became a quickening Spirit.

Now the text, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ as "a living stone," sets Him forth as the Mediator, Immanuel, God with us; and therefore the life here spoken of, as belonging to and dwelling in Him as "a living stone," is His *given* life—His risen, His mediatorial life in which He lives at God's right hand as the covenant Head of all divine influence, as the Source of all grace, as the Author of all spiritual life, as the Resurrection and the Life, which He declared He was to Martha. "Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25, 26).

But though I have shown that these three lives are distinct, yet let no one think they are disunited. As in the blessed Trinity there are three Persons and yet but one God, and as the human and divine nature of the Lord Jesus are distinct and yet united in one glorious Person, so it is with the lives of which I have been speaking. They are distinct and yet united; all needful and all blessed, and all centering in Immanuel, God with us.

Now, it is necessary that the foundation on which the Church of Christ is to stand should be a living foundation. A dead foundation suits dead sinners. Dead works and dead professors go well together; but a living Head requires living members, and living members require a living Head; life in the stem, life in the branches; life in the husband, life in the bride; a living Jesus for a living people. Thus He is "a living stone" at God's right hand, as the apostle speaks—"But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing *He ever liveth* to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:24, 25). Thus is He the Rock of Ages, the living foundation which God the Father has laid in Zion, as the prophet speaks—"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" (Isa. 28:16). Now this is the only foundation on which the sinner can build. There is, there can be no other; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid,



which is Jesus Christ."

i. But this living stone is "disallowed of men." They will have nothing to do with it; and that for various reasons. 1. In some, the world shuts out all room for Christ. There is not so much as a crevice or a corner for Him or His truth. The love of the world bars out the love and service of God. Jesus Himself declares—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If the world has firm possession of a man's heart, there is no place for the Lord Jesus Christ. If his heart is going out after covetousness, and if he is swallowed up in the cares and anxieties of this life, what desire can there be in his soul toward a bleeding, suffering Immanuel? What earnest breathings or longings that He would fill his soul with mercy and love, would bedew him with His favour, come into his heart, and sit on the throne of his affections? "My word hath no place in you," said the Lord to the Jews of old. And why? Because their hearts were filled with worldly self.

2. Sin indulged and delighted in is another cause why men "disallow this living stone:" they love sin too madly to part with it; and therefore they reject this living stone which God has chosen to be the rock on which to build His Church, because they cannot have Christ and sin together.

3. In others, pride and self-righteousness are causes why they reject the Lord Jesus, and why He becomes disallowed in their hearts. They are like a builder (if one of such consummate folly could be found, but we may assume it for the sake of the illustration), who in laying a foundation should place it partly on the rock and partly on the sand, reasoning thus with himself—"If the sand should give way, there will be the rock; and if the rock should give way, there will be the sand; and thus between the rock and the sand surely my building will stand." This would be a work of consummate folly, were it a bridge, a palace, or a cathedral; but there is a great deal of religious architecture in which this folly is daily practised. Christ the rock, self the sand; the gospel to support one part, and the law to sustain the other; where Christ fails, let self come in, and where self fails, let Christ

come in. How many who think themselves master builders are guilty of this folly! But this half and half work, this partly Christ and partly self, partly gospel and partly law, partly promise and partly precept, what is it but really disallowing the living stone as the foundation which God has laid in Zion? Such a building as this will certainly no more stand in grace than in nature. Yet how many foolish builders there are, who with much labour and pains, spend their lives in erecting a building which in the end will only fall and crush them in its ruins.

4. But though I have mentioned three reasons why this living stone is disallowed of men, yet the fourth grand reason I have not yet named. The real truth is, that their eyes are not opened by the Spirit to see, nor their consciences wrought upon by the power of God to feel their need of this living stone, and its suitability to build upon for eternity. The veil of unbelief and ignorance is over their heart, so that they neither see their misery nor the way of God's mercy. Not feeling any need of Jesus, they have no sense of His suitability to the wants of a sinner; having no true knowledge of the depth of the fall, they have no looking out for God's superabounding grace; having no sense of the wounds carved by sin, they have no desire for the healing balm; having no acquaintance with miserable self, they have and desire to have no acquaintance with the blessed Jesus. A man's greatest enemy is himself. Self is about the most deceitful fellow that ever existed. He can wear every dress, speak every language, assume every shape; tower like a giant, or sink like a dwarf; fill a palace, or crawl into a hovel; swell out into an Alp, or fall into a molehill; revel in sin, or put on the mask of religion; gamble in a hell [*hall?*] in St. James's, or smoke in a pot-house in St. Giles's. What cannot this monster self do; and what can he not become? But he is never so subtle and deceitful as when he puts on the mask of religion. Self must always be somewhat. It kills him to be nothing. If he cannot reign as king, he frets and pines. But he can no longer sit on the throne, if the Lord Jesus Christ come into the heart. Self therefore will always disallow the Lord Jesus Christ, for to receive Him is to part with all its glory. The first lesson therefore in religion is to deny self.

"If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." Till self, then, is denied, there is no heart acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ.

ii. But though "disallowed of men," he is "chosen of God," and God, I speak it with reverence, cannot make an unwise choice. To think that would be to attribute folly to the Most High. He is "chosen of God," because He alone was fitted for the work. It would have crushed an archangel to bear what Jesus bore. No bright angel, nor glorious seraph, no created being, however exalted, could have borne the load of sin; and therefore none but God's own Son, not by office, but by eternal generation, the Son of the Father in truth and in love, could bear the weight of imputed sin and guilt. As Hart says—

"Such loads of sin were on Him put,  
He could but just sustain the load."

But He was "chosen of God" that He might be Zion's Representative, Zion's Sin-bearer, and Zion's glorious Head; that there might be a foundation for the Church to rest upon with all her miseries, all her sins, all her sorrows, all her base backslidings and idolatries, all her weight of woe and depths of guilt. It need be a strong foundation to bear this Church, so loaded with degradation, ignominy, and shame! God's own Son, and none else in heaven or in earth, could bear all this. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else."

He was "chosen of God" in eternity, in the divine councils, that He might be a Mediator. He was "chosen" to become man; chosen to become the Rock of Ages, Zion's resting place, harbour, anchorage, and home. Jesus was ever therefore, and ever will be unspeakably "precious" to the Father's heart. Man despises Him, but God honours Him; man disallows Him, but God values Him as His co-equal Son.

iii. God, therefore, not only values Him as His "fellow," and has chosen Him to be the Mediator, but He is in His eyes unspeakably

"precious;" precious in His Deity; precious in His humanity; precious in His blood, precious in His obedience, precious in His sufferings, precious in His death, precious in His resurrection, precious in His ascension to God's right hand, precious in the eyes of God as the Great High Priest over the house of God, and the only Mediator between God and man. Is He not worthy of all your trust, all your confidence, all your hope, and all your acceptance? Look where we will, He is our only hope. Look at the world; what can you reap from that but a harvest of sorrow? Look at money; it makes itself wings and flies away. Perhaps the rich are the most miserable people in the world; they have so many cares which money cannot alleviate, and so many wants which money cannot buy. And look at everything men call good and great; all that man highly values, good perhaps for time, but valueless for eternity. Perhaps no man could put a higher value than I upon what man naturally regards as good and great, especially upon human learning, and attainments in knowledge and science. But, I have seen them as compared with eternity, to be but breath and smoke, a vapour that passeth away and is no more seen. But the things of eternity, the peace of God in the heart, the work of the Spirit upon the soul, with all the blessed realities of salvation—these are not like the airy mists of time, the vapours that spring out of the earth and return to earth again, but are enduring and eternal, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

II. But we pass on to show how believers *come to this living stone*—"To whom *coming* as unto a living stone." How else but by coming to Him can I get into union and communion with Him? Look at the thing naturally. Figures in nature sometimes help us to right conceptions in grace. Here is a builder laying a foundation. That implies that there is a superstructure to be raised upon it, stone after stone to be brought and laid upon that foundation, until the whole building is completed. Now, in this case, does not every stone *come* to the foundation? The foundation does not go to the stone, but the stone to the foundation. This is common sense. I need not insult your understanding by enlarging further on this point. But take the

thing in grace. Here am I standing before God as a sinner by nature and practice. How is my soul to be saved? How am I to escape unutterable woe, the lake of unquenchable fire? I must have an interest in Christ. I must have a living union with the Lord Jesus; I must have a spiritual knowledge of Him, a vital faith in His person, blood, and righteousness. But this I cannot have apart from spiritual union with the Lord Jesus, standing an isolated wretch in myself. I must therefore be transplanted from nature's wild and barren soil, and put into the garden of the Lord; I must be taken out of the quarry of nature and be made a living stone, and then put by God Himself on the living stone which He hath laid in Zion. This in scripture is compared to the operation of grafting, which you have all heard of, if not seen. In grafting, the gardener takes a living scion and grafts it into a living stock. He does not take a dead stick out of the hedge and graft it into the living stock, nor does he take a dead stock and graft upon it a living scion. But he grafts a living scion into a living stock; and then they unite, grow together, and produce goodly fruit. So in grace. If I have a union with Christ the living stone, I must be myself a living stone. It is a pity our translators did not preserve the same word here; it is so in the original, which literally reads thus—"To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as living stones." Had they done so, it would have thrown a clearer light upon the identity of Christ and His members. Introducing the word "lively," instead of "living," seems to mar the beauty and harmony of the truth here.

But what is the evidence of their possessing life? It is their *coming* to Jesus. This is God's own testimony that they are living stones, for can a *dead* stone come? But *how* do they come? We cannot here lay down one positive, precise line, for God like a wise schoolmaster, adapts His lessons to the ages and capacities of His pupils. He does not give the same precise lesson to every pupil, but carefully adapts His teaching to their varied wants. Yet, however diversified, all His teachings tend to the same point—to bring out of self, to cut down all legal, self-righteous hopes, and to lead the soul to feel its need of the Lord Jesus. But this often requires deep and cutting work. Self has taken so deep a root in

the ground by nature, that the knife is required to be applied very low down to cut asunder the tap root.

But to recur to our question. *How* do they come? With weeping and supplications, with piercing convictions of sin, with the renunciation of all their own righteousness, with deep self-abasement, self-condemned, and self-abhorred, seeing and feeling nothing in themselves but wretchedness and misery. If they do not feel *this*, they never will come off the sandy foundation on which they are resting, and be brought to stand upon the Rock of Ages.

But this is not sufficient; something more than this is needed. They must be lifted up and out of self by the Almighty hand of God, and set down by His power upon the living stone. There is often a great mistake made here. Many content themselves with merely seeing the suitability of the Lord Jesus, and having desires after Him; but there is something more wanted than this. There must be a taking up of the soul by the hands of God, and a putting of it on Christ the living Rock. Let me dwell a little longer on this point; and to help my meaning, I will revert to my figure. Here is a foundation laid by a builder, and here is a stone ready to be put on it, squared and fashioned, and fitted for the place it is intended to occupy. It is suitable for the foundation, and the foundation is suitable for it. If the stone could speak, it would say, "How suitable that foundation is to me; I want to be put on it; it suits me and I suit it." Now, the suitability is not enough to bring the two together; a hand is wanted which the stone does not possess. What is that in grace? the operation of the Spirit upon the heart, drawing the soul to the Mediator, and setting it down into Him and upon Him. Then, this "living stone," not only comes to the Lord Jesus, but is built upon Him and into Him, being cemented by the unction of the Holy Spirit. This creates a union between the living stone and the living Foundation; the two then coalesce; there is a mutual union between them: and out of this mutual union flows mutual communion. These are points of vital godliness, much overlooked in our day, but matters of deep importance.

III. But as they are brought to, and built upon Christ as living stones, they are "*built up a spiritual house.*"

The "spiritual house" here, may admit of three significations.

1. It may signify, *first*, and primarily, the whole Church of the Firstborn whose names are written in heaven—the elect of God, and especially the whole building, when it will be brought together in all its parts, and the top stone be put on with shoutings of grace unto it. This is the spiritual house in all its completeness and beauty as it will shine forth throughout eternity.

2. But, *secondly*, the words "spiritual house," may apply to individual churches. A gospel church is an ordinance of God; and where individual churches are gathered together in the name of God, and consist of living members of Christ's body, being thus built as living stones on Christ the living stone, they become each "a spiritual house." The members of a gospel church form the varied apartments of the spiritual house; and though some may be the garret and others the cellar, some the parlour and others the drawing-room, yet collectively they form the spiritual house.

3. But *thirdly*, and this point I shall chiefly aim at in my subsequent remarks, the word may be taken to signify an individual believer; for each believer is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and by His personal indwelling becomes a spiritual house, a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Now, viewing the individual believer as "a spiritual house," we may speak of him as possessing three distinct—what shall I call them?—faculties. We are sometimes at a loss to express spiritual things in words. I will, therefore, call them faculties, for want of a more significant and expressive term. He has an *understanding*, a *conscience*, and *affections*; and this understanding is a spiritual understanding, this conscience is a tender conscience, and these affections are living affections. Now, as he becomes a temple of

the Holy Ghost, it is in these three apartments that the blessed Spirit dwells. First, He enlightens the *understanding*, as the apostle speaks—"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." As the temple of old had a golden candlestick, or as the word more properly signifies, lamp, which lighted the holy place, which without it would have been in utter darkness, so the light of the Holy Spirit illuminates the spiritual understanding of every child of God. This is "the unction from the Holy One," whereby he understands the things of God, and has a clear apprehension of "the truth as it is in Jesus." He thus becomes "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." This is seeing light in God's light. As the blessed Lord opened the understanding of the disciples that they might understand the Scriptures, so this light of the Spirit opens the spiritual understanding. This apartment may be called the vestibule or central hall of the soul, from which the light streams into every other chamber.

2. But there is beyond this, an inner apartment, the very seat of the King Himself, in which He spiritually dwells, and that is *the conscience* made tender in the fear of the Lord. This may be called the King's living room, where He daily and hourly transacts business; where He judges and decides matters brought before Him, and pronounces them good or evil.

3. Then there is the innermost room of all, the bridal chamber of the Lamb and His wife. This is the warm and tender affection of a believing, loving heart. It is in this bridal chamber that the Lord specially manifests His love to His spouse and bride, and draws forth every *affection* of her heart to Himself. Light in the understanding, life in the conscience, love in the heart; what more can we want? How distant at times these things seem from us! Yet they are realities, the sum and substance of genuine godliness. If I have no light in my understanding, no life in my conscience, no love in my heart, what proof have I of being "a living stone?" How can that be "a spiritual house" in which there is nothing spiritual?



But the same work of the Spirit which makes the spiritual house makes the Church of God also holy. The living stones are therefore called in the text "a holy priesthood." That all God's saints are priests is one of the grand distinguishing doctrines of Scripture. This is God's own testimony; for the song of the redeemed is, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests." Bear these two things in mind, that every believer is a priest unto God, and that there are no priests but believers. If there is one thing to me more hateful than another, it is priestcraft. I am no priest. When I renounced my Church of England priesthood, I renounced priestcraft altogether. I am a minister, I hope, of the Spirit, but I am no priest in the ordinary sense of the word, that is, in the acceptation of popery and Puseyism. For a priest implies a sacrifice and an altar; and sacrifice and altar we have none but the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and the altar of His human nature on which that sacrifice lay. Were this truth firmly impressed on the mind of the English nation, that under this dispensation there are no priests except believers; we need no more fear popery coming in again than we need fear a French invasion. It is the belief that ministers are priests which mainly keeps up popery. Take away, then, priesthood out of the professing church, and you cut the very sinews of popery and Puseyism.

But God's people are "a holy priesthood," not in the sense in which Aaron was a priest, nor in the sense in which men call themselves priests at Rome and Oxford; but in a spiritual sense, as offering up "spiritual sacrifices." They, too, are holy, not in the flesh, nor by any transmission of creature sanctity, but holy in the holiness of Christ, "who of God is made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." As united to Him, His holiness is theirs; and as supplied out of His fulness, they are made partakers of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

IV. But I pass on to our fourth and last point—the offering of spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The main office of the priest was to offer sacrifices; and the Romish church

calls its ministers priests, as believing they offer a real sacrifice in the mass. But they are carnal priests, offering a carnal sacrifice which God abhors. But God's priests, believers in the Lord Jesus, as a holy priesthood, taught and sanctified by God, offer up spiritual sacrifices.

1. What are these spiritual sacrifices which they offer up and are acceptable to God? The main sacrifice is that broken heart and contrite spirit of which David speaks—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17). When they come before God, pressed down with a deep sense of their vileness and worthlessness, humbled into the dust, this is "a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God." He looks with complacency upon the man "who is of a humble and contrite spirit, and that trembles at His word." Now if you have felt sorrow, humiliation, and contrition for the sin in any degree, fear not, for you are a priest unto God; aye a far better priest than Cardinal Wiseman, with all his train; for you offer up spiritual sacrifices, and he can only offer up a carnal one.

2. Another "sacrifice" is prayer and supplication coming forth out of a burdened heart and a troubled soul. Have you never offered up this spiritual sacrifice? But say you, "my prayers are so weak and wandering, so stammering and unconnected." Well, what was an acceptable sacrifice under the law? Was it always a whole burnt-offering? It was so sometimes; but the victim was for the most part cut up, and only certain joints laid upon the altar. So it is with many sincere prayers. If there is not the whole burnt-offering complete, there are the parts of the sacrifice laid upon the altar. However broken and inarticulate your prayers may seem to be, yet if it be true prayer, it is acceptable to God as a spiritual sacrifice. Look at this as seen in the light of the ceremonial law. It mattered not whether the bullock, lamb, or pigeon were great or small, so long as it was a clean beast or bird; if it belonged to the order of sacrifices which God had appointed, it was acceptable to Him. Carry this into the things of God. Our prayers and petitions are often poor, weak, stammering things, but are they offered unto God from the heart under

inspirations of His Spirit? Are they what He Himself has wrought in your soul? Is it spiritual breathing? Does it flow from Divine teaching? Is it of God, is it from heaven? Then, if it be, it is an acceptable sacrifice. I like broken prayers. They are usually the best prayers which we offer up. But you say, "when we hear ministers pray, they do not offer broken prayers." No; they do not. There is the gift as well as the grace of prayer. It would not do for ministers in public to pray with stammering lips; but could you accompany home that minister whom you have been hearing pray in public, you would hear him sighing, groaning, and stammering in a very different way from what he did when called upon to engage in public worship.

3. Praise and thanksgiving are also spiritual sacrifices. Sometimes when the soul is lifted up with joy on account of the presence of the Lord, it can burst forth into thankfulness and praise. This is a sacrifice well pleasing to God as He Himself declares, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." The apostle therefore says, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." To bless God for His mercy is "to offer the calves of our lips;" and this is the least we can do in return for His goodness, as David speaks, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord."

4. Devotedness to God's service, what we may term, self-sacrifice, implying the renunciation of our will and way, profit and pleasure, with the crucifixion of self and sin, the old man and the world, is another spiritual sacrifice. To lay down at the foot of the cross worldly pride and religious self-righteousness, schemes of aspiring ambition and projects of pecuniary profit, to be willing to be nothing and have nothing contrary to the mind of Christ and the will and word of the Most High—what a rare grace is this, and yet what a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God.

5. Kindness and liberality to the Lord's poor and needy people, an open heart and an open hand, a free ungrudging spirit ever flowing forth in words of kindness and actions of generosity to the

humble in rank and destitute in circumstances—this free, liberal, bountiful spirit is another spiritual sacrifice. This is God's own testimony concerning it; "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." And should we not be willing to offer to the Lord our best of everything—our time, our health, our strength, our talent, our property, the faculties of our mind, and the members of our body—are not all His by right of gift and of redemption? "Ye are not your own," says the apostle. Why? "for ye are bought with a price. Therefore," he adds, "glorify God in your body and spirit which are God's." Now, when all these things are done from spiritual motives and to spiritual ends, under the teaching and operations of the blessed Spirit, then they become "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God," a pleasing offering to the Majesty on high.

But they are only acceptable "through Christ Jesus." His blood must wash them from all their defilements of sin and self, His righteousness cover them, and the merits of His death and intercession perfume them as they enter the courts of heaven. They are not acceptable in themselves. As the persons of the believers are only accepted in the Beloved, so their prayers and praises, words and works, are only acceptable through Him.

What a mercy to belong to this "holy priesthood," and to have any testimony that Christ has presented our persons, and is presenting our sacrifices so as to make them acceptable to God. Had we but ourselves and our own defiled words and works to look to and rest upon, we might well despair of acceptance or salvation; but having so great a High Priest to present us before the throne of God, we have every encouragement for faith, every ground for hope, and every motive for love.

## **The Lord's Invitation to the Ends of the Earth**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 7, 1844

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22

When in a solemn moment of spiritual meditation, (and such, through mercy, we sometimes have) we take a review of what has passed through our hearts, dropped from our lips, or occupied our minds, during any space of time, say, the last week, what little genuine religion do we seem to find in our souls. When we separate from the Spirit's work all the doctrines we have learned in the flesh, all the practice we have performed through fear of man, and all the false experience that Satan has deceived us with; and, in a solemn moment, weigh up in the balances of the sanctuary what God has given and taught us, and done in and for us, how small the amount appears. But what a mercy it is to come to this conclusion! What a mercy to feel to have so little religion! But some may say, "I do not understand what you mean by that expression, that it is a mercy to feel to have so little religion; I cannot agree with you there; for I feel it to be no mercy at all, as my desire is to have a great deal more than I seem to possess." But suppose that you and I had all the religion which we wish to have, would there not be a great danger of our setting up that religion in the place of Jesus Christ; and instead of coming poor and needy, empty and bare to the Lord, as we are now obliged to come, having nothing and being nothing in ourselves, should we not be rather disposed to come to him with our religion as something to rest upon, and recommend us to his favour? Is it not, then, really a mercy to find and feel we have so little religion, if it bring us poor and needy, empty and bare, to receive out of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace? For the less we feel to have, the more we want to possess; the more empty we find ourselves, the more we desire to be filled, as well as have a greater capacity to receive; the more weak we are, the more we want Christ's strength to be made perfect in our weakness;

the more foolish we feel, the more we need God's teaching, as well as the more is God's wisdom magnified in our foolishness; and the more helpless we are, the more we need help from the Lord. So that, instead of its being a sad and deplorable thing to feel that we have so little religion, when we come, under a sense of our emptiness, to receive supplies out of Christ's fulness, it is our mercy to be sensible how little we have. We then come, not under the description of the rich whom the Lord "sends empty away," but of "the poor" whom he filleth with "good things;" and instead of being among the "mighty" whom he putteth down from their seats, we are found among the humble and meek whom the Lord exalts to honour, "setting them among princes," and "making them to inherit the throne of glory."

Now, if we look at the Lord's invitations in the Scriptures, to whom are they addressed? Are they not spoken to those who are poor and needy, hungry and thirsty, wearied and heavy laden? Are not these the very characters whom the Lord enriches, feeds, refreshes, and blesses? Look, for instance, at the words of the text. There is an invitation in it; for the Lord speaks and says, "Look unto me." But to whom are the words addressed? "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth*; for I am God, and there is none else." He does not, then, speak to those who are near, but to those who are afar off, the ends of the earth, and to them he addresses this gracious invitation.

I.—In examining these words, let us, *First*, look at the *characters* to whom this invitation is addressed, "The ends of the earth."

II.—*Secondly*, at what the Lord says to them, "Look unto me, and be ye saved."

III.—And *Thirdly*, at the gracious reason why they should look to him, and why they are saved by looking, "For I am God, and there is none else."

I.—"Look unto me *all the ends of the earth*." To all the ends of the earth, then, the Lord here speaks. Now he cannot mean the

literal, or natural earth, for that has no ears to hear, being nothing but so much gross, inanimate matter; he must, therefore, certainly speak to the inhabitants of the earth, to those who dwell in the ends of the earth, and not to the earth itself. But what characters, experimentally and spiritually, are here called "the ends of the earth," to whom the Lord thus addresses himself? An expression in Psalm 61:2, throws a light upon the question. "*From the end of the earth* will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." "The ends of the earth," then, represent characters at the farthest possible distance from God in their feelings, at the remotest bounds of creation, and separated by all this wide interval from that God whom they desire to fear, and in whose approving smile they long to bask.

1. But let us see, with God's blessing, what it is that brings the soul to feel itself to be in this spot, for it is soul feeling here spoken of. Let us see how a vessel of mercy gets to the ends of the earth; because he must come spiritually into that place to feel the suitability and enjoy the application of the promise. Before the Lord, then, quickens our soul into spiritual life, we can draw near with our lips when our heart is far from him; are full of presumption, pride, and ignorance; and can come into the presence of the Majesty of the Most High without one check in our conscience, one conviction in our soul, or one sense of brokenness before him. But no sooner do light and life enter together into the soul, than the character of God is made known in the conscience, and our own character too, as standing naked and guilty before his great tribunal; and when we thus see and feel the purity of Jehovah, and our own impurity and vileness, and are spiritually shown what wretches we are by nature and practice, a sense of guilt falls upon the conscience, and by that *sense of guilt* we are driven out from the presence of the Lord. It was so with our forefather Adam; when sin lay upon his conscience, he hid himself from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden; and so it is with every sensible sinner—he departs from the presence of the Lord, because it is too terrible for him to bear. Like Jonah, he will flee unto Tarshish, or

the remotest parts of the earth, to get from the presence of the Most High. Guilt, then, charged upon a man's conscience, will drive him out to "the ends of the earth," and place a barrier between the Lord God and his soul. And if a man has never felt guilt, and experimentally known distance and separation from God in consequence, the promise does not belong to him, nor does the Lord speak to him in the text.

2. But again. Not guilt only, but *shame* also and confusion of face join to drive the soul to "the ends of the earth." We never know the filthiness of sin till it is opened up in our conscience; we may know indeed something of its guilt, and what sinful wretches we have been; we may fear too the punishment of sin; but we can never know its filthiness, till, in the light of the Spirit, we see God's purity and holiness, and then *shame* drives us out from the presence of a holy God. Till Adam knew sin he knew not shame.

3. *Darkness of mind* also—an experience we are utterly unacquainted with till light and life make it manifest—darkness coining upon our soul, such as fell upon Abraham, when the sun was going down (Gen. 15:12), drives us from him who is pure light, to the very ends of the earth, where the rays of the sun seem no more to shine.

4. If the Lord has ever brought us near to himself, and we have *basely departed from him, backslidden* from his gracious ways, been overcome by the world, been entangled in Satan's snares, or our own vile lusts and passions; if we have done things unbecoming and inconsistent with our profession (and who here can hold up his head, and say he has not so done?) these things bring guilt on our conscience, and banish us in soul feeling to the ends of the earth far away from the presence of God.

But when, in soul feeling, we are thus at the ends of the earth, we learn lessons there which cannot be taught us in any other place. There we learn what it is to be at a distance from God, with a desire to be brought nigh; there we are brought to know the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and there begin to learn the value



of the blood of Christ to purge the conscience; there we become clothed with shame and confusion of face; there we are taught to feel our thorough helplessness and complete inability to bring ourselves spiritually and experimentally nigh, and feel what it is to wander in confusion without being able to get near the source of light, life, and truth, or feel access of soul to God. Thus, to be at "the ends of the earth," is a painful but a profitable place; for there we learn lessons which we could not learn anywhere else, and are taught to feel something of the purity of Jehovah, and of our own defilement before him.

Now, it is to those who thus feel themselves to be at "the ends of the earth," that the Lord speaks in the text. He will never encourage presumptuous professors, those I mean who daringly rush on without his sanction, leadings, or drawings. It is better to tarry at "the ends of the earth" all our lives long, than to rush unbidden into the sanctuary, or advance presumptuously into the presence of the Most High. For there is a day coming when the Lord will "thoroughly purge his floor" and then how many presumptuous intruders into his sanctuary, how many burners of false fire, and offerers of unclean sacrifices, will be detected, and driven out! If the will of God be so, it is better to be poor, condemned criminals at "the ends of the earth," waiting in humility for a smile, pleading in sincerity for a promise, than rush presumptuously on, and claim his gifts as our right and due.

II.—It is, then, to these poor sinners, these self-condemned wretches, these guilty criminals, who have no hope but in God's sovereign mercy, that the Lord speaks in the text, "Look unto me." They are the only persons that will look, the only characters that need so gracious an invitation; others can save, comfort and deliver themselves; but these poor wretched outcasts cannot move a step without the Lord's drawings. The Lord, therefore, takes them in hand, for being in these desperate circumstances, they require the high and out-stretched hand of God himself to pluck them from deserved ruin. And as the more they look at themselves, the worse they get, he says, "Look unto *me*, and, be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is

none else."

But the invitation must be spoken to the heart that with the promise power may come; and when power comes with the invitation, then the scales drop from the eyes, the veil is taken from off the heart, and strength is given to do that which the text invites; they "look unto him," though it be from "the ends of the earth," and as they look, they are "lightened, and their faces are not ashamed." The grace of Jesus shines in the invitation (for he is the speaker here); and as this comes into the conscience, they "see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off." "Look unto me," says the Mediator and Advocate, the Friend of sinners, the Saviour of the lost! At his word they look, and what do they see in him?

1. They behold, *first*, his glorious Person, that divine mystery couched in the words, "I am God!" And O, what a subject for contemplation is this! What a sight for living faith to behold! The glorious Person of the Son of God! This is "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!" And what does faith see in the glorious Person of Christ, but the Mediator, the Intercessor, the High Priest, the Advocate betwixt an avenging God and a guilty soul? But till, in soul feeling, we are at "the ends of the earth," we have no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no hearts to feel what a glorious Mediator there is at the right hand of the Father. But being, in our experience, at this distance from God, we are led to see and feel that he who alone can bring us near, must himself be God, for we are confident that none but an almighty arm can pluck us from "the ends of the earth," and bring us near to the Most High. Our own righteousness, our tears, prayers, promises, resolutions, cannot, we feel, bring us near unto God; and we learn the meaning of those words, "And came and preached peace to you *which were afar off*, and to them that were nigh; for through him we *both* have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Thus the more we feel to be at "the ends of the earth," the deeper is our need of him; and as the Spirit unfolds the mystery of the glorious Person of Christ, and reveals his beauty, the more does he become the object of the soul's

admiration and adoration. And O, what a Mediator is held out in the word of truth to living faith! What a subject for spiritual faith to look to, for a lively hope to anchor in, and for divine love to embrace! That the Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the second Person in the glorious Trinity, should condescend to take upon him our nature, that he might groan, suffer, bleed, and die for guilty wretches, who, if permitted, would have ruined their souls a thousand times a day—what a wonder of wonders! But we cannot enter into, nor feel the power of this mystery till we are reduced to such circumstances, that none but such a Saviour can save our souls. Can we do anything to save ourselves? Then we want not help from that mighty One on whom God has laid help; and we secretly reject him. Can we heal ourself? Then we want not the good Physician. But when our eyes are opened to see our own thorough ruin and helplessness, and to view the glorious Person of the Son of God, faith is drawn out to flee to and rest upon that glorious Object.

2. But in looking at his glorious Person from "the ends of the earth," a glimpse is caught of his *atoning blood*; for that blood is seen to derive all its efficacy from his glorious Person; it is seen as the blood of the Son of God, and, Deity giving efficacy to the blood of the humanity, it is seen to have a divine virtue to purge a guilty conscience, and speak pardon and peace to a broken heart. This meritorious blood of the only propitiating sacrifice is that which is held up to the eye of the poor sinner at "the ends of the earth," to the guilty wretch, to the self condemned criminal; and God the Holy Ghost testifies of it as speaking "better things than the blood of Abel." The eyes of the understanding are enlightened to see the nature and efficacy of this precious blood, and there is a looking to and resting upon it, as speaking peace to the guilty conscience, as the only propitiation for sin, as reconciling enemies, as pardoning rebels, as justifying the ungodly.

3. But in inviting the soul to look to him, the Lord invites it also to look to his *glorious righteousness*. Now what do we know, what

can we know, of Christ's glorious righteousness, except we are brought to feel how naked, how needy, how undone we are without it? But when a soul lies at the "ends of the earth," naked and trembling, fearing to meet a never-ending eternity, terrified in his conscience at a thousand crimes presenting themselves to view, if the Lord does but speak with power, "Look unto me;" and spreads out that glorious robe of righteousness, which is "unto and upon all them that believe," how it encourages the poor soul, lying at "the ends of the earth," to shelter himself under this garment of glory and beauty, and take refuge under the skirt of this heavenly Boaz.

4. But in saying, "Look unto me," he also says, "Look at *my dying love*, at its heights, lengths, depths, and breadths, which pass knowledge. Look unto me in all my suffering circumstances, my agony, my bloody sweat, and all that I endured for poor sinners." He invites those at "the ends of the earth" to look unto him as suffering for them; and when they are enabled to see and feel his dying love, a measure of peace flows into the conscience, and the poor soul at the very "ends of the earth," is encouraged and enabled to draw near to the Father.

III.—But he says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." There is salvation then in a look. There is no need, in order to be saved, to heap up numerous treasures of our own righteousness, to accumulate a vast store of good deeds, to make up a certain amount of piety, or to work up ourselves into the heights of creature holiness. A look of faith is all that is needed, an eye opened by divine teaching to see who and what Jesus is. He therefore calls upon "the ends of the earth" to look to his Person, his blood, his righteousness, his love; and to see in him all that we need, and all that we desire. And when we look unto him, as he invites and as he enables, and see who he is, and what a sufficiency for every want, we desire no other salvation and no other Saviour.

Now how often we seem not to have any real religion, or enjoy any solid comfort! How often are our evidences obscured and

beclouded, and our minds covered with deep darkness! How often does the Lord hide himself, so that we cannot behold him, nor get near to him; and how often the ground on which we thought we stood is cut from under our feet, and we have no firm standing! What a painful path is this to walk in, but how profitable! When we are reduced to poverty and beggary, we learn to value Christ's glorious riches; the worse opinion we have of our own heart, and the more deceitful and desperately wicked that we find it, the more we put our trust in his faithfulness; and the more black we are in our esteem, the more beautiful and comely does he appear in our eyes. As we sink, Jesus rises; as we become feeble, he puts forth his strength; as we come into danger, he brings deliverance; as we get into temptation, he breaks the snare; and as we are shut up in darkness and obscurity, he causes the light of his countenance to shine. Now it is by being led in this way, and walking in these paths, that we come rightly to know who Jesus is, and to see and feel how suitable and precious such a Saviour is to our undone souls. We are needy, he has in himself all riches; we are hungry, he is the bread of life; we are thirsty, he says, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink;" we are naked, and he has clothing to bestow; we are fools, and he has wisdom to grant; we are lost, and he speaks, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Thus, so far from our misery shutting us out from God's mercy, it is only the requisite for it; so far from our guilt excluding his pardon, it is the only thing needful for it; so far from our helplessness ruining our souls, it is the needful preparation for the manifestation of his power in our weakness; we cannot heal our own wounds and sores; that is the very reason why he should stretch forth his arm. It is because there is no salvation in ourselves, or in any other creature, that he says, "Look unto *me, for I am God*, and there is none else."

1. *That he is God*, is the very foundation of his salvation; for it is his eternal Godhead that gives virtue, efficacy, and dignity to all that as Man he did and suffered for his chosen people. If he were not God, God and Man in one glorious Person, what hope would there be for our guilty souls? Could his blood atone for our sins, unless Deity gave it efficacy? Could his righteousness justify our

persons, unless Deity imparted merit and value to all the doings and sufferings of his humanity? Could his loving heart sympathize with and deliver us, unless, "as God over all," he saw and knew all that passes within us, and had all power, as well as all compassion, to exert on our behalf? We are continually in circumstances where no man can do us the least good, and where we cannot help or deliver ourselves; we are in snares, and cannot break them; we are in temptations, and cannot deliver ourselves out of them; we are in trouble, and cannot comfort ourselves; are wandering sheep, and cannot find the way back to the fold; we are continually roving after idols, and hewing out "broken cisterns," and cannot return to "the fountain of living waters." How suitable, then, and sweet it is, to those who are thus exercised, to see that there is a gracious Immanuel at the right hand of the Father, whose heart is filled with love, and whose bowels move with compassion; who has shed his own precious blood that they might live, who has wrought out a glorious righteousness, and "is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

He says, therefore, to his people, who are at the very "ends of the earth," who fear to draw nigh, that he is the Mediator between God and man. He says to the guilty, "I am your pardon;" to the naked, "I am your clothing;" to the ungodly, "I am your righteousness;" to the defiled, "I am your sanctification." Being at "the ends of the earth," the purity of God would keep them there for ever; but there being a divine Mediator, a glorious Intercessor, an almighty Advocate, an Immanuel, God and man in one glorious person, though at "the ends of the earth," they may draw nigh through him, for they are blessed and accepted in him. They are indeed at "the ends of the earth," and through guilt and shame dare not draw near; but let Jesus give them one glance, or put forth one touch, and their poor, needy, naked souls will leap forward, spring into his embrace, and find nearness of access to the Father; for by that glance they see there is a Mediator between God and them, an Intercessor and Advocate sitting for them upon a throne of mercy and grace.

Now, if they had never been at "the ends of the earth," never been cast out in their feelings, never known themselves to be filthy and vile creatures, they would never have felt what a suitable and precious Saviour there is at the right hand of God. They would have been swollen with pride, swallowed up in business, satisfied with a form of godliness, contented with being Satan's servants and doing his work, or have been buried in their sins and lusts. If they had never felt themselves shut out from God's presence, and driven to "the ends of the earth," they would never have longed to be reconciled, pardoned, and brought near. But when they are there, and the Lord does but speak with power to their souls, "Look unto me," all the distance is removed, the barriers fall down, the separation is at an end, and they draw nigh unto God, and they see how "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

To, this spot, "the ends of the earth," sin and shame may drive them again and again; and repeatedly may they have to feel many cutting sensations, and learn many humbling lessons; they may fear again and again that they may die, and never see him whom their souls long to see and love; and yet when the Lord again speaks, "Look unto me," the barrier is broken down, and they can again draw near through the propitiation that the Son of God has made for sin.

2. He says, therefore, to such, "I am God, and *there is none else.*" You may look at your own righteousness, it is but filthy rags; at your own resolutions, they are but cobwebs; at your promises, they will be broken before night comes on; at your consistency, it is but a tangled and defiled web; at yourselves out of me, and what are you but a mass of filth and sin? He says, therefore, "I am God, and *there is none else.*" You may go to every other physician, try every other remedy, and look to every other quarter; but all will leave you unpardoned, unaccepted, and unjustified; "for I am God, and there is none else." "Look unto me," he says to all "the ends of the earth;" and when he speaks (for with the word of a king there is power), strength is given unto the soul to look, and be saved.

Now, I dare say, some of you here know what it is in your feelings to be at "the ends of the earth." You cannot get near unto God, cannot feel his presence, cannot see the light of his countenance, cannot taste his love. Sin darkens your mind, burdens your conscience, and oppresses your soul; so that you cannot feel pardon, reconciliation, acceptance, nearness, and peace. There is a distance, a barrier, a separation between God and your soul, and you cannot draw near with holy boldness. How suitable then, how encouraging it is to such sensible sinners, to see that you may draw near under such circumstances. Have I said or done things unbecoming or inconsistent? Has guilt come on my conscience, and despondency filled my heart? Am I therefore to stay at "the ends of the earth?" The Lord says, "Look unto me," that my guilt may disappear. Am I a poor backsliding wretch, roaming after every base idol? Am I to stay therefore at the broken cisterns? The Lord says, "Look to me," that the poor idolater may come back to the fountain of living waters.

When we take a solemn survey of what we are daily and hourly—of what we have been, say, through the past week—what vile thoughts, sinful desires, and base lusts—what vanity, inconsistency, engrossment in business, love of the world—in a word, what base workings of a depraved nature we have had, must we not plead guilty? Perhaps the guilt of these things now lies on the conscience; but shall they operate as insuperable, impassable barriers? When the Lord says, "Look unto me, all the ends of the earth," and the soul is enabled to do as the Lord invites, does it not see Jesus as its wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? and does not this bring comfort to the poor, guilty backslider once more? Does not this encourage him once more to draw nigh? Does not this break the heart of the most stubborn, and draw, as with a cord of love, the poor wretch who can see nothing in himself but a mass of defilement? If we know, then, by painful experience what it is to be at "the ends of the earth," the Lord does not say, "Heal yourselves, make yourselves better." He does not give us a long list of duties to be performed, or of observances to be attended to; and when we



have done this, and performed that, and made up the tale of bricks in full number and weight, he will look upon us. But the Lord speaks to us in our sad condition: "Here you poor, guilty, wretched backsliders; you that have nothing but sin and guilt; you that cannot bless, save, or comfort yourselves; look unto me." He does not say, "Do this, and then I will appear; help yourselves a little, and then I will come down to help you;" but he says to us, as we are in our filth, guilt, and shame, "Look unto me;" and as he speaks, he gives the power. And no sooner do we look, than we are saved by the look, blessed by the look, healed by the look. So that all we have to do is to look to him, as he speaks. It is true, indeed, that he himself gives power to do it, for "without him we can do nothing." And to behold by the eye of faith his glorious Person, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and dying love, will do us more good, and bring into our hearts more true peace, than we could get elsewhere in a thousand years.

Now, to know these mysteries by divine teaching, is to know what vital godliness is. What is vital godliness? To make myself good and holy; to make myself religious and serious, and a decidedly pious character? Such husks may satisfy swine, but they will not satisfy a living soul. What must I do, then, to make myself better? Nothing. Can I, by any exertion of creature will or power, change my Ethiopian skin, or wash out my leopard spots? But when the soul lies at "the ends of the earth," and the Lord says to it, "Look unto me," "thou art complete in me, saved in me, holy in me, and accepted in me;" all the barriers betwixt God and the guilty conscience fall, the darkness flies away, the distance is removed, and the soul, black in itself, is manifested as comely and acceptable in the sight of God. To be spiritually led into this mystery, to go on increasing in the knowledge of it, and to feel day by day less and less in self; to become more foolish, weak, and powerless; and yet, as poor, needy, weak, and helpless, to be drawing supplies out of Christ's fulness, and to live a life of faith on the Son of God—to know something of this, is to know something of what true religion is; and to know a little of this, will make a man more outwardly and inwardly holy than all the good

works or pious resolutions in the world.

Perhaps there may be present here some of these poor wretches at "the ends of the earth;" doubting, fearing, and almost at times despairing, whether mercy can ever reach their souls. Now are you not secretly looking to find something good or holy in yourselves? Is there not some dim hope and expectation of becoming by and by a little better and holier? All this secret leaven of self-righteousness must be purged out; and you may have, under this operation, to sink lower, and yet deeper and deeper into the slough and filth of your vile nature. But there is this comfort for those who feel they can do nothing, that all that is to be done is what the Lord does in us; all that is to be felt, is what he works by his Spirit in us. This is the sum and substance of all salvation and all holiness; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, by what I have done and suffered." There is no other way for health, salvation, pardon, peace, and deliverance to come into our souls; for he is God, and there is none else. There is no other salvation, no other Saviour; no other way of escape from the wrath to come, but by looking unto him as he enables us, believing on him as he empowers us, and leaning upon him as he works in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight. And though you may now seem to yourselves to be at the very "ends of the earth," the Lord sees you there; and he says unto such, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Ye are not out of the reach of mine arm, nor the sight of mine eye, "for I am God, and there is none else." And thus, sooner or later, are all the elect manifestly saved, and experience the sweet testimony and blessed revelation of it in the heart and conscience.

And is it not a mercy to be weaned, emptied, and purged from creature righteousness, natural piety, and a long list of creature duties, not one of which we can properly or acceptably do? Is it not a mercy to have nothing at all to do, except simply what the Lord does in us and for us, and to look to him in whom salvation is, and from whom salvation comes? O what a rest and respite for a poor guilty wretch, labouring at doings and duties, and by them all only increasing his guilt, to feel and find that all is done for

him, and that he has nothing to do but take it; that the feast is provided, and all he has to do is to banquet at it; that atoning blood has been shed, and all he has to do is to feel the power of it; that salvation is finished, that all that is to be done is done already; and all this is freely given "without money, and without price;" freely communicated and brought into the conscience by the operation of God, that he may have all the glory first, and all the glory last, that we may have all the profit and comfort that he can bestow. What a sweet and blessed way of salvation this is to a poor wretched sinner! How much is contained in those words, "It is finished!" Every thing, then, needful for a sinner's salvation is already done for him; the whole work is accomplished, and everlasting salvation brought in; all that remains to be done (and the Lord does that, or it never would be done at all), is, for the sinner to receive it into his heart, and live under the blessed unction and power of it.

May this be our soul's happy experience. May we, even from "the ends of the earth," then be enabled to look unto him, and know that he is God, and none else. And thus may we continually come to him, believe in him, and rest on him, as all our salvation, and all our desire.

## THE LORD'S MERCIFUL LOOK UPON HIS PEOPLE

Preached at Providence Chapel, West Street, Croydon,  
Wednesday August 26th, 1846

"Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name" Psa.119:132

Most of us, who have ever felt the Word of God precious, have our favourite portions of Scripture. Those will be prime favourites which the Lord has specially opened up, or blessed to our soul; but there will be other portions of God's Word which may not, perhaps, have been in any especial manner made a blessing to us, yet such a sweet light has been cast by the blessed Spirit from time to time upon them, or we have seen and felt such beauty and glory in them, that when we open our Bible we almost instinctively turn to them. Psalm 119 has almost become in this way one of my favourite portions of Scripture. If I had the experience of that Psalm fully brought into my soul and carried out in my life, there would be no such Christian in Croydon nor 60 miles round. I repeat it, if I had the experience contained in Psalm 119 thoroughly wrought into my heart by the power of the blessed Spirit, and evidenced by my walk, conduct, and conversation, I need envy no Christian that walks upon the earth for conformity to God's will and Word, inwardly and outwardly. What simplicity and godly sincerity run through the whole Psalm! What tender affection towards the Lord! What breathings of the heart into his ears! What desire to live to his honour and glory! What a divine longing that the life, and conduct, and conversation, the inward and the outward man, might all be conformed to the revealed will and Word of God!

"Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." Three features strike my mind, as especially apparent in the words before me:

I. That *God has a people who love his name.*

II. That *the Lord looks upon them, and is merciful unto them.*

III. The *breathing of the Psalmist's heart*, that God would look upon him, and be merciful unto him, in the same way he looks upon and is merciful unto them.

I. *The Lord has a people who love his name.* But where are these people to be found? In a state of nature, as they came into this world? No; no man by nature ever loved God, for "the carnal mind (which is all that man has or is, as the fallen child of a fallen parent,) is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom.8:7) We are all by nature the "children of wrath, even as others" (Eph.2:3); and are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph.4:18). There is a veil of ignorance and unbelief, by nature, over man's mind, so that he can neither see nor know the only true God and Jesus Christ "whom he hath sent." (2 Cor.3:15; John17:3). Thus, no man ever did, or ever could love the Lord's name that is, the Lord himself, so long as he continues in that state of nature's darkness and nature's death. A mighty revolution must, therefore, take place in a man's bosom before he can be one of those who love the Lord's name, a change not to be effected by nature in its best and brightest form, nor to be brought about by any industry or exertion of the creature, but begun, carried on, and completed by the alone sovereign and efficacious work of God the Spirit upon the heart. This is the express testimony of God: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John1:11-13). But it may be asked, why should these highly favoured people experience this new, this miraculous creation? The only answer that can be given to this question is, that the Lord loved them from all eternity. *Why* he fixed his love upon them to the exclusion of others, God has not informed us. Eternity itself, perhaps, may never be able to unfold to the mind

of a finite being like man, why the infinite God loved some and rejected others; but to all the cavillings and proud reasonings of man, our sole reply must be, "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? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom.9:20,21). The Lord, then, having loved the people with an everlasting love, it is necessary, in order that they may enjoy this love, and be satisfied with some streams of the river that maketh glad the city of God that they should be taught and brought to love God, or how can they delight themselves in him, whose name and nature is love?

But are the first dealings and teachings of the Spirit of God upon the heart usually such as will bring a man to love God? No! A man has a great deal to unlearn before he can learn this. He has to be brought out of the world, to be weaned from creature-righteousness; to have all his old fleshly religion broken to pieces, and scattered to the four winds of heaven, before the pure love of God can come down, and be shed abroad in his soul. It is for this reason the Lord cuts his people up with convictions. This is frequently done by the ministry of the Word; as, in the day of Pentecost, Peter's hearers were many of them pricked in their heart; and the ministers are compared in the Word to fishers and hunters: "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks" (Jer.16:16). The fishers with their sharp hooks draw them out of the water, and the hunters with their pointed spears drive them out of the holes in which they sheltered themselves. These convictions of sin, causing guilt to lie hard and heavy upon the conscience, accompanied for the most part by a discovery of our fallen state, and a manifestation of the evils of our hearts spring from a believing view of the holiness of God, a sense of the breadth and spirituality of his law, a discovery of his eternal and inflexible justice. A measure, therefore, of these convictions it is necessary

to feel, such a measure, at least, as shall drive the soul out of its deceptive hiding places, what the Scripture calls "refuges of lies," in order that it may be brought to embrace the rock for want of a shelter. How beautifully and clearly this is set forth in Isa.28:16, where the Lord tells us, that he "will 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." But, in order to show how his people are brought to have a standing upon this "tried stone," this "precious corner stone," this "sure foundation," the Holy Ghost adds, "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. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it" (verses 17,18). This laying of judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, is connected, you will observe, with the foundation which God has laid in Zion; thus evidencing that before the sinner can be brought to stand experimentally in his conscience upon this foundation, this only foundation "which God has laid in Zion," judgment must be laid to the line in his heart, and righteousness to the plummet in his soul's experience; the hail must sweep away every refuge of lies, and the waters of God's wrath overflow every hiding-place, in order to disannul the covenant which he has made with death, and break to pieces the agreement he has entered into with hell. Thus, in order to bring the people of God to know him as the God of love, it is, in the very nature of things, absolutely necessary that they should pass through convictions of sin, should feel a guilty conscience, and have a discovery of the evils of their hearts, to bring them out of those lying refuges in which every man by nature seeks to entrench himself. Their depth, indeed, and duration God has not defined, nor need we. Yet this we may safely declare, that they must be sufficient to produce the end that God has in view. But it is not the Lord's purpose, when he has sufficiently brought his people out of their lying refuges, to be always wounding and lacerating their consciences with convictions. He, therefore, after a time, brings into their heart a measure of that love of Christ

which passeth knowledge, and this teaches and enables them to love his name.

But what do we understand by the expression, "the name of God?" It is one which occurs very frequently in the Scriptures of truth. By "the name of God" I believe, then, we are to understand all that God has revealed concerning himself, but more particularly the manifestation of his grace and glory in the Person of his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, as the blessed Spirit casts some light upon the character of God in Christ as revealed in Scripture, and brings a sense of this with divine savour, unction, and power into the soul, the "name of God" becomes spiritually made known to the heart; and as the Lord the Spirit, from time to time, opens up all those treasures of truth, mercy, and grace, which are hid in Christ, and raises up faith to believe and lay hold of them, he sheds abroad in the heart a sacred love to the name and character of God, as thus revealed in the Word of truth.

David saw that there was such a people. The Lord had given him what he gives to all his family, eyes, discerning eyes, whereby he saw that the Lord had a people that loved his name; that amidst the ungodly generation amongst whom his lot was cast, there was a scattered people, in whom God had shed abroad his love, to whom he manifested mercy, and into whose hearts he had dropped a sense of that loving-kindness of his which is better than life itself. David looked upon them; and as he looked upon them, he saw what a blessed people they were. He viewed them surrounded by all the perfections of God. He saw them kept as the apple of God's eye. He viewed them as the excellent of the earth, in whom was all his delight, and his very heart flowed out in tender affection unto them, as being beloved of God, and, in return, loving him who had shed abroad his love in their souls.

Very many of the Lord's people are here. Their eyes are enlightened to see that God has a people. Of that they have not the slightest doubt; and not only so, but their hearts' affections are secretly and sacredly wrought upon, to feel the flowing forth



of tender affection to this people. They count them the excellent of the earth. They love them because they see the mind, and likeness, and image of Christ in them, however poor, however abject, however contemptible in the eyes of the world. There is a secret love that the people of God have towards one another, which binds them in the strongest cords of spiritual union and affection. David then saw that God dealt with this people in a peculiar way, and therefore cried out, "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." He saw that the Lord dealt in a special manner with this people, that they were the favoured objects of his eternal love; and as being such, the Lord was continually and perpetually blessing them.

II. There were two things which David specially saw that God bestowed upon this people; one was *God's look*, and the other, *the manifestation of God's mercy*: "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name."

i. But how does God look upon his people? Does not the Lord see all things? Are not his eyes running to and fro through the earth, to see the evil and the good. And are not all secrets open before his heart-searching eyes? Do not his eyelids try the children of men? They do! But still there is a favoured people that the Lord looks upon in a *peculiar* way, in a way in which David desired the Lord to look upon him.

1. He looks upon them *in Christ*. He does not look upon them as standing in self. If he looked upon them as they stand in self, his anger, wrath, and indignation must blaze out against them. But he views them as having an eternal and vital union with the Son of his love; as the apostle says, "Complete in him." (Col.2:10) And viewing them as having an eternal standing in Christ, viewing them as bought with atoning blood, and washed in the fountain which was opened in one day for all sin and for all uncleanness, as clothed in his glorious righteousness, and loved with dying love, he looks upon them not as they are in themselves,

wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; but he looks upon them as without spot, without blemish, in the Son of his love; as the apostle expresses it in few words, "Accepted in the Beloved." (Eph.1:6) David saw what a blessed state this was to be in; that when the Lord looked upon his people, he did not look upon them as poor, guilty, miserable sinners, but looked upon them as having that standing in Christ, that union to Christ, that interest in Christ, whereby he could look upon them with acceptance in his dear Son.

2. But this is not the only way in which God looks upon his people. He looks upon them *with affection and love*. Thus, when he looks upon his people, he looks upon them with all that love and affection that ever dwells in the bosom of the Three-One God, and is perpetually flowing forth to the objects of his love, choice, and mercy. We know something of this naturally. Does not the fond wife look sometimes upon her husband with eyes of tender affection? Does not the mother sometimes look upon her infant, lying in the cradle or sleeping in her lap, with eyes of tender love? Wherever there is love in our hearts, our eyes at times rest upon the objects of our affections. So it is with the Three-One God. There is that love in the bosom of God towards the objects of his eternal favour, that when he looks down upon them from the heights of his sanctuary, he looks upon them with the tenderest affection. As we read, "He rests in his love;" (cf. Zeph.3:17) and again, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa.62:5).

3. But besides this, he looks upon them *in pity*. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psa.103:13,14). Just as when, after the flood, he looked down from the height of his sanctuary upon Noah, and those with him in the ark, and his heart went forth in tender pity, so, from the heights of his sanctuary, he looks down upon all poor, labouring, struggling pilgrims here below, and views them with an eye of pity and compassion, out of his merciful and compassionate heart. I was bringing forward just now the figure of a mother

loving her children, or a wife loving her husband. But let a sickness fall upon the husband, let some affliction befall the child, and then, there is not merely a look of love as before, but a look of pity and compassion also. And if a wife could remove her husband's illness, or a mother cure the child's ailment, how pity and love would each flow forth to remove that which causes pity to be felt. In the same way spiritually. The God of heaven looks down upon his poor, tried family. Some he sees buffeted with sore temptations; others he sees plagued with an evil heart of unbelief; others he sees afflicted in circumstances; others wading amid deep temporal and providential trials; others mourning his absence; others persecuted, cast out by men. Each heart knows its own bitterness, each has a tender spot that the eye of the Lord sees; and the Lord, as a God of grace, looks down upon them and pities them. When he sees them entangled in a snare, he pities them as being so entangled; when he sees them drawn aside by the idolatry and evil of their fallen nature, he pities them as wandering; when he views them assaulted and harassed by Satan, he looks upon them with compassion under his attacks.

4. Besides that, he looks down upon them *in power*, with a determination to render them help. Reverting a moment to the figure I have used before, a mother looking upon her sickly child, there was pity painted upon her features, compassion beamed from her eye. Could she help, as well as pity, would she hesitate to do so? But the Lord has not only a mother's pity and a wife's love, for he himself challenges the comparison; he says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isa.49:15); but [he has] power for his family. He has almighty power to relieve his poor suffering children, toiling and struggling through this vast howling wilderness; for "help is laid upon One that is mighty;" (cf. Psa.89:19) who is "able to save unto the uttermost" (Heb.7:25).

ii. But, besides this, he is *merciful* unto them: "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." David saw how merciful the Lord was to those

who needed mercy. They were guilty criminals; they were fallen creatures; they were sinning continually against the God of all their mercies. And, therefore, they needed mercy. And that not once, when the Lord was first pleased to pardon their sins and deliver their souls. They need mercy not once, nor twice, but they need mercy every day that they live, every hour that they breathe upon earth; as Hart sweetly expresses it: "Begging mercy every hour"

David, then, saw the Lord was merciful to his people. He knew that upon the footing of righteousness none could be saved; he knew by painful experience what hearts they carried in their bosoms; he knew what temptations beset their path; he knew what snares Satan was laying for their feet; he knew their weakness, and he knew their wickedness; yet he saw how merciful the Lord was to them; how he bore with their manners in the wilderness; how he "multiplied pardons" as the Scripture expresses it; how he forgave their iniquities; how he blotted out their sins; how he showed mercy and compassion upon them, who were by nature the vilest of the vile. He saw there was that in their hearts which justly provoked God's condemnation. But then he saw mercy in the bosom of the Redeemer more than proportionate. He saw their hearts were full of evil, full of wickedness, full of unbelief, full of everything that God hates; yet he saw how the mercy of God abounded, how his grace superabounded over all their sins. He saw how the mercy of God was from everlasting to everlasting. As the cloud sometimes covers the face of the earth, so he saw the Lord covering all the iniquities, transgressions, and backslidings of those who love his name.

III. And this leads me to the third part of my discourse. This it was that opened up in his soul, this *breathing of his heart* that he would look upon him, and be merciful unto him, as he useth to do unto those that love his name. I believe I may honestly say, thousands of times have these words gone out of my lips, "Look thou upon me." Rarely do I bend my knee in prayer before the Lord of hosts without the words, "Look upon me." How expressive

it is! As though the desire of the soul was that the Lord would not pass him by; would not consider him unworthy of his notice; and would not banish him as from his presence, but would cast an eye of pity, love, and compassion upon him. But mingling with this desire, that the Lord would "look upon him" was a distinct feeling of his helplessness, sinfulness, and unworthiness. It is as though David was lying at the footstool of mercy clothed with humility, sensible of his sins, feeling the inward vileness of his heart, and judging himself unworthy of the least smile of God's countenance, or the least whisper, of God's love. But still he could not but see that the Lord had a people that loved his name; nay, he himself felt a measure of this same love. He might not have the full assurance of it. His heart might be desolate and afflicted. Doubts and fears worked in his mind; but still, amidst it all, he felt the tender goings forth of affection to the name of the Lord, which was precious to his soul; he felt nearness of access unto his sacred presence; and there was that in his heart which was melted down into love and tenderness at the very name of the Lord. "Because thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." (Song of Sol.1:6) But mingled with this tender affection, blended with this secret and sacred love to the name of the Lord, was a deep sense of his own worthlessness. And these two feelings always go together. Far from my heart, and far from yours who desire to fear God's name, be that bold presumptuous confidence that claims God's mercies, unmingled, with any movement of godly fear in a sinner's bosom, unmingled with a sense of worthlessness, weakness, and wickedness, that ever lives in a regenerated breast. No; wherever there is any true love to the name of the Lord, wherever there is any breathing of affection after the name of Jesus, depend upon it there always will be mixed with it the deepest sense of our own worthlessness. David could not but feel that there was love in his heart toward the Lord's name. David could not but feel there was a people that, like himself, loved that name. David could not but see that the Lord looked upon that people with an eye of love and pity. David could not but see that the Lord was specially and peculiarly merciful unto them. He himself experienced these tender sensations of love in his bosom. He was deeply penetrated; he

was inwardly possessed with a sense of his own worthlessness; but he dare not intrude. He stood at a distance, and could not go boldly and presumptuously forward. He drew back, as being one of the most worthless of those who sighed after the Lord's manifested favours. Thus, the very expression, "Look thou upon me," not merely implies that David had a love to the name of the Lord, but also, mingled with it, a sense of his own undeservedness that the Lord should bestow upon him one single blessing.

Again, "Look upon me" implies that his soul was in that state and case which specially needed a look from the Lord. If your heart is hard, you want but one look from the Lord to dissolve it. Was it not so with Peter? When Peter had sinned so grievously, when he had denied his Lord and Master, do we not read that Jesus turned and looked upon him? What was the effect? The stony heart gave way; the obduracy of his mind was melted; and we read, "Peter went out, and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62) We often feel a sense of our obduracy and impenitence; but, if the Lord do but look upon us, he can melt them away in a moment. There is also a sense of our vileness, our sinfulness, our wickedness; a feeling of this nature: "O that the Lord would but look upon me, though I am so utterly undeserving of the least notice, or least favour from his hands. O that he would cast an eye of pity and compassion upon me, for I cannot do without him."

It also implies that the soul desires some peculiar manifestation of God's mercy and favour. David could not be satisfied with hearing about God's mercy, nor reading about God's mercy, nor knowing there was a people to whom the Lord did show mercy. He desired that the Lord would look upon him, visit him, bless him, and manifest himself to him, come down into his heart, visit his soul, bless him with sweet manifestations of his dying love. And is not this the language of the brokenhearted sinner at the footstool of mercy? Does not this express simply the feeling that he has at the throne of grace? "Look upon me;" here I lie at thy feet, all helplessness, all weakness, all wretchedness, all inability. I deserve not the least smile from thy countenance; I deserve not

the least whisper from thy mouth; I deserve to be trampled under thy feet into everlasting perdition. Yet, Lord, I cannot do without thee. "Look thou upon me." Give me one look of mercy; give me one look of love; give me one look to bring into my soul that which my heart longs to feel. To see, it may be at a distance, but still to see, the people that the Lord looked upon with such peculiar looks of pity, compassion, and love, he could not but covet a measure of the same blessing; and his heart burned within him that the Lord would bestow on him similar favours. Has this ever been the experience of your soul? What do you pray to God for? I suppose many of you fall upon your knees before the footstool of mercy. What do you pray to God for? Is it for some special blessing to your soul? Is it for some manifestation of Jesus to your heart? Is it that the Lord himself would look down upon a guilty worm, and speak to your soul in the soft whispers of his mercy and his love? These are true prayers, these are spiritual breathings; this is the intercession of the Spirit in the sinner's bosom with groanings which cannot be uttered. If you know what it is in soul experience thus to lie in humility, in simplicity, in sincerity, in brokenness of heart, in contrition of spirit, before the footstool of mercy, crying, "Look upon me." "Me," who am utterly unworthy of thy mercy. "Me," who have continually backslidden from thee. "Me," who am the vilest of the vile, and the guiltiest of the guilty, yet, "look thou upon me;" for I cannot bear that thou shouldst pass me by unnoticed, that thou shouldst not look upon my soul, as thou lookest upon thy children. This is a cry which, most surely will be answered.

*"And be merciful unto me."* When shall you and I get beyond the reach of mercy? Shall we ever get beyond feeling a desire after it as long as we breathe here below? God keep us, who desire to fear his name, from ever living a single day without breathing, more or less, after the sensible manifestation of mercy. "But," say you, "you have had mercy; what do you want it for again? Will it not do once in your life?" The man that makes that speech knows nothing of his own heart, knows nothing of the manifested mercy of God to a sinner's soul. As sins abound, as guilt is felt, as corruption works, as the conscience is burdened, as the iniquities

of the heart are laid bare, as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit's light, do we not feel our need of mercy continually? Mercy for every adulterous look; mercy for every covetous thought; mercy for every light and trifling word; mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts; mercy whilst we live; and mercy when we die; mercy to accompany us every moment, to go with us down to the portals of the grave, to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan, and to land us safe before the Redeemer's throne?

"Be merciful unto *me*" Why me? Because I am so vile a sinner; so base a backslider; such a daring transgressor; because I sin against thee with every breath that I draw; because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves; because nothing but thy mercy can blot out such iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind. David saw that this mercy was peculiar mercy. He says, "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest do unto those that love thy name." He knew it was not common mercy that the Lord bestowed upon those that love his name; but inexhaustible mercy, everlasting mercy, superabounding mercy. For he knew that nothing but such mercy as this could suit such guilty sinners as those who love the Lord's name. David was too well instructed in the mysteries of his sinful nature to expect that that nature would ever be anything but vile. David knew too much of the weakness and wickedness of his heart to dream for a single moment of perfection in the flesh. David never expected to be in a spot where the mercy of God should not be needed every hour. But he saw the people of God were dealt with in a different way from other men. He saw that they were of that blessed generation upon whom the dew of heaven fell, and his heart longed after a measure of that dew to fall upon his soul. Has not that been the case with you sometimes? You have gone amongst God's people; your heart has been oppressed, cold, and dead; but you have gone and conversed with some of God's saints; you have seen grace shine in them, and your heart has been sweetly warmed in your bosom; you have felt your soul melted and dissolved under the unction and grace of their words; and you have longed to



experience some of the things that they have been speaking of, and that the same power and dew that rested upon them might rest upon you. Well, you have said nothing, but have gone away, hasted away before the time, put on your hat, or your bonnet, and gone away. But when you got away, O what a going up of your soul towards the Lord, "O that thou wouldst be pleased to look upon me! That thou wouldst give me some sweet manifestation; that thou wouldst grant me a blessing that will satisfy my heart!" So that, seeing grace shining in the person with whom you were conversing, there was a communication of life and feeling whereby you longed after a similar manifestation of mercy and love to your heart; after the same divine dew and blessed unction to water your soul.

It is something like, in nature, two farms or gardens, upon one of which the rain has fallen plenteously, while the other is dry and parched. The owner of the latter, while he looks only on his own ground, thinks it may do. But let him go a little distance from home, and see a farm richly watered with the rain of heaven, and covered with verdure; when he returns to his own patch, and sees no such crop there, does he not long for the same fertilizing rain to fall upon his land? So spiritually. If you go amongst the people of God, and see grace shining in them; the image of Christ in them; the blessed Spirit carrying on his work in them; their souls clothed with beauty and verdure, while you are cold, dead, and dry; does not your soul long to experience some of the same blessings, and be watered with the same dew and rain that have fallen upon their hearts? When the soul is here, we can say, "Look thou upon me, and be merciful upon me, as thou usest to do to those that love thy name." "Lord, give my soul a portion of that blessing which springs from the operations of thy Spirit in the hearts of thy children." When the child of God sees clearly the operations of the Spirit in the bosom of another, his own heart longs after a measure of that same power to rest upon him, that the same fruit of the Spirit may be brought forth in his heart, in his lips, and in his life.

Sweet spot to be in! Safe spot to be acquainted with! Far better

than that vain confidence and presumptuous assurance which many make their boast of, who never doubt, or fear; always see their interest, and claim God's covenant mercies; can say, "My Father, My Jesus," with unwavering breath, while, perhaps, they have been wallowing, half an hour before, in all manner of uncleanness; while their hearts are as covetous as the devil can make them, and their hands polluted with everything that this world can soil them with. God's people cannot walk in this path. They cannot get upon these mountains, where there is neither dew nor rain. This is their spot, when they are in their right mind, to lie at the footstool of mercy, waiting upon God to shine away their fears whether they shall ever get to heaven; to have mean thoughts of themselves, as the vilest of the vile, and the weakest of the weak; to put in no claim, but simply breathe forth their desires to the Lord, that he would show mercy, favour, and kindness to them. There may be some here who are in this spot. Perhaps they have been writing bitter things against themselves, because they cannot tower to the same height of assurance as some speak of; because they cannot sing those hymns which are sung in some chapels; because they cannot use that bold language they hear fall from the lips of others; and thus they are sometimes tried, condemned, and cut up in their feelings, as to whether they have the love of God in their souls at all. Now, if there be such a one here, can you not find some of the feelings I have been describing, some of the experience I have been endeavouring to trace out in your heart? "Look thou upon me." Is not that the desire of your soul? You could not utter that prayer before the Lord quickened you.

Before you can utter that prayer you must have faith to believe that the Lord does look down upon his people. You must have a desire in your heart that the Lord would specially bless and favour you. You must be weaned from all creature righteousness, creature wisdom, and creature strength, and be looking to the Lord to bless you with that blessing which maketh rich. Do you not see how kind and tender the Lord is to his people? Do you not see that they are the only people on the face of the world whose lot is worth envying? Does not sometimes this petition, if not in

words, at least in substance, steal out of your heart, "O that thou wouldst look upon me." Though I am a vile wretch, though I am a guilty sinner, though I am a base backslider, though I am a filthy idolater, though I deserve to be banished from thy presence, though I merit to be trampled under foot, yet look upon me! It is what my soul desires, that thou wouldst bless me, that thou wouldst show me thy mercy, that thou wouldst shed abroad thy love in my heart, that thou wouldst speak with thine own lips, and whisper into my heart, "Fear not, for thou art mine." And when you read in the Word of God, or hear from the lips of some experimental man of truth, the feelings of God's people, those whom the Lord has really blessed; when you hear of the rain and dew of heaven falling upon their souls, and the secret of the Lord resting upon their tabernacle, is there not in some of your bosoms a longing desire that the Lord would so bless you, so manifest himself unto you, that you may enjoy the very same things in your own heart, by an application of them with power to your conscience?

Now you who know something of these things in your soul may, and indeed certainly will, be despised by heady professors; you may be ridden over by them, trampled under foot, cast out as knowing nothing; but, depend upon it, you have true religion, more vital godliness in your hearts, that know some of these feelings, desires, and exercises by divine teaching, than all these high and heady professors. Yes, there is more true religion, more vital godliness in a sigh, cry, and groan, in a simple petition put up out of a labouring bosom at the foot-stool of mercy, than in the presumptuous language of all the hypocrites in the world put together. There is more of the Holy Ghost's work in the conscience of a sinner that goes burdened, exercised, tried, and distressed to the throne of grace, and there looks up to a bleeding Jesus, and longs after an application of his atoning blood to his conscience, than in all the presumptuous claims that thousands have made with presumptuous lips. Here we have it in the Word of truth, here we have before our eyes the experience of a saint of God, drawn by the hand of the Spirit; here we have the breathings of a tender conscience, the sighings of a broken

spirit, the utterance of a feeling heart.

Now, can you find yours there? Look and see whether you can find anything of the experience of the 119th Psalm in your soul. Never mind what people say about you, nor what they say against you; no, nor even what your own heart may say in your own bosom. But can you in honesty, simplicity, and godly sincerity, find David's feelings in your bosom? David's prayer in your heart? David's breathings in your breast? If so, God has made you a believer. If so, you are under divine teaching. If so, David's God is your God; and as sure as David is in glory, so surely will you be in glory too.

But as to a religion that knows nothing of these things, neither sighs, nor cries, nor breathings, nor groans, nor longings, nor languishings, nor meltings, nor softenings, that feels no contrition, no tenderness, no godly sorrow, no desire to please God, no fear to offend him, away with it! Throw it into the river! Bury it in the first dunghill you come to! The sooner it is got rid of the better. Religion without heavenly teaching; and the Spirit's secret operations; without a conscience made tender in the fear of the Lord; without the spirit of prayer in the bosom; without breathings after the Lord; without desires to experience his love, and enjoy a sense of his mercy and goodness; all such religion is a deception and a delusion. It begins in the flesh, and it will end in the flesh. It is all that man can produce; and as the Lord says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," (1 Cor.15:50) so fleshly religion cannot. "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you," said the Lord, "they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63) But if there be within these walls any who know something of these fruits in your souls, something of this experience traced out by the Spirit of God in your hearts, you are safe, though perhaps you cannot see it yourselves; you are secure, though your hearts may sometimes quake and fear. For the Lord, who has begun the work, will carry it on, and bring it to full perfection, satisfy you with a sweet discovery of his grace and love here, and eventually and eternally bless you with a weight of glory.

## The Lord's Thoughts

Preached at Jewry Street Chapel, Aldgate, on Thursday Evening, July 22, 1847

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." Psalm 40:17

There is one passage of Scripture frequently read, and as frequently quoted, and yet, it is to be feared, little understood, and less laid to heart. The passage to which I refer is that striking one, Isaiah 55:8, 9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Two distinct and marked things are here said of "God's thoughts." *first*, that they are not "our thoughts;" in other words, that they are diametrically opposite; and *secondly*, that "as the heavens are higher than the earth," so are the thoughts and ways of God higher than the thoughts and ways of man. This solemn declaration of the Most High is not true merely in one or two instances; it runs through the whole of the divine economy; it is the description of what all God's purposes are as distinct from the purposes of man. And, therefore, this opposition of divine ways to human ways, and this infinite superiority of the thoughts of God to the thoughts of man, will not be merely in one or two particulars, but will run in diametrical contrast with every thought, natural thought, of the human heart, and with every way, natural way, of the human mind.

This we may see by casting a glance at the world around us, where, as the Lord says, "the things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God." The pride, ambition, pleasures, and amusements, in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged, and sailing down the stream into an awful gulph of eternity, are all an abomination in the sight of God; whereas the things which men despise, such as

faith, hope, love, humility, brokenness of heart, tenderness of conscience, contrition of spirit, sorrow for sin, self-loathing, and self-abasement; looking to Jesus, taking up the cross, denying one self, walking in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life—in a word, *the power of godliness*—is despised by all, and by none so much as mere heady professors, who have a name to live while dead.

It would appear from the words of the text (which are true in the first instance especially of the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is he that speaks throughout, though true also with respect to every faithful follower of the Lamb), that the Psalmist cast his eyes around him, and as he saw men at large pursuing every device and imagination of their heart, and beheld how the world lavished its smiles, honours, and approbation upon the great and rich, that he threw a glance at his own state naturally and spiritually, and summed up the feelings of his soul in this divine reflection, as though he would contrast himself with the giddy multitude, "But *I am poor and needy*; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." 'Men may despise and trample me under foot, and cast me out, yet the Lord Jehovah thinketh upon me. What need I more? Let me then still be "poor and needy," if the Lord thinketh upon me, I have every thing that my heart can desire.'

Our text consists of two clauses. With God's blessing, we may take these up as the two leading divisions of our subject.

I.—"*But I am poor and needy.*" What an honest confession! How suitable to the experience of every God-taught soul! Let us contrast this humble confession with the boast that fell from the lips of the Laodicean church, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Mark the contrast! The dead, carnal, lifeless professor, boasting, "I am rich!" and the exercised, tried, tempted child of God, confessing, "I am poor!" The one, full of pride, and glorying in self: the other, broken, humble, contrite, and laid low at the footstool of mercy!

"But I am poor and needy." There must be some distinction

between these two expressions. The Holy Ghost, who inspired God's holy word, we cannot think would use tautology. We may not indeed be always able to see the minute differences of inspired expressions; yet we may be sure that God the Spirit could not write in any other way than in language most expressive, and most divinely suitable to set forth the mind and will of God. We may, therefore, I think, safely establish some distinction between these two expressions, as descriptive of the felt emptiness and nothingness of the living soul.

i. First, then, with respect to the expression. "*I am poor.*" What does it imply? Does it not, at the very least, presuppose the absence of riches? But, of course, we are to understand the word in a spiritual sense. We are not to consider the Psalmist, in using these words, was speaking altogether of natural poverty. It is true, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the great exemplar of his people, and from whose lips these words prophetically fell, was a poor man; for he had not where to lay his head, and was sustained by the contributions of his followers. And there were times in David's life, in which he too was poor, when hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and had to look to men, as in the case of Nabal, to support him with the bread that perisheth. But we should sadly limit the mind and meaning of the blessed Spirit, if we restricted the word "poverty," here to natural poverty; for there are many who are deeply involved in natural poverty, who can never from a feeling heart say: "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

It is *spiritual poverty*, then, that the Spirit specially speaks of when he puts this language into the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his spiritual followers: "I am poor;" for though the majority of the Lord's people are poor literally, yet all are poor in spiritual things, when made so by a work of God the Holy Ghost upon their hearts.

But in order more fully to open up the mind of the blessed Spirit here, we will, as the Lord may enable, enter into a few particulars, wherein the child of God is made to feel himself poor.

1. First, then, with respect to his own *righteousness*. No man can really say before a heart-searching God, "I am poor," who has any shred of creature righteousness left, and who is not utterly stripped of all dependence on his own doings or performances. If a man has not, by the powerful hand of God in his conscience, been stripped of every rag and thread of creature righteousness, he cannot, he dare not, if an honest man, say before God, "I am poor." Now, it is the special work and teaching of the Spirit in the soul, to strip us of all our own righteousness. To it by nature we ardently cleave; we weave our spider's web, and, like Adam of old, would fain pluck leaves off the fig-tree, that we may stand clothed before God in them. But the blessed Spirit, in his divine work on the conscience, will never suffer us to stand before God in one rag or thread of our own righteousness, but will strip us completely bare. And this he does by working in us from time to time such a sight and sense of what we are in the sight of God; by giving us such views and solemn discoveries of God's purity, majesty, and holiness; and by such an opening up of the breadth and spirituality of the law in our conscience, that we are forced to fall down before him, and cry, "Unclean, unclean."

2. But not only have we by nature these tatters of legal righteousness, from which we must be completely stripped; but we have also a great stock of *creature strength*. It is often a long time in the experience of God's people before they are brought to be, as the apostle says, "without strength;" to be completely weak. Many of the Lord's people often have some lurking hope that they can do something—that surely they can obtain something in answer to prayer—that they can read and understand God's word—that they can cast themselves at the footstool of mercy—that surely they may take hold of some promise suitable to their case—that they may stretch forth their hands, and bring into their souls some little encouragement out of God's own invitations. There is in many a heart even when circumcised to fear God's name, this lurking creature strength; of which and out of which it has to be completely stripped. But when we are brought by painful teaching into that spot where we cannot raise up one spiritual thought, cannot breathe forth a



spiritual groan, if by so doing we could save our souls from the bottomless pit; and feel as dependent, as completely dependent, upon the almighty power of God, as the clay is dependent upon the potter's hand to work it into a vessel fit for the master's use; then may we be said to be "poor" not merely as regards our own righteousness, but "poor" also as regards all our own strength. There is a common idea, that after the Lord has quickened the soul, man has power to do something. But I believe the children of God are deeply convinced, through a long series of painful exercises, that they have no more power to draw forth living into actual exercise, living hope into actual operation, or living love into actual enjoyment, than they had power in the first instance to kindle faith, or hope, or love in their souls.

3. But again. It is a long time before we are completely stripped of all *creature wisdom*. This is one of the strong holds out of which we are driven as from a last refuge. We have, perhaps, heard and sat under ministers who have preached the gospel with a considerable degree of clearness, and set forth the doctrines with marked ability, and perhaps superior eloquence. These doctrines we have imbibed from their lips; and until the Lord was pleased to exercise our souls; we may have thought a knowledge of the doctrines was the ultimatum, the sum and substance, the Alpha and Omega of vital godliness. But after a time the Lord was pleased to lead us into darkness, and not into light; perhaps some powerful temptation beset us, or sin began to work as sin never worked before; or Satan was allowed to tempt us as Satan never was allowed to tempt us before. Or there was, as Mr. Hart speaks 'a breaking up of the fountains of the great deep within.' And under this solemn view, as ruined bankrupts, most wretched sinners, we begin to find that all our once fancied wisdom has made to itself wings and flown away; that when we are brought into spiritual trials, powerful temptations, and deep waters of affliction, all our wisdom, all our knowledge of the doctrines of grace, and all that clear scheme which we once thought we so well understood, fail us at the very hour that we need it most; and we are brought to see and feel that nothing but divine manifestations, the powerful testimonies of God to our

conscience, and the lifting up of the light and life of his blessed face can raise us up out of these waters wherein we are sunk.

4. But again. Poverty not merely implies an utter want of everything to which we can look, everything on which we can hang, and everything of which we can make our boast; but it also implies a *poverty of spirit*; as the Lord says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:3.) A man can only be poor in heart, as he is brought down in his soul to be sensible of his utter poverty in divine things. Nor can he be truly and really "poor in spirit," until he has seen an end of all perfection, and is made by the hand of God to feel himself nothing but ruin, guilt, and misery. This creates poverty of spirit; not merely the *doctrine* of poverty of spirit, which we may adopt as well as any other doctrine; nor mere letter experience, in which we may make ourselves wise as well as in the doctrines of truth; but a real broken, humble, contrite spirit before God. So that when we come into the presence of his divine Majesty, we feel what we profess to be, nothing before him, absolutely nothing; "poor and needy;" being nothing and having nothing in ourselves but a mass of wretchedness and ruin.

ii. But we pass on to consider what may be applied by the expression "*needy*." I think, without straining the phrase, we may take it to mean—needing everything suitable to our poverty: "poor," first—"needy," afterwards: "poor," as being stripped of all fancied good; and "needy," as being made to need those mercies and blessings which are adapted and suitable to that state of poverty.

We may look at it *naturally*. How many wretched mendicants are there in our streets! They are "poor," because they have nothing; and "needy," because they have need of everything. Thus *spiritually*. The child of God is "poor," when he has not in himself anything spiritually good; when he is brought to utter destitution; when he looks within, and feels he is nothing but a mass of beggary, bankruptcy, insolvency, and complete ruin before God. And he is "needy," when the blessed Spirit, who has brought him

down into the depths of poverty, sets before his eyes and raises up in his heart a sense of, and a desire for, those things which are so blessedly adapted to the wants of a soul taught its spiritual poverty. And indeed, poverty must ever be the necessary preparation for need. The two cannot be inverted. Poverty comes first to strip us of all fancied good. And then, after poverty, need is deeply felt. Thus, when the blessed Spirit has been pleased to make us poor, really poor, before the eyes of a heart-searching God, and raised up in us that poverty of spirit which Christ has so specially blessed, he is also pleased to set before our eyes, in sovereign mercy, those spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, which are so suitable to the state of poverty into which he has brought the soul. For instance,

1. I have been endeavouring to show, if we have been taught our spiritual poverty, we have been completely stripped of all *creature righteousness*. Does not this open up a way for the manifestation of a righteousness which is suitable to us? Being stripped of our own, and brought in guilty before God, how suitable, how blessedly suitable is the righteousness, the glorious righteousness of the Son of God, when displayed before our eyes, and brought with some divine power into our conscience! But it is the preceding poverty, the having no righteousness of our own, that instrumentally makes us long after, and deeply prize the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us, and made known to us by the power of the Spirit. Thus, the "needy" seek and long after, and when revealed, cleave unto, the spotless obedience of Immanuel, as an all-justifying robe, shielding and sheltering them from the justice of an offended God.

2. But we need *strength* also, when we are brought into real poverty of spirit: so that we can feelingly take up the language on our lips, that we are "poor and needy," when stripped of all creature strength. Yet there is a desire in our souls to believe. 'O, could I but believe!' the soul will sometimes cry. And is there not a desire raised up in the heart to know and to hope in the Lord, to feel him precious, to enjoy the sweet manifestation of his mercy and love, and experience the blessed application of his

atoning blood to the conscience? Yet poverty, heart-felt poverty, has brought us into that state before God,—that we have no strength to know, to believe, to love, to hope in God's mercy, to enjoy his presence, to delight in his manifestations, and realize a sense of his eternal favour to our souls.

Thus, *poverty*, by leading us into a knowledge of our utter weakness, leads us also into a feeling *necessity* for the strength of Christ to be made perfect in our weakness. And when the Lord is pleased to raise up faith in our souls whereby we look unto Jesus, to give us a good hope through grace, "an anchor within the veil," to shed abroad the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and to communicate some testimony of our interest in his atoning blood, how suitable, how blessedly suitable are all these heavenly blessings to our poverty and necessity!

3. Again. I observed that in real poverty we have *no wisdom*. It is all dried up. We might once have slaked our thirst at human pools, and thought to make ourselves wise in the letter of the word. How many are running after human attainments, as though these could profit them in the things of God! But sooner or later, we are brought to this spot, that nothing short of divine teaching can make us wise unto salvation; that nothing but that wisdom which cometh from above can really profit us; and that everything short of divine illumination, divine manifestation, and divine application, leaves our soul empty, ignorant, naked and bare.

Thus, through poverty of spirit, as regards a feeling sense of our ignorance in divine things, we come to be "needy." And this need manifests itself in leading us from time to time to sigh and cry for that special teaching which makes the soul wise unto salvation.

This experience will be the experience of every child of God. It is not a particular standard erected of so many feet high, and all that comes short of this must have their heads cut off. But it is the experience of every child of God in proportion to the Spirit's

work upon the heart. All cannot perhaps go into the same depths; all are not equally exercised; all have not their heart ploughed up with the same measure of conviction; all are not brought down into the same sense of their ruin and wretchedness; and yet all, so far as they are under divine teaching, are "poor and needy;" all are stripped of creature righteousness, creature strength, and creature wisdom; and all are made to need, deeply need, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and the manifestations of divine mercy and love, so that nothing can satisfy them but God's manifested favour to their souls.

This evening I look around me, and see many assembled here, and, doubtless, many who profess to know the truth in Jesus—let me ask you, in all affection and tenderness, can you, can you from the bottom of your heart, say, "I am poor and needy?" 'Lord, when I look up unto thee, I feel myself nothing in thy sight; all my strength, all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my once boasted attainments, all my creature religion, all my fleshly holiness, everything I once leant upon and highly prized, I see it all wretchedness and ruin. Before thee I stand, the heart-searching God, having nothing and being nothing, and yet at times breathing forth the desires of my soul that thou wouldst teach me, guide me, lead me, bless me, and manifest thyself to my soul!'

II.—Now, if you can go thus far with me, we will go a step further, which leads me on to our second division,—"*Yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*" Great words, great words! How do I come to know them? What evidence, what testimony had David that the Lord thought upon him? Had he been taken up to the third heaven, and looked into God's thoughts? or had an angel let down the book of life, and shewn to his bodily eyes that his name was there, and therefore God thought upon him for good? O no; it was an internal testimony in the court of conscience; an evidence not visible to the outward eye, nor audible to the outward ear, but dropped into his soul from the very court of heaven itself.

But this it will be desirable further to illustrate. There is some deep truth couched here; God enable us to look at it in the light of the Spirit. God's thoughts were always upon his church from all eternity; and his thoughts were upon her for good.

i. It was in consequence of Jehovah's thinking upon her that ever she had *a being*. And how did Jehovah manifest that he thought upon his Zion? By making an eternal covenant on her behalf; by choosing her in Christ before all worlds; and by designing and planning a wondrous way by which she should be eternally interested in this eternal covenant, "ordered in all things and sure." God thought eternally upon his Zion; and everything brought forth in time is the result of those eternal thoughts that were ever in his bosom. When he spake this world into being, his thoughts were still set on his Zion. It was for her that this world was created. This earth in which we live is but a scaffolding, by which the temple of mercy is built up. All the arrangements around us were entered into prospectively for the benefit of the church of Christ.

ii. He thought upon her when he *sent his dear Son* for her benefit and on her behalf; when, in the appointed time, the only begotten Son came forth from the bosom of the Father, and took in the womb of the Virgin Mary our human nature into union with his divine Person.

iii. God thought upon his Zion while the Lord Jesus Christ was journeying here below, in this vale of tears. Jesus thought upon his Zion continually, for he was then working out a glorious righteousness whereby she should be eternally saved. When grovelling in the garden of Gethsemane, his thoughts of Zion forced the sweat, the bloody sweat, from his agonizing brow. When he was stretched a bleeding victim upon the cross, between heaven and earth, deserted by man and forsaken of God, then he thought upon his Zion; he thought of her as her sins passed in solemn array before his eyes, and he underwent the penalty due to each and thus, while thinking of his Zion, he bought her with his own blood. When he ascended up into glory,

and took his exalted station at God's right hand, he thought upon his bride. And still he thinks upon his Zion. Her name is cut deep upon his heart, and worn upon his breast. His thoughts towards her are thoughts of love, thoughts of peace and not of evil. She is continually in his thoughts, perpetually in his heart's affections.

iv. But let us bring this down more closely into personal experience, because it is of personal experience the Psalmist here speaks—"The Lord thinketh upon *me*." When the Lord brought you into being, he thought upon you; the parent from whom you sprung, the situation of life in which you were born, and all the circumstances which have accompanied you up to the present hour, were all the subject of his thoughts, were but the results of what had passed through his infinite and eternal mind. He thought upon you during the careless hours of childhood, and the reckless years of manhood. He thought upon you when you were sporting with your souls, and trifling with eternity. He thought upon you in sickness, when he raised you up from the brink of the grave. He thought upon you when surrounded by dangers on the right hand and on the left, and kept you from being hurried by them into eternity. His eye was upon you for good during every hour and every moment of your unregenerate life; and when the time came for him to visit you with his grace, and bring you to a sense of your lost and undone state before him, he thought upon you. And because his thoughts were upon you, the arrow of conviction flew from his bow and lodged in your conscience. He thought upon you during all the time you were suffering under guilt and trouble; and so thought upon you that conviction brought not down your soul into absolute despair. He thought upon you when a word from time to time came to relieve your mind, when some gleam of hope shone upon your soul, when some sweet invitation came into your heart with life, feeling, and power. He thought upon you when he brought you under the preached word. He thought upon you when he sent some testimony of his mercy and love into your soul. And he so thinks upon you, if you are a vessel of mercy, as if there were no one else to think of; as though you engrossed all the thoughts of the Godhead; for such is the infinite nature of the Godhead that

he can think upon all his elect at the same moment, and yet think of each, as if each occupied the whole of his eternal mind.

'But,' say you, and say I, 'we want to have some in eternal testimony that the Lord thinketh upon us. We want to say, with a feeling heart, as the Psalmist said, "The Lord thinketh upon me," and to know that he does.' Let us trace this out.

1. Have you never been in straits in providence? Have you never been exercised about your daily bread, how doors would be opened to provide you with an honourable maintenance? You have; we all have, in a measure. Now when the Lord was pleased to open *this* door and open *that* door, or raise up *this* friend and raise up *that* friend, at the very time you needed it; sent you just that sum of money to pay that bill you were so anxious about; or, by the hand of an enemy, as Elijah was fed by the ravens, fed your poor perishing body—was not this some evidence that the Lord thinketh upon you? If he had not thought upon you for good, would that friend have come, or that letter have arrived, just at the very nick of time? would that door have been opened, or that relief have appeared, which was so suitable to your case? Surely, if you can trace out one or two, or more such marked instances, if you can thus see the finger of God, you may say, "The Lord thinketh upon me."

2. Again. If you have been tried with any peculiar temptation, or anything has been laid very powerfully upon your conscience, so that you were compelled, absolutely compelled, to make it a matter of prayer; **did you not [*perhaps, you did not?*]** come to the Lord in a cold and formal manner, or say, 'I will pray about this thing, as it is my duty to do; but prayer was pressed out of you by the force of circumstances—by a weight and burden which compelled you to cry to the Lord, because there was no other quarter whence relief could come; if your prayer was then heard and answered—if it was clearly manifested that the Lord heard the cry and sigh of your soul—can you not write upon that answer to prayer, "The Lord thinketh upon me? "If the Lord had not thought upon you, he would never have heard that prayer. It is a



testimony in your soul that the Lord thinketh upon you, if he ever heard and answered any petition that went up out of your labouring bosom.

3. But again. You may have been in some peculiar trial of mind, such as you never were in before; and therefore you needed special relief. This is the way, I believe, the Lord deals with his people. He does not deal with them in generals. He brings them into particulars—into special spots, where none but himself can appear, relieve, and bless. Now if you have been brought into a special trial of soul, have laboured under a special temptation, or have been entangled in a special snare, and then the Lord was pleased to apply a promise to your heart, or drop a word into your soul exactly suitable to your state and case, so exactly suitable that if you had taken the Bible to pieces and selected a text, you could not have found one so appropriate—if the Lord dropped such a word into your soul, and it brought with it sweet relief—can you not say, "The Lord thinketh upon me?" If he did not think upon you, if your concerns were not near to his eternal mind, if your case did not lie upon his heart,—would he, could he, have dropped that precise promise into your soul, that very word into your heart, which was made so sweet and precious?

4. Or, again, you may have turned aside from the right path. And who is not guilty here? Who does not inwardly backslide, if kept from open backslidings? But the Lord sees our backslidings, and sends us reproofs for them. If we are chastened, it is an evidence that we are God's children, for all are partakers of chastisement who are sons. Now, if the Lord sees that you are going out of the path, become proud and lifted up, slipped into carnal security, satisfied with a name to live, got into that miserable state of self-sufficiency and wretched dead assurance in which so many are wrapped up—if the Lord, seeing this, begins to work upon your conscience, to rebuke you, and even to lay on his chastening hand, by bringing affliction on your body, and trouble into your soul, you can say, "The Lord thinketh upon me;" for if the Lord did not think upon you, he would not thus use his chastening hand to bring you out of these ways of evil.

5. Again. If your soul, from time to time, has been revived in the things of God; if when you have been dark, cold, carnal, hard-hearted, and unfeeling, and have come under the ministry of some of God's sent servants, the word has been blessed to break you down, to melt you, to refresh you, to encourage you, to bring you once more to the feet of Jesus with godly sorrow for your backslidings, and earnest desires to live to his glory—there is a testimony that God thinketh upon you.

6. Again. If the Lord has ever given to you a testimony of your interest in the love and blood of the Lamb; if he has ever sealed the pardon of your sins upon your soul, shed abroad his love in your heart, and whispered into your conscience that peace which passeth understanding—there is another evidence, another convincing testimony, that the Lord thinketh upon you; for if he had not thought upon you, he never would have shed abroad his love in your soul, he never would have applied the precious blood of sprinkling to your conscience.

But there doubtless are those among us who can scarcely rise up to the language of the text. I would observe that we have in it the strongest language of assurance; and yet, remark how it is blended with the deepest self-abasement! I believe in my conscience that the two always go together. We never can have assurance, except so far as it stands in a broken heart and a contrite spirit; for God does not throw away his favours. He does not give the sweet assurance of his love to harden the heart, to make us carnal and worldly-minded, to let us think lightly of sin and the wretched evils that accompany sin. But where the Lord breaks a soul down into contrition and penitence, into self-loathing and godly sorrow, by giving him a sight and sense of pardoned sin—in that soil alone does the tree of assurance grow. There can be no real assurance, springing from the testimony of God, unless it stands in a broken heart and a contrite spirit. If, then, you hear ministers always preaching about assurance, and see them proud, covetous, worldly-minded, and their conversation one tissue of levity, jocoseness, and frivolity, you

may be well assured that their assurance does not come from the mouth of God to their soul. On the other hand, when you see a poor, needy, broken-hearted child of God lie low at the footstool of mercy, and the Lord is pleased to raise up in his heart some sweet testimony of his interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, enabling him to rejoice in the Lord, and to feel how precious Jesus is to his soul—*that* assurance springs from the testimony of God, for it stands in a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

But, I say, there may be children of God here who cannot rise up to this language. They may *hope* that the Lord thinks upon them, but they cannot speak it with that feeling of confidence which the Psalmist does. They can say "I am poor and needy;" but to carry it out with full assurance, "yet the Lord thinketh upon me," they cannot, they dare not. And yet they have testimonies, could they but view them in the light of the Spirit, that the Lord thinketh upon them. Why did the Lord, in the first instance, awaken you to a sense of your lost and ruined state? Why did he shoot his arrows of conviction into your conscience? Why did he bring you with weeping and supplication to the footstool of mercy? Why did he make Jesus precious to your soul? Why did he ever give you a heart to seek his face, to cleave to him for mercy and salvation, and to take a delight in his name? Why did he ever visit your soul with his promises and sweet invitations, and raise up in your heart that spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace? Why did he show you the glory of Christ and illuminate the eyes of your understanding to see his suitability to every want of your soul? Why has the Lord appeared for you in providence, heard your prayers, delivered your soul, and brought you out of temptation? Why has he, from time to time, laid upon you his afflictive hand, his chastening rod? Because he thinketh upon you. Nay, I may add one word more—do you think upon him? If you think upon him, there is evidence that he thinketh upon you. There is a promise to those that think upon his name; "a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." (Mal. 3:16.) And thus the church confesses, "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." (Isa. 26:8.) Are there not solemn

seasons in your soul, when you think upon the Lord? When you lie awake, perhaps at midnight, thinking upon God, upon his truth, his love, his word, his dealings with your soul, and your desires, prayers, and breathings all flow forth to his sacred Majesty—is not this some evidence that you are thinking upon his name? And be assured that if you think upon him, he has thought upon you. Look at the giddy multitude. Do they think upon God? Is he in all their thoughts? Are their minds ever fixed upon the solemn things of eternity? Is Jesus ever felt to be precious to their souls? Do they pant after him as the hart after the water brooks? No, their language is, "There is no God." It is not their spoken language, but it is their inward language. But through mercy you can say, that you think upon God; and thus there is some evidence, though you cannot rise up to the assurance of it, that he thinketh upon you. And if he thinks upon you, his thoughts are thoughts of good, thoughts of peace, and not of evil. Does he not read your heart? Does he not know your trials? Does not his holy eye look into the very secret recesses of your soul? And if he thinks upon you, will he leave you, give you up, abandon you in the hour when you need him most? No; he who thought upon you in eternity, will think on you in time, in every hour of trial, every scene of temptation, every season of sickness, and in the solemn hour when soul and body part. Through life and in death, he will still be thinking of you; and will bring you at last to that heavenly abode where these two things will be blessedly combined—the Lord's ever thinking upon his Zion, and his Zion ever thinking upon him.

## The Righteous and Their Blessings

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Oct. 3, 1858

"But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him." Psalm 37:39, 40.

Viewed by the natural eye, human society is made up of a vast number and an almost infinite variety of ranks and conditions. From the Sovereign on the throne to the pauper in the Union, society in this sense may be compared to a vast chain uniting two distant points, every link of which is necessary to the continuity of the whole. Some of the links may be large and others small—some strong and others weak—some of gold and others of iron—some highly polished and others worn and rusty; but each occupies a fixed position in the chain; and if one of the weakest and worst break or give way, the fracture destroys the connexion of the whole as much as if the strongest were to fail. Or to vary the figure, human society may be compared to an arch, in which every stone occupies a certain place, and is kept in its position by the key-stone, which drops into the centre and binds the whole fabric firmly together. The smaller links in the chain, if they could find a tongue, might sometimes complain how weak they are; but they determine the strength of the chain, for however closely wrought or massive it be, it cannot be stronger than its weakest link. Or the lower stones of the arch might murmur their indignation against the great weight that has been laid upon them; but if they sustain the greater pressure, they support more strongly and firmly thereby the whole arch, and thus occupy the most important and honourable position of the whole structure. In society, there always will, there always must be rich and poor; and the rich can no more do without the poor than the poor can do without the rich. Without the poor, where would be labour? And without labour, where would be food or shelter, raiment or fuel, house or home, or the commonest necessaries of life? We should all die of cold and starvation were there no poor to labour for us in the field and in the mine, at the forge, the bench, and the loom. And without the rich, how could the poor get wages to pay them for their labour and to provide themselves with food?

So that capital and labour—the employer and the employed—the food consumer and the food producer; in other words, the rich and the poor, are indispensable to each other's well being. I drop these hints to show how foolish it is, as well as how sinful, for the poor to dislike the rich, and for the rich to despise the poor, when neither can exist without the other.

But when we view the present scene with a spiritual eye, and leave out of consideration that wondrous frame of human society which God has constituted with as much wisdom as the glorious sun over our head, or the fair creation with all its marvels under our feet, we see that men really are to be divided into only two classes: the righteous and the wicked—those who fear God and those who fear him not—those who are walking in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life, and those who are travelling down the broad road that leads to eternal destruction. If you are an attentive reader of God's word, it cannot have escaped your observation how much the Scripture speaks of "the righteous." In fact, we can scarcely open our Bibles without seeing them named in almost every page—their character described, their blessedness declared, and the most gracious promises pronounced on their behalf. It is of these "righteous" that our text speaks; and salvation, strength, help, and deliverance are declared to be their peculiar privilege and portion. In opening up these words, I shall, therefore, with God's blessing, endeavour:

I.—*First*, to show who "*the righteous*" are, and how *their salvation is of the Lord*.

II.—*Secondly*, that these righteous ones will and must have their "*time of trouble*;" but that in that time of trouble, the Lord will prove *their strength, will help them, deliver them, and save them*.

III.—*Thirdly*, why the Lord will do all these things unto them: "*because they trust in him*."

I.—It is evident, from God's own testimony, that since the fall of man, none by nature are righteous in such a sense as the Scripture declares the saints of God to be. For let us bear in mind that in order to judge rightly of spiritual things, we must measure

them not by a natural, but by a spiritual standard; and where shall we find that but in the inspired Scriptures? Suppose, for instance, that two surveyors are fixed upon to measure and value a certain building; and the tape or measuring rod of the one is marked right, and the other, through fraud or inadvertence, is marked wrong: how can they agree in the sum total of the measurement? Now if a dispute arise in consequence as to which is the correct measurement, what is to be done but to examine the two measures and abide by that which is the right one? Or if in the sale of an article the buyer weighs with one set of scales and weights and the seller with another, the one being true and the other false, how are these two men to come to any agreement with regard to the real weight of the article; and how is it to be decided according to truth and justice, except by putting it into fair scales against honest weights? So if men measure the righteous by any other than God's measure; or if they weigh them by any other scales or weights than those of the sanctuary, how can God and men agree in their judgment who the righteous are any more than those of whom I have been speaking in figure? It is for this reason—that his scales and weights are all wrong, that the judgment of man who "the righteous" are differs so widely from the judgment of God. But need I ask you whose judgment is right and whose is wrong—whose word shall stand, God's or theirs? (Jer. 44:28.) Immediately, therefore, that a man, through ignorance or prejudice, sets aside the judgment of God and follows his own, he commits a mistake, and if not rectified by the grace of God, as far as he himself is concerned, a fatal one. The standard whereby man weighs himself or others is and must be necessarily defective, for he can merely view certain acts which he considers acts of righteousness. Man cannot read human hearts; he cannot enter into the springs of action, nor pierce into those hidden motives which give the real complexion to acts and determine their true character as good or evil; still less has he any view of the purity and holiness of him who is a consuming fire, nor is he acquainted with the breadth, spirituality, and strictness of God's righteous law, which declares an angry word to be murder, and an unchaste glance to be adultery. He therefore weighs men's acts in a corrupt balance, and measures lips and lives by a faulty standard; so that when he says—"These men are righteous: for they speak righteous words, they do righteous acts"—he, having no right means of determining, can pronounce no right judgment

either upon men or their acts. To set aside the Bible or mistake its meaning is like a judge coming on circuit and deciding cases, not according to the law of the land, or the verdict of the jury, but according to his own prejudices or his own interest. But God, the supreme, the righteous, the unerring judge of all the earth, looking down from heaven upon the hearts and actions of men, has already pronounced the sentence with his own infallible lips. And this is his decision:—"There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10, 11, 12.) If, then, we accept (and how, if taught by his Spirit, can we do otherwise?) God's judgment and not man's; if we are determined, as obedient children, to abide by the declaration of him who cannot lie, and to disregard the vain imaginations and lying deceits of a heart too deeply sunk in darkness to see, too deeply buried in sin to feel its own ignorance and its own alienation from God, we shall believe that to be true of all which we know, from experience, to be true of ourselves, that "there is none righteous, no, not one."

And yet the word of truth—and our text is but one voice among hundreds—speaks of "the righteous" over and over again. But how can this be, if there are "none righteous;" and have we not, by rashly running down human nature, entangled ourselves here in a noose from which we cannot escape? This, then, is the enigma which we have to solve—this the knot which we have to untie; and I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to solve this enigma and to untie this knot—not by logical skill, or by sophistical argument, as if I wished to establish my own views, right or wrong, but by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word of truth and in the hearts of all who fear and love his great Name.

i. As God has declared that there are "righteous" people on earth, we may start from that point as a settled question. But as he has also declared that there is "none righteous," we must come to this conclusion, that either the word of God contradicts itself, saying and unsaying in the same breath—(awful conclusion to come to!)—or that there are those who in one sense are righteous and in another not. In fact that is just the solution of the whole enigma—that the righteous are unrighteous in



themselves, but righteous in Christ. But this simple statement will not suffice. A fuller explanation is needed. When, where, and how do they become righteous?

1. To understand this more clearly, we must run our thoughts back into a past eternity; for we must not view God as resembling ourselves, the being of a day, ever changing and ever changeable, resolving and breaking resolves, having no fixed purposes or eternal will, but viewing men and things with the eyes of time and waiting for events to happen. We must view him as he has declared himself to be, unchanging and unchangeable. "I am the Lord; I change not" (Mal. 3:6); "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) In God's own eternal mind, therefore, and unchangeable purpose, the righteous were always righteous, and this not by any foreseen goodness of their own, but in consequence of their union with, and standing in, the Lord Jesus Christ as their covenant Head. Thus, as *viewed in eternal union with the Son of God*, they are righteous as partaking of his righteousness; for as is the head so are the members—the church of Christ never having any standing distinct from her Lord and Head. You cannot separate the vine from the branches, or the husband from the wife. You cannot dislodge the corner-stone from the building reared upon and united unto it. The vine would cease to be the vine without branches; the husband would be no husband without the wife; and the foundation would be incomplete without the superstructure. In this sense, then, from all eternity the people of God were righteous in Christ, because they were viewed in the mind of him who cannot change as for ever and unalterably one with the Lord the Lamb. In this sense they are righteous in his righteousness, holy in his holiness, and comely in his comeliness; so that he could say of and to his beloved Bride in their eternal betrothal—"Thou art all fair, my love there is no spot in thee." (Song 4:7.)

2. We now come down to the creation of man, which was the first bringing of these hidden purposes to light; when God made our first parent in his own image, after his own likeness. But the fall broke in. Our first parent did not continue to stand in that uprightness in which he was created. An awful catastrophe took place—one evidently by God's permission, but not by God's cooperation. God had no hand in it, though not unforeseen or

unprovided against; but in his infinite wisdom and for the manifestation of his own grace and glory, he left Adam to stand or fall in the strength that he naturally possessed when he came fresh from his divine Creator's hand. We, my friends, and all the race of mankind were in Adam's loins when that fearful fall took place. Just as Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him, and paid tithes in him (Heb. 7:9), so were we in the loins of Adam when Satan met him and overthrew him; and we therefore fell with him. Adam was our natural covenant head, and thus his acts were our acts; for the head and members stand together in that intimate union and relationship that what benefits the head benefits the members and what injures the head injures the members. This Adam well knew, for he was told before the fall to "increase and multiply;" and therefore he was warned that an innumerable offspring was in his loins, that he stood as their covenant head, and that if he fell, he was consigning not only himself, but unborn millions to death and ruin. The woman was deceived, but Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:14); and this made his sin so heinous, that he sinned wilfully and deliberately, and well knowing the awful consequences. From him we have all sprung by lineal descent. We are therefore not only involved in his sin, but tainted by his corruption. Thus we are doubly sinners—sinners by partaking of his sin in the actual commission of it in Paradise, and sinners by the transmission of his corrupt nature in which he begat all his children, and which we inherit from him. Thus all are by nature children of wrath, for "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22); and "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that ("in whom" margin) all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.) In this sense, "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23.) Measured, then, by the law of God, no man is or can be righteous; for the description that the prophet gives of Zion in his day is true of us—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." Many think we take a pleasure in magnifying and exaggerating the fall of man—that we gloat over his corruptions, and instead of decently covering, rudely and rashly lay bare his sores. But where can we find language stronger than Paul's description of the sins of the Gentile world in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and of the abominations of the Jewish world in the second? And what

conclusion does he draw from both but this, that "every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God?" (Rom. 3:19.)

Now the Lord the Spirit makes all the family of God feel this by bringing home the law in its breadth, spirituality, and curse into their conscience, that they may experimentally learn their guilt, and their mouth be effectually stopped from uttering a word in self-justification. Who that has the fear of God can appeal against the verdict of his own conscience? For the law not only condemns actions, but words and thoughts. It requires an unswerving obedience, makes no allowance for human infirmity, but takes, as it were, the sinner by the throat and says—"Pay me that thou owest. And the debt thou owest me, and every farthing of which thou shalt pay, is perfect, unswerving love to God, for he commandeth thee to love him with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and thorough, unwavering love to man, for 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' And if thou do not love God and man; with this perfect love—if thou fail at any time or in any way in the feeling or in the action—if thou have but one murderous thought or unchaste desire; and if in a moment of weakness or temptation, thou break it and thus offend in one point, thou art guilty of all. (James 2:10.) There is then no mercy in the law for thee; to hell thou must go with all thy sins upon thine head." Now who can stand before this fiery law? The children of Israel, when the law was proclaimed from Mount Sinai, begged that they might hear those terrible words no more—words which, with all their fearful accompaniments of blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet piercing ear and heart with its shrill notes, as blown by angels' breath, struck awe and terror into the stoutest consciences. Now when this same law enters the conscience of a sinner with divine power, it lays him in the dust guilty before God; it cuts him up root and branch; for it not only condemns outward sin, but as a two-edged sword is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12); and thus turning all his comeliness into corruption, shows him and makes him to feel that there is nothing in him but sin and corruption from head to foot. It thus strips him of all creature righteousness, so that he falls before God with his mouth in the dust, crying out—"Behold, I am vile."

But how can this be a righteous man? He cannot of himself, as he

would freely tell you; but he can be made one, and that in a moment, not only before God, but in his own faith and feeling. When, then, he is in this state—with only a step, it may be, between him and death—without hope, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without righteousness in himself,—if there be but given a blessed revelation to his soul of the Person, blood, and righteousness of God's co-equal, co-eternal Son, and he be enabled to stretch forth his hand to put on this robe of righteousness, and freely accept what God freely gives—pardon, peace, and salvation through the Son of his love—then he is justified in his own conscience; then he stands not only a righteous man before God, but by receiving the atonement (Rom. 5:11), and being clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10), he becomes a righteous man in his own feelings, in the enjoyment and experience of his *free and full justification from the curse of the law and the wrath of God* due to his transgressions.

3. But there is also another sense in which the children of God are righteous; and that is, by *the implantation in their bosom of a righteous nature*, which, as being born of God, is as pure as God is pure and as holy as he is holy. For this reason we are said to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and to "put on the new man which after God [i.e., after the image of God] is created"—it being a divine and new creation, "in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24.) This pure and holy nature, John tells us, cannot sin, because it is born of God (1 John 3:9), and is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes the soul free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2), being that kingdom of God in the heart which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) This is an *imparted* righteousness, and its very essence is that sweet spirituality of mind which is life and peace, and that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. (Rom. 8:6; Heb. 12:14.)

4. But there is still another sense in which the saints of God are righteous; which is by *producing fruits of righteousness*, those good works unto which they are created, and which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10.) Let no man think that this is a small or unimportant matter, and that it is of little consequence how a man lives so long as he believes. It is not those who say Lord, Lord, that enter the kingdom of

heaven, but those who do the will of God. (Matt. 7:21.) The end of every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is to be "hewn down and to be cast into the fire." (Matt. 3:10.) But the saints of the Most High are not "trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12), "but trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified." But do not other men perform righteous actions? No; because they are not done from righteous principles nor to righteous ends. Do not motives much decide the true nature of actions? Take this case. Two persons visit the same individual—say some poor sick widow—to condole with her and relieve her temporal wants. The heart of the one is touched with compassion and sympathy, and, weeping for and with her, he seeks by every means to soothe her sorrows, and before he leaves ministers of his substance to her necessities. The other, out of mere ostentation or as an act of duty, pays his visit more as a relieving officer or a parish overseer than a sympathising friend, and, after a few dry, cold, hard words about the duty of submission, puts into her hand, being well able to afford it, double the amount that the other gave her. Now would you say that these two men did an equally good action, or that he who gave double did twice as good a work as the other? Though outwardly they do the same act, you decide upon the relative goodness of it by scrutinising the motive; and if you can thus exercise your judgment upon what is and what is not a morally good action, how much more shall the all-seeing Majesty of Heaven judge what is or is not a spiritually good action! The good works, then, of natural men are not righteous actions, because they are not of the Spirit, nor done with an eye to the glory of God, nor renounced by the doer as meritorious. Did not the widow's mite outweigh in value all the other gifts cast into the treasury? Righteous actions can only be performed by righteous men. The tree must be made good before the fruit can be good. The good acts then of the saint of God, done under the influence of the Holy Spirit, are righteous acts, because they spring from a righteous principle and are done to a righteous end—the honour and glory of a righteous God.

We seem, then, brought to this conclusion, that those who know, fear, and love God, are righteous in four different ways. They are righteous as being eternally justified in the Lord the Lamb; they are righteous as being clothed with the imputed righteousness of the Son of God; they are righteous as possessing an imparted

righteousness, the new man of grace; and they are righteous in their life and conversation, by performing acts of righteousness.

ii. But I pass on to show *how the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord*. Though they are righteous in the sense I have pointed out, they cannot save themselves, wholly or in part. They have, in fact, no hand in their own salvation. The whole is of grace from first to last. They may hinder, but they cannot help; nor can they produce anything out of their hearts or in their lives available for their own salvation or that of others. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious"—so precious that nothing but the blood of Christ can effect it, and, as regards all human exertions, without this, "it ceaseth for ever." (Psalm 49:7, 8.) Look at the several ways in which I have shown that the saints of God are righteous, and see what you can find of self in any. Did they plead their cause with God before the world had birth or being, and ask him to give them a name and a place in the Book of Life, when time itself had no existence? Where were they when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7.) We can no more think that the members of the mystical body of Christ united themselves to him, their head, than we can think the members of our natural body put themselves in their present place by an act of their own will. They could not, therefore, be righteous in that sense. Nor could they be righteous by working out a perfect obedience to God's holy law, for they had lost all power, through the fall, to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Nor could they produce any internal fruits of righteousness such as a heart-searching God can accept, for since the fall every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually. It is like a gutter running down the street. You may try if the water be drinkable, but glass after glass will have to be thrown away. Thus it is with the heart of man. Thought after thought, desire after desire, and imagination after imagination, are all equally corrupt; nor can the water thus polluted at the fountain head run itself sweet, but will ever cast forth its wickedness from its natural inherent sinfulness. Nor again can they without grace perform acts of righteousness. As, therefore, without righteousness there is no salvation, and they have no righteousness of their own, their righteousness must be from God. And is not this his own declaration—"Their

righteousness is of me," saith the Lord? (Isa. 54:17.)

But *how* is the salvation of the righteous of the Lord? 1. First, in its eternal *contrivance*. O what a contrivance was the way of salvation! How it would have tasked the utmost skill and wisdom of angelic minds, had the Lord set the brightest seraphim to devise how sinful man might be saved and yet God's honour and justice be preserved intact. All the celestial hierarchy might have consulted among themselves to all eternity, but none could have solved the problem. Had they been so far moved by compassion as to feel a desire, "Lord, pity poor man! Think of that terrible hell to which he is hastening!" would not a sense of his eternal justice and infinite holiness have arrested the thought before it passed out of their lips? How could the highest angelic intellect imagine a way whereby mercy might be shown and yet justice not suffer? They had seen their fellow-angels hurled from heaven's battlements into the burning lake. Why should not sinning man suffer the same punishment as sinning angels? That the mysteries of redeeming love surpass in themselves the comprehension of angels is plain from the words of the apostle—"Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12); and yet they are ever learning in it new lessons of the wisdom of God, as the apostle tells us—"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10.) Shall I say too much if I express the thought that to harmonise justice and mercy drew on the utmost resources of the divine mind? At least Scripture bears me out in declaring that the Person and work of the God-Man is the most eminent display of divine wisdom that could be manifested, as the apostle cries out in an ecstasy of admiration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." (Rom. 11:33.) That God's co-equal and co-eternal Son should take into union with his own divine Person a pure humanity, conceived under the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and in that pure humanity should suffer, bleed, and die; by that one offering of his sacred body and soul should put away sin, and by his active and passive obedience work out and bring in a righteousness in which millions of ruined sinners might stand accepted in the beloved; and yet that every attribute of God should thereby be fully harmonised and eternally glorified,—surely this contrivance is worthy of the infinite wisdom of God. In this sense, then, may we say that the salvation of the

righteous is of the Lord.

2. But having looked at the contrivance, let us view it in its *accomplishment*. How the eye of faith follows not only the plan but the execution? How it sees the Son of God taking flesh into union with his divine Person in the womb of the Virgin Mary; how it views him a babe in Bethlehem's manger; then a child growing up in wisdom and stature. How it follows him all through the course of his holy, innocent life, until it comes to the garden of Gethsemane, where it views him sweating great drops of blood and groaning under the wrath of God. How thence the believing eye accompanies the blessed Redeemer to the cross of Calvary, and there sees the suffering Son of God bathed in blood—the sun hiding his light, the earth quaking to its very centre, tombs opening and giving up their dead, until his expiring voice sounds forth the words "It is finished," and the Holy Lamb of God bows his head and gives up the ghost. O, truly, truly, when we gaze upon the sight, and see the suffering son of God—when we view by the eye of faith those precious drops of blood which fell from the Redeemer's thorn-crowned brow and pierced hands and feet and side, well may we say, "Here is pardon; here is righteousness; here is salvation." Where, O where, can we find any other. Is not this salvation in its full accomplishment? Is not this a finished work?

3. But is there not something still beyond this? Yes, there is. There is salvation in its *application*, in its realisation and enjoyment. The salvation, which is of God the Father's eternal contrivance, and God the Son's full accomplishment, needs God the Holy Ghost's divine application; for salvation is to be enjoyed in the heart by being personally applied to the conscience. How ever a trembling sinner may feel his shame and nakedness, he cannot stretch forth his hand and take the robe as his own; he cannot by an act of faith bring before his eyes the atoning blood, or sprinkle it upon his conscience. As it was Moses who sprinkled the blood upon the people—not the people upon themselves; as it was the father who brought forth the best robe—not the returning prodigal breaking into his father's wardrobe: so it is the Holy Ghost who sprinkles the blood of Jesus upon the conscience, and clothes the soul with his salvation. Thus the church exults—"He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh



himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isaiah 61:10.) In this way salvation is known to be of the Lord by divine manifestation and in personal experience.

And O, what a salvation must that be which is wholly his! What beauty and glory do we see stamped upon the works of God's hand in creation! I have sometimes thought that God has scattered beauty upon the face of creation, if I may so speak, from his very finger tips! The butterflies that flit to and fro in the summer's sun, the birds that skim through the air, the shells which strew the floors of ocean, and the flowers which adorn garden and field,—how beauty is stamped upon them all; as if even the outer court of creation, the very precincts of the king's palace, must be beautiful; as issuing from the mind, and called into being by the voice of the King in his beauty. For if heaven is his throne, earth is his footstool, and beautiful because his foot rests upon it. But in salvation, how the beauty, grace, and glory of God pre-eminently shine forth! How all things in creation fall short of the beauty of a suffering Mediator—of the grace of the bleeding Lamb—of the glory of salvation as revealing mercy without trespassing on the demands of justice. Where else can we find a salvation which at once glorifies God and saves man; which harmonises all the perfections of Jehovah, and crowns Jesus Lord of all? Truly, then, we may say, "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." Nor do I believe that you are a righteous person unless you can say "Amen! amen! salvation is of the Lord! I believe it, I know it, I feel it." But you may have learnt it where Jonah went to learn it, in the very "belly of hell," for there Jonah felt that salvation is of the Lord. Or if more gently handled and taught in less severe a school, you have still seen and felt enough of misery and mercy, malady and remedy, law and gospel, to know that salvation is of the Lord. This salvation may not have reached your heart with all that sweet power and full assurance that you may desire; you may still have doubts and fears as to your interest therein; but from a pressing sense of need, and sips and tastes that the Lord is gracious, you receive with hearty approbation the blessed truth that salvation is of the Lord. You are very sure that salvation is not in yourself; and if not in yourself, where can you look for it except in the Lord? Look up, therefore, doubting, trembling saint of God, and see the salvation of the Lord! Look up and see the blessed Jesus at the right hand of the Father, who has saved thy soul by his own

precious blood, and given thee some pledge and earnest of it, and believe, as God may enable thee, that salvation is of the Lord, and that thou, even thou, hast an interest therein! This, of which thou hast already the foretaste in hope and the earnest in hand, will, when more clearly and fully manifested, gladden thy heart, remove every guilty fear, support thee in every trial, comfort thee on the bed of languishing and pain, bear thee through the dark valley, and land thy happy soul in a blissful eternity.

II.—But this leads me to show that the righteous have their *times of trouble*; for they have to prove in the path of tribulation what the Lord is to them. We are not carried to heaven in a coach and four. We are not borne upon men's shoulders in a palanquin and taken into the blissful presence of God in a sleep, without any concern or anxiety, trouble or sorrow. There is "a time of trouble" for all the saints of God; and it is in this time of trouble that they learn that salvation is of the Lord, and what the Lord their salvation is to their souls.

1. The first time of spiritual trouble which the Lord's people experience is when God *pricks their conscience by a convincing word*—when he applies the keen edge of his two-edged sword to their heart, and sends the sentence of the law into their conscience. This is the time of Jacob's trouble, of which we read that "none is like it." (Jer. 30:7.) I do not mean that all the quickened family of God are pierced with equal depth and poignancy of conviction; but the wound must be deep and powerful enough to kill. A death and a resurrection must take place in the soul as well as in the body. This death may be a sudden stroke, or the effect of prolonged disease. In dying literally, there may be the sudden stroke of fever, or a lengthened paralysis; a severe and agonising but short illness, or a long, lingering consumption equally brings the body to the house appointed to all living. So all must die under the law and to their own righteousness; but whether they die quickly or slowly—be the wound in the first instance very deep or less severe, it is a time of trouble to all the saints of God.

But the Lord, we read in our text, "*will be their strength*" in the time of trouble. When you were first called by grace, you would have sunk into despair, unless the Lord had been pleased secretly

to support your soul. His support is an invisible support. Did not the Lord, when he was first pleased to awaken your soul, give you strength in that time of trouble? You knew not before what the strength of God was; but he strengthened you to cry and pray to him for mercy; to believe that in his own time he would appear; to wait for that time, and not outrun or fall behind it. But for his strength thus secretly put forth, where would your guilty soul have been now?

Besides which, according to our text, *he helped* you; he gave you some little assistance. He helped you by a soft sustaining word to hope in his mercy—to lie at his feet till deliverance came—to seek for it in the appointed way—to read the word with some spiritual understanding—to hear the truth with some softness and brokenness of feeling—to call upon his name with some earnestness and power—to unbosom your heart with some freedom of access. He helped you to look unto the Son of his love, as one from whom, and from whom alone all your salvation could come, and to refuse all comfort from any other hand. So that now, looking back upon this time of trouble, you can see—though you could not perceive it then—that the Lord was your secret strength and help, and worked in you in a manner you did not then understand, but which you can now more clearly and plainly distinguish.

2. But there is another *time of trouble*, when the Lord is pleased to open up more fully and thoroughly the fountains of the great deep, and to lay bare the secrets of the Adam-fall. We do not usually know this in the first teachings of God in our soul. We see the evil of sin, but are unacquainted for the most part with the evil of the heart. We see the streams, but not the fountain; we taste the fruits, but know not the root that bears the stem which brings them forth. But after a time, when we have been favoured with some little deliverance, the Lord leads us into the chambers of imagery and shows us what we are in the Adam-fall. This is indeed the time of trouble. When you see and feel nothing in your heart but sin and wickedness; when you would be holy, but find that you cannot be so; when little else but filth, pride, uncleanness, and rebellion are at work in your carnal mind,—all this brings with it a time of trouble, for you are dismayed at the discovery of the deep and foul abyss which God has lain open within by the light of his Spirit.

3. It is also a time of trouble, when *the Lord*, who has revealed himself to your soul, *begins to hide his face*; when you doubt and fear that all is a delusion—that your faith is wrong from the beginning—that the work upon your soul was not really the Lord's—that you have been deceiving yourself, the people of God, and the minister to whom you have told your experience. You fear that you have been deceived, that all is a delusion, and that you have added to the rest of your sins the daring crime of hypocrisy.

4. Another time of trouble is when *temptation besets you sore*—when Satan riddles you, as it were, to and fro in his sieve as he riddled Peter (Luke 22:31); and so much falls through the meshes that only a few grains of grace, which the Lord has lodged by his own Spirit in your heart, seem to remain. When you are put into the furnace to endure that fiery trial which shall try every man's work of what sort it is; or are in deep mire where there is no standing; or are struggling against the waves and billows that seem bursting over your head, until you are afraid that you shall say or do some dreadful thing which will plainly prove you to be the enemy of God, and given up by him to destruction of body and soul,—this is indeed a time of trouble.

5. Or, as the afflictions of the righteous are many, and we can lay down no certain path of suffering, you may be called upon to pass through *heavy trials in providence*—bereavements of wife or child, or painful and peculiar family troubles, which may wound and lacerate your warmest affections and tenderest feelings. All the family of God have their allotted number and measure of griefs and sorrows, which, as they come upon them, form "times of trouble" which, with all our other times, are in the hands of the Lord (Psalm 31:15), and are dealt out by him with unerring wisdom and most faithful love.

Now these times of trouble try the saint of God, and they are meant to do so: that is the very purpose why they are sent, for "the Lord trieth the righteous." Still the promise holds good: "he is *their strength* in the time of trouble." When he breaks up the fountains of the great deep of sin and iniquity, he strengthens his people that they may not be carried away by the flood. When he hides his face, he strengthens them to say—"Though he slay me,

yet will I trust in him." When temptation besets them sore—when they are put into the furnace, the Lord is with them there, as he was with the three men whom Nebuchadnezzar cast in. The Son of God is there with them, so that not a hair of their head is singed, nor the smell of fire cast upon them. (Dan. 3:27.) In all their afflictions he is afflicted, and by sharing it with them supports them under it. He is thus their strength; for he strengthens them with strength in their soul. He enables them to bear the weighty cross—to sustain the heavy load of trial and affliction—to put their mouth in the dust as needing and deserving his chastising strokes, and submit to his righteous dispensations and dealings as plainly sent by a gracious and loving hand. And ever and anon he drops in a sustaining word, gives an encouraging look, bestows a soft and healing touch, and thus helps them to wait in faith and hope until in due time he sends full deliverance. Thus he helps and delivers, and will do so in every time of trouble down to their dying bed, when he will give them their full and final deliverance from the body of sin and death and a world full of iniquity and sorrow.

O what a blessed inheritance is the inheritance of the righteous! Not only is their salvation from first to last of the Lord, but he continually helps and delivers them; yea, *"he delivers them from the wicked,"* from their ungodly persecutors, their malicious foes, and all who hate them, because they love and follow Jesus. O the blessedness of the righteous! You may be very poor in this life's goods; you may have trouble upon trouble, trial upon trial, affliction upon affliction; but if you are one of these righteous ones whose heart God has touched by his Spirit and grace, and who he is training up as an heir of eternal glory, happy, thrice happy is your state and case! Your salvation is of the Lord. Can that be disappointed or disannulled? Not till the Lord ceases to be the Lord. As such he will still be your strength, will help you and deliver you, and eventually bring you into the bliss of his own presence, the fulness of his own joy, and the glory of his own inheritance.

III.—And now comes our last point—*why* the Lord does all this for the righteous: *"because they trust in him."* That is not the primary but the secondary cause.

But why do they trust in him. Why? Because they can trust in no

one else. The times of trouble have weaned them from all earthly confidence. They can no longer trust in their own goodness, wisdom, strength, or righteousness. Driven out of house and home, they cleave to the rock for the want of a shelter. Jesus must be their all in all, for none else have they to look to in heaven or in earth. Thus they trust in the Lord as their only help and hope. O what a blessed thing it is to have in one's own bosom a secret trust in Jesus—that whilst so many are looking to something in themselves or in one another, resting their eternal salvation on works that really are but the sports of a child, the saint of God is reposing upon the Lord of life and glory. On him he hangs his hope and in him he puts his trust. These the Lord will honour; nor will he ever disappoint their hope or put their confidence to shame. Who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded? If you are enabled to trust in him, to believe his faithful word, to discard all creature confidence, and to hang the weight of your soul—and O what a weight is that!—upon a faithful, covenant-keeping God, he will never leave, fail, or forsake you. You may find it hard to trust in him at all times or indeed at any time. You may feel a want of something sensible—something to see or hear, distinct from faith. Look not for this. We walk by faith, not by sight. It must be a naked trust in an invisible God. "Some trust in horses, some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." (Psl. 20:7.) And if you are enabled so to trust, he will make it manifest sooner or later in your own conscience that you are one of the righteous; light will beam upon your path; glory will dawn upon your heart, and you will have the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul. May we not well add—"Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!"

## THE LOST SHEEP RESTORED

"My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place." Jeremiah 50:6

God the Father in His eternal appointments, God the Son in His mediatorial work, and God the Holy Ghost in His inward teachings, have drawn an eternal line of distinction between the whitewashed professor and the living soul. However the hypocrites in Zion may be mixed up in churches with the people of God; however they may profess to believe in the same doctrines, yet there is a boundary—never to be crossed—established between them by the hand of the triune Jehovah, a boundary line which not all the art or wisdom of men can ever break down. The child of God has that filial fear in his heart which the professor knows nothing of; he has that uprightness before God, that integrity, that simplicity and godly sincerity, that desire to be right, that fear to be wrong, that panting of heart feelingly and experimentally to know "the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent," **Joh 17:3** that longing to live day by day under the blessed Spirit's teachings, that humility of soul and brokenness of heart, that tenderness of conscience, and those other fruits of the Spirit, which may indeed be counterfeited and imitated, but which never really exist save in those hearts which God has touched with His finger.

It therefore behoves all those whom God has been pleased to plant upon the walls of Zion as watchmen, in order to call the hours of light and darkness, and to proclaim when "the morning cometh, and also the night" **Isa 21:11-12** to cry aloud and spare not betwixt the honest man and the thief. The faithful shepherds are called upon "to judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats" **Eze 34:17** Nor has there ever been a period when the prophets of the Lord were more

urgently required to take forth the precious from the vile and be thus manifested as God's mouth **Jer 15:19**

In the two verses that precede the text, and in the text itself taken in connection with them, we have a description by the Holy Ghost, speaking through His servant Jeremiah, of the way in which the Lord leads His people. We find described by the unerring pen of divine inspiration, the place where He finds them, the cause which has driven them there, the way in which they are delivered, and the spot to which they are eventually brought. And, therefore, in speaking from these words I shall not confine myself to the words of the text, but shall, the Lord helping me, take them in connection with the two verses which immediately precede it. And may the blessed Spirit condescend to favour us with His unction and dew, without which all that I speak, and all that you hear, will be like "water spilled upon the ground."

As there is nothing like a good beginning, I shall endeavour to make my ground good at first by stating as plainly and as decisively as I can who the persons are of whom these things are spoken. They are called in the text by the mouth of God Himself, "My people," and they are that peculiar people whom God the Father chose in Christ before all worlds, that chosen generation whom God the Son, taking their nature into union with Himself, redeemed by His own most precious blood, and that holy nation whom God the Holy Ghost condescends to teach, and lead and guide, and bring home safe to glory. This elect portion of the human race, God calls in the text, "My people," as though He would say of them, "They are Mine by choice, Mine by purchase, Mine by adoption; eternally Mine, irreversibly Mine; Mine in spite of sin, death, and hell; Mine in spite of the flesh, the world, and the devil."

**(i)** But our first view of this peculiar people shall be in the place where God finds them. "My people," He says, "hath been lost sheep." They do not become sheep by being found, nor do they cease to be sheep by being lost. They were sheep eternally in the mind of God; and their becoming lost did not alter nor destroy



their character of being sheep any more than the wandering of a sheep literally and naturally from the fold turns it into a goat. It may be lame, sick, or diseased; it may stray away miles from the fold; its fleece may be torn with briars or soiled with mud, and its whole appearance so altered that the shepherd can scarcely recognise it; but it is a sheep still, and ever will be a sheep whilst it continues to exist. And thus the elect being sheep eternally in the mind of God, and as such possessing an eternal union with the Son of God, could not cease to be sheep by falling in Adam, nor do their personal, individual falls, slips, and transgressions destroy their original, unalterable character.

But viewed as to the place where the Lord the Spirit finds them, they are "lost sheep," ruined, undone, without hope, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without righteousness; lost, so as to have no power to find the way to glory; lost, as to any expectations of finding that in the creature which God can look upon with acceptance; lost, as to any hope of ever reaching the heavenly shore, save under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit; lost, as to any possibility of doing the least thing towards propitiating the favour of God, or gaining an interest in His love.

When God the Holy Ghost takes a soul in hand, just as the fingers of a man's hand wrote a sentence of condemnation upon the wall of the palace of the king of Babylon, so does the blessed Spirit write the word "Lost" upon the conscience of every vessel of mercy; and when He has written this word with power on their consciences, they carry it about with them branded as it were in letters of fire, in such a manner that the impression is never to be erased, until it is blotted out by the atoning blood of the Mediator.

And thus in the teachings of the Holy Ghost in the consciences of God's family, "lost, lost, lost," is written on their heart; "lost, lost, lost," is the cry of their lips; "lost, lost, lost," is the deep feeling of their soul. And none was ever found who had not the feeling lost, written more or less deeply upon his heart. None was ever gathered in the arms of the heavenly Shepherd; sought out upon

the mountains and the hills, laid upon His shoulders, and brought home with rejoicing; none was ever brought into a spiritual acquaintance with Jesus, so as to enjoy communion with Him, who had not sighed, and groaned, and cried under a sense of his lost state, as a guilty sinner before God.

Now when the soul has been taught by the Holy Ghost to feel as well as to see and know itself to be without strength to deliver itself from the wrath to come, and is in consequence sunk down into despondency and dismay, then is the time when the Holy Ghost usually gives it some discovery of the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We find this sweetly set forth in that remarkable chapter, **Eze 16**. The vessel of mercy is there delineated under the figure of a new-born babe, abandoned by its mother, and "cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born". **Eze 16:5** As unpitied, as abandoned, as polluted, as helpless, as perishing, as wretched as an outcast is the quickened soul. But it is not left to perish. "When I passed by thee," says the loving Redeemer, "and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee" (the sign of espousal), **Ru 3:9** "and covered thy nakedness; yes, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine". **Eze 16:8**

There seems to be some hint of this in the last words of the text, "They have forgotten their resting place," implying that these "lost sheep" had to a certain extent been found, and had had some rest given to them in Christ; that the Lord the Spirit had brought them, some by a deeper, others by a more shallow way, some more and some less strikingly, to find Jesus to be their rest, so that their lost, distressed, and troubled souls had found a measure of rest in Christ, rest in His blood, rest in His righteousness, rest in "the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" **2Sa 23:5**

But the Lord speaks of His people in the text as having forgotten "their resting place." Now if they never knew what a resting place

was, they could not be said to have forgotten it. And this, if I am not much mistaken, affords us a clue to the meaning of the text in speaking of God's people as being lost on the mountains through the instrumentality of false shepherds. It is clear that their being lost in the first instance could not arise from treacherous guides, as they were lost in their first parent, lost in the womb where they were conceived in sin, and lost from the womb, whence they went astray speaking lies. It is rather the straying away of a sheep which has been folded, than of one that had been yearned upon the mountains, and had never known the voice of the good Shepherd; the wandering of the backslider, rather than of the dead in sin. And thus it corresponds to the parable of the lost sheep **Lu 15:4-6** which describes the case of a backslider; and it falls in with David's penitent cry **Ps 119:176** "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant."

**(ii)** The Lord then in the text states the cause, the instrumental cause, of the backslidings and wanderings of His people. He charges it home upon their false shepherds, their deceiving and deceived guides, who through ignorance or maliciousness lead them astray. "My people," saith He, "hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place."

O! what thunderbolts of divine vengeance are threatened in God's Word against false ministers—enough to make any man with a tender conscience who stands up in the name of the Lord tremble from head to foot! What awful denunciations of the wrath of God against the idol shepherds **Zec 11:17** the slothful, self-seeking pastors, who never strengthen the diseased, nor heal the sick, nor bind up the broken, nor bring again the driven away, nor seek the lost, but rule them with force and cruelty, feeding themselves, and not the flock! **Eze 34:4,8**

But if the Lord's people are led astray by these shepherds after they have obtained some knowledge of Christ, we may be very sure that their treacherous guides came in the garb of truth. The

doctrines of grace were on their lips, but deceit and hypocrisy in their heart; and thus, under the mask of truth, they insinuated themselves into the affections, biassed the judgment, and beguiled the heart of God's people. Did they come with open errors, did they at once propound their deceptive sentiments, did they at the outset manifest their ungodly lives, the sheep would take alarm and not listen to their alluring voice. But they come into the fold as real shepherds, the divinely commissioned pastors of the flock, though they enter it only to break down the hurdles, and scatter and lead astray the sheep. We will, the Lord enabling us, unmask and hold up to view some of these false shepherds who come in the name of Christ, but are neither taught nor sent by Him.

Some of these false shepherds lead them aside by building them up in doctrines, without the sweet power and living efficacy of truth being felt in the soul; and thus the children of God get drawn aside from sighs, and cries, and groanings after the Lord, to rest upon doctrines as doctrines, without the sweet unction and blessed power and divine savour of those doctrines being communicated and breathed into their heart by the mouth of God Himself.

Now whatever it be that leads the soul away from its "resting place," whatever draws it aside from an experimental knowledge of the Son of God, whatever seduces it from the Spirit into the form, and from the power into the letter, injures, seriously injures, a living soul. However Scriptural, however true these doctrines are, however ably stated, clearly proved, or eloquently enforced, yet, when used by ministers of unrighteousness, as they frequently are used, to build the soul up in presumptuous confidence, and oppose the Spirit's work upon the conscience, they draw the sheep away from the power and spirit and savour of divine realities as made experimentally known, into the dead letter and dry form. Doctrines in the letter are but the skeleton and wire-fastened bones of truth, without the sinews and flesh coming up upon them, and the skin covering them above, or the

breath of the Holy Ghost breathing upon them that they may live  
**Eze 37:8-9**

I appeal to the consciences of some here present, if you have not been thus led astray.

When the Lord first began His work in your soul (**I can speak for myself**), was there not a simplicity, an uprightness, and mingled with convictions of sin and helplessness, a panting to know Jesus by His own manifestations? And when brought to some measure of faith and hope in Him, was there not a sincere, childlike reliance and rest upon His blood and righteousness? But have not some of you been led away from this simplicity and godly sincerity, this implicit and panting reliance upon the Spirit's inward teachings, into a dry, cold, hard profession of truth, much further advanced indeed in the knowledge of the letter, but the freshness, the savour, the vitality, and the power of truth sensibly declined, and as it were dried up out of your soul? And what has been the instrumental cause of this substitution of the wisdom of men for the power of God? Trace it to its source, and it will generally be found that the false shepherds were the cause, who came into the fold, pulled down the hurdles of godly fear, and drove or drew the flock away upon the barren mountains, leading them from mountain to hill of doctrines and speculations, hairbreadth distinctions and strifes of words, until amid disputes and controversies the sheep forgot their resting place.

Again; others of these false shepherds, who come in the garb of truth bring with them a base antinomian spirit, which they may conceal at first, but which, after a time, they breathe forth, and infuse into the minds of their hearers. It is not so much a man's words as his spirit that we are to watch and narrowly observe.

Whenever a minister is over a people, and is preaching to them continually, he will breathe his spirit into them, will infuse into their minds what his own mind is full of. A minister, then, shall come among a people professing vital godliness, with truth on his lips, with the doctrines of grace and some show of experience,

and yet there shall be a spirit of levity and carelessness about him, a spirit of slighting the preceptive parts of God's Word, of neglecting the ordinances of His house, of making light of the workings of godly fear and tender conscience, and without absolutely denying the experience of the saints, for that were too barefaced and might damage his own interest, he shall throw out contemptuous remarks against the sighs and cries of a troubled heart, the tears, groans, and supplications of the living soul. He shall set aside these things as legality and bondage, and clamour loudly for what he calls the liberty of the gospel and the unwavering assurance of faith. When he has brought them off from "looking into self, and poring over frames and feelings," in other words from a heart-felt, divinely-taught and wrought religion, he will infuse into their minds that reckless, hardened presumption, that licentious, antinomian spirit, which Satan has breathed into him—a spirit as different from holy trembling, godly awe, and reverential fear, as heaven from hell, or Christ from Belial.

The sheep who had found some resting place in Christ, who had felt the savour of His name as ointment poured forth, gradually drinking into this loose spirit, and finding how suitable it is to their vile lusts and passions, often get so intoxicated with this wine of Sodom and these grapes of Gomorrah, that they "forget their resting place;" and being "turned away on the mountains," wander "from mountain to hill" of presumptuous confidence, and perhaps fall down some of the steep crags, until the good Shepherd seeks them out where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Others of these false shepherds, coming under a profession of truth, introduce Sabellian, Arian, Pre-existerian, and other abominable error, and yet wrap them up so covertly that they deceive the unwary.

But there is another class of false shepherds of a totally different stamp, who are great zealots for the precepts of God's Word, and the ordinances of His house, but whose object is secretly to infuse

a spirit of self-righteousness—to lead the people up to what they call holiness, as though holiness were something to be attained by diligent cultivation; and thus they draw them aside from lying as poor miserable sinners at the foot of the cross, and bring them to lean upon something in self, where by dishonour is done to the Holy Ghost, as teacher of the church of God, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our sanctification as well as our righteousness. Whatever leads a man away from lying at the foot of the cross, from godly fear, reverential awe, and a trembling sense of God's presence, whatever draws him aside from communion with Jesus, from contrition and self-renunciation, does not come from God. Whatever Scriptural language it be dressed out in, whatever piety and holiness are worn in the features, manner and garb of the preacher, whatever zeal, devotion, and fervour he seems to carry with him, yea, though he comes as an angel of light, he and his message are to be rejected if he teach anything that leads the soul away from the cross of the Lord Jesus.

"If anything, easy or hard He teach, save the Lamb and His blood." But in early days, before the soul is led deeply into the mystery of sin and the mystery of salvation, nothing more readily falls in with the engrained self-righteousness of our hearts than earnest persuasions to holiness from the lips of a preacher who seems embalmed in all the odour of it, and in our undiscerning eyes clad from head to foot in well-nigh sinless perfection.

But however these idol shepherds differ from one another, in one point they all agree; one charge is made against them all. "They have caused the sheep to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains." They have turned them away from the cross of Christ, away from simplicity and godly sincerity, away from tenderness of conscience, away from the distressed and troubled paths of the children of God, away from beggary, bankruptcy, and destitution, away from looking unto the Lord of life and glory as the only hope, strength, and righteousness of their needy and naked souls. Nor is this all, "They have turned them away upon the mountains," have driven or drawn them upon the barren

mountains—the mountains of Gilboa, where there is neither dew nor rain, neither food nor shelter, where in the day the drought consumes them, and the frost by night. They do not lead them into the vale of humility, amid the green pastures, and beside the still waters, which are only to be found in that valley; but turn them away on the mountains of pride and self-exaltation, presumption, and barren speculation. And what is the consequence? "They have gone from mountain to hill"—from one barren height to another, wandering they knew not whither, dissatisfied with every spot to which they came, but still unable to come down into the valley, trying mountain after hill, notion after notion, text after text, doctrine after doctrine, but finding rest and peace in none. The living sheep who are seeking after food and pasture, however they may be led astray for a time from the simplicity that is in Christ, never really feed upon anything but that which the Holy Ghost Himself communicates. Though the child of God may be continually entangled in doctrines and speculations, yet he never really rests in anything short of sweet communion with Jesus; is never satisfied short of the divine manifestations of mercy to his soul, the lifting up of the light of the Lord's countenance, the sweet whisperings and droppings in of His eternal love and discriminating favour. But it does continually happen, and I believe it has happened to some in these towns, that, seduced by false teachers, the living family go astray, wander from mountain to hill, trying first one thing and then another, seeking rest and finding none; restless, perplexed, baffled, confused, unable to feed upon what is set before them, and yet unable to get to the pastures, where they may lie down and feed.

**(iii)** But we come to the way in which the Lord delivers these sheep that have been thus led astray—the manner in which He fulfils the promise contained in **Eze 34:10-12** "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd



seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so I will seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."

"In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" **Jer 50:4-5**

The Lord had a wise and gracious purpose in thus suffering them to wander. He had an end to accomplish thereby. He wanted to teach them the emptiness of all mere profession, the nothingness of the creature, and the depravity of their fallen nature. By thus allowing them to wander, baffled, troubled, and perplexed, He brought to pass His own secret purpose, which was to sicken them thereby of men, to wean them from the creature, to break down the pride of their hearts, to show them the emptiness of all their own wisdom and strength, and to turn away their eyes from beholding vanity.

He brings, then, powerful convictions into their consciences, and lays judgment to the line in their hearts. And this He does by some affliction or cutting stroke in their persons or their families, by bringing them under a heart-searching ministry, by shooting a secret arrow into their consciences out of His own Word of truth, or by recalling to their mind their feelings in times past, and how they have declined from them. This produces in them the feeling described in **Ho 2:7** "I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now." There is a movement in the soul, a going forth of heart, a returning of the backsliding child. "In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall go and seek the Lord their God." "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them" **Jer 31:9** "I will arise," said the repenting prodigal,

"and go to my father" **Lu 15:18** Whilst they were bewitched by their false teachers, and wrapped up in dry doctrines, there was no going and weeping. Sighs and groans were counted the very dregs of legality, fit indeed for beginners, but not for such established believers. Whilst the heart was hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, there was no going and weeping. Whilst leaning to self-righteousness and the work of the creature, there was no going and weeping. All religion that springs from the flesh and stands in the wisdom of man leaves the heart unimpressed. No contrition, no tenderness, no humility, no brokenness of heart, no tears of godly sorrow, no honest confession, no daily sigh, no midnight groan, no restless tossing on the bed, nor secret supplications at the footstool of mercy, are to be found in the heart that is drawn aside into flesh-pleasing delusions. But when the Lord "rises up that He may do His work, His strange work, and bring to pass His act, His strange act"—when "He sets His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, and to gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth"—when as a shepherd He seeks His sheep on the hills and the mountains, He smites their conscience, and causes grief and distress to be felt, in order to bring them to turn their faces toward Zion, "O," says the poor soul, smarting under these convictions, "how I have been deceived and deluded! how I have been resting upon doctrines without feeling their power! how I have neglected secret prayer!—how I had almost got above reading God's Word! how slighting the work of grace in the soul! believing myself to be walking in liberty, when I was in the very worst of bondage! O I am ready to weep tears of blood, that I was so led astray by the false shepherds under whom I sat."

Convinced of his error, he turns his back upon the false ministers who have beguiled him, and turns his face to Zion. As we read, "They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward." The apostle tells us what it is to come to Zion **Heb 12:22-24** "But we have come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of

all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined" **Ps 50:2** for "there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (**Psa 133:3**) Zion is the seat of all gospel blessings. In it is laid "the precious corner-stone" **Isa 28:16** in it "is placed salvation for Israel" **Isa 46:13** the Lamb of God stands upon it **Re 14:1** mercy, redemption, pardon, comfort, strength, deliverance, and glory come out of it. In turning the face, then, Zionward, is implied the seeking of gospel blessings. They are therefore said "to seek the Lord their God," who is only to be found in Zion, His dwelling-place **Ps 76:2** and where praise waiteth for Him **Ps 65:1** But they ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward in no light and trifling spirit, and in no positive certainty that they shall ever arrive there. They have to ask the way step by step, often doubting and fearing whether they be in the way. Having been so often deceived and deluded, they dare no more trust their own hearts, but have to beg of the Lord to show them every inch of the road. They can no longer blindly follow every presumptuous guide, but have to cry to the Lord Himself to teach, and lead, and quicken them in the way. And as they go, they weep. They mourn over their base backslidings, over the many evils they have committed, over the levity of mind which they have indulged, over the worldliness of spirit, the pride, presumption, hypocrisy, carnality, carelessness, and obstinacy of their heart. They go and weep with a broken heart and softened spirit, not resting in their tears as evidences, but seeking the Lord their God; seeking the secret manifestations of His mercy, the visitations of His favour, the "lifting up of the light of His countenance;" seeking after a revelation of the love of Jesus; to know Him by a spiritual discovery of Himself. Being thus minded, they seek not to establish their own righteousness, they seek not the applause of the world, they seek not the good opinion of professors, they seek not the smiles of saints, they seek not to make themselves Christians by their own exertions. But "they seek the Lord their God"—seek His face day and night, seek His favour, seek His mercy, seek His grace, seek His love, seek His glory, seek the sweet visitations of His presence and

power, seek Him, wrestling with Him till they find Him to be their covenant God, who heals all their backslidings.

And as they seek Him they say, "Come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." The desire of one thus taught and led, thus deeply convinced of the emptiness and worthlessness of all religion that does not centre in the experimental knowledge of the Son of God, is to feel a manifested union with Christ; to find his very soul melted into communion with Jesus; and therefore he presses forward to join himself to the Lord, so as to drink into all the meaning of those wonderful words, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" **1Co 6:17** He says to himself, "Dry doctrines floating in the brain can do me no good; the praise of man cannot ease a guilty conscience." "Nothing," he says, "can give me solid peace, but a manifested union with Christ, to feel myself one with Him, to know the power of His love, the efficacy of His blood, and the manifestation of His glorious righteousness."

"Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord." Does this imply any power in the creature to join himself to the Lord? No; but it implies this—that, when the Lord unites us to Himself, then we unite ourselves to Him; when the Lord brings the believer into a manifested union with Himself, then there is a leaping forth of the soul, a going forth of the affections, a cleaving to Him with purpose of heart, a believing in Him with all the powers of the mind, and a solemn renunciation, a casting aside, a trampling under foot, a rejection of everything but that which stands in the power of God, as made known to the soul by the Holy Spirit.

It is not spoken in a presumptuous way; "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord." It does not indicate any bold presumptuous claim upon the Lord, as if being now on the road to Zion, and being possessed of certain evidences, they could claim the inheritance, and, as it were, rush in, and lay hold of gospel blessings; but it points out the actings of living faith in the soul, which goes forth, when raised up and drawn out by the blessed Spirit. The vain confidence and rash forwardness of those who are

at ease in Zion, is a very different thing from the meek faith of those who are going and weeping, asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, whose hearts are melted by the Spirit into contrition, and desire to feel and taste the sweet manifestation of the love of a dying Lord. These, without presumption or bold familiarity, can say, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord," as feeling in their souls the actings of that living faith whereby they cleave to and lean upon Him, as the only prop between them and hell.

There was no presumptuous claim nor bold familiarity in the woman who stretched forth her hand to touch the hem of Jesus' garment, and yet she joined herself to the Lord by taking hold of His raiment. The touch of living faith is one thing; the intrusion of daring familiarity is another. A child may climb its parent's knees; a servant must keep his due distance.

"Come," say they, with filial confidence, "let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant;" as wanting to feel the power of that eternal covenant made manifest in their souls; desiring to see their names manifestly written in the book of life; desiring to look upon Him whom they have pierced, and see their sin atoned for by the shedding of His precious blood; desiring to feel in the depths of their broken heart their interest in the everlasting covenant "ordered in all things and sure." And thus, though nothing in themselves but beggary, bankruptcy, destitution and nakedness; nothing by nature but a filthy mass of all that is loathsome and detestable in the sight of God, yet longing to find and feel themselves wrapped up in the bundle of life with the Lord of life and glory, to have their conscience sprinkled with those balmy drops of atoning blood which the Holy Ghost applies to purge it from dead works, and to rejoice in the Lord as all their salvation and all their desire.

Now, I would by no means wish to lay down the path I have feebly and imperfectly chalked out, as one in which all the redeemed walk without any variation. The outlines may be the same in all, but the filling up may be different in each. Many, for

instance, have not been led astray by false shepherds, but have sat under sound ministers from the beginning of the work upon their souls. But if not deluded by them, have they escaped the deceits and delusions of their own hearts? or if kept from evil and error outwardly, have they been preserved inwardly? Here all are upon a level; nor can one boast over another. Bearing this then in mind, have you not, each in your measure, trod in these paths? When the Lord began His work of grace in your soul, was not the word "lost" written upon your conscience? Did you not carry that burden with you wherever you went? Whenever you awoke in the dead of the night, did not the word lost stare you in the face? However you might seek to drown your convictions, did not the word lost ring in your ears? Whenever you went to chapel, did not the word lost seem written before your eyes?

And did not the Lord in His own time and way lead you up to some persuasion of your interest in the blood and love of the Lamb, and cause, in some measure, the hopes and affections of your renewed spirit to flow forth unto Him? Then you found a resting-place, and never wished for any other rest but that which "remaineth for the people of God," even an entrance by faith into the finished work of Immanuel. But did you always rest there? Whether led astray by false guides, or drawn aside by your own base heart, let honest conscience, speaking like a faithful monitor in your bosom, testify whether there was not some secret departure from the Lord.

What an awful error it is to deny backsliding! What ignorance it manifests of a man's own heart! How it stamps a man as a perverter of truth, and one that trifles with sin and the displeasure of the Most High! Who that knows himself and the idolatry of his fallen nature dares deny that he backslides perpetually in heart, lip, or life? Can any of us here deny that we have backslidden from our first love?—backslidden from simplicity and godly sincerity—backslidden from reverence and godly fear—backslidden from spirituality and heavenly-mindedness—backslidden from the breathings of affection and pouring forth of the heart into the bosom of the Lord? And if we have not been

suffered to backslide into open sin, if the Lord has kept us, and not suffered us to be cast down into the mire, yet have we not committed the twofold evil which the Lord charges upon His people; "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water?" **Jer 2:13**

And what do we reap from backsliding?—do we reap pleasure, comfort, or peace?—do we reap the smiles of God, or the solemn testimony of the Spirit in the conscience? No. If conscience speaks in your bosom, what does it say? That every departure from the Lord has brought grief and trouble, that so far from justifying yourself in your sin, you have been ready almost to weep tears of blood, that you have so wickedly departed from the Lord. It has been our mercy that the Lord has not given us up to hardness of heart and searedness of conscience, that we have not been allowed to say with Israel of old, "I am innocent, I have not sinned" **Jer 2:35** but that He has "led us with weeping and with supplications." Have not some of us within these walls (**I am sure I have for one**) been obliged "to go and weep," and tell the Lord a piteous tale of backsliding; how we have departed from His fear, and sinned basely against Him; how unwilling we have been to take His yoke upon us, and walk in His precepts? Have we not been forced to tell Him that we have been disobedient and stubborn, filthy and vile, and has He not, in some measure, led us "to turn our faces Zionward"—to turn our back upon all false ministers, upon all idol shepherds, upon all the strength, and wisdom, and righteousness, and will of the creature, and given to us some simplicity, uprightness, and integrity of heart and conscience, whereby we have turned our face Zionward, looking for a blessing to come out of Zion, looking for grace, looking for glory? "I will make thee sick in smiting thee," say the Lord **Mic 6:13** alluding to the feeling of sickness produced by a wound ("I am made sick)," **1Ki 22:34 (margin)**. And have not these wounds in our conscience made us, in our measure, sick of the world, sick of the professing church, sick of hypocrites, sick of our backslidings, sick of all but the Word of God revealed with power, sick of all but the blood and love of the

Redeemer, of all teachings but the teachings of the Holy Ghost, of all company but the company of the children of God? Can you say thus much? that you have turned your back upon everything but Christ, and Him crucified? that you have turned away from all doctrines but those which centre in the blood of the Lamb? that you have turned away from universal charity and general philanthropy, as substituted for the power of vital godliness (though you would desire to love and serve your fellow men as men), and that your spiritual affections are toward God and His people? and has there been in your soul any such feeling as Ruth had when she said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God?" Any sweet response in your bosom to the voice of the Lord, "My son, give Me thine heart?" "Take it, Lord, with all that I have and am!" Any casting yourself at the foot of the cross, and there entreating the Lord of life and glory to speak peace to our souls?

Now this, I believe, is the way in which the Lord more or less leads the souls of His children. There is indeed no dictating to Him how He shall lead us into the knowledge of Himself, whether by a longer, or whether by a shorter path than others of His children, whether by terrible things in righteousness, or by a less distressing mode; but He will surely bring all His people sooner or later to be nothing and to have nothing—to cast aside their own righteousness as filthy rags; sooner or later to obey that precept—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Sooner or later the peculiar people will have to walk in the paths of temptation and sorrow; and sooner or later will be led into sweet communion with the Lord of life and glory, to be "satisfied," like Naphtali, "with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord."

This religion is what I desire to preach; to live in, and to die by. For there is no other that can satisfy a quickened soul.

He that is not interested in the eternal election of God the Father, in the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of God the Son, in the work and witness of God the Holy Ghost, whatever be his



name, sect, denomination or profession; whatever be his outward conduct, the doctrines he professes, or the creed to which he signs his name, he will die as Esau died, as Balaam died, as Saul died, as Judas and Ahithophel died. He will never see the King in His beauty, never see the land afar off, never see the new Jerusalem, nor the blood of sprinkling, "that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." But every living soul that has been feelingly taught his lost condition—that has known something of a resting-place in Christ—that has turned his back upon the world and the professing church, and gone weeping Zionward—in whose heart God the Holy Ghost has implanted those solemn desires, and **(if I may use the expression)** those solemn determinations under the divine teaching—not a determination of freewill, but the inward determination of grace strengthened to it by the Spirit of God, "to join himself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten"—that he may live in Jesus and die in Jesus—live out of Jesus and unto Jesus, that he may feel His power, taste His love, know His blood, rejoice in His grace—every such soul shall, like Israel of old, be borne safely through this waste howling wilderness, shall be carried through this vale of tears, and taken to enjoy eternal bliss and glory in the presence of Him whom to see as He is constitutes the blessedness of the redeemed. Every such poor, exercised, tempted soul shall be brought into personal enjoyment of Christ below and of Christ above, so as to enjoy a foretaste of heaven here, and hereafter to bathe in the ocean of endless bliss.

## THE LOST SOUGHT AND SAVED

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, or, Lord's Day Evening, July 27, 1851

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

Man is a strange compound. A sinner, and the worst of sinners, and yet a pharisee! A wretch, and the vilest of wretches, and yet pluming himself on his good works! Did not experience convince us to the contrary, we should scarcely credit that a monster like man, a creature, as some one has justly said, 'half-beast and half-devil,' should dream of pleasing God by his obedience, or of climbing up to heaven by a ladder of his own righteousness.

Pharisaism is firmly fixed in the human heart. Deep is the root, broad the stem, wide the branches, but poisonous the fruit of this gigantic tree, planted by pride and unbelief in the Adam soil. And what can "hew this tree down, yet leave the stump of the roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field?" **Da 4:23** The axe of the Spirit only. Self-righteousness is not peculiar to this or that individual. It is interwoven with our very being. It is the only religion that nature understands, relishes, or admires. In spite of all my Calvinistic profession, a pharisee I believe I should have been to this day, and the chief of the pharisees, if I had not had some deep and painful discoveries of what I am in the Adam fall.

And these discoveries we need perpetually. Again and again must we be put into Satan's sieve. Again and again must the heart be ploughed up, and its corruptions laid bare, to keep down the growth of this pharisaic spirit. It is a creature of many lives; it is not one blow, nor ten, nor a hundred that can kill it. Stunned it may be for a while, but it revives again and again. Pharisaism can live and thrive under any profession. Calvinism or Arminianism is the same to it. It is not the garb he wears, nor the mask he

carries, that constitutes the man. An Antinomian may be as great a pharisee as an Arminian; a Particular Baptist as a Roman Catholic.

Pharisaism we see carried out to its fullest extent in the New Testament; and by some of the vilest wretches that ever lived, fiends in enmity against the beloved Son of God. This hatred often broke out during the Lord's life before it quenched itself in his blood. And what specially drew out this enmity? It was to see grace and mercy manifested in the salvation of a sinner. When the gracious and blessed Lord called down Zaccheus, the chief among the publicans, from the tree in which he fancied himself securely perched, and invited himself to become his guest, how this stirred up and drew forth the enmity of the pharisaic heart! 'O,' they cried, in all the pride of their painted holiness, 'he is gone to be guest—did ever any see the like? To what a strange pass are things come now! Here is one who declares himself a teacher sent from God; and yet what a horrible thing is this Teacher, who calls himself the Son of God, now doing; he is gone to be guest, to sit down to table, and to partake of food, "with a man that is a sinner!" Why did he not rather come to us holy men! Our hands are clean; we are the special favourites of heaven and the only fit companions for one sent from God! But that he should go to be guest with a publican and a sinner—Oh, this is indeed an affront to us, and most unbecoming in him.'

And yet, with all their murmurings, Zaccheus manifested what the power of God could do, and that grace after all can in one moment do in a sinner's heart a thousand times more than all their pharisaism had done in theirs for years. Take all these pharisees together; was there one who had ever done or ever meant to do half of what Zaccheus was enabled to do by the grace of God? "Behold," he says, "Lord, the half of my goods **pharisaism never gave the tenth or hundredth part** I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation," **and no doubt he had amassed much of his property thereby,** " I restore him fourfold." Penetrated and overwhelmed by the superabounding grace of God, he would

have stripped himself to the bone. The gracious answer of the blessed Redeemer was, "This day is salvation come to this house, for so much as he also"—this despised publican, this abhorred sinner—"is a son of Abraham," a child of God, interested in the everlasting covenant. Then He that hath the key of David brought forth the key that opens the wards of this intricate yet heavenly lock: **"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

In opening these words, I shall attempt, with God's blessing,

I.—**First**; to trace out the meaning of the expression, **"that which was lost."**

II.—**Secondly**; the **"coming of the Son of Man."** And,

III.—**Thirdly**: the execution of his blessed office in **"seeking and saving that which was lost."**

I.—God created Adam in his own image, after his own likeness; and for a short space **how long, we know not** he stood upright in his native created purity. But, according to the secret purposes of God, our first parent and federal head fell from that high estate; and we being in his loins, fell in him and with him. And Oh what a fall was there! The fall of man was complete. A responsible, intelligent being, capable of serving and obeying his Creator, if he fall, must fall to the very bottom of his created nature. There is no medium between thorough standing and thorough falling. Satan, created an angel of light, when he sinned through pride, fell to the bottom of his angelic nature. He was not suspended, like the fabled coffin of Mahomet, betwixt heaven and hell; but he fell as low as he could fall—down, down, down to the very depth of angelic nature. The highest angel became the lowest devil. But man could not fall so low as Satan, because he was not in his nature by original creation so high as Satan. The greater the height, the deeper the fall. But man fell to the bottom of human nature, as Satan fell to the bottom of angelic nature. In a word, he fell as far as he could fall. He fell out of the image of

God; he fell from the high estate in which he was created into entire alienation from his Creator, and sank, utterly sank into the lowest depths of wickedness, so that nothing good, pure, or innocent was left remaining in him.

But how hard, how difficult it is to believe this! When we see so much amiability in human nature, so much that wears the appearance of goodness; when there really is such kindness and benevolence, and so much tender disinterested affection shewn by thousands in whom the grace and fear of God are not—how hard to believe, how cruel to declare, that man is essentially and innately a being steeped in wickedness! But this arises from two things:

1. from not seeing, or bearing in mind, that natural and spiritual things are eternally distinct. Nature at its best is nature still: flesh at its highest attainment is flesh still. And

2. that society could not subsist unless there were tender affections in the human heart. I see the goodness of God in the fact that human nature is thus kind and amiable. In the wise providence of God, too, our passions are in civilized communities under necessary restraint. Our mutual interest makes us outwardly, if not inwardly, kind and affectionate, and restrains the breaking forth of our innate selfishness. We could not live in the world were it otherwise. If there were no check upon human nature, we should be like wild beasts, and tear each other to pieces. For the sustenance of life and society, it is necessary that there should be real or pretended affection, and amiability. But because this individual is kind, another amiable, and a third interesting, to deny and soften the reality and depth of the fall, is to err indeed.

All true sight and knowledge of the fall flow from the teachings of the Spirit. As, therefore, we obtain light from on high, and feel spiritual life in our breast, there is a deeper discovery of the Adam fall, and of our own miserable state as involved in it, until we are brought to see and feel, that in us, that is, in our flesh

dwelleth no good thing. Now this will ever be in a proportionate degree to the manifestation of the purity and holiness of the character of God, and the application of God's holy law in its breadth and spirituality to the soul. This will effectually dispel all dreams of human purity and creature perfection. Let one ray of divine light shine into the soul out of the holiness of God, how it discovers and lays bare the hypocrisy and wickedness of the human heart! How it seems to take the lid off the boiling pot, and shews us human nature heaving, bubbling, boiling up with pride, unbelief, infidelity, enmity against God, peevishness, discontent, and every hateful, foul, unclean lust, every base propensity and filthy desire. You may hear now and then in others the bubbling and boiling through the vessel. But to know yourself, you must look below the lid to see how it steams, and hisses, and throws up its thick and filthy scum from the bottom of the cauldron. A calm may be on the face, but a boiling sea within.

It is this laying bare of our deep-seated malady that makes a soul under the first teachings of the Spirit feel itself lost. And Oh, what a word! Lost utterly lost! The purity of the divine image lost; and with it, utter loss of power to return to God, nay more, loss also of inclination. What a condition to be in! Without power, without will; an enemy and a rebel; by nature hating God and godliness; when we would do good to find evil, horrid evil, present with us; to feel sin thrusting its hateful head into every thought, word, and action, so that when we would settle down and find rest in self "all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" **Isa 28:8**. Where this is opened up in a man's soul, and a corresponding sense of the purity and holiness of God is manifested, he will see and feel himself too the vilest of the vile: and he will be glad to put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.

Now in this melancholy state, what can such a poor lost wretch do? Condemned by the law; hunted by Satan; pursued by conscience: alarmed by fear of death: and troubled with a dread of eternal perdition—what can he do to save himself? When he feels himself "lost," what help, strength, or wisdom is there then

to be found in him? But if he have not some of this experience traced out in his heart by the finger of God, the gospel is to him an empty sound. He has never, no never, felt the power of the gospel in his soul; he is in heart a pharisee. Free grace may be his creed, but freewill in some shape or other is the idol within. But when, in the depth of his soul, he knows himself "lost, lost, lost," and feels the inability of the creature to save,—this is the man, this is the spot, unto whom and into which the Saviour and salvation comes; and he, and he alone, will welcome and drink in with greedy ears the joyful sound of salvation by grace.

II.—"**The Son of Man is come.**" What a blessed coming! The Lord Jesus seems to have taken to himself, with the tenderest condescension to our wants, that gracious title, "the Son of Man." He was the Son of God, and that from all eternity; but he delights to call himself the Son of Man. We want one like ourselves, wearing the same nature; carrying in his bosom the same human heart; one who has been "in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" and therefore able to sympathize with and to succour those that are tempted. A sinner like man, when made sensible of his pollution and guilt, cannot draw near unto God in his intrinsic, essential majesty and holiness. Viewed as the great and glorious Being that fills eternity, Jehovah is too great, too transcendently holy, too awfully perfect for him to approach. He must therefore have a Mediator; and that Mediator one who is a Mediator indeed, a God-man, "Immanuel, God with us." The depth of this mystery eternity itself will not fathom.

But the tender mercy of God in appointing such a Mediator, and the wondrous condescension of the Son of God in becoming "the Son of Man" are matters of faith, not of reason; are to be believed, not understood. When thus received, the humanity of the Son of God becomes a way of access unto the Father. We can talk to, we can approach, we can pour out our hearts before "the Son of Man." His tender bosom, his sympathizing heart, seems to draw forth the feelings and desire of our own. God, in his wrathful majesty, we dare not approach; he is a "consuming fire;" and the soul trembles before him. But when Jesus appears in the gospel

as "the Mediator between God and man," and "a Daysman," as Job speaks, "to lay his hand upon us both" **Job 9:33**, how this seems to penetrate into the depths of the human heart! How this opens a way for the poor guilty, filthy, condemned, and ruined sinner to draw near to that great God with whom he has to do! How this, when experimentally realized, draws forth faith to look unto him, hope to anchor in him, and love tenderly and affectionately to embrace him.

**"The Son of Man is come!"** We never asked it. Durst we have asked it? Who durst propound this in the counsels of heaven? Here is man sunk in the ruins of the fall, an enemy, and an alien. Who dare propose his reconciliation and recovery? The elect angels saw their fellow angels cast out of heaven without pity and without mercy; why should not man suffer the same fate? Man shared with them in sin; why should not man share with them in sorrow? But Oh, the tender mercy heavenly grace, sympathizing compassion of the Triune Jehovah! When man was sunk in the lowest depths of the fall—ruined and alienated from the life of God, the secret counsels of eternity were brought to light, that the Son of God should become the Son of Man, to suffer, bleed, and die for such wretches; and thus be a Mediator able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him! "The Son of Man is come," has come! The Mediator has appeared in flesh, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

III.—But we pass on to consider **what the Son of Man came to do**. Here we were lost, utterly lost—without power, without will to help or save ourselves. Now in this extremity, utter extremity, when, as the apostle says, we were "without strength," the Son of Man came **"to seek and to save that which was lost."**

There is something expressive in the word, **"that** which was lost." It does not say, ' **those** who were lost,' but **"that** which was lost." The election of grace, the chosen remnant, was viewed as a lost thing; and the Son of Man came to seek and save this lost remnant. The church of God is thus spoken of **as a whole;**



and yet, to shew its insignificance and nothingness in itself, it is but **a thing**, an empty nothing, compared with the majesty of God.

But a sense of being thus "lost," must be wrought into the heart as an experimental feeling. A Saviour, like Jesus, is not inwardly needed till the soul feels itself really lost. We cannot till then understand his character, enter into his heavenly mission, nor see the beauty and blessedness of superabounding grace. The gospel to us is no gospel to all; but a dry, dead, unmeaning sound. We may daily read and continually hear it preached. But the gospel as a revelation of the grace of God, in its blessedness, suitability, sublimity, and glory, with all the fruits connected with it—why, we are deaf to its divine melody, blind to its heavenly charms, until a conviction, and that a piercing one, lays hold of the soul, that we are lost, lost, lost, eternally lost, without this remedy.

Now the Lord works this sense of our lost condition in various ways. In some perhaps suddenly; in others, in a more gradual manner; but all he brings eventually to the same point—to feel themselves utterly lost. A man must lose his life to find it; must lose his religion to gain it; must lose his power and strength, nay, his all, before he receives new power and new will through the gospel of the grace of God.

1. "The Son of Man is come **to seek** that which was lost." Here is a poor sinner writing bitter things against himself. Alas! he has lost all his religion. O how religious he once used to be! How comfortably he could walk to church or chapel with his Bible and hymn-book under his arm, and look as devout and holy as possible! How regularly too he could read the Scriptures, and pray in his manner, and think himself pretty well with one foot in heaven. But a ray of light has beamed into his soul, and shewn him who and what God is, what sin and a sinful heart is, and who and what he himself as a sinner is. The keen dissecting knife of God has come into his heart, laid it all bare, and let the gory matter flow out. When his conscience is bleeding under the scalpel, and is streaming all over with the gore and filth thus let

out, where is the clean heart once boasted of? Where is his religion now? All buried beneath a load of filth. Where is all his holiness gone?—his holy looks, holy expressions, holy manners, holy gestures, and holy garb—where are they all gone? All are flooded and buried. The sewer has broken out, and the filthy stream has discharged itself over his holy looks, holy manners, holy words and holy gestures; and he is, as Job says, "in the ditch." "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean." Here is a pharisee of the first water aspiring to the height of creature perfection. Common water will not do; it must be snow water, the purest possible. And in this he will wash, and wash, and wash again; there shall not be one spot or speck upon his hands or heart. "Yet shalt thou," Job adds, "plunge me in the ditch." What then? How will he come out? There shall not be a single thread not saturated with the filth of the ditch; so that he shall be as glad to tear off his filthy rags as one who had dropped into the Thames' sewer. "Mine own clothes shall abhor me," as much as I abhor them **Job 9:31**.

If such be your experience, may I not ask you, Where is your former religion now? You have lost it; and a very good thing too. We never find the right religion till we have lost the wrong one; never find Christ till we have lost self; never find grace till we have lost, what I think Bunyan calls, our own 'pitiful self-holiness;' and never experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace till we despair of salvation by the works of the flesh.

"The Son of Man is come **to seek** that which is lost." But how does he seek? By the gospel. Some by the **preached** gospel. There may be one here who cries with Jonah, "I am cast out of thy sight." Jonah was obliged to go into the whale's belly, aye, into the belly of hell, to feel himself lost, and have his pharisaism drowned out of him. When he cried, "Then am I cast out!" that was the best speech Jonah ever made in his life; and when he said, "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple!" that was the best look that Jonah ever looked in all his days; for it was that cry and that look which brought Jonah out of the belly of hell. And

though I will not say, we must be cast into the whale's belly, or even into the belly of hell, we must go down somewhere into Jonah's experience before we can have Jonah's deliverance. Now the Lord seeks out such lost souls. Perhaps there is some one here this evening who may have crept into the chapel, hid himself in some corner, buried his face in his hands, and secretly lifting up his heart to God, has said, 'Lord, canst thou, wilt thou be merciful? Have I sinned so as never, never to be forgiven? Are my backslidings such as never, never to be healed? Have I offended thee, so that thou wilt never, no, never give me a smile again?' Here is the man. Here is the individual that the Son of Man is come to seek; here is the poor creature; the Lord knows where he is—where he is locally, and where he is spiritually; and he is come to seek him. He cannot find the Lord; but the Lord is come to look after his stray sheep. In his providence and grace he brings him under the sound of the gospel, and applies it with power to his soul. Thus, he often seeks; and not only seeks, but finds him.

If the Lord did not seek him, he would never seek the Lord. That is most certain. If you are one that seeks the Lord in prayer, in supplication, in secret desire, with many a heart-rending groan, and often by night and by day, be well assured, that you would have never sought the Lord, had not the Lord first sought you. He is now seeking you. It may be **as you fear** some time before he finds you; but he will find you at last. How sweetly the Lord has set forth this in the parable of the lost sheep!

The poor sheep has gone astray; and having once left the fold, it is pretty sure to have got into some strange place or other. It has fallen down a rock, or has rolled into a ditch, or is hidden beneath a bush, or has crept into a cave, or is lying in some deep, distant ravine, where none but an experienced eye and hand can find it out. And so with the Lord's lost sheep; they get into strange places. They fall off rocks, slip into holes, hide among the bushes, and sometimes creep off to die in caverns. When the literal sheep has gone astray, the shepherd goes after it to find it. Here he sees a foot-mark; there a little lock of wool torn off by the thorns.

Every nook he searches; into every corner he looks, until at last he finds the poor sheep wearied, torn, and half expiring, with scarce strength enough to groan forth its misery. Nor does he beat it home, nor thrust the goad into its back; but he gently takes it. up, lays it upon his shoulder, and brings it home rejoicing. Similar in grace are the Lord's ways with his lost sheep. Men act otherwise. Let a pharisee see a sheep **cast**, as we call it in the country, that is, lying helpless upon its back, he would soon kick it up and kick it home, beat its head with his crook, or drive the sharp nail into its flank.

David's was a wise prayer, "Let me fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of man." Oh! to fall into the hands of God; into the hands of a merciful and compassionate High Priest, who was tempted in all points, like as we are, and can therefore sympathize with his poor tempted people! These, these are the only hands for us safely to fall into; and he that falls into these hands will neither fall out of them, nor through them, for "underneath are the everlasting arms," and these can neither be sundered nor broken.

2. But the Son of Man is come not only to seek, but **to save**. Seeking was not enough; he would **save** as well as seek. And do you think he would save only in part? Was the fall in part? Did man fall only half way from God? A salvation, then, which does not go as deep as the fall, can be no salvation to me. It is not a half salvation, nor a three-quarter salvation; no, nor a ninety-nine hundredth salvation that can suit or save a thoroughly ruined soul. To be salvation at all, it must be complete. Were it anything but complete, it were none; it would not reach down to the extremity of the case.

"The Son of Man is come **to save**." Blessed word! "To save?" He requires nothing upon our part to contribute to our salvation; he is come to save, and that to the uttermost. And to save from what? From the depth of the fall; from sin in all its miserable consequences.

The Lord came to save from **sin**. There are five things connected with sin from which the Lord came to save.

1. There is the **guilt of sin**. Now this lies with great weight and power upon every conscience into which the law enters, and where there is any discovery of the purity, holiness, and majesty of God. Guilt of conscience, what a burden! Distress of soul through the imputation of God's wrath, and the fearful apprehension of falling into the hands of Him who indeed is a "consuming fire," is a load indeed. Did guilt ever lie upon your conscience, wake you up in the dead of the night, and make you feel as if you could wring the hair off your head? If you have felt something of what guilt is, and what a wound it can make in a sinner's conscience, you need not me to tell you, it must be the Son of Man, and the Son of Man alone, who can save you from the guilt of sin. And how does he save from guilt? By the application of his precious blood to the conscience; thus revealing a sense of his dying love, and giving the soul to feel, that where sin abounded, there grace doth and will much more abound. Nothing short of this can effectually take away guilt from the conscience of the sinner.

3. But there is the **filth of sin**. Sin not merely makes as it were a stab in the conscience, or rather, the law as manifesting the wrath of God due to sin brings thereby a burden of guilt; but the filth of sin pollutes and defiles the heart and imagination. Did you ever feel what a filthy wretch you are! how defiled and polluted from head to foot; so that you have hated, abhorred, and detested yourself before God as a monster of all uncleanness? O how little a man can know of the hideous nature of sin, and of the holiness and purity of God, who does not feel how sin pollutes and defiles him from head to foot! He must be saved from this. And how? In two ways:

1. by a solemn plunge into the fountain of Christ's blood once opened for sin and uncleanness, "**If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me**"; and

2. by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; being bathed in the laver of regeneration, and washed by the washing of water by the word; in other words, by the application of God's word of truth by a divine power to the heart.

3. But there is the dreadful **love of sin**. 'O!' say you, 'surely a child of God can never love sin! Why, I have always been taught ever since I heard of religion, that when a man is born again he loves what he hated, and hates what he loved; and therefore, you can never persuade me that there is such a thing in my heart as love to sin!' I do not want to persuade you; I want you to persuade yourself. And if you knew as much of the human heart as some here, you would painfully know there was in the carnal mind enmity against God, and love to evil. Do not mistake me. **In the carnal mind**. Take my words as I speak them; that there is in the carnal mind a detestable and abominable love of sin. If there be not, I am much deceived. Do you never commit sin? **Why** do you? Is it not because you **love** it? If you did not love it; if there were no desire toward it, no inclination, would you ever long after anything sinful? We do not want what we do not like; it is inclination that draws and leads us here and there. Look a little deeper into your heart than the mere surface. Do not take my word for it; I know it too painfully to be mistaken; it has cost me many a groan; and yet here it is to this day.

Look a little deeper; take the lid off; it needs no microscope; and I warrant, if you look a little deeper than usual you will see a something, a something we can scarcely bear to look at: but you will see a something, a something in your heart that has a strange alliance with every sin; a hideous something that seeks gratification from what God hates, and what you and I hate too; for there is a hating of sin in our spiritual nature, as there is an abominable and detestable love to it in our carnal nature. Now we must be delivered from, and saved out of this. And how? By the letting down of the love of God into our soul. You may try not to love this and not to love that forbidden thing; not to desire this, or not to desire that sinful object. You may try to watch your looks, your thoughts, and your words, and say, 'I won't, I won't, I

won't!' but there is something within which secretly says, 'Aye, I want, I want, I want,' every time that you say 'I won't, I won't, I won't.'

Now you must be saved from this; for all your groans and sighs and struggles cannot keep that something in our heart from opening its mouth, like a little bird in its nest after a worm. But when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the blessed Spirit, and heavenly things come with a sweet power into the soul, it takes away for the time the love of sin, and draws up the affections to where Jesus sits at God's right hand. And that is the way whereby we are purged from the dreadful love of sin, and learn to detest everything which made the Saviour groan, bleed, and die.

4. But there is the **power of sin**. "Sin shall not have **dominion** over you." Why? "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." 'Aye,' say you, 'but sin has power.' I grant it. But what gives sin its power? **Love**. O what a mysterious power sin has in our carnal mind! People say they do not love sin. 'O, that is horrible!' they cry. But sin loves them, if they do not love sin. What else makes them so proud, so overbearing, so worldly? What leads them to do this or that unbecoming thing? Why surely there must be some power to produce this. Here are some steel filings lying upon the table, O how quiet they are! they do not move. No; they lie quite still. But bring the magnet; and see where they are then. See how they leap toward it and cling to it closely. So it is with sin and our carnal mind. Here sin lies. O how quiet these lusts are! how subdued this pride! Why it is almost changed into humility! Surely the heart is getting better! It is not so bad as preachers say it is! Why, all is as calm as the sea on a summer's day. Here are the steel filings; very quiet, though very dirty. Bring the magnet. Let something that attracts the carnal mind pass over these filings. O how they all leap forth to embrace it! Now here is the power of sin working in our fallen nature through temptation. This we must be saved from. And how? Not by the law; not by resolutions; not by tears; not by remorse; not by shame; but by the blessed beaming in of the grace of God, giving

power against power, giving strength, the strength of grace against the dominion of evil.

5. But there is the **practice of sin**. Are you quite pure here? Could you bear to be followed up every day of the week, and every hour of the day? Would you like a minister of the gospel to be always dogging your steps, and watching what you said and what you did, and how you lived all the day long? 'No,' say you. 'I should rather shrink back I think sometimes.' Then, though God may keep you from unbecoming things outwardly **God grant it may be so!** yet who is not guilty in some measure of some slip, some fall? Who can say he keeps his eyes, or his hands, or his feet, or his tongue as pure as they should be kept? Now from this we want deliverance. And this, by "the fear of God, as a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

From these five things does Jesus save; the guilt of sin; the filth of sin; the love of sin; the power of sin; and the practice of sin. And all by the gospel: not a grain of the law, but all by the gospel, the pure gospel, the precious and everlasting gospel. "For the Son of Man;" not Moses; no, not Moses; but "the Son of Man"—the kind, condescending, compassionate great High Priest—"is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And if **He** cannot do it; who can? If **He** has not done it; who has? If we turn away from this Saviour, and this salvation, what hope have we? There is hope now; but turn away from the gospel to the law, from Christ to Moses, and from salvation by grace to salvation by the works and deeds of the flesh—it cuts off all hope. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And let Pharisees rave as long as they please; let them gnash their teeth against the purity and blessedness of the free grace of the gospel; those who have felt its power and tasted its sweetness, know that nothing but the gospel can suit their souls, and nothing but the gospel can save them from all that they fear. Nay more! this despised gospel as regards practice and a consistent life and conversation will produce more in five minutes than the law could produce in five centuries; it will raise up more holiness, true holiness, more obedience, true obedience, than Moses could do



with all his thunders. And therefore the Lord give us faith to drink deeply into this precious gospel, enjoy its sweetness, and die beneath its blessedness.

## Love in its Priceless Value and Unquenchable Strength

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, August 31, 1862

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement fame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." Song of Solomon 8:6, 7

One of the surest marks of a new and heavenly birth is *love*; and one of the most certain evidences of alienation from the life of God is *hatred*. Do I speak thus decidedly merely as my own private opinion, which may be true or false, or do I utter it as a declaration in strict accordance with the oracles of God? What is the testimony of God himself on this point as revealed in the first Epistle of the beloved disciple? Does he not give love as an evidence of a new and heavenly birth? "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1 John 4:7.) And again "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." But what is also his testimony in respect of that counter-evidence which I have brought forward as a sure mark of alienation and death? "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (1 John 3:14.) And this fatal mark, this death-spot, will stand against a man in spite of all his false light and all his false profession; for "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."

But though love in the heart is a scriptural, and therefore infallible mark of an interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, and the sure fruit of a new and heavenly birth, yet the soul possessed of this indubitable evidence cannot always read the handwriting of God, though one might almost of it, say with this divine attestation in its behalf, that the Lord has himself "written the vision, and made it plain upon tables that he may run that readeth it."

Now there are several reasons why this evidence of grace is hidden in obscurity from the very eyes of its possessor.

1. Sometimes love both to the Lord and his people, for they rise and sink together, is in itself and to our apprehension *very faint and feeble*. It resembles in this the life of a babe that is ushered into the world in so feeble a state that it can hardly be pronounced whether it be alive or still-born. Or it may be compared, in this low condition, to a person taken out of the water, in whom for a time life seems as if extinct, and yet, by using due means, it may be and often is resuscitated. Thus the very feebleness of love, like the feebleness of life in a person drowned, obscures the evidence, though it does not destroy the reality of its existence.

2. Sometimes, again, love has to *conflict with many corruptions*. It is, in this state, like fire applied to damp stubble or weeds, as we see sometimes in the fields in autumn. When first lighted, and even for some time after, it often seems a matter of uncertainty whether the fire will be suffocated by the superincumbent mass of weeds, or whether it will burn up brightly into a flame. So in the heart of the child of God, there is so much opposition to everything good; so many weeds of guilt, filth, and corruption seem to lie as a damp, wet mass over the life of God in the soul, and the smoke is so confusing and blinding, that he can at times hardly believe he has or ever had any true spiritual love either to the Lord or to his people.

3. Another reason is, that "*the carnal mind*" is still "*enmity against God*"; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Now as this carnal mind still continues in him unsubdued and unsubduable, its internal movements of enmity and rebellion hide or obscure the evidence that in the same bosom, in the new man of grace, there dwells heavenly love.

4. A fourth reason of the obscurity of this gracious evidence, not to mention others, is the *presence of guilty fear*; for where there

is fear there is bondage, and where there is bondage there is torment; and this tormenting bondage, which can only be cast out by perfect love, seems to shut the eyes of the mind from seeing the faint spark of imperfect love which is in the heart in spite of the fear, the bondage, and the torment.

But though love in the heart of the child of God is often thus faint and feeble, though it has to struggle against so much opposition, and is so often damped by the corruptions incident to our fallen condition, through which, however, it strives to struggle, yet it is not the less love, and that, too, of a heavenly origin. As a proof that it is kindled by a divine hand and kept alight and alive by heavenly breath, we find that it is never extinguished in the heart to which it has been communicated, but goes on, like the smoking flax of which our Lord speaks, to burn, until at last it breaks forth into a bright and blessed flame; and then it is conspicuously manifested to itself and to others as the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

But whilst love is in this struggling state, seeking for some clear manifestation of its reality and power, and desiring, as true love ever must desire, the presence of him whom the soul loves, it will be venting itself from time to time in earnest breathings that the Lord would himself decide the doubtful case by shedding it abroad more fully in the heart; and thus, by some conspicuous display of his all-conquering grace, settle all the difficulty. This breathing after some clear and conspicuous display of the Lord's love seems to be very much to be the utterance of the Spouse in the words before us. Warmed and impelled by the gentle flame of love, she breaks forth: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." Her desire, as here thus passionately expressed, was to be blessed with nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ; to lie, so to speak, as warm and as close in his bosom as a seal which is worn next the breast; and not only so, but to have some conspicuous display of this love, by seeing and feeling herself borne as if on high by being bound upon his right arm, and there worn, for ever worn, as a royal signet on a monarch's hand,—his jewel of ornament, his seal of authority, his ensign of

power. She then goes on to explain, or rather to tell him, from the warmth of her own feelings, how strong love is. "Love," she says, "is strong as death;" nay, she adds, it is unquenchable, for "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." But tormented, as it were, with a fit of jealousy, which always is love's sure accompaniment, she cries out. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Yet once more falling back upon the fountain of eternal love, whence she drew all her own affectionate warmth, and feeling what a priceless blessing the love of Christ is, she utters this expression of her sense of its sovereignty and unpurchaseable nature: "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned."

In unfolding, however, the spiritual and experimental meaning of her warm and eloquent appeal to the Lord's love and pity, I shall rather depart from the order of the words in which she uttered it and as I have thus far explained it, and shall bring before you spiritual love under four distinct aspects as they look out upon us in the text.

I.—*First, Love in its priceless value:* "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

II.—*Secondly, Love in its unquenchable strength:* "Love is strong as death." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

III.—*Thirdly, Love in its cruel accompaniment:* "Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."

IV.—*Fourthly, Love in its sealed manifestation:* "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."

I.—I have first, with God's help and blessing, to show you *Love in its priceless value*. The Spouse declares, and, in declaring it, gives expression to a feeling to which all who know anything of

love human or love divine will set their seal, that "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

i. Is this not true in *human* love? Can that be bought or sold, trucked away or exchanged, hawked about and haggled over at so much a pound, as so much saleable goods or merchandize? Is not love, even the faintest and feeblest that burns in a human heart, a possession so valuable and of a nature so peculiar that it cannot be purchased by any amount of earthly treasure?

1. Look, for instance, at *wedded love*. The foundation of all happiness in the married state must be mutual love between the husband and wife. For a woman, then, to sell herself for money to a man whom she does not love, or for a man to tie himself for life to a woman whom he dislikes or despises for a little gold dust or a lump of thick clay, in what can such mercenary bargains end, and justly too, but mutual misery? Even with much mutual love, it is not always easy to bear with each other's infirmities of temper, sickness, age, and other ills of life; but without love they must be an intolerable burden, especially when fancy paints what might or would have been the happy lot had another been the partner, and if grace be not at hand to furnish patience and submission to the present trial. But I am happy to say that I speak here not from experience, but from conjecture and observation.

2. Look, again, at the love which a *mother bears to her babe*. Is that a love to be bought or sold? Put into the poorest woman's arms a nobleman's heir: can she love it as she loves the offspring of her own womb? Why, the miserablest tramp that carries her crying babe under a cloak of rags loves it more than she would the heir of a peerage, could the one be substituted for the other.

3. Nor is it less true of that sincere and hearty love which subsists between *friends* who are warmly attached to each other upon any natural or spiritual ground; such love, I mean, as David speaks of in his funeral lament: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me

was wonderful, passing the love of women." (2 Sam. 1:26.) Is love like this to be bought or sold? All that Saul could have given David could not have purchased it. So we see, even of human love, that it is a treasure of such priceless value that it is not marketable; that it cannot be knocked down to the highest bidder, or purchased by all the gold in the mines of California or Australia.

ii. But when turning our eyes from human we fix them on divine love, then we seem to stand upon still safer, surer ground in pronouncing with the Bride, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." For what is the love spoken of here? We may view it chiefly as *the love of Christ to his people*; and of that love the apostle prays that the Ephesians might 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." Now a love which has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights, and when all these have been explored and measured, still "passeth knowledge,"—can such a love as this be purchased by any amount of worldly possession? If a man would give all the substance of his house for the love of Christ, would it not be utterly contemned by him who is altogether lovely?

But to see the priceless value of this love, thus strongly and graphically expressed, let us glance at what it is *in itself*; and to do so more clearly, we will consider it under these two points of view:—We will view it first, as love divine, that is, love as flowing eternally out of the bosom of the Son of God as God, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the glorious Trinity; and then we will view it as love, we will not say *human*, but one *peculiar* to our blessed Lord, as uniting a sacred humanity with his own eternal Deity.

Now in the blessed Trinity, the mind and will, and therefore love of the three Persons in the Godhead must be one and the same, or else they would be divided in will and affection. The love, therefore, of God the Father, the love of God the Son, and the

love of God the Holy Ghost toward the people of their eternal choice, must be one and the same, or there would be division in that essential attribute of the Godhead, love. In this point of view, the love of the Son to his people as God, is the same as the love of the Father and of the Holy Ghost: eternal, infinite, unchangeable.

But when we look at the love of Christ in a special manner as the love of him, who, in an incomprehensible yet most blessed manner, unites in one glorious Person Deity and humanity, then we come to a peculiar love; and this is the love of which our text speaks as unpurchased and unpurchaseable.

iii. But why should the love of Christ be of such priceless value? How and why should our blessed Lord love his people with a love so intense that if a man would give all the substance of his house for love like this, it would be utterly contemned? To gain some clearer view of the heavenly mystery, let us look at some of its distinguishing features. The love spoken of is the love of Christ to his Church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:25.)

1. The Church, was, however, *given* him by the Father, and thus we may say that he loves her as his Father's peculiar and *express gift*. Thus the Lord addressed his heavenly Father in those touching words, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me....And all mine are thine and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." (John 17:6, 10.) Christ, then, loves the Church with conjugal love as being the *special gift* of his heavenly Father.

It was from all eternity the purpose of God the Father to glorify his dear Son, and to manifest him to all created intelligences both in heaven and in earth "as the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person." In accordance with this divine purpose, the Father determined to give him a people in whom he should be glorified, that every divine perfection might be brought to light, and shine conspicuously forth in the face of Jesus Christ. God being essentially invisible, "dwelling in the light which no



man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see," his glorious, or to speak more correctly, his gracious perfections are invisible too. It is true that "his eternal power and Godhead," as the apostle speaks, "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20); but those inner perfections, those tender and gracious attributes such as his mercy, pity, lovingkindness, goodness, and truth, could only be made known as revealed in the face of his dear Son. He therefore gave him a Church to be his spouse and bride; united her to him by eternal covenant; prepared for him a body which he should in due time assume; and thus by coming forth from the bosom of the Father as his own Son, taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, our blessed Lord reveals and reflects every perfection of the Godhead. I often bring these things before you with the desire and intention that you may be well established in the truth, and thus not fall a prey to every error and heresy which come flying abroad on the wings of novelty. Jesus then loves the Church with all the peculiar love of a Husband as a most precious gift of his heavenly Father, that he may be glorified in her, and she may be glorified in him, and thus an eternal revenue of glory arise to his God and her God.

2. But again, he loves the Church as *his by purchase*. The Church sank in the Adam-fall in such depths of degradation and apostacy, such alienation from the life of God, such sin and guilt and misery as neither heart can conceive nor tongue express. The image of God in which man had been created was completely marred and defaced; all will or power of recovery was utterly lost; and nothing seemed to await her but that flaming sword which should send body and soul to eternal destruction. Here, then, *redemption* was necessary, unless the Church should for ever lie under the guilt of the fall, and the chosen spouse of Christ perish with the rest of Adam's ruined race. But who was able to redeem her? Whom would God accept as the Goel? What price would he require? We need not ask. The Goel, the next of kin, is the Lord who has taken her flesh and blood; the price he has paid not less than his own heart's blood. And does not this make her doubly dear to the Lord, that as she was his by the

Father's gift, she became as if doubly, additionally his by his own purchase? She was to him a costly gift, for after he had received her he could not for his honour's sake, his love's sake, let her go; no, though to redeem her cost him the deepest agonies of body and soul, pangs of grief which made ministering angels wonder, and his pure body to sweat blood at every pore.

3. But he loves the Church also as *his by conquest*. She was surrounded by foes—sin, Satan, death, and hell; and all these arrayed in arms against her with deadly hatred and destructive force. But every one of those foes must be subdued before she could rise up into the enjoyment of his eternal love. Our Lord fought the bloody battle for her. He fought against sin and overcame it by the cross; he fought against Satan, and by death destroyed him that had the power of death; and when he went up on high spoiled him and all his principalities and powers of their usurped dominion. He fought against death, and conquered the King of terrors by laying down his own life. He overcame the grave by lying in it; and vanquished hell by enduring its pangs on the tree. Thus the Church is his by fair conquest. He fought, he won, and she is the prize of the victory.

4. But she is his also *by possession*. He has redeemed her and bled for her; he has fought and conquered for her; and who shall say that he has not fairly won her? But to win is not to possess. It is in heavenly as in earthly courtship. To win the maid is not to possess the wife. If wooing win the heart, marriage secures the hand. So with the Lord and his bride. He wins by conquest; he woos by grace; but he secures by possession; for when he reveals himself in his beauty and glory, he gains possession of every affection of the believing heart. This, in a gracious sense, antedates the marriage, for *that* is not yet come, nor will until that great and glorious day when the sound shall be heard through the courts of heaven, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7.)

Love like this certainly must be of priceless value. For if the Son

of God laid down his precious life to redeem her from the power of sin, death, and hell, she must be of unspeakable value in his eyes; and the love which carried him through all this scene of woe must indeed be, as the apostle speaks, "love that passeth knowledge." If, therefore, a man would give all the substance of his house for this love, it would be utterly contemned. Does this not hold good even naturally? If a large estate, consisting of many thousand acres of land with a noble mansion upon it, were to be offered for sale in this neighbourhood, and a man went into the auction-room and offered £100 for the whole, would he not be hissed and almost kicked out of the room as drunk or insane? At any rate, would not such an offer be "utterly contemned" by the seller and by all who know anything of the value of the property? So we may say in a spiritual sense: if a man come before the Lord and say, "What is this love of thine to be sold for? Here is my body: shall I give my body to be burnt? Will that buy it?" "No;" has not the Lord already decided this point by the declaration of the apostle, "Though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing?" "Shall I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, give all my property away in charity, go into a monastery, wear sackcloth, and be under strict rule of penance and silence all the rest of my life? Will not that buy this love?" "No," the Lord still replies, "It profiteth nothing." "It would be utterly contemned." "Shall I devote to obtain it every faculty of my mind and body, toil and toil after it night and day with a whole army of tears and cries: will not this help me to win at last this heavenly love?" "No," says the Lord; "even that would be utterly contemned." Not that any man really does this or attempts or means to do it, for all these exertions of the creature, could they be accomplished, would be not to win the love of Christ but to establish its own righteousness: and were a man to make such sacrifices out of a principle of love to the Lord, it would show that the Lord had touched his heart by his grace. But assuming that a man gave all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned.

iv. But this will be still more plainly seen if we take a glance at its peculiar and wondrous character.

1. This love is *infinite* as being the love of an infinite God. But what is man? A finite creature at the best, even were he not a defiled, polluted worm of earth. Then all he can offer is the offering of a finite creature; and can infinite love be purchased by a finite price?

2. Again, man's love is changeable. He cannot ensure, if he begin to love, that he will go on loving up to the end. Are there not a thousand objects to catch his roving affections, and have we not already had proof upon proof that human love is as fickle as the wind and as changeable as the weather? Can he, then, buy immutable by changeable love? To say the least of it, the love of Christ to his people is from everlasting to everlasting, and all that man's love can be is just now and then a scrap of thought, or a struggling remnant of affection gathered up and thrown to the Lord as snatched from other objects and other purposes. If man will, then, attempt such a barter, need he wonder if it "be utterly contemned?" The Lord may well say to all such bargainers what he said of old to those who offered polluted bread upon his altar: "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 1:8.) Try your bargains with your fellow-men. Offer an Australian miner a rusty nail for his golden nugget. Offer the tax-gatherer a shilling for a sovereign.

3. But this love is *pure* and *holy*, because it is the love of him who is, in his divine nature, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," and in his sacred humanity "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." (Exod. 15:11; 1 Peter 1:19.) But at the very best, all man can give is love stained and polluted with indwelling corruption. May we not, then, well come to the conclusion that "if a man would give all the substance of his house for this love, it would be utterly contemned?"

Who, then, is to have it? Who is to have any interest in, who is to win any possession of love like this? If it be beyond all price and

all purchase, who of the sons of men can hope to possess it? To this we answer, *that* may be given as a boon which cannot be bought at a price. This is just the conclusion to which I wish to bring you, that being unpurchaseable this love is a *gift*, sovereign, distinguishing, and free—sovereign in its source, distinguishing in its objects, free in its disposal.

II.—But this description of the wondrous nature of the love of Christ brings us to our next point, which is to show *Love in its unquenchable strength*. "*Love is strong as death;*" "*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.*"

By these two striking figures the Holy Spirit sets forth the strength of the love of Christ. We will look at them separately.

i. The first comparison is taken from the *strength of death*. It is as if the blessed Spirit searched for a figure whereby to convey to our mind most strongly, clearly, and expressively the amazing strength of the love of Christ. How strong *death* is! How, like the scythe of the harvest-man, it never ceases swinging in its career, until it has mowed the whole crop down! How many generations, for instance, have lived in this ancient town since it was called by its present name! And where are they now? Mowed down by the strong arm of death. But not only here. Thousands, and millions, and myriads of millions have all fallen before this scythe since Adam fell. It will be too strong for every person here. You and I, and all who now breathe the vital air and tread this earthly ball, will sooner or later fall before this merciless, unsparing conqueror of the whole human race. Youth is strong, but how much stronger death often is; for it mows down the young as well as the old. Health may be strong, but death is stronger still; for how oft "one dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, when his breasts are full of milk and his bones are moistened with marrow." (Job 21:23, 24.) Medicine is strong; and yet how, in spite of all the aids and appliances of the medical art, death goes on to seize victim after victim, and lays them in the grave. Resolutions are strong; but O how death sweeps away all resolutions with the chilling blast of his lips, and tramples down

promises with his giant feet as the mower tramples down the weeds in the field as he mows down the corn before him. Who was stronger than Samson? But death was stronger than he, yea, stronger than the pillars of the house of Dagon which he pulled down over his head. Who was wiser than Solomon? Yet all his wisdom saved him not from the grasp of death. Who lived longer than the antediluvians—some more than 800, some than 900 years? And yet, when we read the number of their years, it seems as if at the end of every verse which records their age, death tolled their funeral knell. "And he died"—"and he died"—"and he died!" falls with hollow sound on the ear. Two only of all the sons of men since sin entered into the world, and death by sin, have escaped and proved stronger than he. One is Enoch, who "was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him" (Heb. 11:5); and the other Elijah, who was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire.

How strong, then, that love must be which is as strong as death; yea, in a sense, stronger still, for our blessed Lord's love was even stronger than death, for it was not overcome by it, but rather overcame it. Nay, he proved himself, as the Lord of life, not only stronger than death, but stronger than death's Master, for "through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. 2:14.) On the cross he grappled with death, and by dying overcame him who had overcome all; and then rising triumphantly from the grave, proclaimed the victory won, of which he had spoken in anticipation: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25, 26.) Thus the blessed Lord took the sting out of him who had stung all to death; and robbed him of his victory who, as the King of terrors, had erected his throne of conquest over slaughtered millions.

But there is another death over which the Lord's love triumphed, for his love being "strong as death," is stronger than *all* deaths, and that is, death in *sin*—the alienation of fallen man from the life of God as the consequence of the fall. But how strong is that death! How death in sin, alienation from the life of God, holds

thousands and tens of thousands in its fast embrace; and is so strong that nothing can break it up but the power of God, through our blessed Lord's mediation, quickening the dead soul, and thus overcoming that death in sin which holds fast in chains all the human race.

But there is a third death—and his love is stronger than that also—I mean *eternal death*—what the scripture calls "the second death," even full and final banishment from the presence of God into that dreary abode of everlasting woe "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." But the love of Christ is stronger even than that, for he endured the wrath of God in his own Person on the tree, and by enduring the miseries of the second death under the hidings of his Father's countenance, proved that love in his bosom was stronger than the very pangs of hell. How strong, then, must be that love which is stronger than death temporal, stronger than death spiritual, stronger than death eternal!

But by her description of love, "as strong as death," we may understand the Bride to express the strength of her own love to the Lord as well as that of his to her, for she speaks of a peculiar quality of all love that is really divine. Now as her love is a reflection of his, as such it is of divine origin; for "love is of God" (1 John 4:7), and is "shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 5:5.) *Her* love, therefore, is strong as death natural, and we may say stronger, for death that will destroy the body cannot destroy the soul, nor the love of God which has been shed abroad in it. Yea, it is stronger than death spiritual, for it lives and loves in spite of it now; and than death eternal, for it will triumph over it in the resurrection morn.

ii. But the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the Bride, uses another figure to set forth the insuperable strength of love divine. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

Two ideas are, in fact, couched under these words. 1, That of *fire*, which many waters cannot quench; 2, Of *life*, which many floods

cannot drown. Let us look at each separately.

Our blessed Lord came into this world on an errand of love. "Then said I, Lo! I come [in the volume of the book it is written of me," the book written by the finger of eternal love] "to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7.) But in the execution of this will he had to wade through deep waters. Hear his own dolorous cries as he waded through them, and well nigh sank under them! "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul." (Psa. 69:1.) It was not an easy conquest that the Lord gained over sin, death, and hell. He had to endure what no heart can conceive or tongue express; for as the prophet speaks, "The Lord laid on him," or, as we read in the margin, "made to meet on him," "the iniquities of us all." (Isa. 53:6.) Thus, as a mighty flood, all the iniquities of God's people were made to meet on the head of Jesus. Here "deep called to deep at the noise of God's waterspouts;" here the innocent sufferer cried out, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." (Psa. 42:7.)

But we will consider these "waters" a little more closely and distinctly.

1. First view the *waters of affliction* in which our blessed Lord had to wade, as it were, up to his very neck. From the manger to the cross, from Bethlehem to Calvary, what was our Lord's life but a scene of constant affliction and sorrow? "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Grief and our blessed Lord were intimate friends—bosom companions, never separated until the dying cry, "It is finished!" proclaimed to heaven and earth that the work of salvation being accomplished, grief was gone, and now nothing remained but "the joy set before him for which he endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2.)

2. But view the expression, "waters," as signifying *opposition* made to the flame of love, for the idea evidently is of water being naturally opposed to fire and used to quench it. The bride then seems to seek for a figure which shall express the insuperable strength of love against all opposition; and she therefore



compares it to a hidden fire which burns and burns unquenched and unquenchable, whatever be the amount of water poured upon it. Thus the figure expresses the flame of holy love which burned in the heart of the Redeemer as unquenchable by any opposition made to it. In this sense we may view the *coldness, deadness, and unbelief of his people*, as opposing the love of Christ. How soon is earthly love cooled by opposition! A little ingratitude, a few hard speeches, cold words or even cold looks, seem often almost sufficient to quench love that once shone out warm and bright; and how often, too, even without these cold waters thrown upon it does it appear as if ready to die out of itself. But the love of Christ was unquenchable by all those waters. Not all the ingratitude, unbelief, or coldness of his people could quench his eternal love to them. He knew what the Church was in herself, and ever would be; how cold and wandering her affections, how roving her desires, how backsliding her heart! But all these waters could not extinguish his love. It still burnt as a holy flame in his bosom, unquenched, unquenchable.

But the words will apply also to *her* love as well as to *his*, for as many waters could not quench the love of Christ, so many waters cannot quench love to Christ. Her love, like his, has many waters cast upon it; sometimes from the world—that worldly multitude without and within, which is compared to "many waters" in the description of "the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet," whose judgment John was called to see (Rev. 17:1); sometimes from the *opposition in her carnal mind* to all good, which as water to fire, is opposed to the holy flame of spiritual love which would burn in her bosom.

iii. But the Holy Spirit uses even a stronger term than waters to set forth the opposition made to the love of Christ. It is as though he would intensify the expression by bringing forward a figure of still deeper import. "Neither can the *floods* drown it." The idea expressed here is that of a life so strong that all the floods that swell and roar and rush tumultuously over it cannot drown it. There is life in love; an undying, indestructible life. Thus the eternal life of Christ was in his eternal love; and as this life could

not die, this love could not be drowned. But look at the floods which swept over it!

1. View first the dreadful *wrath of God* which our blessed Lord had to endure in the garden. Hear him crying, "Let this cup pass from me," as if it were filled with such intense bitterness that he shrank from it in dismay. Who can conceive the floods of intolerable wrath which burst, so to speak, upon his sacred head, when upon the cross, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, he had to endure the ire of God due to them all? Who can realise any just or adequate idea of the intolerable pangs of hell which those sins merited and which he endured; or the dreadful displeasure of God as manifested in the withdrawing from him of the light of that countenance, in which he had never before seen anything but ineffable complacency and infinite love? How the distress and agony endured by the blessed Lord are expressed by him in the words of that Psalm which so peculiarly sets forth his sufferings, "I sink in deep waters, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." (Psalm 69:2.) The "deep mire where there is no standing" is the same as "the horrible pit and miry clay" spoken of in Psalm 40., and signifies that overwhelming sense of the wrath of God under which he sank as into a deep and horrible pit of miry clay to which there was no bottom.

2. View, again, with me, *Satan* flooding our blessed Lord with every kind of abominable temptation. We read of Jesus being "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15.) He must, then, have felt all the weight and power of the temptations of Satan in all points, as indeed we know he did in the wilderness. But though these floods rolled with awful weight over his soul, they did not and could not drown the life of his love.

3. But view also the floods of ungodly men which often make us afraid, but did not daunt his holy heart nor damp his blessed confidence. David, personating the Lord in his suffering character, says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of

ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me." (Psalm 18:4, 5.) But in this extremity he cried to the Lord and obtained deliverance: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears." (Verse 6.) So our blessed Redeemer, "when he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7); and thus these floods did not drown the life of love in his holy soul.

Nor can they drown the life of love in a believer's heart. It is as true of the love of the Church to Christ as of the love of Christ to the Church, that many floods—floods of opposition, trial, temptation, inward and outward ungodliness—which would sweep away every vestige of earthly love, cannot quench the flame or drown the life of love that is really divine.

III.—But we have now to view Love in its *cruel accompaniment*: "Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."

i. Jealousy is for the most part the accompaniment of love; and the warmer the love the hotter the jealousy. Where there is no love, there is no jealousy; but where love exists, jealousy is for the most part its invariable companion. As it is in human, so in divine love: jealousy is ever the accompaniment of love divine.

1. View it, then, first, as being in the very heart of Christ; for love being in the heart of Christ, jealousy will be there too. But in his case it is not mixed with sin and infirmity, as in us, but is a holy jealousy, which we may rather call zeal. Thus we read of the Lord being "clad with zeal as a cloak" (Isa. 59:17); and the Church asks him, "Where is thy zeal and thy strength?" (Isa. 63:15.) Nay, we find God speaking of himself, not only as zealous but jealous: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Exod. 20:5); he declares that "his people provoke him to jealousy" (Deut. 32:16); and that he "stirs up jealousy like a man of war." (Isa. 42:13.)

This zeal or jealousy our blessed Lord eminently felt. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." (John 2:17.)

But this zeal or jealousy the Bride calls "cruel as the grave." O how cruel the grave is, has been, and ever will be, as long as there is a grave left on earth to swallow up in its devouring maw the remains of a fondly loved object of affection! How cruel the grave seems to be that swallows up the beloved husband or the fond, affectionate wife; the blooming daughter in the flower of youth and beauty, or the brave, manly son in the very prime and vigour of life. How cruel the grave that often separates lovers when perhaps the wedding day has been fixed. All is fond anticipation, but death comes; the cruel grave opens its mouth, and the intended bride or bridegroom is stretched in that gloomy abode. O how cruel the grave is—sparing no age or sex, pitying no relationship, divorcing the tenderest ties, and triumphing over all the claims of human affection. But jealousy is as cruel as this cruel grave. How can this be true? What cruelty can there be in jealousy comparable to the cruelty of the all-devouring grave? Its cruelty consists in this, that nothing but the removal of the rival can assuage its torments. "Jealousy," says Solomon, "is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance." (Prov. 6:34.) Take this feature then first as regards the Lord's jealousy. There are rivals to the love of his heart—the world, sin, and self. The Lord's jealousy, therefore, burns against them. Any favour shown to the rival is injustice to the true lover; jealousy, therefore, must and will put it out of the way. Thus if the Lord take away from us any portion of this world's good, strike a deadly blow at our sins, or cut off the right arm of self, it is but like a jealous lover stabbing a rival and letting out his heart's blood on the pavement. Still, as coming in this severe way, the stroke seems cruel, though really dealt in mercy. Thus Job complained, "Thou art become cruel to me." (Job 30:21.) So the Lord says, "I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one." (Jer. 30:14.)

But there is something more said about this jealousy: "The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." What a tormenting passion is jealousy! tormenting to its

miserable possessor, and tormenting to all within its reach and influence! A jealous wife! can there be a greater trial to a husband? How Abraham, how Jacob suffered under this house scourge, when Sarah was jealous of Hagar and Rachel of Leah! And many a good man has had to endure almost a life of misery from the same cause, scarcely daring to look or speak for fear of this home torment. Truly "its coals are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame."

But the jealousy in our text seems to be rather a godly jealousy, as the apostle speaks of himself: "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy." (2 Cor. 11:2.) So sometimes a holy, godly jealousy burns very hot in a Christian's bosom. "The coals thereof are coals of fire," which hath not an ordinary but "a vehement flame." It is literally, in the original, "the flame of God;" that is, it is a flame which has God for its author and God for its end; and as such it will burn up everything contrary to God and godliness. If you love the Lord with any warmth of holy affection and godly jealousy, and are pining for some manifestation of his love, you will be jealous of everything which intercepts the beams of his favour; and your jealousy will burn with a vehement flame against everything which makes the Lord hide from you the light of his countenance. If you loved a person very much, but were doing something which sadly grieved his heart, and he in consequence felt it necessary to carry himself coldly towards you, would you not put away that thing, whatever it were, which intercepted his love? It might cost you a great sacrifice, and there might be a hard struggle between the love of self and the love of the individual; but jealousy would come to your help, and with its vehement flame would burn up that which hindered the affection of the beloved object and intercepted its expression; and this in proportion to your love, for the more loved the object, the more vehement is the flame of jealousy to burn up everything which comes in the shape of a rival. Don't you think if a young woman was warmly attached to a young man and he to her, and he saw something in her which made him act coldly towards her, she would if she knew it avoid that conduct which damped or restrained his love? But suppose that she saw him inclined to pay

attention to another, would not her jealousy make her still more decided to win back his affection at any cost or sacrifice? Thus though jealousy has its torments, it is not without its benefits.

So, though the Church here was languishing and complaining, yet the very expression of her jealousy, showed there was a depth of affection in her heart which could not be satisfied, but by some personal manifestation of the Lord's presence and love. This made her jealous of all or any who were enjoying what she longed for. Do you not sometimes feel the same?

When, for instance, you learn that the Lord has blessed, say, a dear friend of yours, under some sermon which you heard too, and yet did not bless you; sent the word with power into his heart, and sent you home barren and wretched, was it not almost like Rachel looking at Leah with a fine babe in her arms and she a barren stock? What jealousy, with its coals of fire and its vehement flame, tormented your mind! But if it is all one to you whether you hear the word with power or not, if you can sit and sleep under a sermon with all the coolness possible, and never feel jealousy over yourself or jealous against another more favoured than you, what does it show? That you have not a grain of love toward the blessed Lord, for had you a particle of love, you would have a grain of jealousy with it; and one grain of jealousy would burn like a live coal in your bosom, and make you dissatisfied with everything but the Lord's presence and manifested blessing to your own soul.

IV.—But time admonishes me to proceed to our fourth point, *Love in its sealed manifestation*: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."

The Spouse could not be satisfied with knowing that love was strong as death, and being perfectly convinced that many waters could not quench it, nor all the floods drown it; still less could she be satisfied with cruel jealousy and being burnt and consumed in that most vehement flame. She wanted a sealed manifestation of this love to her soul, and therefore breaks out, "Set me as a seal

upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."

In opening up these words, let me take a few scriptural illustrations to show the mind and meaning of the Spirit in using the figure of the seal.

i. In ancient times, pen, ink, and paper, such common implements with us, were little known. Seals, therefore, were much used for various purposes not now required, and being thus constantly needed, were often worn upon the wrist or finger. The Spouse, therefore, using the figure, begs of the Lord to "set her as a seal upon his heart, and as a seal upon his arm," that she might have those precious things revealed to her heart and conspicuously displayed, which are signified by her figurative language.

1. A seal in Scripture sometimes signifies a thing that is *secret* or hidden from view. Thus we read of a book that is "sealed," which "men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed." (Isa. 29:11.) To understand this, we should bear in mind that books in ancient times were not divided into pages, but were written on a long continuous roll, and that when rolled up a seal was sometimes put on its end, of which the consequence was, that it could not be opened, and thus its contents were completely concealed, and the whole locked up under a seal of secrecy. Thus the Lord's love is a hidden, a secret love. Nor can this love be known, as being hidden in the bosom of Christ, until revealed to the soul; but when inwardly and experimentally revealed, then the seal is opened and the book read; and in that book every line is then seen to be dipped in blood and love.

2. But a seal also has another meaning in Scripture; it signifies what is *secure as being closed up*. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." As water is very scarce and precious in the East, the proprietor of a well often secured it from being stolen by rolling a large stone to the mouth, and putting a seal upon it for surer preservation. Thus

when Pilate told the Pharisees to secure the sepulchre of the Lord that the disciples might not steal his body away, "they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." (Matt. 27:66.) In that sense, therefore, sealing signifies security. Thus the Bride longed to see and feel her eternal security stamped on Christ's heart and openly displayed on Christ's arm.

3. In another sense the figure of a seal is used to mean *ratification, attestation*; as we ratify a deed by putting our seal to it. So we read of the "sealed evidence" of the purchase of the field, which Jeremiah in the prison bought of his uncle's son. (Jer. 32:14.) This is spiritually the sealing "witness of the Spirit to our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16); and is spoken of by the apostle in these words: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13.)

Now in these three senses, the Spouse cries, "Set me as a seal upon thine *heart*." The bride longed to be near to Christ's heart, to have, as it were, her name deeply cut on his breast. There is an allusion here to the ephod of the High Priest under the law which was suspended on his shoulders by two onyx stones, bearing the names of the tribes of Israel, six on each stone. But besides this, he wore also a breastplate, in which there were twelve precious stones, four in a row, and on each, "like the engravings of a signet," was cut the name of a tribe of Israel. (Exod. 28:11, 21.) So our great High Priest bears engraved on his heart the names of his dear people; and in allusion to this, the bride says, "Set me as a seal on thine heart" that I may be presented before the throne as worn on thy bosom before the Lord continually.

ii. But she also says, "*Set me as a seal upon thine arm.*" The King's seal was very precious in his eyes and those of his subjects. Thus, speaking of a wicked king of Israel, the Lord says, "Though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence" (Jer. 22:24); and so again, "O Zerubbabel, my servant, I will make thee as a signet"



(Hagg. 2:23), that is as precious and valuable as a king's seal. We may well understand that a signet in those days, being the king's seal to ratify and attest every deed, was peculiarly valuable, as stamping it with royal authority, and without which it could not be valid. Thus Joseph had the King's ring put on his hand, to stamp all his acts in the King's name and by his authority. For the signet was usually worn on the arm as a kind of bracelet, that it might be more conspicuous than a ring on the finger. Thus the bride says, "Set me as a seal upon thine arm openly and visibly, that I may not only be borne on thy bosom as a sweet pledge of love there, but worn on thine arm as enjoying some conspicuous manifestation of thy love." Nothing, then, could satisfy her but these two choice blessings—the one inward, the other outward; the one in Christ's heart, the other on Christ's arm—love in all its secret reality, love in all its conspicuous manifestation.

Now can you enter at all into the language of our text? Have you any of the feelings expressed in it? Have I given utterance this morning to any secret thoughts of your mind, any warm desires of your soul? If I have, the Lord add the blessing.

## **The Love of Christ in Giving Himself for the Church**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Dec. 13, 1857

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 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."  
Ephesians 5:25-27

Gospel precepts are grounded upon gospel truths, and are intimately connected with gospel promises. This is a much broader and nobler foundation for them to stand upon, and a much stronger bond of union between God's will and our obedience, than if the precepts were placed upon the basis of legal duty, or were connected with mere moral obligation. An example or two of New Testament precepts will perhaps convey more clearly my meaning. The apostle, writing to the Ephesians, urges this precept upon them: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." (Ephes. 4:25.) Observe how he not only warns them against falsehood, setting a broad and decisive stamp upon the common vice of lying, but inculcates truthfulness in all their communications with each other. But upon what ground does he base this precept to put away falsehood, and to speak truth every man with his neighbour? Because lying is dishonourable or immoral, disgraceful to the character, the vice of mean cowards, or if generally pursued would undermine the very foundations of society? No; he does not put the distinction betwixt truth and falsehood upon any such low ground, or inculcate veracity from such mere natural and moral considerations. But he says, "For we are members one of another." What is the force of that motive? On what ground does that precept stand? Is it not this, "Shall members of one and the same body deceive each other? Shall my right hand deceive my left? Shall my left hand try to shuffle and

cheat my right? Shall my eye mislead my foot? Shall my ear impose upon my eye? Would not the whole body be a mass of wretched discord if member after member were trying how each might get an advantage over the other by lies and falsehood? Is not truthfulness in every member, eye, ear, hand, foot, for the good of the whole body?" It is in this high and exalted way, upon this noble basis, namely union and communion between the members of the same mystical body, that the Holy Spirit inculcates universal truthfulness upon the people of God. Take another instance from the same Epistle: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." Here he inculcates brotherly kindness amongst Christians, tenderness of heart, and mutual forgiveness of offences. But upon what basis? Why should Christians be kind and forgiving to each other? Because it is for their mutual comfort? Because the very need of Christian society requires it? Because it is ignoble to resent injury—not worth while to indulge in idle resentment? Or that we shall be damned if we do not? There is not a word of such motives. They would be all too low, too general, too weak, and the last too legal, too unworthy of the Holy Spirit to dictate. What then is the basis upon which he puts forgiveness? What is the motive whereby you should forgive your brother? "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Thus the gospel precept which inculcates mutual forgiveness stands upon the gospel truth, that God having forgiven us, we are bound to forgive one another for his sake.

As I wish to make this point clear, for it is one of considerable importance, let me give you another example. It shall be taken from what we may call relative duties. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." Here the apostle inculcates submission and obedience on a Christian wife as due to her husband. But why and upon what ground? Because woman is physically weaker than man? Because it would conduce to her happiness of mind; and because she would find more solid comfort in occupying her right place in being subject to her husband than by seeking to rule him? None of these motives, however, good they might be, does he bring forward; but takes far higher, more spiritual, and

therefore more blessed ground. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord*. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (Ephes. 5:22-24.) Is not that noble ground? Does not that put the subjection of a wife upon the highest and yet most comely and honourable basis? The believing wife, who sees and feels the spiritual subjection of the church to Christ as its head, may upon that ground, without loss of dignity or position, without shame or degradation, freely submit and be subject to her own husband as occupying to her in the marriage union the same mystical relationship which Christ occupies to the church.

Upon similarly noble and spiritual ground stands the exhortation in our text: "Husbands, love your wives." Why? Because it will conduce to your mutual comfort to treat her with love and affection? Because you have taken her from the bosom of her family, and are therefore bound to consult her happiness, which is best done by giving her that love which she seeks from you and can so fully return? Does he put the exhortation to Christian husbands to love their wives upon any such ground, which, though perfectly true, and so far good, must be called, from a Christian point of view, both weak and low? No; this is the ground: "Husbands, love your wives, even as *Christ also loved the church*, and gave himself for it." As then Christ loved the church, therefore you, as a Christian husband, are bound upon that ground to love your wife. What a noble ground to put a Christian precept upon! How it elevates it far above all the low ground of legal duty or moral obligation; or even social happiness; and invests conjugal love with the very spirit of the gospel, by putting it upon a spiritual foundation, and bringing down, as it were, upon it, as its proper atmosphere, the very breath of heaven. O what an exalted, what a noble, what a godlike religion is the gospel of Jesus Christ! And how it raises and elevates social relationships and what we may call common duties into spiritual privileges by breathing into them the very mind and spirit of Christ!

But it is not my object or purpose this morning either to speak

upon the precept generally, or give a lesson from it to Christian husbands. I shall therefore rather consider the ground on which the precept is placed by the apostle than the precept itself. This ground you will observe to be the love of Christ to the church, with what he has already done, and what he has yet to do in consequence of that love.

In opening up therefore the words before us, I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First*, show a little—for who can describe anything of it beyond a little?—*of the love of Christ to the church.*

II.—*Secondly*, the *fruit* of that love: "*He gave himself for it.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, what is the *effect* of that love in our time-state: "*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.*"

IV.—*Fourthly*, what will be the *glorious display* of this love in the realms of eternal bliss: "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."

I.—When we attempt to speak of the love of Christ to his church, we can at best but lisp and stammer in setting forth a subject of such vast depth and infinite magnitude; for who can adequately conceive and who can sufficiently express the lengths and depths and heights and breadths of a love which the Holy Spirit himself declares to pass all knowledge? Yet would we fain essay to speak a little of this love of Christ to his church: for the apostle prays that we may "comprehend" it, or rather as the word means, "apprehend" it, for we may apprehend, that is, lay hold of and embrace what we cannot comprehend. It is also worthy of observation that the word "comprehend" (Eph. 3:18) is translated "apprehend" in the passage: "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." (Phil. 3:12.) As Hart says,

"To comprehend the great Three One  
Is more than highest angels can."

And if we cannot comprehend the great Three One, how can we comprehend the love of the great Three One?

Yet will we attempt, with God's help and blessing, to set before you a little of the love of Christ to his church; and perhaps we shall be able to see a little more clearly what that love is if we view it from different points, and thus gather up a fuller and more connected idea of the purity, fulness, and depth of that love as it gushed forth from his eternal bosom.

1. First, then, that love was *free*. This feature is indeed stamped upon every blessing which God has given, both in nature and in grace. God does nothing by compulsion. What he does, he does freely; what he gives, he gives liberally. The air we breathe, how free it is. How widely diffused, how spread through the whole earth and sky. When you have been shut up all day in the house, cabined, as it were, and confined to some little close room, and have got so jaded and wearied with indoor work that your very brain seems to reel and your head to ache to bursting, how refreshing to go forth and breathe the pure air of heaven. How free it comes, how it plays round your temples, blowing upon you with such charming fulness; not shut up and confined, but spreading itself all around and over you. Does not this very freeness, fulness, and freshness constitute its main charm, as it fans your pale cheek, and puts new life into your frame? So with the sun: how freely his rays fall upon the earth. What a fulness in his beams! How he fills every spot of space with the glorious rays which are continually gushing out of his bosom, unexhausted, inexhaustible. In him, as the fountain of light, there is nothing niggardly; nothing kept back; but he is ever flowing forth in millions and millions of beams to lighten, or warm, or exhilarate the earth; glorious type and figures of "the Sun of righteousness!" The rain, too, how freely it falls! How the whole

heavens at times seem to discharge their watery contents, and how shower after shower falls and falls, until earth seems almost to cry out, "Stay, stay, ye bottles of heaven; I lack no more: I have all that I need; I am filled to the full." These are but faint emblems of the love of Christ. It is so free; and its being so free, is that which makes it so beautiful and so blessed. We hear sometimes of what is called love at first sight; and this is said to be the strongest of all earthly love. John Newton tells us that this was his case, and adds that his love for the young girl whom he afterwards married never abated or lost its influence a single moment in his heart from that bout; and that she was never absent a single hour together from his waking thoughts for the seven following years. Now Christ's love to his bride was a love at first sight; for when she was presented to him by the Father that she might be his spouse,—I do not wish to degrade divine things by carnal comparisons, and yet I cannot forbear, though I wish to use the words with all solemnity, saying, that immediately Christ beheld his chosen bride he fell in love with her; for he saw her not sunk and fallen, but in all her beauty as clothed in the fulness of that glory in which she will one day shine forth, when she sits down with him to the marriage supper of the Lamb. How *free*, then, was this love!

2. But this love was an *everlasting* love. There can be no new thought in the mind of God. New thoughts, new feelings, new plans, now resolutions continually occur to our mind; for ours is but a poor, fallen, fickle, changeable nature. But God has no new thoughts, feelings, plans, or resolutions; for if he had he would be a changeable Being, not one great eternal, unchangeable I AM. All his thoughts, therefore, all his plans, all his ways are like himself, eternal, infinite, unchanging, and unchangeable. So it is with the love of Christ to the church. It is eternal, unchanging, unchangeable. And why? Because he loved as God. Never let us lose sight of the glorious Deity of Jesus. He loved her in eternity as the Son of God, prior to his incarnation. That was but the fruit of his love. "Who loved me," says Paul, "and gave himself for me." And so our text, "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." Do we not read, "I have loved thee with an

everlasting love?" And what is the effect? "Therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) We can therefore assign no beginning to the love of Christ, for it existed when he existed, which was from eternity. Neither can we put any end to that love, for it can only end with himself; and as he had no beginning, so he has no ending. His love then is as himself, which as it knew no beginning shall know no end. O what a mercy it is for those who have any gracious, experimental knowledge of the love of Christ, to believe it is from everlasting to everlasting; that no incidents of time, no storms of sin or Satan, can ever change or alter that eternal love, but that it remains now and will remain the same to all eternity. Is not this Paul's triumphant challenge, where he cries out, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" adding his persuasion that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38, 39.) This eternal, unchanging character of the love of Christ gives us something to stand upon apart from our fluctuating feelings, our wavering frames, and the changes that ever take place in our apprehensions of divine realities. The love of Christ to us is not changing and changeable like ours to him, but like himself abides for ever.

3. But again, it is not merely a free and everlasting love, but it is a love which does not *depend upon anything that is in the creature* for its origin, continuance, or completion. God does not look out of himself for any acts of his mind or works of his hand. He is sufficient to himself and for himself, for all his counsels, and all their execution; and therefore he cannot and does not consult his creatures what he is to plan for their benefit, or how to carry out his eternal purposes toward them. The apostle, therefore, speaks of "the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." And again, "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. 1:11.) The love of Christ to his church is in the fullest harmony with these purposes. What then we are in ourselves, or whatever in this time-state



may take place in us through temptation, suffering, or affliction, does not affect the love of Christ. It is wholly and purely in himself, independent of and distinct from our love to him, which is but a reflex of his love to us. As the apostle speaks, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us;" and again, "We loved him because he first loved us." (1 John 4:10-19.) This love therefore stands distinct from any change in our mind, any fluctuation of feeling we may experience, because it depends wholly and solely on what the blessed Lord is in himself, as loving us before we loved him—yea loving us when we were alienated from the life of God, and enemies in our mind by wicked works.

4. This love again is a *very strong love*. The Scripture has used three or four very striking figures to designate its strength. You will find them in the Song of Solomon, I think all in the same chapter (8:6, 7), and in one or two verses. First, it is said to be "*as strong as death*." What an image! How strong is death! O the millions that death has destroyed! The millions that remain for death to destroy! The strongest must yield when he approaches. No man yet has ever been able to stand against death when he drew near to seize his victim. But the love of Christ is as strong as death; and though this is the greatest figure that the Holy Ghost can well employ, yet in one sense it is stronger than death; for the love of Christ bore him through death, rose with him at the resurrection from death, and has gone with him up to the right hand of God when he had destroyed death.

But the Holy Ghost has used another figure of an almost similar kind, to express the nature generally of spiritual love, and therefore applicable in the highest degree to the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Speaking of jealousy, which is love's ever constant attendant, he says it is "*as cruel*"—that is, as insatiable—"*as the grave*." How the grave is ever opening its mouth! How grave after grave has opened its jaws in the churchyards of this town, till there is no space left in them to bury our dead. And if you walk any day round our new cemetery, you will almost always see a grave with its mouth open; yes, as long as there is an inhabitant in this town, there will be a grave to

open its mouth for him. So that however numerous be the inhabitants, there is a grave for each, and a grave for all. Fruitless are the widow's tears, the father's sobs, and the mother's bitter cries. The cruel grave still goes on to bury out of their sight the tenderest and dearest relations in life; and will in the appointed time draw us in and cover us up, as it has the countless generations that have lived before us on earth. Now the love of Christ or jealousy, which is the accompaniment of it, is said to be as cruel as the grave; that is, as the grave keeps devouring and is never satisfied, so the love of Christ in its jealousy against all rivals, in its indignation against all our idols, is ever opening itself to receive us into its bosom as our safe hiding place. If the grave has swallowed up a beloved husband or dear child, and you can believe that their remains are safely housed there till the resurrection morn, its seeming cruelty was real kindness, its cold bosom a warm shelter, its close bed a sure safeguard.

But love is also compared to *fire*: "The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Fire we know devours everything. What can stand against it? Houses, buildings, the earth itself will one day be consumed by this destructive element. Such is Christ's love, which hath a most vehement flame, for it burned in his bosom with a holy fervour, as he said, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptised with: and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." (Luke 12:49, 50.) The fire of his love which he was to send on the earth, was already kindled in his own bosom; and when this fire is kindled in ours it will make our hearts burn within us in love to him, and hatred of sin and self.

The last figure of this nature which is used by the Holy Spirit in the Song of Solomon is almost of a similar nature to express the strength of love. It is compared to a flood of *water*: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." How great is the power of water when it rushes down as a destructive flood, sweeping all before it. But the flood can fertilise as well as

destroy. So the love of Christ poured itself forth in the days of his flesh in the garden and upon the cross, to sweep away, as it were all sin before it, and yet to bless and fertilise the church, making her fruitful in every good word and work.

How suitably and expressively do these figures, death, the grave, fire, and water, set forth as emblems the strength of that love of Christ which nothing can quench, nothing destroy, but which will prevail over sin, death, and hell, yea, over every impediment and obstacle, till it gain the day, achieve the victory, and in all the blaze of full perfection and fruition fill heaven with its eternal glory.

II.—But I pass on to show what is *the fruit* of this love; which is, that Christ *gave himself for the church*.

i. God exacted, so to speak, a sacrifice from his dear Son. I wish to speak cautiously upon this point; for in these deep and solemn mysteries we must be careful how we tread, and not penetrate into divine counsels any more than they are revealed, or put thoughts and words of our own into the mouth of God. Yet may we reverently and devoutly search the Scriptures to ascertain from them what the Holy Spirit has revealed for our instruction, though not for our speculation.

I have already shown that the Son of God freely, fully, and unchangeably loved the church which was given to him by the Father in the councils of eternity, and presented to him as his future spouse and bride. By sovereignty, by purpose, by foreseen, fore-determined creation she belonged to God. Does not our Lord say to his heavenly Father of his disciples: "Thine they were and thou gavest them me;" and again, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." (John 17:9.) Thus the church, as belonging to the Father, was originally and actually God's gift to his dear Son. But though thus given to him to be his pure and spotless bride, she was foreseen in the infinite wisdom of God as able to fall; nay, as known that she would fall. But the fall was

not only foreseen, but fore-provided for. We therefore read of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8); and that our Lord, though "by wicked hands crucified and slain," yet was "delivered," that is unto death, "by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God." (Acts 2:23). When, therefore, our Lord accepted the church from his Father's hand, he perfectly knew that she would fall; but that as nothing sinful could enter unto the presence of God, and as his own precious blood alone could save and sanctify her from her sins when fallen, he knew that there was a sacrifice to be offered, a penalty to be exacted, the law to be fulfilled, justice to be satisfied, and every debt contracted by her to be paid to the uttermost farthing. The gracious Lord therefore thoroughly knew what would be the consequence of his espousing the church unto himself—that she would fall; that he must redeem her from the fall; that in order to do so he must come unto this lower world; must take of her flesh; must suffer, living the most sorrowful of lives, and dying the most agonising, disgraceful, and terrible of deaths. None of these sufferings and sorrows were hidden from his eyes. He knew that he must suffer all that she must otherwise have suffered, go through all that she must otherwise have gone through; in a word, endure her hell that she might enjoy his heaven. "He thus gave himself for us;" that is, in the councils of eternity, he gave himself up to God that he might do his will, which will was the redemption of the church. Hear how he himself spoke ages before his first coming: "Lo, I come [in the volume of the book it is written of me] to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7.)

ii. But we must come down from these divine transactions, these heavenly and eternal councils, though they form the basis of all our salvation, and of our very hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised before the world began (Titus 1:2), to what actually took place in time. We must come down from heaven to earth—to what the eyes of man actually saw, what the ears of man actually heard, and what was actually fulfilled and accomplished in the days of the flesh of Jesus.

1. In this sense, then, Jesus "gave himself" first when he took

flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. But the question may perhaps arise, "Why did not Jesus Christ come at once as man—a fully grown, adult, and perfect man, as Adam was created? What need was there for him to be conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, to be born as we are, a little babe, and then grow into a child, a boy, a youth, a man? Why could he not come at once in his divine and human nature from heaven? Would not that have been a more astonishing miracle? one more likely to give us faith?" Such thoughts may cross our minds; but they are idle at best, not to say irreverent and profane. But how could he have taken of the actual flesh and blood of the children except by taking part of the flesh of the Virgin? How could he be descended, according to the promise, from the seed of David, except he sprang from one who was of the lineage of David? Or how could he be altogether one like us as man, unless he had come into the world in the same way that we came? The nature that was to be redeemed must be partaken of by the Redeemer. This the apostle seems clearly to intimate when he says, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16); plainly implying that if angels had to be redeemed angelic nature must be taken, but if men the nature of man. And yet not a sinful, a fallen nature; for that could not have been offered as a sacrifice. God, therefore, in his infinite wisdom, provided that sin should not intermingle with Christ's conception as with ours; that though conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the human nature of our blessed Lord should not be by natural generation, lest there should be the taint of sin attached thereto. The angel, therefore, in revealing this mystery to the Virgin Mary, said unto her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35.) Thus that "holy thing" which was born of the Virgin, though flesh, blood, and bone of her substance, and therefore flesh, blood, and bone of the children, yet by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost was conceived without sin, and thus became not a person but a nature. This "holy thing," therefore, was the pure humanity of our blessed Lord; not mortal, yet capable of death; not fallen, though

made of a woman who was fallen; not able to sin, but able to suffer, both in body and soul; and taken at the moment of its conception into indissoluble union with the Person of the Son of God.

2. When, too, this blessed Redeemer came into the world from the womb of the Virgin, he still "gave himself." From the day he was circumcised, when he came under the law, till the day he was crucified when he endured its curse, he was ever giving himself. With every thought of his holy mind, every word of his holy lips, and every action of his holy hands, he was giving himself to God, as ever doing the will of God; ever performing the work which the Father gave him to do. Thus even as a child, before he entered upon his public ministry, he could say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49.) What condescension in him who was the eternal Son of God to think with human heart, to speak with human lips, to touch the things of earth with human hands, to walk upon human ground with human feet. We lose much of the blessedness of redemption from want of seeing or bearing in mind what the Son of God was here below as the God-Man. We are so habituated, in reading of his words and acts in the gospels to think of him only as a man, that we much lose sight of the Deity that was in the closest union with his human nature, and of his being God-Man as well as man. When we look at the shame, the scorn, the contempt that he endured during his sojourn here below, living a life of the greatest poverty, and yet going about ever doing good, what an object is presented to our believing eye, if we can view this God-Man with faith as thus ever doing the will of God. When, too, we are enabled, under divine leading, to draw near the sacred precincts of Gethsemane's gloomy garden; when we can stand as under the shadow of the olive trees, and view the Redeemer as God's own Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, not now as filling heaven with his glory, but as a poor, bowed-down, drooping man, suffering, groaning, and agonising under the weight of sin, till the huge drops of blood and sweat fell from his forehead, pressed out of his holy body by the pressure of God's anger, the curse of a broken law, and the sins

of millions resting upon his innocent head—what a sight for faith! Here truly he was giving himself. Who compelled him to this act? Was it man? Was it the force and fury of his enemies? Did he not say in the hour of his greatest woe—and O what words they are!—"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" He had but to look up and utter one word of prayer, and angels in millions would have flown to the rescue. But he meekly added, "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26:53, 54.) And well we may ask with him, How could the church have been redeemed had these angels come? Here was the struggle, the conflict, the agony; the bitter cup lay on one side, and deliverance from drinking it on the other. Deliverance from the bitter cup was to save himself a weight of woe, to be rescued from the agony of the cross, and the drinking of the wrath of God to the very dregs. But this escape from personal suffering was to lose the Church, renounce the bride, leave her to sin, death, and hell, forfeit his word, deny his engagements, give up all he came upon earth to do, and thus sacrifice his own glory, and with it the glory of God. On the other hand, there was the bitter cup, the shame and bodily agony of the cross, and, what was far less endurable, the curse of the law, the terrible wrath of God, the hidings of his Father's face, producing the deepest agony and distress of soul, with all the dreadful pangs of that blackness of darkness into which but for his enduring it the church must have forever sunk. As then he tasted the first drops in the gloomy garden the cup was so bitter that for a moment, as it were, there was a pause in his holy mind whether he could or would drink it up. But it was only for a moment, and would not have been recorded, but to show us the depth of his sufferings, and to encourage our fainting faith. Immediately, in all the meek submission of his holy nature, strengthened as it was by the Holy Ghost who held him up in this mighty conflict, he said, "Not my will but thine be done." Then it was decided. Meekly he took the cup into his holy hand, and drank it to the very dregs.

3. But now let us follow him to the cross, and see what he endured there. We will not dwell upon his bodily agony, though

beyond conception distressing, for many have endured that. Peter was crucified—tradition says with his head downward. Many have suffered crucifixion, it being in those days the common punishment of slaves. Josephus tells us there was not wood enough round about Jerusalem to supply crosses for prisoners at the siege of that city, whom Titus crucified. Thousands have died in greater bodily agony than the Lord, for he only suffered in body for six hours. But of all the generations of men, none have ever felt what the Lord endured in his soul; for he had to suffer in his soul what the elect of God would have had to suffer in hell, if he had not suffered it. What is the body? That is not the chief seat of suffering: martyrs have rejoiced in the flames. It is the soul that feels. It was so with Jesus. His body, it is true, was racked and torn, but it was the racking of his soul in which lay his chief agonies; and the greatest of all was the final stroke God reserved to his last moments, the last drop of the cup in all its bitterness, which was hiding his face from him. Nothing else but this last bitter drop extorted the cry of suffering from his lips. He could look from the cross upon his mother and the disciple whom he loved, and speak in most affectionate language to both. He could pray for his very murderers with holy calmness: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But when, to crown all the scene of suffering, the Father hid his face from him, *that* was more than his holy soul could bear; *that* extorted from him the dolorous cry—such a cry as earth never before or since heard, a cry which made the sun to hide his face as if in sackcloth, the solid earth to shake, and the very graves to open their mouths as if they could no longer hold their dead, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But then all was finished; he had given himself: the whole work was now done; and every type and figure of the law fulfilled and accomplished. Thus the law was satisfied, justice honoured, God pleased, the church redeemed, and all the counsels of eternity in her deliverance from death and hell fully accomplished. Then, therefore, and not before, the blessed Lord cried out with a loud voice, to show that he gave up his life—that it was not taken from him by violence or weakness—"It is finished!" and then, with all the tranquillity of his holy soul, he meekly bowed his head, and committing his spirit



into the hands of his heavenly Father, quietly and solemnly gave up the ghost. To give himself thus to death was the last act of his giving himself.

III.—But now we come to *the effect* of this giving of himself, and especially that which flows from it as its fruit and result in this time-state.

i. From the cross flows all our salvation. The cross is, as it were, the sun of the gospel; for from the cross shine forth all the grace and glory of the gospel; nor is there a beam of light, life, pardon, or peace which ever reaches a contrite soul, but what comes from and through Christ, and him crucified. It was this which made Paul say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." It was this too which made him preach "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

But let us now look at the fruit of the cross as manifested to the church in her time-state. We read in our text that "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might *sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.*" Two things are here spoken of as the effect of Christ giving himself—sanctification and cleansing. I think we may understand these words in two different senses, first, the sanctification and cleansing of the church as effected upon the cross; and secondly, the sanctification and cleansing of the heart and conscience by the application of Christ's blood by the Holy Ghost.

1. When Christ died upon the cross, he opened a fountain in one day, as the prophet Zechariah speaks, "for sin and uncleanness." (Zech. 13:1.) We may, therefore, view the church as washed on that day from all her sins in his most precious blood. Does not this form the grand theme of the eternal anthem sung in the courts of bliss: "Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5); and again, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes,

and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14.) We may view, then, the church as in that day washed, because the iniquity of the land was to be removed in one day—the day of the atonement at Calvary. (Zech. 3:9.) It was removed when Christ shed his precious blood, for then he washed the church in his own blood from all her transgressions; and not only so, but on that day he clothed her in his spotless righteousness. Thus, under the teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit, we may come to the foot of the cross with eyes of faith and see on that day, on that solemn spot, the church washed in the atoning blood and clothed in the justifying righteousness of the Son of God. And as the church was on that day cleansed, so was she on that day sanctified; for do we not read, "Wherefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12); and again, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;" and so again, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:10, 14.)

2. But we have to come to the experience of individual souls: for what is the church but the aggregate of believers? We have therefore to pay special regard to what is wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart of every saint of God; because unless there be a work begun and carried on by the Holy Spirit in the heart, there is no inward faith in, acquaintance with, hope towards, or love to Christ and him crucified, or any looking to the blood of the cross as that whereby we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. We read in our text, that he gave himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the *washing of water by the word.*" Thus, there is not only a sanctifying and cleansing of the church by the blood of the cross, but a washing of water by the word of truth. By the word is meant the gospel, the word of his grace, and that as applied with power; for this is God's appointed instrument, which the Holy Ghost employs to bring the benefits and blessings of Christ's finished work in the soul. It is therefore called the "washing of water by the word;" that is, the inward cleansing and baptising of the soul, which is compared to the washing of the body with water. You recollect what the Lord

said to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and please to bear in mind, that in being born of water there is no allusion to any baptism, infant or adult, but an allusion to the influences of the Holy Ghost upon the soul, of which water is a standing emblem all through God's inspired word. It is indeed marvellous upon what a slight foundation has been built that huge, towering structure which has overshadowed the church of England and thousands in it with such destructive influence; I mean the figment, for it is neither less nor more than an ecclesiastical figment, of what is called "baptismal regeneration." This vast edifice stands upon two or three words of the Lord, being "born of water," which have no reference whatever to the ordinance of baptism. The washing, then, with water by the word signifies the regenerating, sanctifying influences and operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, which are produced by the application of the word of truth to the heart and conscience. Here is the word of grace which I hold in my hands, and in full accordance with which I hope I am now speaking in your ears this morning. That word of grace, if the Spirit is pleased to accompany any portion of it with power to your hearts, has an influence upon your conscience. Some, God is pleased thereby to regenerate and quicken into spiritual life; some, to bless and deliver from bondage and trouble, guilt and sorrow; others to comfort and strengthen, encourage and revive; others to warn, teach, and admonish. But what God does, he does by the word of his grace and the influences which accompany that word; for ever bear in mind that God does nothing but by his word. The sanctifying, cleansing effects therefore which attend the word of his grace under the operations of the Spirit are spoken of here as "the washing of water by the word." The "word" is the written Scripture; the "water" is the power of the Holy Ghost; the "washing," is the cleansing effect of the application of the word. Let me ask you this question, if you doubt my words, How are we to get the burden and guilt of our sins off our conscience, the defilement of mind which sin produces, the bondage of spirit which sin creates, the fears and alarm of the soul which sin works? You will say, "By believing in Jesus Christ, for being justified by faith we have

peace with God." That is true; but how can we believe in Jesus Christ, so as to find this peace? By the word of his grace, accompanied by the special influence, unction, and dew of the Holy Ghost revealing and making known pardon and acceptance with God, which is therefore spoken of here as "the washing of water by the word." For as water washes the body, so the word of truth washes the soul, by washing away the guilt and filth and defilement of sin. As the blessed Lord said: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) And again: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.) So also: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." (John 13:10.) Thus as water when applied cleanses the body from natural filth, so does the word of promise, the word of truth, the word of salvation revealing and making known the Saviour's precious blood, cleanse the conscience from the guilt, filth, and defilement of sin.

2. But Christ gave himself for the church, not only that he might cleanse, but might also *sanctify* her, and that by the washing of water by the word. This points to the sanctification of the Spirit, for washing in the blood of Christ and sanctification by the Spirit go hand in hand; as the apostle testifies, "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.) View the church without the sanctifying operations and influences of regenerating grace. She is far from Christ; she has no desire towards him, no manifest union, no communion with him; no faith in his blood, no hope in his mercy, no love to his name. Were she left always thus, where would be her meetness for heaven? But when the word of truth comes with power, and is accompanied by the influences of the Holy Ghost to the heart, then there is not only a cleansing of the conscience from the guilt and filth of sin, but the communication of a new heart and a new spirit. How plainly is this spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel, where, after the promise, "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you," it is added, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." We have not only therefore

to be washed from our sins in the blood of the Lamb, not only to be pardoned and forgiven and thus have a title to heaven, but we want a meetness for heaven; we want a new heart and a new spirit given to us, whereby we may taste, handle, feel, and enjoy the love of Christ as shed abroad in the heart, and experience the flowings forth of love to him in return. As then the blood cleanses, so the Spirit sanctifies. John therefore says, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." (1 John 5:6.) The blood is the blood of the atonement; the water is the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost.

Observe the order in which these blessings come. First, is the love of Christ in eternity; secondly, the gift of himself in time; thirdly, the cleansing by blood; fourthly, the sanctifying by the Spirit. Now look at these things for yourselves. Are your sins pardoned? Have you any evidence that you are washed in the blood of the Lamb? Do you believe that you are going to heaven? What does your belief of this, or your hope in it, rest upon? Where are your evidences? Surely not from merely seeing these truths in the Scripture as the bare revelation of God, or believing them from my statements. Such a faith and such a hope, if you have no better, will prove delusive, and will leave you in the hands of him who is a consuming fire. If your hope of eternal life is well grounded, it is because the word of life has come into your soul, and you have been not only cleansed by the application of the blood of sprinkling to your conscience, but sanctified and renewed by the power of the word, through the Holy Spirit, upon your heart.

But let us bear in mind that we continually stand in need of this "washing of water by the word." Our conscience contracts fresh guilt, which needs to be cleansed away by the blood of sprinkling. We are continually sinking into deadness, darkness, carnality, and sloth, and therefore we need continual revival out of death by the power of the word of life. And Jesus is ever sending forth the power of his grace and communicating the influences of the Holy Ghost, both to cleanse the conscience from the guilt of sin, and to

revive the life of faith in the soul. As then the Holy Spirit is pleased to accompany the word of truth with his own divine influences, it not only cleanses the conscience from the guilt and filth of sin, but renews and sanctifies the soul, and brings it into sweet union and communion with, and a holy obedience unto the Lord the Lamb.

This then is the mighty work, the fruit and effect of Christ's loving the church and giving himself for it, which is now being carried on upon earth. And this is the work that must be done in your soul; for by this alone can you prove your title to heaven; and by this alone obtain a meetness for it.

IV.—But I pass on to our last point, which is, what will be *the future fruit* of Christ's having loved the church and given himself for it—*a state of eternal holiness, happiness, and glory*. "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."

What is the church now, so far at least as she can be viewed by the eyes of man? Full of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes. And what are we ourselves as viewed by our own eyes? What do we see in ourselves every day but sin and filth and folly? What evil is there in the world that is not in us, in our hearts? It is true men cannot read our hearts; but we read them; yea, are every day and sometimes all the day reading them. And what read we there? Like Ezekiel's roll, it is "written within and without;" and we may well add, if we rightly read what is there written, we have every reason to say it is "full of lamentations, and mourning, and woe." (Ezekiel 2:10). For I am sure that there is nothing that we see there every day and every hour, but should cover us with shame and confusion of face, and make us blush to lift up our eyes before God, or almost to appear in the presence of our fellow man. And yet with all this our life may be circumspect, and our walk and conduct irreproachable. Nay, it should be so and ought to be so, in order to maintain a godly and consistent profession before men.

But neither others nor we ourselves now see what the church one day will be, and what she ever was in the eyes of Jesus. He could look through all this time-state—through all the sins and sorrows of this intermediate period, and fix his eye upon the bridal day—the day when before assembled angels, in the courts of heaven, in the realms of eternal bliss, he should present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy, and without blemish. O what a day will that be, when the Son of God shall openly wed his espoused bride; when there shall be heard in heaven, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7.) How cleansed, how sanctified, how washed, how clothed must the church be in that day when the very eyes of omniscience, which can read the slightest departure, even a wrinkle from infinite purity, will find in her neither spot nor blemish, so that God himself in all the blaze of his holiness may say of the church, "I have viewed her with my omniscient eye; I have looked at every member of the mystical body of my dear Son; I have examined each with all the eyes of Godhead: but there is no spot, there is no wrinkle, no blemish in any one of them; all are complete in him; all stand accepted in the Beloved."

Now, my friends, if any of you know what you are, and what you have been, and what you fear you yet may be, can you entertain any hope of being one of this glorious church which is to be presented to the Lord the Lamb without spot or blemish, except it be by having an interest in the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Son of God? Do you think that your own works, of whatever nature they may be, can ever present you before God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing? Are they now without spot or wrinkle in your eyes? Can you now look upon anything which your heart conceives, your lips speak, or your hands execute, and say there is no wrinkle, no spot, no blemish in it? What, are you yet so ignorant both of God and yourself,

both of law and gospel, both of sin and holiness? Can pride and self-righteousness have so blinded your eyes, can Satan have so deluded you as to make you say of any word from your lips or any action of your hands, "It is as pure as God in heaven, it is as holy as the glorious I AM?" You know that you dare not say so. Yet the church—and if you are to be saved, it must be as a member of this church—yet the church is to stand before the throne of God and be examined by his omniscient eye to see if any one in that glorious assemblage has any spot or wrinkle in him or upon him; for if the eye of God were to see any spot or wrinkle in you, would he not, so to speak, at once commission an angel to take you and hurl you from heaven into hell? You could not stand amongst the church of God if you had spot or wrinkle in soul or body. You would be ejected with ignominy out of heaven. You might have crept in there as an interloper, but would be cast out as polluted into the depths of eternal woe. How foolish, then, how vain, how delusive must every hope be which is founded upon good works, so called. Take them one by one. Examine the best of your religious duties, as they are termed, and ask yourself whether one of them is without spot or wrinkle.

But O, if renouncing all your own righteousness and fleeing to Christ, you are interested in the finished work of the Son of God; if you are washed in his precious blood; if you are clothed in his glorious righteousness, then you will stand at the last day before the bar of God without spot or wrinkle; and Christ will present you unto himself as the bride and spouse of his heart, holy and without blemish.

But you may ask—and this is an inquiry well worth pressing upon your conscience—"How am I to know that I shall stand at that day without spot or wrinkle?" To answer that inquiry, what do you know, I ask, of the cleansing, sanctifying influence of regenerating grace, of the word of truth laying hold of your conscience, of the word of power coming into your heart, of the blood of Christ being applied, and the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost? If not now, yet before you are called away from these lower scenes, you are blessed with a



living faith in the Son of God, with the application of his love and blood to your conscience, when time ends with you, it will open to you a glorious eternity, and for ever delivered from all your present sins and sorrows, fears and anxieties, you will be presented at the great day amongst that glorious church, which has neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing. But if you live and die without any interest in these heavenly blessings, should I be faithful, standing up here in the name of the Lord, should I be faithful to my commission and to my conscience, if I were to say it will be all well with you? that you have only on your death-bed to send for a minister to pray by your bed-side, give you the sacrament, and speak a few comfortable words, and it will be all right with your soul? Should I be faithful to my commission to encourage such a delusion as this? a delusion by which thousands are continually deceived? I dare not do it. Yea, I would lift up my voice and cry aloud, "There is no salvation past, present, or future, but what flows through the precious blood of the Lamb, and is made experimentally known to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost."

## **The Love of the World Forbidden to the Saints of God**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,  
March 3, 1859

(A Posthumous Sermon.)

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John 2:15-17

The precepts of the gospel are, or ought to be, as dear to us as the promises; for do they not stand upon the same foundation? Are they not as much an integral portion of God's word? Are they not revealed by the same Spirit, written by the same inspired pen, and do they not form part of the blessed volume which we hold in our hand and have before our eyes? I think, if I may judge by my own experience, we some times pass by these portions of God's word. We try to legalize them; we do not see their connection with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we endeavour to perform them in a legal way, as though they were part and parcel of the law. We consider that if we acted them out we should thereby recommend ourselves to the favour of God. Many stay there all their lives. But after a time the Lord is pleased to break this snare by leading us into the truth of the gospel, commending its sweetness and savour to our souls, giving us a larger or less measure of holy freedom and spiritual liberty, whereby we begin to understand the gospel as a pure dispensation of God's grace. Now we lie under a temptation as to the precept. We make too little of it by attempting to slight it; not to despise it—we cannot do that. But we see not at first its exact position in this revelation in the New Testament, nor do we recognise its bearing on the life of a Christian. After a time, however, we begin to see and understand something of its value.

But from neglecting the precepts we may go on to breaking them, and by that means bring guilt and distress upon our consciences, and then we shall see how worse than foolish it was to neglect these precepts which God has revealed in the Scriptures as so many bars and hedges; then we begin to discern how these precepts are set to guide and keep the soul from slipping into those things which are grieving to the conscience and dishonouring to God's mercies. Then it is that we begin to love the precepts for the beauty and blessedness we see shining forth in them, and we desire to keep them—not because by keeping them we shall be kept from those things that dishonour God, but because there is a great reward in keeping of them, and it is a blessed thing to do those things which are pleasing in God's sight. What a precept we have here laid before us by the pen of holy John! What solemn warnings, and yet what gracious injunctions, and how he has set before us in the strongest way what the world is, the dangers of loving it, and the blessedness of the man who so far from loving it is separated from it and crucified to it.

In opening up these words I shall, as the Lord may enable me,—

I.—First endeavour to show, What the world is of which our text speaks; and John gives a clear and blessed account of what there is in the world and why you are not to love it.

II.—Secondly, The precept, which is that we are not to love the world nor the things in the world.

III.—And thirdly, The reason we are not to love the world *for* and *against: for*, if any man love the world it is an evident proof the love of the Father is not in him; and *against*, whilst the world is passing away, and the lust thereof, God's own testimony is that he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

*The world* is a very comprehensive expression. All men are disposed to assign to it a signification that may correspond with their innate fleshly desires. They do not see the world is, if I may be allowed the use of the expression, the antipodes of God. All

that is of God is not of the world, and all that is of the world is not of God: that is, these two things are asunder, and you may as well try to reconcile heaven and hell, Christ and Belial, as an eternal God with the world.

By *the world* is not meant the mere creation that we see by day or look upon when the stars blaze by night—not the mere outward frame. The world is a far deeper thing than what our natural hand can touch or our natural eye see. We need not go far to look for it; we shall find it within. Each man carries a world in his own bosom. For what is the world? Is it not a collection of men's hearts? Take all the hearts in the breasts of all the men on the face of the earth and put them together, and this is the world. For every single practice of the world, everything that the world loves and pursues, you have in your heart, I have in mine. The world without merely carries into practice—cordially follows out that sin which is ever working in our breast. We need not, therefore, go very far beyond ourselves to know what the world is which we are not to love, for we shall find, if we have eyes to see what we are as poor fallen sinners, that we carry the world in our hearts. It requires no microscopic eye to look into these depths.

Well, what does John say about what is in the world? He says, "All that is in the world"—that evil that is apparent therein, that meets your eye and forms its prominent features—these are "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life," and he puts these three things together as though by naming them in this striking and separate form he would show the main things in which the world consists. By the term *lust* we do not understand the base *lusts* of the flesh that are more usually designated by it. "The *lust* of the flesh" embraces a variety of things, and has not merely that comparatively narrow meaning which people generally associate with the term in regarding it as one monstrous instance of depravity or one gross instance of the fall of man, that I need merely allude to because it is a subject so tender and delicate. There is included in the expression a great deal more than that. For instance—I dare say you may have felt it—the love of drink, the love of money, and the like. There is the

love of indulgence—indulging the body beyond its due requirements; there is a feeding the flesh beyond what the flesh requires as its natural sustenance; and every act whereby you feed the flesh beyond what it requires is neither more nor less than the lust of the flesh. Whatever you take special delight in and indulge in as being eminently suitable to your natural taste, as something you seek pleasure from distinct from God, is the lust of the flesh. Everything and anything that pleases, amuses, delights, or interests your carnal mind distinct from things spiritual and divine—it takes a wide range—may be comprehended in the expression "the *lust* of the flesh"—"the *desire* of the flesh" or the risings up of the depraved nature which we inherit from Adam. Whatever this carnal mind of ours may desire, be it wealth, property, learning, riches, or anything that may gratify our carnal mind and give us a happiness distinct from God's presence, is "the *lust* of the flesh." How subtle is this flesh! how deep! how continually putting itself forth in some desire, in some longing, in some wish, in some attempts to gratify itself! your flesh, the movements of your carnal mind, though men widely differ in their constitutions, inclinations, pursuits, objects of ambition, knowledge, and habits, though in all these men widely differ, yet from first to last it all amounts to the same thing, it is not of God, of his Spirit and grace, it is not spiritual, vital godliness, it is something belonging to the flesh, whatever this is, whatever it may be, it may be very elegant, very refined, very highly polished, varnished, and decorated, but it amounts to the same thing—the lust of the flesh. You may dress a corpse in satin, and put it into a coffin covered with crimson velvet, and then in lead; but it is a corpse still and must go into the same grave as the parish pauper. So your dress may be adorned and decorated, but still yours is the same flesh as that of the vilest wretch whose sins seem to be crying out to God for vengeance. When we say "the lust of the flesh" we do not merely mean the gross sins into which man may fall, not merely words even; but the very *desire* of the heart, the very risings, the very movements of the carnal mind. The very wish of the flesh apart from the sensual gratification of that wish—is a sin. The alienation from God, the breathings of the mind totally alienated from God,

are evil. When we see what our flesh is, that is enough to make us astonished that we can be what we are! When we see that all our attempts, be they many or few, to subdue the flesh, mend it, improve it, sanctify it are fruitless, and our frame is as devilish as before,—our feeling all this is enough to cut down all the pride of man and make the most highly-favoured saint feel that he is saved in the same way as the vilest sinner.

And then there is "lust of the eye." What an avenue of evil do our eyes meet! How the eyes gather in sin with every look! It is scarcely possible to open them without committing sin! We can hardly look a fellow sinner in the face without committing sin. I was going to say the eyes gather in sin, if I may use the expression, almost as the boys gather dung in the streets. Our eyes are such inlets to sin that we cannot open them without the lust of the eye being kindled. Now, the lust of the eye expresses something more than is often attached to its meaning, because the eyes are not only the inlets of evil but the inlets of knowledge, instruction, and many things that are naturally entertained. And what are beautiful paintings, landscapes, works of art, and all those things that men of ability and refined minds take delight in? What are beautiful buildings, fine architecture, handsome houses, beautiful furniture, dress (male and female) worn according to the fashion of the day—what are all these things but the lust of the eyes? Does not the lust of the eye include all this? That which the eye sees and lusts after is the commission of sin.

Now, surrounded as we are by sin in every shape, feeling as we do the workings of sin every hour and moment, how continually do we find this lust of the eye kindled by the objects around us as we meet them, and all this is of the world. So that a man may actually retire from the world, shut himself up from all society so as to be a hermit comparatively speaking, and yet all the time the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes may be working in him so highly that he is afraid his soul will be lost through their influence.

And then there is the pride of life. Does not this work in us? It is not confined to those who can gratify it—to the rich and respectable. It is not confined to those who live in good houses, to those who have princely means to gratify it. I have said sometimes that the tramp that goes from door to door has as much pride in his heart as the peer who rides in his carriage. There is a pride working in his heart as much as in the greatest noble of the land. Not that those who have the means to gratify their pride are not exposed to the greatest temptation, for there lies the great peril of riches. The poor man may condemn those who are placed in a higher position; but place him there, and he would perhaps be worse than they; but his poverty keeps him, under present circumstances, from manifesting it. Still this is no excuse. If a man have means that is no reason why he should use those means for the gratification of the "pride of life." There are the poor, the children of God, upon whom the money may be better spent. Therefore, there is no excuse for a man because he has such means to indulge the "pride of life."

What a triple enemy against a child of God! What! an arduous battle he has to fight against this threefold foe! If he is not exercised with the lust of the flesh he may be exercised with the lust of the eyes; or if not with the lust of the eyes there is the pride of life: so that behind and before, on the right hand and on the left hand, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—this triple foe—meets him at every turn. And who has eyes to see them? who has a conscience to feel them? who knows anything of the spiritual conflict with this triple foe? The man and the woman only who have the life of God in the soul. I was once much struck by the remark of an eminent servant of God. He said, "Every man was overcome by sin, but a child of God." And it will be found so. Sin will prove victorious over every man except a child of God; whatever his profession may be he will be overcome by sin who is not delivered by the grace of God. And the child of God has a hard battle. He does not come clean off. He escapes as it were by the skin of his teeth. Many a bitter cry does he put up to the Lord to keep him from evil that it may not grieve him. He stands at times on the brink of the precipice,

and it seems as though hell were under his feet. But he is kept by the power of God. The devil deals hard with the child of God—more hardly with him than anybody else. Sin may be compared to a river which will flow very quietly till there is a dam placed across the stream. It is then that the strength of the river is seen. So as long as there is a free course for sin all goes on very quietly; but only let a man try to keep out sin, then he will find out the strength of sin, and so the devil seems to work more upon a child of God than upon others, because he knows he has these safely in his grasp, and therefore he lets them alone.

Well then, to come to the precept: we are not to love this world. How plainly it speaks, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are not to be gratified. "Well but," you may say, "my heart loves them, and how is my heart to be divorced from that love? You lay the precept before us; but how are we to perform that precept?" By the grace of God. By the power of God in your soul. He can and will give you a principle—a holy principle in your heart that will make you hate the world, and at times hate yourself. When you feel the world working in you he will give you a godly abhorrence not only of the world without in which you are to live your appointed time, not only of that which lies around you; but you will see what a passing thing the world is, and you will view its hideous blackness in the sight of an holy God, and he will make you to see, and feel the lust of the eyes so that you will be afraid to open them lest it should be an inlet of depravity in your soul. You will see the workings of it; you will see how opposed it is to the lowly majesty of the Lamb of God; and there will be a time when you will feel a solemn distaste against the lust of the eye.

Then there is the pride of life. You will cry to the Lord to preserve you from its power and dominion, and in God's strength you will be willing and more than willing to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and to put off the old man and put on the new. Then, when your soul is in any way favoured with the love, grace, goodness, mercy, and favour of God by holy influences



and divine teachings, a solemn distaste is brought into your soul of all those things which are contrary to the grace of God. And this is the only way whereby we can keep the precept. We might impose upon ourselves a task or precept. We might say, "I will go through this day without giving way to the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eye, without loving the world or the things in the world." We might make such a resolution, and the first step we might take after coming down stairs, the first act might overthrow it all. The first thing that occurred might drive away all our resolutions, as the strong wind drives away the chaff. It is not in this way that we are to keep the precepts of the gospel. It is by the letting down of the goodness, mercy, and longsuffering of God in the soul, it is in his strength and not in our own, it is in what he is pleased to communicate by his own Spirit that we can fight this battle and come off more than conquerors.

III.—Then I pass on to show the reason why we are not to love the world, and the evidence *for* and *against*.

Now, first we have this demolishing truth, for I answer it is a demolishing truth: "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." If you love the world and the things that are in the world with a real, hearty love, if you feel the world to be your element and home, and you love it as men in general do love it, who are altogether in it, you carry in your bosom a demonstrative evidence that the love of the Father is not in you; for the two spirits, the two feelings, the two experiences are so distinct. It must be one or the other. You will either love the world and the love of the Father be not in you; or the love of the Father be in you, and then you must not love the world. But we must take the words in a spiritual light. We are not to suppose that the spirit of the Father is so continually in a man's heart that he never loves the world. But when the love of the Father is in a man's heart, and he feels the life and voice of God and is under the influence of the love of the Father, then he does not love the world. And then, again, when the love of the world does get admission into his mind so as for a time to get the better of his soul, then it seems as though it drove away the love of God, that

holy dove, who will no longer tarry where the love of the world is; for he is driven out of his hearth and home by the coming in of a flood of evil. So that if the love of the world be in a man's heart it is an evident proof that the Father is not in him. But we are not going to say that the saint of God never feels any love to the world; for, if we were to lay it down in a broad positive way that there never is in the heart of a saint of God any secret love to the world whatever, if we were to lay it down as a broad rule that he is never entangled in the lust of the flesh, in the lust of the eye, in the pride of life, but is delivered from them all we should then come to the point—*perfection*. We do not set up a child of God as being perfect, as having a complete victory over sin. He cannot be perfect in the flesh nor could we set him up as such when God's word gives us no sanction thereto. Surely Paul was not here, in this state of perfection, when he wrote the 8th chapter of Romans, surely not David when he wrote the 65th Psalm, and who would dare to say that the love of the Father was not in Paul, and that it never touched the heart of David? yet the one cries out,—“O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of sin and death?” and the other says,—“Iniquities prevail against me.” Where would be your sighs, your groans, your conflicts, your struggle, your battle, if sin or lust had not its power, or you never were tempted or entangled in any kind of sin or lust, temptation or trial whatever. But, thanks be to God, there is at times a victory given over all our lusts, sins, and passions, and that victory flows from the love of the Father. When this love is let down into the soul with any gracious going forth of affection, then and only then, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life subdued, put under our feet, and turned and kept out of our soul. This is what the saints of God are brought experimentally to feel, and this is that which makes them look the more earnestly and feelingly to the God of all grace to fight their battles, and bring them off more than conquerors. But holy John gives us another reason why we should not love the world, and O! what a reason it is! He says—“The world passeth away, and the *lust* thereof.” How truly evident this is! How the world is passing away! Every day is bringing us nearer to our appointed end, every day sensibly shortening the days of our

pilgrimage here below. "And the world passeth away." How we see neighbours, persons whom we know by name or character, suddenly cut off, and how every day we see their remains carried to the cemetery! But, where are they? They are passed away. "And the word passeth away and the *lust* thereof." Where is their lust, their feasting, their huntings, their fishings, their parties, their social pleasures, as they term them? Where are they? All gone! Passed away! When the man is put into his coffin, and the mould drops on the coffin lid, and the turf is shovelled over his bones, then all is gone, and nothing remaineth but that all his sins are to be hung round his neck like a millstone to drag him down to eternal perdition. All that men love or enjoy, whether it be in the coarsest pleasures or those of the highest refined intellect, it all passeth away with him that taketh delight therein. "But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Not merely *knoweth* it, but *doeth* it; he that has a principle of holy obedience whereby he knows the will of God and does it, he shall abide for ever. He that has a mind and will to believe in his person, to hope in his mercy, and is enabled to bring forth the fruits of the gospel. And, oh! what a struggle it is to do the will of God! To see what God's will is in matters that crucify the flesh, and to do it in spite of the flesh, relations and friends! In order to effect an obedience to God's will we have sometimes to go out as Abraham did from our father's house, and to turn our backs on friends as Moses did when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. This was their evidence, they did not talk about the will of God, nor make a great boast of it; they simply did it. To do the will of God was their desire. They cried, "Show me thy will, let me do that will whatever it may be, whatever it may cost." So our cry should be. Our desire should be to live as the martyrs of old lived, though it cost them their natural lives, though they were burnt at the stake in cruel torment because they saw the will of God, and did it.

Now when we measure ourselves by those holy men, when we put our knowledge, our church membership, our experience, and what else we have beside theirs, when we put ourselves into the true scales, what necessity do we see for crying to the Lord and

begging of him that he might work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; for we feel that all religion is empty talk and vain chatter except there be a doing the will of God. To talk about religion is easy enough; to profess is easier still; but to do the will of God with a single eye to God's glory, with a living faith in him, and feeling that the eye of God is upon us, and to know that will, and knowing the will of God to do it, though it cost a right arm or a right eye, yet to do that will, there is the difficulty. Will men leave the world and the things of the world to do the will of God? They are going after the will of the flesh, and what the world can give them, and not after what God commands them in his holy word. But the saint of God says, "The world is passing away, and the lust thereof with it; I have to die, to meet eternity, to stand before an awful bar; then if I am in the world and doing the will of the world, how shall I meet this awful hour? But if enabled to do the will of God with a single eye to God's glory, and under the smiles of his grace I shall abide for ever; and when death comes it will but be to me the entrance into the portals of eternal bliss." Oh! the saints of God who have gone before us! How they did the will of God. How they bled as well as suffered! How they struggled to know that will and to perform it! How they laboured against wind and tide, against the snares of Satan and inward besetments! How they groaned and laboured, suffered and died! Where are they now? In the presence of Jesus, beholding him for whom they suffered and laid down their lives. Where are the others, those that loved the world and the things that are therein? Where are their houses? Where are all their earthly joys? Where are their companions? They have passed away! And so it will be, all, one after another, will sink into death and pass away, and all the things that engage the minds of men, they will all pass away, they will all come to naught. But here and there will be found this man, this poor man, and that woman, that poor despised woman, and this poor creature, bowed down with a sense of weakness and infirmity, struggling in the weakness of faith amid the vast crowd to know the will of God and to do it; these will then shine like the stars in the firmament. Oh! to be among that number, not with the crowd who are passing away with the world, but among the favoured few, the children of the

Most High, who seek to know and to do God's will in the utmost depths of their heart, as being a will so acceptable to him! May our lot be among those who fear his great name, who shall abide for ever, and who shall be found at the right hand of God when the world shall have passed away, and the lust thereof, and the globe on which we stand shall present one confused mass of black ashes.

## **THE LOVE OF THE WORLD AND THE LOVE OF GOD**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 19, 1868.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John 2:15-17

The various writers of the Epistles of the New Testament, though all equally inspired of God, though they all preach the same doctrine, unfold the same experience, and enforce the same practice, yet differ widely in their mode of setting forth divine truths. Thus Paul shines conspicuously in setting forth the grand doctrines of the gospel, such as the union of the Church, as chosen in Christ, with her great covenant Head, salvation by free, sovereign, distinguishing, and superabounding grace, justification by faith in the Son of God, and the blessed and abundant fruits and privileges which spring out of the relationship of the Church to God from her union with the Son of His love. It was necessary for the instruction, edification, and consolation of the Church of God that these grand and glorious truths should be not only revealed in the gospel, and preached by the Apostles, but be put upon permanent record for all ages as a part of the inspired Scriptures. God therefore chose Paul and endowed him with the largest of intellects, the greatest amount of grace, and the fullest possession of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which perhaps ever met in any one man. Thus to him was given to write the greater part of the inspired Epistles of the New Testament.

James keeps on lower ground. He does not soar into those sublime heights in which his brother Paul found himself borne up and sustained with his strong pinion; but directing his pen against the perversions of Paul's gospel, which had crept into the Churches, and aiming his keen arrows against the Antinomians of

his day, shows that there was no use talking about being justified by faith without works, if they meant thereby to exclude works altogether from having part or lot in the ministry of the gospel or the walk of a believer; and that it would not do to say if men only believed in Christ they might live as they listed, without paying the least regard to doing the will of God, or bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. All this loose, licentious, Antinomian doctrine, James cuts up root and branch.

Peter, melted and mellowed in the furnace of affliction, writes as one who had experienced much inward conflict, and therefore deals much with the trials, temptations, and sufferings of the Church of God; yet looks with steady eye, and points with clear pen, to the glory which is to be revealed that shall make amends for all.

Jude bursts forth into a stern and severe denunciation against the ungodly men, who, in his day, had abused the grand truths of gospel grace to walk after their own lusts. He points his keen pen against "the spots in their feasts of charity," that would seem in those days to have sprung up to defile the clean garments which should have been worn at such holy celebrations of the love and blood of the Lamb. He denounces the judgment of God against the "trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots; .... the clouds without water, and the wandering stars, to whom was reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

When we come to John, we seem to come into a different atmosphere—an atmosphere of love and holiness. He in his youth had laid his head upon the Redeemer's bosom, and there had drunk in large and deep draughts of love. He had stood by Him when upon the cross, had witnessed His agonies, heard His dying words, and seen the spear of the Roman soldier pierce His heart, so that out of it came blood and water. It seems, therefore, as if the reflection of what he had thus tasted, felt, and handled, tinged as it were his Epistle with golden light. If I may use a figure, it seems almost to resemble what we see on a summer eve, when the setting sun sheds a bright glow of golden light

upon every object; or if I may borrow an illustration from art as well as nature, as we see it transferred to the canvas of great painters, such as Claude or Turner, where every object seems lit up with this golden beam. Thus when we come to this Epistle, it seems as if a ray of golden light, the light of holiness and love, spread itself over every word and bathed it with the hues of heaven. It is this peculiar atmosphere of love and holiness which makes every word of this Epistle so full of light, life, and power.

Standing then as if upon this high and holy ground, and breathing this heavenly air, this atmosphere of purity and love, the disciple whom Jesus loved sends a warning voice to the children of God in the words of our text, and solemnly cautions them against the love of the world. He knew their propensity, what was in the heart of man, and that though the saints of God were redeemed by the blood of Christ, taught by His Spirit, and wrought upon by His grace, yet still there was in them a carnal, earthly principle, which cleaved to, and loved the world. He therefore lifts up a warning voice: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And to shew that this was not a matter of small importance, but involved in it life or death, he goes on to testify that whatever profession a man might make, if he really loved the world, the love of the Father was not in his heart. He then takes a rapid view of all that was in the world, and summing it up under three heads, as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, passes upon it this condemning sentence, that it is not of the Father, but of the world. He then lifts up in still stronger strain his warning voice, that the world is passing away and the lust thereof, and that there will be a speedy end to all this show and glitter. But he adds, to encourage those who, in spite of all opposition, are doing the will of God, that when all things here below shall pass away and perish, they shall abide for ever.

This is a simple sketch of the way in which I shall this morning attempt to handle the subject before us; and you will see it is in close accordance with the outline of our text.



I.—Let us **first** then consider John's **solemn admonition**: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

II.—**Secondly**. the **reasons** why we should not love the world, which are:

**1. That if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in our heart.**

**2. That all that is in the world is ipso facto condemned as being not of the Father, and therefore opposed to and alien from Him.**

**3. That the world is passing away and the lust thereof.**

III.—**Thirdly**. the **blessing** that rests upon him that doeth the will of God: that he abideth for ever.

I.—If there were not a strong tendency in the heart of the partakers of grace to love the world, why need this admonition be dropped by holy John? It is because there is so strong a tendency in the human mind to love the world, that this caution is needed; and happy are those by whom it is taken, heeded, and acted upon.

1. But what are we to understand by the expression "world," as used here? For if we are warned against the love of the world, we ought to have some clear understanding what is meant by the term, in order that we may know whether we love it or not.

i. The word "world" then, in Scripture, has various significations. It signifies sometimes the **material world**; as in the passages, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." In these passages is meant the material world, this lower sphere in which our earthly lot is cast.

ii. Sometimes it signifies **men and women generally**, human kind, man viewed simply as man. It seems to have this meaning in the passage, "God so loved the world." We cannot understand by "the world" here, the whole of the human race, as all being alike personal and definite objects of the love of God; for such a view would exclude the love which God has to His chosen people in Christ; and would make Him love Esau as much as Jacob, and Judas as well as John. Our Lord says to His heavenly Father in His special prayer, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." **Joh 17:23** But if He loved the whole world with the same eternal love as He loved those whom He gave unto His dear Son, what becomes of this special appeal of the Lord in the days of His flesh to His heavenly Father? It would have been no prevailing plea for God to keep them from evil, if every man in the world were loved with the same love as that wherewith He loved those for whom the Lord so specially and earnestly prayed. When, then, we read that "God loved the world," it must mean not every individual of the human race, but men and women, as partakers of flesh and blood, and thus distinct from angelic beings.

iii. Sometimes "the world" means **the Gentiles as** distinct from the Jews; as in that passage where Abraham is said to be "the heir of the world." **Ro 4:13** This is an explanation of the promise that "in him and in his seed, all the nations of the earth, should be blessed;" by which was meant, that salvation by the promised seed should not be limited to the lineal descendants of Abraham, but that the Gentiles also should have an interest in the work of redemption, and that Abraham should be the father, not only of the Jew, literally and lineally, but the father of the Gentile also, as walking in his steps.

iv. But in our text the expression "world" signifies, as it often does in the Scripture, that **general state of things** here below, that moral, or rather **immoral** world, which consists in the aggregate of men and women, who live, move, and act without the fear of God, dead in sin, who have no regard to the word of God, pay no heed to the will of God, and are altogether under the

influence of the god and prince of this world. This, then, is the World which we are not to love.

Why should we not love it? There are many reasons, as I shall presently show; but the chief is, because it is a **fallen** world; fallen from its proper allegiance. Man was made in God's image, in God's likeness; therefore he owed allegiance to God as his Creator, and the least he could do was to serve Him to whose creating hand and inspiring breath he owed the possession of body and soul. Nor was this difficult in him, as it is difficult in us; for sin had not corrupted his mind, nor deprived him of the power of obedience, as it has deprived us. As he bore the image of God stamped upon him, he could approach God in the purity of his native innocence, and his worship was acceptable to God as a pure offering. But when he sinned and fell, sin at once broke off that obedience, that allegiance, and that pure and simple dependence upon God which he had in his primitive innocence.

The great sin of Adam was, that he sinned wilfully, deliberately, and with his eyes open. The woman was deceived by the craft of Satan; but "Adam was not deceived" as she was, but sinned, knowing what he was doing, and not entangled in temptation, or persuaded to it by another. By thus deliberately disobeying God's command, he cast off his allegiance to God; and as man is, from his very nature in body and soul, a dependent creature, by withdrawing himself from dependence upon God, he fell under the dominion of Satan. Thus Satan, through whose temptation in the first instance sin was introduced, set himself up, with God's permission, as man's god and king. As, then, Adam's race all inherit Adam's sin and nature, Satan became the prince of this world, and brought the whole in subjection to himself; setting up his laws against God's laws, his maxims against God's maxims, his policy against God's counsel, and his infernal and wicked will against the pure and holy will of God.

Sin is of that nature that it is ever generating itself, and like fire, spreading as it goes. Thus when once Satan had breathed into the heart of man, and infected his nature with his own infernal

spawn, it generated there and produced a crop similar to the spawn itself. As we see in the case of natural disease, a breath of infection once caught will generate fever or smallpox through the whole body, so by the fall, human nature became thoroughly depraved, alienated from the life of God, subservient to Satan, madly in love with sin, opposed to God, and hostile to Him at every point.

It is this infection of our nature which makes the precept not to love the world so suitable and so important. As the subjects of regenerating grace, as having a living faith in the Lord Jesus, as having a good hope through grace, as loving the Lord, and cleaving to Him with purpose of heart, we publicly and openly profess to be the children of God; and as such we profess to come unto Him as the object of our worship, to obey Him as our Prince and King, to whom we owe allegiance. So also, as believers in the word of His grace, we profess to take His word to be our guide, His will to be our law, and His precepts to be the directing principle of our words and works. But we daily find, from painful experience, that there is not in us that willing heart, and that obedient mind, so as to make God's word and will the guide of our life. We fully acknowledge, and for the most part sincerely and earnestly desire, to walk in obedience to what He, in His holy word, has laid down as incumbent upon those who fear His name. But through the perversity of our mind, the weakness of the flesh, and the deep set corruption of our fallen nature, we find that there is in us a contrary and opposing principle to our better mind and will.

We fully see at times what this world is; how sunk in sin, how full of rebellion, perversity, and alienation from the life of God; how desperately and determinately opposed to everything that is holy, heavenly, or spiritual; how under the sentence of God's wrath, and that most justly. All this we see and feel. God, we trust, has given us a new heart and a new spirit, which has separated us from the world that lieth in wickedness. And yet, strange to say, there is in us a cleaving to, and a loving the world, though we see it and feel it too, as I have described it. Now, how can this be

explained, except that there is in us a corrupt principle in union with the world, and opposed to that inward life of God which hates it and is separate from it? Is not this what the apostle found when he said: "The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do?.... I find then a law that when I would do good evil is present with me." **Ro 7:19,21**

Now the question is, which principle is to reign and rule? Am I, if I possess and profess the fear of God, to obey God, to listen to His word and will, to seek to do those things which are pleasing in His sight? Or am I to love what God abhors, and thus really place myself amongst the ranks of the enemies of God and godliness? Surely it is by our love to things, that the point is decided where our heart and treasure is. And this will even hold good whether we apply the rule to measure the whole or to measure a part. I may not, I hope I do not love the world in the same full way as a carnal man loves it, to whom it is his all; but I may love it partially, if I do not love it fully, love a little of it if I do not love the whole of it, long after a slice of the cake, if I do not want to have and eat it all. But, just so far as I love the world and the things that are in the world, I love God's enemy; I love a state of things which is in direct opposition to the revealed will of God; I forsake my banner and range myself under the opposite flag; I stand in the ranks of those who are fighting against God and against whom God fights; and by my love toward them, I show my approbation of their principles, their maxims, their pursuits, their customs, and their ways, and so in heart, if not in person, I side with those who lie under the wrath and condemnation of God.

This, then, is the reason why God bids me not love the world; for if I love the world, my heart declines from the strait and narrow path, slips into an easy groove, walks in compliance with those who are travelling down the broad road, and like Ephraim, though armed, turns back in the day of battle. God, therefore, by His inspired apostle, drops this caution in my ears, and O that God the Holy Ghost would convey it into my heart and yours in all its

sacred light, life, and grace: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

If this precept is to be carried out, we must not love the **men and women** of the world; we must not love their company, nor seek and take a pleasure in their society. The calls and claims of business, and in most of your cases the daily duties of your vocation in life, may, and indeed must take you into the world. The professional man must attend to his clients or patients; the tradesman must wait upon his customers; the mechanic must work at the same bench with his mate; and even those of us who are not so engaged are sometimes obliged to transact with worldly characters. But all this is a very different thing from loving their company and seeking their society. If your heart is under divine influence, the world will not hurt you so long as you do not mix with it more than you are absolutely compelled.

We are not called to go out of the world and shut up ourselves in monasteries and nunneries. What we have to shun, is the company of the world on those occasions when it is not needed. Thus you need not go out of the world to be separated from it. You may be out of the world and love it; you may be in the world and hate it. You may walk in Cheapside and have your heart in heaven; you may walk on Salisbury Plain and have your heart in Cheapside. It is where our heart is, where our affections are, and what we inwardly love, which shews whether we are of the world or not; for you will observe, that the main force of the precept lies in this, "Love not the world." John does not say **Leave** the world, but do not **love** it. And why should John bid us so forcibly not to love it? For this simple reason, that love is the strongest passion of the human breast, and never can be satisfied without enjoyment and possession. If a man love a thing, he will have it if he can, sooner or later, by hook or by crook, by foul means or by fair means. If he is desperately in love with an object, he is miserable till he gain it; for love is the strongest passion that moves the human breast. You all know this who have ever been, to use a common expression, "in love;" and, though this is especially true of the love which man has for woman and woman

for man, it is also true of all other love, though not perhaps to the same intense degree. If, therefore, a man love the world, he is sure to be straining every nerve to get at, and to possess the object of his love; and nothing will satisfy him but the enjoyment of that upon which his heart is set.

Now, viewing this love of the world as a disease, if we could find some mysterious remedy which would cure that propensity at the very root; if there were, say, some holy balm brought us by an angel from heaven, like the oil which, according to the Romish legend, was brought to anoint the kings of France, and we could drop, drop, drop it into the seat of all this worldly love and purge it out, cleanse, and remove it; and if, by the dropping in of this mysterious yet blessed oil, there could be communicated another love of a purer kind, of a holier nature, which was fixed upon God Himself, and the things of God, how by this mysterious yet blessed remedy the disease would be removed, and how the love of the world would at once be purged out by the entrance of a better love, which would, so to speak, reach down to, and wither it, and put another in its place, as a new root.

It is in grace as in nature. A strong love will drive out a weak one. Take the instance of a young man or young woman who may have a kind of roving affection toward some object; but let another object come before them who is more attractive, more winning, more beautiful, or more engaging, and let that new object not merely strike the eye, but strike a root into the natural affections, the old object is immediately dropped, and the roving affections, at once centre in the new object and there remain fixed and firm. So it is in divine things. You have, by nature, a roving eye and roaming heart, ever roaming after this and that idol, and that lover. And thus you go on for months or years, roving in affection after a multitude of worldly objects. But you are arrested by the power of God. The arrows of conviction pierce your conscience: you are made to cry for mercy, and in due time the Lord reveals Himself with power in your soul. Now when the Lord is pleased thus to shed abroad His love in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and to drop into the bosom a holier and purer, because a heavenly and spiritual love, then those roving

affections which were loosely roaming after every worldly object, are gathered up, and the love of God coming into the soul in divine power, sets before us Jesus as the only object of our love. It is thus that another higher, purer, and more powerful love cures and purges that love of the world which, though it pleased us in our carnal days, yet was found in the end to bring with it only misery, bondage, and death.

2. You will observe that the precept takes a very wide range; it says: "Love not the world, neither **the things that are in the world.**" This is a very wide sentence. It stretches forth a hand of vast grasp. It places us, as it were, upon a high mountain, such as the Lord stood upon when tempted of Satan, and it says to us, "Look around you: now there is not one of these things which you must love." It takes us, again, to the streets of a crowded city; it shows us shop windows filled with objects of beauty and ornament; it points us to all the wealth and grandeur of the rich and noble, and everything that the human heart admires and loves. And having thus set before us, as Satan did before our Lord upon the high mountain, the kingdoms of the world, it says, not as he did, "All this will I give you," but, "All this I take from you. None of these things are for you. You must not love one of these glittering baubles; you must not touch one of them, or scarcely look at them, lest, as with Achan, the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment should tempt you to take them and hide them in your tent."

The precept takes us through the world as a mother takes a child through a bazaar, with playthings and ornaments on every side, and says, "You must not touch one of these things." In some such similar way the precept would, as it were, take us through the world, and when we had looked at all its playthings and its ornaments, it will sound in our ears, "Don't touch any one of them; they are not yours; not for you to enjoy, not for you even to covet." Can anything less than this be intended by those words which should be ever sounding in the ears of the children of God, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world?"



II.—Now come the **reasons**, the first of which is as plain as it is decisive: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

1. We may take it in two points of view: first, as a **test**; secondly, as a **remedy**.

Take it first as a **test**. Some of you may say, "I am very fond of hearing the gospel faithfully preached, and I could willingly walk any distance to hear a sound, experimental minister, a real servant of Jesus Christ, who preached with savour, unction, and power. I have many years professed to know the things of God for myself, and I am very fond of hearing the truth set forth in accordance with my feelings." All this sounds well, and is indeed, more or less, the language of those who know and love the truth. But words at best are but words; and many speak well with their lips who speak very badly with their feet.

Apply, then, this test to your heart and to your life. Do you love the world, the things of time and sense? Are they entwined round your affections? Do they occupy the chief place in your heart? What are your pursuits, when free to follow them? I say pursuits, for I do not mean necessary engagements. Who are your companions? Whose society do you prefer? That of the light, vain, and trifling, the carnal and the worldly, or the tried, afflicted, exercised children of God? What subject most engages your mind, occupies your thoughts, dwells with you night and day, is to you your all in all? Is it the things of God, or the things of the world? What are you most bent upon attending to and acquiring? Is it the manifestation of the Lord's goodness and mercy, the breakings in of His pardoning love, the application of His atoning blood, the secret whispers of His favour to you, and the enjoyment of His presence? Or are you satisfied without these divine realities, and spend days and hours without ever longing after, or looking out for them? Now if so, the love of the Father is most certainly not in you. Talk as long and speak as loudly as you may about religion, this one thing will stamp "Tekel" upon it all. Weighed in the balance it is found wanting: If you love the world,

and the things that are in the world, the love of God is not in your heart.

Now view it as a **remedy**. We all by nature love the world; and if you said you did not, I would not believe you, for I know you do. But is there no remedy for it? There is; and if you had it revealed to your heart you would find its effects. For what would the love of God do if it were in your heart?

i. First, it would shew you, by the contrast, what a wretched, ungodly, miserable world this is, and how different the love of God is from the love of the world. It would teach you that we cannot love God and mammon; and that either the love of the world must prevail and shut out the love of God; or the love of God prevail and keep out the love of the world.

ii. Secondly, you would find very gracious fruits and effects springing from it. If the love of God were in your heart, it would spiritualize your mind; it would draw forth every tender affection of your soul; it would make you seek and love communion with God and His dear Son; it would make you love the word of God, and be, from time to time, searching the Scriptures to know the mind and will of God, that you might walk before Him in the light of His countenance. You would also find, that all this would have a very separating effect upon your spirit, and would throw a great light upon what the world and the spirit of it really are; so that when you were forced unwillingly into it, you would continually sigh and say, "O, what a miserable world this is! I see nothing in it but sin and death, misery and bondage; and if I get entangled with the spirit of it, how it deadens my soul, carnalises my mind, robs me of every tender, gracious feeling, fills me with lightness and frivolity, and stamps inward death, darkness, and bondage upon my soul."

Now try this test by your own experience. You come from your chamber sometimes in the morning, with your mind in some measure fixed upon divine things. You have been favoured during the night, or in getting up, or on your knees, or in reading a

portion of the word, with some nearness to the Lord; and have felt a sweetness and blessedness in waiting upon Him. But you leave your peaceful home to follow the pursuits of your temporal calling; you go into the world, not willingly but of necessity, and mix with your fellow men. O what a change from your feelings in your bedroom, and the savour of which still abides upon your spirit. It is like going from day to night, or rather, from heaven to hell. What levity, what carnality, what worldly-mindedness, often what filthy and disgusting language, what a contempt of God's will and word, what dislike of His people and ways, and what a thorough determination to enjoy sin, cost what it will and may. What a poor, miserable creature do you feel yourself to be in such a scene and such society; and yet you cannot help saying to yourself, "O what a contrast! Am I, can I be happy here? Do I feel at home with these wretched men and women? Is there any comfort to my soul in their society? Do I feel I can join with them in their light, vain, and trifling conversation, and unite in spirit with their worldliness? O no, I feel I cannot do so; for what they hate I love, and what I love they hate." Thus you may judge, from your own experience, if you have any of the right sort, what the effect is of a little drop of the love of God shed abroad in the heart; what is the fruit of a gentle gale from the everlasting hills, a little of John's holiness and happiness breathed into the soul. Does it not clearly shew you what the world is, and does it not produce in your spirit such a separation from it, that you cannot but wonder at and adore the grace of God which has made such a difference between you and them?

John goes on to unfold more fully and clearly what is in the world, that he may give us another reason why we should not love it, summing up the things of the world under these three pregnant and pointed heads: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

i. The first is "**the lust of the flesh.**" By this we may, in the first place, understand those base sensual lusts which I shall not enlarge upon in a mixed congregation, as it would not be prudent, or scarcely consistent with modesty and propriety, to do

so; and yet it is a feature in our fallen nature with which most of God's children are acquainted, and some by very painful experience.

The expression, lust of the flesh, embraces a very wide scope: and yet every part and portion which it reaches and denounces is opposed to God and godliness; for not only are there those baser lusts and more sensual propensities, at which I may hint and no more, intended by the expression, but it includes also **gluttony** in all its various branches. This is one of the commonest sins in the rich and prosperous, but is shared also with them by every rank and class, from the alderman to the mechanic, and indeed all who find a pleasure in stuffing and gorging themselves with acceptable food, or even take a delight in eating for eating sake.

"The lust of the flesh" embraces also the love of **strong drink** in all its various degrees and ramifications, from a propensity to, and an indulgence in moderate sips and drams and stimulating liquors, to positive drunkenness. There are many secret, greedy, and gluttonous professors whose god is their belly, and many hidden sippers of strong drink who carry a good face in the visible church of God; and who, as being undetected and unsuspected, feel no condemnation for their gluttonous appetite, or their secret indulgence in strong drink, excusing themselves with a plausible pretext that their health requires it, or they only take just so much as does them good, when all the while they are under the dominion of the love of food or the love of drink. A tender conscience will feel the least excess in either. Solomon says, "Put a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite," **Pr 23:2**; as though he would say, "Stick a knife into thy gluttony; let out its life-blood, if such be thy besetment; hold thy hand when thou art tempted to take too much food and to eat it too greedily and pleurably." What secret glutton, what sly lover of strong drink ever manifested spirituality of mind in lip or life, or ever was a pattern and an example to the church of God?

Every fleshly lust, whether they be the base and sensual lusts of our vile nature, or gluttony and love of drink, are all under the

same marked disapprobation of God. They all come under the same unqualified sentence, that they are things in the world and of the world, and that God is not in them, but opposed to them. It matters not, therefore, what lust of the flesh it be, whether open or secret, whether strong or weak, whether countenanced by the example of others or generally disapproved of. If a man be under the influence and power of any lust of the flesh, so far he is not under the influence and power of the love of God.

You will observe, also, that it is not the actings of the flesh only, but the lust of the flesh which John condemns. Thus it is not only gross acts of criminal sin, indulged gluttony, or habits of secret drink, which John condemns, but the very desire after them. The Apostle declares that "they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," and that we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh; "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." **Ro 8:13** Now, nothing short of the love of God shed abroad in his heart will cleanse and purge a man from the lusts of the flesh, by operating upon his mind in the way I have described. As so taught and blest, he will see such evil in sin, and especially in the lust of the flesh, that he will learn to hate it and himself for it; and as the Holy Spirit draws and guides his affections into a purer channel, and by the fear of God, in living exercise, subdues and mortifies the lusts of the flesh which he may painfully feel, he will not suffer them to have dominion over him.

ii. The next thing, which John denounces is "the lust of the eyes." This seems to include everything that gratifies the natural eyesight. What an avenue is the eye to sin, and how quickly, how instantaneously sin can pass in the way of lust through the eye into the inner chambers of the mind. Job made a covenant with his eyes, that he would not look upon a maid. And our Lord tells us, "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." No one scarcely ever fell under the power of this special temptation but it first entered into his heart through his eye. It was so with David;

it was so with Solomon; it was so with Samson. The man after God's own heart, the wisest and the strongest of the children of men, alike fell, and foully fell, through the lust of the eye.

Look also at the love of dress and display, and see the influence it exercises upon the weaker, or to speak more politely, the fairer sex. I believe that I shall not go very far wrong when I say that there is scarcely a woman of any age, except the very old, or of any rank or station, high or low, who is not, more or less, under the influence of this lust of the eye—who does not seek to adorn her person with dress to the utmost of her power, that she may raise envy in the eyes of her own sex, or please the eye of the opposite one. It is so deeply engrained in the female bosom, that it is continually manifesting itself, and even under the most unlooked for and extraordinary circumstances. I remember reading some time ago an account given by a matron of some jail where female prisoners were confined, and where of course all wore the prison dress; but O the glee if one of these poor prisoners could get hold of a piece of ribbon and stick it in her dress. Thus even when shut up in a prison where they could see nobody but a gaoler and their imprisoned companions, the love of dress, so innate in the female heart, displayed itself in putting on the prison dress the ornament of a paltry piece of ribbon.

Are not all of us, whether men or women, guilty of the lust of the eye besides in the mere love of dress? How attractive to the eye of man is beauty and grace in woman, and I suppose I may add, how attractive to the eye of woman is manly vigour, with comely features set off by the bloom of health and youth on the cheek of man. And yet all this is but the lust of the eye; it only feeds the carnal mind; it only gratifies our natural senses, and if this lust be indulged in and carried out, none know into what paths of sin it may not lead. Many a woman has been seduced into sin by the love of dress and admiration; and many a man, attracted by the charm of female beauty, has made concerning faith awful shipwreck. We need well guard our eye—you, the female sex, lest you spend your time and thoughts upon making yourselves attractive to men; and you men, beware of being seduced by the

charms and beauty of women. The lust of the eye has made even many a poor child grieve and groan during life, and perhaps made many a restless, if not dark and mournful death-bed. Therefore, God keep us from gratifying the lust of the eye, as well as the lust of the flesh. We can only do it at the expense of conscience; we can only do it to the robbery of our soul.

iii. John lifts up his voice a third time, and denounces "**the pride of life.**" O how this reigns in this great metropolis! What an aspiring after living above their station in life seems to animate both high and low. What a spirit there is abroad to set men and women grasping after something to feed their pride and swell themselves into some kind of imaginary importance. How many seem willing almost to starve themselves and their families, and wear rags at home to make a display abroad, and are making every exertion to feed the pride of life, not only in dress, but in furniture; in living beyond their means; contracting debts which they will never be able to pay, and outrunning their annual income by extravagant expenditure. How many are drawn aside by this pride of life out of their right sphere; and sad to say, there are too many instances in which even the children of God have been so influenced by it as to wander sadly from the strait and narrow path.

2. Now all this lust of the flesh, and of the eye, as well as pride, that river in which the world swims, and in which too many, even of those who fear God, are tempted to dabble, is **ipso facto** condemned as not of the Father, but of the world. God is not here; His word is not here; His will is not here; His wisdom is not here; His love, goodness, presence, power, are none of them here. It is all man, false, fallen, deceived and deceiving man; it is all the spawn of maxims, pursuits, delight, and approbation of a world lying in the wicked one; of a world under the awful curse and denunciation of the Almighty. On which side, then, will you rank yourself? A lover of the world, or a lover of God? Which are you? "Well," some of you perhaps may say, "I scarcely know." You scarcely will know as long as you are halting between two opinions; as long as by your life and conduct you are walking

hand in hand with the world. But if there be the life and fear of God in your breast, you must be a very miserable being in this state of doubt and uncertainty. You must have many cutting reflections upon your bed; must often hang your head before God, and before His people too, and gloom must spread itself over your face, when silence and solitude leave you time to think and feel.

If the fear and love of God be in your soul, you cannot go out in affection after the world and God take no notice of it in your conscience, and never bring down His frown upon it sensibly in your heart. But you may say, "I would be more free from this wretched love of the world, but I cannot deliver myself." No, nor will you ever be freed until you fall down flat before God, crying to Him to deliver you from it. But should He answer your prayer, and bless you with a sense of His love, you would find when it came into your soul in divine power, it would in a moment effect what you could not do for yourself in a century. It would cleanse and purify you from that wretched love of the world which is now both your temptation and your burden, by giving you a better object of love; for it would take your affections and fix them upon things above, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

3. Observe what is to be the **end of all these things**, which is another **reason** why we should not love the world: "The world passeth away and the lust thereof."

The world and all that is in it comes to an end. Where are the great bulk of the men and women who fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago trod London streets? Where are they who rode about in their gay carriages, gave their splendid entertainments, decked themselves with feathers and jewels, and enjoyed all the pleasures of life? Where are they? The grave holds their bodies, and hell holds their souls. "The world **passeth** away." It is like a pageant, or a gay and splendid procession, which passes before the eye for a few minutes, then turns the corner of the street, and is lost to view. It is now to you who had looked upon it just as if it were not, and is gone to amuse other eyes. So, could you



go on for years enjoying all your natural heart could wish; lay up money by thousands; ride in your carriage; deck your person with jewellery; fill your house with splendid furniture; enjoy everything that earth can give; then there would come, some day or other, sickness to lay you upon a dying bed. To you the world has now passed away with all its lusts; with you all is now come to an end; and now you have, with a guilty soul, to face a holy God. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

All these lusts for which men have sold body and soul, half ruined their families, and stained their own name; all these lusts for which they were so mad that they would have them at any price, snatch them even from hell's mouth; all these lusts are passed away, and what have they left? A gnawing worm—a worm that can never die, and the wrath of God as an unquenchable fire. That is all which the love of the world, and all that is in it, can do for you, with all your toil and anxiety, or all your amusement and pleasure. You have not gained much perhaps of this world's goods, with all your striving after them; but could the world fill your heart with enjoyment, and your money bags with gold, as the dust of the grave will one day fill your mouth, it would be much to the same purpose. If you had got all the world, you would have got nothing after your coffin was screwed down but gravedust in your mouth. Such is the end of the world. "It passeth away and the lust thereof." This rings the knell of all that is in the world, the passing-bell which announces the coming of the great extinguisher of all human hopes and pleasures—the great and final extinguisher, **death**. Just as you put an extinguisher upon your candle before you step into bed, and all is dark, so the great extinguisher death extinguishes all the light of man. Only look and see how he sickens and dies, and is tumbled into the cemetery, where his body is left to the worms, and his soul to **face** an angry God, on the great judgment day.

III.—Now look at the **blessing** which rests upon him "that doeth the will of God." He abideth for ever.

Compare the two characters. Take first, a man of the world, who says in his heart, "I will have as much of the world as ever I can get; I will spend my time, thoughts, money, all that I have to gain what my heart loves, to enjoy myself if I possibly can. I will not keep my heart back from any lust—whether lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. I will have them all."

Now, contrast with this wretched worldling, the believing, obedient child of grace, who does the will of God in coming out of the world, in being separated from it, in abstaining from its society, in leaving it, as far as he can, consistently with his calling in life; and above all things, by having the love of God shed abroad in his heart. Mark how he seeks and endeavours not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world, but by the power of God's grace, to be separated from it in body, soul, and spirit. This man does the will of God, for God's command is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." He does the will of God in coming out and being separate; he does also the will of God in believing in His dear Son; he does the will of God by repenting of his sins with godly sorrow, which needs not to be repented of; he does the will of God by keeping close to His word, ever desirous to know His will and do it; he does the will of God by seeking to have testimonies, tokens, manifestations of the pardoning mercy and love of God to his soul, prizing the application of atoning blood and love more than thousands of gold and silver; he does the will of God when he chooses to suffer afflictions with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He does the will of God when he chooses to suffer persecution rather than deny his Master; when he would bear any amount of shame and scorn sooner than comply with the maxims and invitations of an ungodly world; and when he would sooner live alone with the Bible in his hand, and God's presence in his soul than be introduced to the highest company, mix with the most refined and educated, or the most polished society upon earth. He does the will of God when he seeks to have his life regulated by the revealed will of God, repents early of his sins when he is entangled in them, and seeks to have the blood of the Lamb

sprinkled upon his conscience to purge it from their guilt, love, and power. And he does the will of God by ever labouring still to look right on, still to believe that what God has said is true, to stand by the truth and power of God's word, come what will, and suffer what he may.

Now such a man does the will of God, and God declares of him that "he abideth for ever." The work of God is in that man's heart, and that work abides for ever. When all empty profession comes to nought; when all boasting ceases; when loud talkers are silent in darkness, then the quiet, secret, and sacred work of God upon that man's soul will shine forth more and more. It abides, and therefore he abides. It is God's work in his heart and is not to be put out by the great extinguisher, nor blown out by the gusts of temptation, like a candle in a gale of wind. The love and goodness of God are with him in all his troubles, attend a dying bed, and go with him into eternity; when the work of God's grace upon his soul will be crowned with everlasting glory. Then he will stand for ever as a pillar in the temple of God and go no more out.

Now contrast the two. Here are two people now before me, sitting in the same pew, both professors of religion, but one, a secret lover of the world, and the other, a secret lover of God. They both can talk pretty much the same language, read the same Bible, sing the same hymns, and hear the same preaching; but one's heart goes out after his covetousness, after his lusts; and the other's heart goes out after his God. Now what will be the end of these two men? The one, when death, the great extinguisher comes, will be silent in darkness; and the other will shine like the stars for ever and ever. He lives well, will die well, and will rise well; for he will rise to immortal glory, when the Lord comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

## THE MALADY AND THE REMEDY

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, in 1845

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:23-26

There **are two points** that every gospel preacher should never cease to enforce upon the consciences of those who desire to fear God. One is, the utter fall of man; and the other, the complete salvation of the elect through the blood and righteousness of Immanuel. In these two points there must be no trifling, no compromise. On the one hand, the fall of man is never to be set forth in any other way but as thorough and complete; and on the other, the recovery by the mediation and work of the Son of God must be set forth as entire and as complete as the fall. If the fall be half way, the recovery will be but half way; but if the fall be to the very deepest centre of ruin, guilt and misery, then the recovery will be to the very highest point of glory, salvation and bliss. Thus, like tenon and mortice, they fit into each other, and the one moves side by side with the other. So that in preaching we cannot separate the utter fall of man from the complete salvation of those who are interested in covenant love and blood.

In the text the apostle in the most decisive manner declares the utter ruin of man. Of the elect, in common with the whole of Adam's fallen progeny, he asserts in the most direct and decisive terms: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." He shows here the fall of man in two distinct points of view. First, "**All have sinned.**" All God's people before they are called by grace, before made new creatures by the operation of the Spirit

of God upon their hearts, before quickened into divine and spiritual life—of them it is true, **all** have sinned. Does not conscience bear a responsive echo to what God the Spirit has here declared? Does not conscience in a living man's bosom strike in with this solemn testimony? Who in this congregation that fears God can stand up, look the Almighty in the face, and say: I have not sinned? John says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

All the election of grace know and feel themselves to be sinners, when righteousness is laid to the line, and judgment to the plummet; when the sins that they have committed are brought before their eyes, and laid with weight and power upon their consciences. Many of the Lord's family have been gross sinners, the vilest of sinners, before the Lord touched their hearts by His grace—perhaps living in drunkenness, swearing, lying, thieving and adultery! Many of the quickened family of God—when they look to the rock whence they were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence they were digged—know that they lived in the commission of open sins and iniquities! But all the Lord's people have not been open, coarse, profane sinners, in this sense of the word. Guardians, parents, morality and various influences have so operated that some at least of the Lord's family have not been left to commit gross open sin. But are they one whit better? In the eye of man they are. But in the eye of God are they one whit better? If the unclean glance is adultery—if the angry thought is murder—if the rising pride of the heart be a dethroning of God from His pre-eminence—if God weigh the intents of the heart—if His all-seeing eye judges men by motives—if the very thought of foolishness is sin, and the very secret movement of the heart towards evil is in the sight of God stamped with awful and horrible iniquity—who can escape the charge of being a sinner in God's sight?

But the apostle adds another word, that none may escape; he throws an ample net and encloses all that float in the stream; he will allow none to swim through its meshes. He therefore says: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." There is a

stroke to cut you down! You may say you have not been an open sinner; no one can charge you with drunkenness, whoredom, theft, blasphemy and other sins that men commonly indulge in. But see how this word cuts you down to the ground in a moment!  
**"Come short of the glory of God."**

What is it to come short of the glory of God? It is to act without a view to His glory. Now everything that we have ever done which has not been done with a single eye to God's glory, has the brand of sin stamped on it. But who in an unregenerate state, who, as the fallen son of a fallen parent, ever had an eye to the glory of God? Did such a thing ever enter into man's natural heart as to speak to God's glory, act to His glory, consult His glory and live to His glory? Before ever such a thought, such a desire can cross our breast, we must have seen Him who is invisible; we must have had a view by faith of the glory of the Three-One God; we must have had an eye given us by the Holy Ghost to see that glory outshining all creature good. Every movement, then, of the selfish heart, every desire to gratify, please and exalt self, is a coming short of the glory of God. This stamps all natural men's religious services with the brand of sin. It leaves the religious in the same awful state as the irreligious; it hews down the professing world with the same sword that cuts down the profane world. When men in a state of nature are what is called "religious", is their religion's end and aim the glory of God—the glory of free grace—the glory of the Mediator between God and men—the glory of the Holy Ghost, the only Teacher of God's people? Take it at its best, its brightest shape, is it not another form of selfishness, to exalt their own righteousness, and climb to heaven by the ladder of their own doings? And is not this a coming short of the glory of God? But besides that, the very glory of God requires that every one accepted in His sight should be without spot, speck, stain, or blemish. A pure God cannot accept, cannot look upon, cannot be pleased with impurity; and just in proportion to the infinite purity and ineffable holiness of Jehovah, must all impurity, all carnality, all unholiness and the slightest deviation from absolute perfection be hateful and horrible in His sight.

Now who can say that he has ever brought forth a righteousness which can bear this close inspection? Who can say he has cleansed his heart and hands from evil? Where, where is the bosom in which sin has not made her nest? Where is the mind that is free from "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life"? Where is the heart that is a pattern of the image of the Lord of life and glory? But if we come short of this in any one particular—if we deviate from it for a single moment of our lives, for a single breath we draw—we fall immediately under the curse of an avenging law. Thus this awful sentence in a moment sweeps away man's righteousness, as the north wind sweeps away the mists: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." **Ga 3:10** By one blast of this north wind of God's terrible justice, the works of man, and all his righteousness are swept away as an unclean thing, and he stands naked, shivering and guilty before a holy and tremendously just Jehovah.

Now this all the election of grace are brought more or less to feel. It is a solemn and indispensable preparation of the heart for mercy;—it is the introduction by the hand of the Spirit into the antechamber of the King of kings. It is the bringing of the soul to that spot, that only spot, where grace is felt, received and known. It is therefore, utterly indispensable for the election of grace, for all the ransomed and quickened family of God to have this felt in their conscience, that they have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. What painful sensations and piercing convictions are experienced in every conscience that has felt the weight of sin, by knowing experimentally the purity, holiness and righteousness of Jehovah discovered to the heart!

But how this prepares the soul for, something better and brighter! Did the fall of Adam take God unawares? Was it not foreseen by His all-prescient eye? It was. God permitted the Fall to take place according to His own wise appointment, that there might be established on the foundation of the Fall His own glory—that there might be a righteousness brought in as far superior to

Adam's righteousness, as heaven is superior to earth, as the sun outshines the faintest and feeblest twinkling star. Therefore it was necessary for the display of grace, for the manifestation of the mercy and favour of God to the chosen race, that the Fall should take place. By the Fall, the mercy, grace and wisdom of God were to be displayed in the salvation and glorification of His own peculiar people.

This leads me to the second part of the subject set forth so amply, so clearly in the words of the text. "Being justified freely by His grace..." What does "grace" mean? What is its spiritual signification? It means, simply, **favour**; and favour irrespective of the worthiness or worthlessness of the party toward whom that favour is shown. Grace is the free flowing forth of infinite condescension and tender love from the bosom of Jehovah to a chosen race, irrespective of all that should be found in them that might provoke God to withdraw His favour from them utterly.

1. The **sovereignty** of grace is one of its most blessed features: that it chooses freely its own objects; that it never consults the will of man, but visits those objects that infinite wisdom and infinite mercy has seen fit to select. Man, rebel man, may kick at the sovereignty of grace, and accuse the holy Jehovah of injustice in the exercise of this sovereignty. But I believe His dear family will all be made to bow to it sooner or later with holy admiration and heartfelt adoration; and instead of rebelling against it, this will be the feeling of the soul when grace visits the heart: "What! me, Lord?" How it humbles, melts and dissolves the heart into contrition and brokenness before God, ever to believe that grace should be fixed upon so worthless and so vile a wretch! And the deeper we sink into a knowledge and feeling of our base original, the more shall we admire and adore the sovereignty of grace in choosing us, and bringing us to a knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

2. But besides the sovereignty of grace, there is its **freeness**; that it flows freely forth from the bosom of God; that it wants no conditions to be performed by the creature, requires no good



hearts, demands no good lives—though it **makes** good hearts, and though it **makes** good lives when it comes; but in the first instance, when it flows freely forth from the bosom of God, it demands no good heart, and no good life, on the part of the favoured object; but flows freely forth—as freely as the air flows in the bosom of the sky, as freely as the river pours forth its stream into the bosom of the sea.

3. Another feature of grace is, it is **superabounding**. O sweet and blessed word! that grace superabounds over all the aboundings of our sin; that however high the tide of sin may rise, there is a springtide of grace that flows over all; that however deep the waves of corruption may appear to be—deep beyond the fathom-line of human intellect—yet there is a sea of grace deeper still, an unfathomable ocean of eternal mercy and eternal love, as far beyond all the demerits of the creature, as the creature is lower than Jehovah "the God of all grace."

Now, this grace—in its sovereignty, in its freeness and in its superaboundings—is manifested chiefly in two things; one is, in setting forth a **complete propitiation**—the other, in bringing in a **spotless righteousness**.

What do we want as sinners? What does conscience crave when guilt lies upon it? Is there anything so suitable, anything so precious, as redemption and propitiation? Both are implied in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation."

But what is propitiation? By propitiation we are to understand, a sacrifice acceptable to Jehovah, by which God, or rather His attributes are propitiated; whereby God can be favourable, whereby mercy, grace, pardon, can freely flow forth. Now sin, and the law condemning sin, barred out, barred back, the favour of God. They were the opposing obstacle to the love of God. For God cannot, as God, love sin and sinners; therefore, the sin of man, and the holy law of God, the transcript of His infinite and

eternal purity, barred back, so to speak, the favour of God. It was needful, then, that this barrier should be removed, that a channel might be provided through which the grace and mercy of God might flow: in a word, that sin might be blotted out, and that the law might be accomplished and fulfilled in all its strictest requirements; or, as the text closes it, that God "might be just"—retaining every righteous attribute, not sacrificing one of His holy perfections—and yet, though just, perfectly just, "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." But how was this to be effected? No seraph, no bright angel could ever have devised a way. It lay locked up in the bosom of the Three-One God from everlasting; and that was—that the only-begotten Son of God, who lay from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person," should become a bleeding Lamb—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world **Re 13:8**;—that He should take into union with His own divine Person, human nature, "the flesh and blood of the children"—pure, spotless and holy—and offer up that nature, that body which God prepared for Him, a holy sacrifice. When He came into the world the sacrifice began, and every holy thought, every holy word and every holy action, in suffering and performing, that passed through His heart, dropped from His lips, or was performed by the hands of the only-begotten Son of God, when He was upon earth, was part of that sacrifice. But the grand consummation of it **the offering up of that body especially** was, when it was nailed to the accursed tree, and His blood was shed to put away sin. Now, this is the propitiation, the redemption, the sacrifice—the way, the only way, whereby sin is expiated—the way, the only way, whereby sin is pardoned.

But in order that this blessed sacrifice and atoning propitiation may pass over to us; that its value, validity, efficacy and blessedness may be felt in our consciences; there must be that wrought in our souls whereby it is embraced. The only salvation for our souls is the propitiation made by Jesus upon Calvary's tree. There is no other sacrifice for sin but that. But **how is that to pass into our hearts?** How is the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice to be made personally ours? It is by faith. Does not the

Holy Ghost declare this by the mouth of the apostle? "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood."

Now, this is the turning point in the soul's salvation. This is the grand point to have decided in a man's conscience before God. This is the Cape to be doubled by every one that sets forth upon the sea of salvation. Before he can double this Cape, he is driven back by storms, and tossed by winds; and often he fears lest he should be engulfed in the billows. But when, by living faith, he is enabled to double this Cape, to see the propitiation through the blood of the Lamb, to feel his very heart and soul going out after, and leaning upon, and feeling a measure of solid rest and peace in the blood of the sacrifice offered upon Calvary—then he has doubled the Cape of Good Hope, then he has passed into the Pacific Ocean from the stormy Atlantic; and then he begins to receive into his conscience a measure of the favour and grace of the Lord God Almighty.

But before we can see the efficacy of Christ's atoning blood, we must see by faith the **Person** of Immanuel. There all our faith centres. If we have never seen Jesus by the eye of faith, what is our profession worth? Is not this life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent? Does not the apostle say: "Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus?" Was not this the bent of the apostle's soul and heart?—"Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before." Was he not straining every sinew pressing forward to "know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings?" Was not that the goal to which the heavenly minded man was urging his course—to know the bleeding Lamb of God, to feel the power of His resurrection in his heart, and to be led by the divine Spirit into secret communion with His sufferings, so as to have a measure of His suffering image stamped upon his tender conscience? Before then we can have faith in this atoning blood, we must see the glory of the Person of the Lord of life. Said John: "We beheld His glory, **the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father**, full of grace and truth." Were your eyes ever anointed to

behold the glory of Jesus? Did your faith ever contemplate—did your hope ever anchor in—did your love ever flow forth to the glorious Person of Immanuel? Was He ever precious to your soul? ever "altogether lovely" in your eyes? so that you could say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Now, if **as convinced of your sin against God** you have seen this Person by the eye of faith, you have had faith flowing out of your soul to His atoning blood; for His atoning blood derives all its value, all its validity, and all its efficacy from its being the blood of that glorious Person. Upon that atoning blood we then view infinite dignity stamped, as it is the blood of the Person of Him who was God-Man; and we then see the dignity, immensity and glory of the Godhead of Jesus stamped upon the sufferings and blood that flowed from His pure Manhood. When we see that by the eye of faith, what a rich stream does it become! what a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness! what value is stamped upon it to purge and cleanse the guilty polluted conscience!

Now, when this is known and felt, the soul is justified; justification passes over from the mind of God into the bosom of the sinner. He never was, in the mind of God, in an unjustified state; but he was so in his own conscience and as touching the law, and as regards his standing as a sinner before the eyes of a holy Jehovah. But the moment he is enabled by living faith to touch and take hold of the atoning blood of the Lamb of God, justification passes over into his soul, and he becomes freely justified, pardoned and accepted, through the blood of sprinkling upon his conscience; and he stands before God whiter and brighter than snow, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin."

But, you will observe, the apostle does not necessarily connect assurance, nor does he necessarily connect consolation **the highest consolation, that is** with faith in His blood. There is many a poor, trembling, doubting, fearing sinner who has faith in Jesus' blood, and yet has not experienced the full liberty of the gospel. He has believed in Jesus, and yet has not received into

his heart that Spirit of adoption, that Spirit which beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. He has fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel; he has believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God; he has looked to the atoning blood of the only sacrifice God accepts for sin; and he has felt in a measure—not perhaps a full measure, not in a measure that altogether satisfies—but he has felt a measure of peace, pardon, salvation and love flowing into his bosom through that atoning blood. It has been "precious blood" to him. Faith may not have been very powerful—who shall define its extent? it may not have lasted long—who is to define its duration? but if ever that blood has been seen by the eye of living faith, and rested upon for eternal life, and a measure of peace has been felt through the sprinkling of it by the Holy Ghost on the conscience—that soul has received justification; it has passed over from the mind of God into that sinner's heart and conscience.

But the apostle adds: "That God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Thus, wherever the blood of the Lamb has been looked unto and believed in, there the righteousness of God, which is "unto and upon all them that believe," is freely communicated. Pardon through blood, and justification through righteousness, always go together. They are parts of the same salvation; both branches of the finished work of the Son of God. Whoever receives pardon through blood, receives justification through righteousness; for it is "unto all and upon all"—imputed unto, clothed upon—"them that believe." Then what a wonderful termination of all! "That God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Are they not wondrous words? Are weightier, more wonderful words to be found through all the Bible? "That He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Does not the justice of God stand arrayed against the sinner? Does not the justice of God condemn him in his minutest thoughts, in his most secret motives, in every word of his lips, every conception of his heart, every action of his hands? Can this divine attribute be sacrificed? Can God in the slightest degree, for

a single moment, cease to be just? If He ceased to be just, He would cease to be God. If one attribute of the divine character could suffer the most momentary eclipse; if the faintest shade of darkness could pass over the character of Him who dwelleth in the light, which no man can approach unto—He would cease to be the infinite, eternal Jehovah. No. The things of time and sense may fall into ruin; the sun may drop from the sky; the heavens may be rolled back like a scroll, the earth and its elements be dissolved by fervent heat, and the inhabitants thereof die in like manner; every star may fall from its sphere, and every planet vanish from its place—but Jehovah stands unchanged and unchangeable amid the wreck of ages, and amid the universal dissolution of all transitory things. He cannot for one moment sacrifice one of His attributes. Every created thing, every finite intelligence, must sooner be annihilated, than Jehovah sacrifice or suffer the slightest tarnish of any one of His eternal attributes.

Yet God can be just, infinitely just, scrupulously just, preserving His attribute of justice unchanging and unchangeable, and still be "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The way in which this was effected will take endless eternity to understand and a boundless eternity to admire and adore. That the only-begotten Son of God—He who is equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost—should come down to this lower world, take upon Him the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, become a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—suffer, groan, agonize, bleed and die—in order that the justice of God might still stand, and the salvation of men still be secured; that the mercy of God might flow forth unimpeded by the demands of unblemished justice—what a subject for eternity itself, not to exhaust, for it is inexhaustible, but to explore. Thus, by the mediation of the Son of God, justice was maintained in all its inviolable integrity. Nay, more, the justice of God was highly magnified thereby: for when the Lord of life and glory was "made of a woman, made under the law," and fulfilled the solemn requisitions and holy demands of that law, as the Scripture says, He "magnified" it and "made it honourable;" He stamped an eternal dignity and immense and unspeakable value upon the

law, by condescending to obey and fulfil it. So that, so far from the justice of God being diminished, it was rather heightened and magnified by the mediation of the Son of God. Thus He not only is just in the highest sense of the word, but He also can be and is the "justifier of him, which believeth in Jesus."

But what is meant by the expression "the justifier?" It means that God can count man as righteous, can freely pardon his sins, can graciously accept his person, can impute to him righteousness without works and can bring him to the eternal enjoyment of Himself. And who is the character that He thus brings to Himself by justifying him? "He that believeth in Jesus." What simplicity, and yet what sweetness and suitability is there in the gospel plan! Say it ran thus: "That God might be just, and yet the justifier of him that worketh, that pleaseth God by his own performances, that produceth a righteousness satisfactory to the eyes of infinite purity." Who then could be saved? Would there be a single soul in heaven? No: such a word as that would trample down the whole human race into hell. But when it runs thus: That it is the mind and purpose of God, His eternal counsel which cannot pass away—that He is the "justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"—the poor, the needy, the exercised, the tempted, the distressed and the perplexed, that believe in Jesus, that look to Jesus and rest in His Person, blood, righteousness and love for all things—that these are justified, that these are pardoned, that these are graciously received, and saved with an everlasting salvation—how sweet, how suitable, does the gospel that declares this become to the living, believing soul!

Now you must know—if conscience is honest in your bosom—you must know whether you have ever believed in Jesus, or not. Such a mighty revolution can never take place in a man's soul without his knowing something about it. Memory can chronicle a number of insignificant events—birthdays of children, marriage days, trifling occurrences of childhood and youth. And shall memory not chronicle that important era in a man's life, that mighty revolution whereby he passed from death unto life, whereby he was manifested to be a saved soul by believing in the blood and

righteousness of the only-begotten Son of God? Have you never had glances, glimpses, views, sights and discoveries of the Son of God in His beauty? As you have lain upon your bed, as you have sat by your fireside, as you have heard the word preached, as you have read the Scriptures, as solemn feelings have been raised up in your heart from time to time—has there been no seeing by the eye of living faith the once-crucified but now glorified Immanuel? What! no panting after Him? No longings? No intense desires, no sweet communications, no precious tastes, no divine discoveries, no heart full of love toward His Name? Surely, if you are a believer in the Lord of life and glory, some of these things in a measure—I dare not set up a very high standard in these things—but surely some of these things in a measure have passed in your bosom. Now, if you have known what it is thus to go forth in the exercise of living faith upon the only-begotten Son of God, God has justified you; for He is the justifier, the acceptor, the approver, the pardoner of him which believeth in Jesus. "Who is he that condemneth? It is God that justifieth."

"But O" say you **and I say so too** "my guilty conscience often condemns me—my backslidings often condemn me—my inward and outward slips and falls often condemn me—and my own heart often proves me perverse!" It is so, to our shame and sorrow. But shall these things alter the eternal purpose of God? Shall the inward condemnations of conscience cancel the grand act of justification on the part of Jehovah? Shall doubts, fears, sinkings, despondencies and exercises stretch forth their hand to blot the believer's name out of the book of life? Shall they dash away the validity and efficacy of the blood of sprinkling, nullify the work of the Son of God, and prove the Holy Ghost a liar? They may tease and harass, they may distress and perplex **and it is good to be exercised about them**, but they shall not eventually condemn, for "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." He that believes in Jesus is passed from death unto life, from condemnation unto justification.

Is any other gospel worth the name? Is any other way of salvation **so called, though really the way of death and**



**damnation** worth a glance? Is not this the only way? and do not all other ways terminate in disappointment and despair? What a mercy it is that there should be such a way! What are we? Are we not, in ourselves, lost sinners? Is there any hope for any of us under the law, in our own righteousness, by our own performances, or through our own resolutions? Are not all these things as the spider's web? But is there not a glorious Mediator at the right hand of the Father? Is there not seated on a throne of grace a great High Priest over the House of God, able to save to the uttermost? And does not this once crucified but now glorified Jesus, graciously speak to every sin-troubled bosom and every exercised heart: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" Is it not better to trust in His Name, to look to His blood, to shelter beneath His righteousness, and to yield up our heart's affections into His sacred hands and keeping, than to trust in a name to live, to a form of godliness, to our own intentions, our own hearts, or our own works? I am sure the Lord will bring all His people here—though often by "terrible things in righteousness"—by cutting up and cutting to pieces every delusive hope, every presumptuous claim, every vain-confident expectation—and by enabling them, with simplicity and godly sincerity, and in the actings of that living faith of which He Himself is the author and finisher, to give themselves, wholly and solely, up into the hands of the Lord of life and glory, to be saved by Him with an everlasting salvation.

The Lord in mercy make it more and more manifest! We are perplexed sometimes because our faith is so weak and wavering. But the question is not whether our faith be weak and wavering, but whether it is **genuine**. That is the grand question to have decided. You may have strong faith, so called, and it be nothing but awful presumption: you may have weak faith, and yet that faith be genuine.

The Christian often cannot see  
His faith, and yet believes.

I believe there is often more real faith, more genuine trust more

heart-felt confidence in the poor, exercised, plagued, tempted, distressed people of God than in those who stand upon a lofty pinnacle, who never doubt their interest, and think nothing worthy the name of faith but strong assurance. There is often the strongest faith where that faith is the most deeply tried; there is often the most simple, implicit and childlike confidence when it seems as though one blow would dash every spiritual hope to atoms. We see this in the woman with the issue of blood, who touched the hem of the Lord's garment—in the leper who kneeled down before Him, and said: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean"—in the Syrophenician woman, who begged for a few crumbs from the Master's table—and in the centurion, who only wished a word to be spoken, for he was sure that word would produce a healing effect. We see that all these were trembling and fearing characters; yet the Lord declares of the centurion, that He had not seen so great faith, no, not in Israel. And instead of cutting them off as weak in faith, He commended the strength of it.

And thus you may find when all things are most against you, your faith then though tried will be most strong; and perhaps, when all things seem for you and you think your faith is sailing on a fair sea, there may come a storm which shall sadly try it. But whether your faith be weak or strong—whether your consolation be great or small—this is the great point to have decided by God's testimony in an honest conscience—whether we have faith at all. Have we one grain, one spark, one particle of living faith? If we have we are as safe and as secure as the strongest believer.

The Lord shine upon His work where begun, mercifully carry it on, and shed abroad that perfect love which casts out all fear, and bring His people to this blessed spot—to be "determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

## MAN'S DEVICES AND THE LORD'S COUNSEL

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, 17th June, 1841.

"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Proverbs 19:21

Divine sovereignty is stamped upon every page of the Scriptures. I do not mean that the doctrine of divine sovereignty is stated in every chapter of God's Word, but that we shall not find a chapter in which divine sovereignty may not, more or less, be traced. If we open, for instance, the prophecies, divine sovereignty is the basis of them all. If we read the historical books of the Old Testament, divine sovereignty is to be traced in the actions which are there recorded. If we look at the promises which are made to God's people, divine sovereignty is stamped upon them, for they all rest on the immutability of God's counsel; and therefore we may take almost any chapter of the Scriptures at random, and we shall find divine sovereignty engraved upon it.

But divine sovereignty is not merely a matter of **inference**—not merely a doctrine to be gathered from the prophecies and their fulfilment, from the lives of the patriarchs, or from the promises that God has given, and has accomplished to His people. If divine sovereignty were a matter of mere inference, the enemies of God's truth might challenge us to bring forward **direct** passages of Scripture, where the sovereignty of God is set forth; and, therefore, besides the general current of the Scriptures, we have express texts, so as to leave the enemies of God's truth without excuse, and to afford us power to answer their challenge, when they demand of us something more positive than inference. Thus we read, that the Lord will "fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11); that He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11); that "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His

hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. 4:35). And in the verse which I have just read, and from which I hope, with God's blessing, to deliver a few thoughts, we have the same doctrine declared, "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless **the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.**"

Now this doctrine of divine sovereignty, nature can never brook. It is so contrary and so repugnant to every feeling of our carnal minds, that nature will not submit to it as a truth from God. But say some, "I think you must be mistaken in this assertion. Is it not a matter of daily experience, and do we not hear from the mouths of ministers, yourself amongst them, that there are many characters in the professing Church of God, who have received the doctrine into their judgments, without feeling the power of it in their hearts?" Certainly. But is that any proof that nature can receive the doctrine of divine sovereignty?

Let those very persons who have received this doctrine into their judgment, be tried to the quick upon the point; let them be put, for instance, into that situation where Job was placed, let God "put forth His hand, and touch all that they have;" then those who have received the doctrine of divine sovereignty into their judgment, but have never had the feeling power of it in their hearts, would do that which Job did not, "curse God to His face." It is one thing to receive the doctrine as a doctrine, and another thing to submit to it as the truth of God; and no man knows this who has not felt God's eternal and unalterable counsels clash with the purposes of his heart and the intentions of his will, and overturn well nigh every scheme and plan that he has chalked out; and so to have come, by inward experience, to the spot to which the Lord brought His prophet Jeremiah: "Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed" (Jer. 20:7). "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

Now the Lord, in these words, seems to open up to us a little of what the real state of the case is betwixt man and Himself. He gives us a glimpse of what is going on in the restless bosom of

man; removes the veil, as it were, from that busy workshop, displays to us the artificer in full operation, and shows us what is transacting in that busy scene. "There are many devices in a man's heart;" and if you and I know anything of our hearts, we shall say, that God has well depicted what they are, and that which takes place in our minds, day by day, continually.

We gather also from these words that there is an opposition and a conflict betwixt the devices that are in a man's heart, and "the counsel of the Lord;" that these do not move parallel with one another—are not in strict accordance—do not run side by side in concurrent harmony, but that there is an opposition betwixt the two; and yet, though there is this opposition betwixt the "devices in a man's heart" and "the counsel of the Lord," yet "the counsel of the Lord" must stand, and the "devices of a man's heart," when they are opposed to that counsel must go to wreck.

If we look a little through the Old Testament Scriptures, we shall see how the Lord frustrated, in a way of divine sovereignty, the devices that were in a man's heart. For instance, there was the device of the brethren of Joseph; their secret thought was to bring his dreams to nought, to frustrate, if it were possible, those intimations which the Lord had miraculously given, and to overturn those purposes of God, whereby He was about to manifest Joseph's superiority and their inferiority. They had many devices in their hearts, but "the counsel of the Lord" stood; and He made use of their very device to sell Joseph into the hands of the Ishmaelites as a means to bring to pass that which He had purposed in His own eternal mind.

We have another striking instance in the case of Haman. Haman had purposed to cut off the whole nation of the Jews; that was the "device of his heart;" that was the darling project which he indulged in his mind, for the gratification of which he was willing to make the greatest sacrifices, and to run the greatest hazards. But "the counsel of the Lord" stood, and "the counsel of the Lord" was, that Haman should be hanged upon the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai; "the counsel of the Lord" was, that

Mordecai should be "the man whom the king delighteth to honour," and that Haman, who hated him, should be the very person that should put that honour upon him.

But perhaps the conduct of the Jews, when Christ was upon earth, was one of the most striking instances of the devices in a man's heart, and yet of "the counsel of the Lord" standing in opposition to these devices. What was their infernal project? It was utterly to destroy and get rid of Him, who, by His preaching "tormented" them; it was to remove Him out of the way, by putting Him to a violent death. Well, these devices in part succeeded. They were allowed to do that which they had purposed, but the Lord wonderfully overruled the very devices of their hearts, that they, by fulfilling their own purposes, might fulfil His and that His counsel might yet stand, though their devices seemed for a time to succeed.

Now, these which I have mentioned, are cases in **unregenerate** men, but we find it also to stand good in **regenerate men**, that "there are many devices in a man's heart," but that "the counsel of the Lord" alone shall stand. What a crafty device there was in David's heart, to hide his adultery! What base methods he took to conceal that crime from coming to light! But "the counsel of the Lord" was that that crime should come to light, that it should be made manifest before the eyes of men; and therefore, whatever were the devices of David's heart, the Lord took care that His "counsel should stand."

So in the case of Abraham and Sarah, there was a device in their hearts, that they should have a son in some way which was not appointed of the Lord, that they should hurry the Lord's work, and hasten the Lord's time, and thus introduce the child of promise, not, as the Lord had purposed, in a way of miracle, but in a way accordant with nature. Such was the device of their hearts, but "the counsel of the Lord still was made to stand." Isaac must be the seed of promise; and their devices, in a measure, succeeding, only served to introduce bondage and misery into their house.

But to come to those particulars which more immediately concern ourselves.

Let us look then at a child of God, before the Lord is pleased to quicken his soul into spiritual life. Though dead in sin, he is "a vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory," yea, chosen before the foundation of the world as a vessel, to be made meet for the master's use. But how many devices are there in that man's heart, to frustrate the purposes of God concerning him! How he would have damned his soul a thousand times, if the Lord had let him! How he was suspended continually, as it were, by a hair, over the very brink of the precipice, and how in those times, though he knew not the Lord, yet still the Lord "girded him," as He girt Cyrus (Isa. 45:5), and he was preserved in Christ, before he was "called" (Jude 1:1) to the knowledge of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent!"

All through the life, then, of a vessel of mercy, before the Lord calls him by His grace, there is the standing of "the counsel of the Lord," in opposition to the "devices" that have been working in that man's heart. But we will now look at him, just a little before the Lord begins the work of grace upon his soul. I believe in most cases, there is a concurrence of providential circumstances, often in a way of affliction; the Lord perhaps brings down the body by disease, or removes some idol, or cuts off the desire of his eyes at a stroke, or brings him into circumstances of temporal distress, and thus, usually speaking, there are some concurrent circumstances, which, though they do not prepare a man's heart to receive grace **for "the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord"**, yet they put a man into a certain posture, place him in a certain position which is the most suitable place for God to meet his soul in, and to visit him with the Holy Spirit.

Well then, here is one whom the Lord is about to meet with His grace—whom He is about to quicken into spiritual life. Now the Lord shall perhaps give a stab to all that man's worldly prospects; he shall make, as it were, a cut at every fond desire and every

airy vision and every lofty castle, which that man is endeavouring to erect: or He shall bring sickness and disease upon him; or some cutting disappointment, so as to separate him from the world;—so that the things of time and sense shall wear a sickly aspect, and he shall find no pleasure, and take no comfort in them. Yet all this time the man is devoid of spiritual life—destitute of the grace of God, but still, through a concurrence of providential circumstances, brought into that posture, and into that place where the grace of God, when it comes into his heart, will find him in a position suitable to receive it.

I have often thought of the way in which the Lord seemed pleased to begin His work of grace in my heart. I was, at that time, a young man at Oxford, not indeed what is called "a gay young man"—not living an immoral life, but still utterly dead in sin, "without God and without hope in the world," looking forward to prospects in life, surrounded by worldly companions, and knowing as well as caring absolutely nothing spiritually for the things of God. Well, the Lord, in His mysterious providence, removed me from that place, and took me to Ireland, contrary to the wishes of my friends, and shut me up, as it were, for more than a year and a half away from the society of the world, brought me into great natural affliction of mind, and then, in that affliction of mind He was pleased, as I trust, to communicate His grace to my soul, and quicken me into spiritual life.

Now I have looked sometimes with wonder upon the circumstance of His taking me from all my former companions, and putting me there in quietness and solitude. When life came, this quiet and secluded nook seemed to be like a little nursery, where the infant plant of grace might for a while be fostered, before I was thrust out into a rude world. It seemed to be a little spot, where the Lord might not merely begin His work of grace, but strengthen it in some measure, that when I was thrown back amongst my old companions, I might have power sufficient to resist their wiles, and that I might be separated, as indeed I most effectually was, from them. And thus looking at the Lord's dealing with my own soul, and at His way of working with others, I have



sometimes seen what a concurrence there has been of providential circumstances, which, though they were not grace, yet were so necessary in the chain of divine appointments, that could one link have been broken, the whole chain must have fallen to the ground.

But we pass on to look at the first beginning of the work of grace upon that man's soul whose case we are attempting to describe. "There are many devices in that man's heart" when the Lord first begins with him—and one of his first devices is to please God, and to work out a righteousness which shall be acceptable in His holy and pure eyes. Not knowing in its full extent the breadth and spirituality of God's law, not being deeply and powerfully acquainted with the corruptions of fallen nature, not being led into "the chambers of imagery," so as to see all the idolatrous tracings upon the wall, he seeks for the most part to establish his own righteousness, and thus, in some manner, to conciliate the favour of God.

Well here is a device in a man's heart; but the "counsel of the Lord" is that he shall not establish that righteousness, that he shall not "find his hands," that his attempt shall not prosper; and therefore by bringing powerful convictions into his conscience, by thrusting "the sword of the Spirit" into his "joints and marrow," by laying open the requisitions and spirituality of His holy law to his soul, He frustrates those devices, He roots up those plans, He breaks down those airy castles; and this foolish creature, who was fostering a pleasing device, in some way to gain God's favour, He levels and prostrates as a ruined wretch before Him. Well then the devices of this man's heart have been frustrated.

He has been trying to gain the favour of God, and instead of gaining the favour of God by his righteousness, he only finds himself farther from the mark than ever. He has been trying some method to conciliate God's favour, and to please Him, and to serve Him, love, honour and obey Him; and yet the more he labours in tugging and rowing his boat against the stream, the more violently does the current of sin come down, to bear him

away from the point to which he is aiming, and carry him into a wide and vast sea, where he has neither chart, nor rudder, nor compass. Then, in this state "he knows not what to do;" he comes, as the Psalmist says, to "his wit's end" (Ps. 107:27). If he cannot please God by his own righteousness, he knows no other method of gaining his favour; for Christ, at this time, is not made known to him, he has no spiritual acquaintance with the sacrifice of the Son of God; his eyes have not been anointed, so as to discover any glimpse of that righteousness, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe. Therefore, in this bewildered state, he comes to "his wit's end," feeling that the only thing that he knows of to gain God's favour is effectually frustrated, that all his props are removed, and all his confidence clean taken away.

"The counsel of the Lord" then, is that Christ should be made known to this man. The Lord has two grand outlines of divine counsel in this matter, for though they in effect centre in one, yet, as far as our experience is concerned, there are two. The one, the humbling and breaking down of the creature into nothingness; the other, the exalting and setting up of Christ upon the wreck and ruin of the creature. Then "the counsel of the Lord" is, that Christ should be set up in this poor creature's heart, that the Lord of life and glory should be exalted in his broken spirit and contrite soul. And therefore He brings Christ near, He raises up faith in the soul, whereby Christ is apprehended, He drops in some sensations of Christ's preciousness, and bedews the conscience with some drops of the Saviour's atoning blood, whereby a measure of divine peace is experienced, a sense of heavenly love is enjoyed, an embracing of the Saviour in the arms of faith is experimentally known.

Now, as "the devices in a man's heart" are many, there is a new device that comes into the heart of the soul whom the Lord has thus blessedly healed by atoning blood, which is, to maintain those sweet views which he has experienced, to keep firm and safe hold of these sensations which he has enjoyed, and not to lose out of his heart that taste of pleasure which he is experiencing. These are the "devices in the man's heart," but "the counsel of the Lord" shall stand in spite of all these devices. "The

counsel of the Lord" is that Christ should be all in all, that He should stand exalted upon the wreck and ruin of the creature.

Now, when the soul is brought to know a little of Christ's atoning blood, and to have by faith a sight and an enjoyment of Christ's glorious righteousness, it does not see what a secret fund there is of creature strength in the heart, nor what inward pride and self-righteousness are working up from the bottom of the carnal mind. It does not see that self has not yet been thoroughly humbled and abased, nor yet Christ made known in that way in which He is to be made known hereafter. And therefore the creature not being at this time humbled, the devices in this man's heart are, to retain that which the Lord has given, to keep firm hold of that which the Lord has put into his hand; and by his spirituality of mind, earnestness in prayer, continually searching God's Word, abstaining from "all appearance of evil," and living to the best of his power to God's glory, to maintain firm possession of that which has been given him by God.

But "the counsel of the Lord" is, that the creature should learn its weakness, that helplessness should not be a mere doctrine received into the judgment, but that it should be a solemn truth which is experienced in a man's soul. This weakness a man can only learn by being placed in that position, where, when he would make use of his strength, he finds it is all gone, and is become perfect weakness. Little by little his sweet sensations evaporate; little by little he loses the light and life and consolation and peace, which has been enjoyed; little by little he is not so spiritual as he was, nor so earnest at "the throne of grace;" the Word of God does not seem so precious, the companionship of the people of God not so eagerly sought after, and the ordinances of God's house lose their relish. And as these heavenly feelings disappear, and get dispersed out of a man's heart, there arises a succession of very different things which come to take their room. As spirituality diminishes, worldliness increases; as humility abates, pride resumes strength; as the sight of Christ's righteousness is diminished, his own righteousness rises to view;

and as the Lord's favour is less sweetly and blessedly felt, there must be a kind of making up for it by some work of the creature.

Well then, here are "devices in this man's heart," but "the counsel of the Lord shall stand." And "the counsel of the Lord," is this, to exalt Christ upon the abasement of the creature, to make the strength of Christ perfect in our weakness, and the wisdom of Christ perfect in our folly, and to establish Christ's righteousness upon the ruin of the creature's righteousness. Now the man does not understand what the Lord is about, in frustrating his devices, and establishing His own counsel; nor does he see what the Lord is really doing, by leading him into this strange mysterious path; nor can he readily believe that the Lord is working at all, because His hand is concealed. But the Lord's work is to pull down as much as to build up, to root out as much as to plant, to bring the beggar to the dung-hill just as much as to raise him amongst princes, and exalt him to a throne of glory; it is just as much His work to kill as to make alive, to make poor as to make rich, to reduce to hunger as to "feed with the bread of life," and to cast the soul down into the dust of self-abasement, as to lift it up by a sweet manifestation of Christ.

"The counsel of the Lord," then must stand, whatever be the devices in this man's heart; and this counsel is to bring the creature low, that he may exalt Jesus high, to strip the creature of all its attainments, to pluck out the peacock-feathers, that it may be poor and needy and naked and empty and bare. Well now, when a man is in this state, he will begin to sigh and cry and to groan unto God "being burdened." And now, perhaps, a fresh device will work in his heart, "Oh, now that I am groaning to the Lord, the blessing will soon come; now that I am humbled, and lying at the foot of the cross, surely the Lord cannot be very far from me. Am I not just the character that the Lord has described in His Word, 'poor and needy'? Do I not stand before Him an undone wretch? Surely the Lord will appear very shortly." Now these are some of the devices that are in this man's heart, but "the counsel of the Lord" is distinct from this man's devices, and "the counsel of the Lord shall stand."

Not deep enough yet; there must be another plunge down into the billows. The creature is not stripped enough yet; self-righteousness is not taken away enough yet; self-sufficiency is not broken down enough yet. Another stripping must yet take place, another crushing into the dust, another breaking up and breaking down, another bringing the soul lower than ever it was before. The delay then of this answer to his prayers, the Lord not appearing just when he wants Him to appear, slighting his requests, denying a listening ear to his cry, hiding Himself altogether, not giving him any glimpse of His countenance, and drawing back as he would fain draw near—all these things so puzzle, and seem to be so opposed to the "devices in a man's heart," that he is brought into a greater strait than ever he was before.

And now he seems brought to this point, **that he never shall have the blessing at all**; that as the manifestation has been so long delayed, as the Lord does not appear when he calls upon Him, as He hides His face so from him, and will not be prevailed upon by any of his petitions to give him one look of mercy, the Lord never will come; and he says, "Surely all my past experience must have been a delusion. It could not have been from God. My liberty must have been false liberty. My peace must have been false peace. My joy must have been the joy of the hypocrite. It never could have been from God, or else I should not be in that miserable state in which I am now." Well, the device in this man's heart now is that his experience is not of God.

The device in his heart before, was, that he was so humble, that the Lord was going to appear immediately; but now when the Lord has given him another plunge, brought him deeper still, he says, "the Lord will not appear at all." But, however many be the devices in a man's heart, "the counsel of the Lord still shall stand;" and that counsel shall be to come with favour, to give him some sweet discovery of Christ, to bring a sense of reconciliation into his soul, to revive his spirit, and to make Christ ten thousand times more precious and ten thousand times more lovely than He was before. Well then, this "counsel of the Lord

shall stand," whatever be the devices in a man's heart that stand in opposition to it. And we almost always find that all "the counsels of the Lord" stand in opposition to our devices, and that all our devices must be frustrated, in order that "the counsel of the Lord" should stand.

We will go a little farther. The devices of our heart are generally to find some easy, smooth, flowery path. Whatever benefits we have derived from affliction, whatever mercies we have experienced in tribulation, the flesh hates and shrinks from such a path with perfect abhorrence. And, therefore, there is always a secret devising in a man's heart, to escape the cross, to avoid affliction, and to walk in some flowery meadow, away from the rough road which cuts his feet, and wearies his limbs.

Now then, in the execution of this device, a man shall sometimes come to this point, "I have had a good experience, I have known the Lord, I have felt the power of the gospel, I have tasted the misery of sin, as well as the sweetness of Christ; the Lord has delivered me in many instances, He has blessed my soul in many difficult and dangerous straits, He has raised up in my heart confidence in Him. Well now, why should I not stand in this liberty? Why should I not rest in this experience? Why should I not take up my firm footing upon that ground, which the Lord seems to have set my feet upon?" Here then is a "device in a man's heart," and this device in his heart he will try to execute—that is, instead of being, day by day, a poor, needy, naked wretch who wants deliverance; instead of being, day by day, a helpless creature, who needs the help of the Most High; instead of carrying the cross, suffering tribulation, and walking in a path of temptation and distress, he rests upon the old experience, and takes a natural and carnal footing upon that former work, without the Lord, from time to time, leading him into fresh experience of his mercy, by leading him into fresh experience of his own misery.

Now, I believe that there are some good men in that spot. We read of persons being "at ease in Zion;" well, they are "at ease in

Zion," not at ease in Sinai, nor at ease in Egypt, but they are at ease in Zion. And there are sometimes gracious men who have had a good experience, and have been led by God Himself into an acquaintance with the truth, and yet the Lord for wise purposes ceasing to exercise them, and to plunge them into tribulation, they get into a carnal state, resting upon their former experience, without, having daily instruction from the Lord Himself, and being continually led into those paths in which, and in which alone, Christ is really precious and suitable.

It resembles the case of a man who has been wading through deep poverty. When he was struggling through this slough, if he was a child of God, he knew much of God's providence, and when wonderful help came to him in most trying straits, he would bless, thank, and praise God for succouring him in these difficulties. But the man has emerged from this miry path; he is now settled in some good measure of worldly prosperity. Does he want a God of providence any more? Does he want the postman to bring a letter to his door, containing the very sum which he needed to pay his rent, lest he be dragged to a prison? No. All he has to do is to open his strong box, or to go to his banker, in order to pay every man his own, and discharge every bill. Then a God of providence is no longer known to him as before.

Well, so it is, in an analogous way, with the man who has been deeply exercised and tried in grace. His very deep exercises, his very painful trials, have been a means of showing him what a God of grace is, because they have so emptied his heart, that nothing but grace would do to come in, and fill that empty spot. Then when grace has come, it has so thoroughly filled up the void, the heavenly tenon has so sweetly fitted in with the cut mortise, that there was a sweet reception of "the truth as it is in Jesus," an embracing of it with all the strength of affection that he had. But when a man gets out of the trying path, when he gets into those circumstances spiritually, that I have been describing **naturally**, why then, just as there he lost sight of a God of providence, so, in a great measure, here he loses sight of a God of grace. Therefore, nothing but trials and exercises and

temptations and distresses, can ever make a man know a God of grace, in the same way as nothing but temporal poverty can make a man acquainted with a God of providence.

But though some of God's people are suffered to walk in this easy path, yet there are those whom He will not suffer thus to be "at ease in Zion," and the devices of whose hearts He frustrates by causing His own counsel to stand; for He has "chosen Zion in the furnace of affliction," He has purposed that His people should pass through the fire, he has chosen "an afflicted and poor people, that they should trust in the Lord;" and there, fore, though the Lord does see fit, that some shall be like those described in Amos, who "stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock," yet He takes care that there shall be a remnant of His people that shall be sorely exercised and oppressed and troubled and distressed in their minds, so as to bring them, day by day, to a feeling necessity of a God of all grace, to bless, teach and comfort them.

Another "device in a man's heart" is, that he shall have worldly prosperity; that his children shall grow up around him, and when they grow up, he shall be able to provide for them in a way which shall be best suited to their station in life; that they shall enjoy health and strength and success; and that there shall not be any cutting affliction in his family, or fiery trial to pass through. Now these devices the Lord frustrates. What grief, what affliction, what trouble, is the Lord continually bringing into men's families! Their dearest objects of affection removed from them, at the very moment when they seemed clasped nearest around their hearts! and those who are spared, perhaps, growing up in such a searedness of conscience and hardness of heart, and, perhaps, profligacy of life, that even their very presence is often a burden to their parents instead of a blessing; and the very children who should be their comfort, thorns and briars in their sides! Oh, how the Lord overturns and brings to nought the "devices of a man's heart" to make a paradise here upon earth.



Again, a man in his fleshly mind is generally devising some method or other, whereby he may escape a practical subjection to the gospel—some way or other whereby he may escape walking in the path of self-denial and mortification of the flesh, and crucifixion of "the old man with the affections and lusts." He is generally seeking some way or other to indulge the flesh, and yet, at the same time, to stand in gospel liberty, to have everything that can gratify his carnal mind, and, at the same time, have a well-grounded hope of eternal life. But the Lord says, "No, these two things are not compatible; he that shall live with Christ must die with Christ; he that shall reign with Christ must suffer with Christ; he that shall wear the crown must carry the cross." So that whatever devices there be in a man's heart, or whatever ways and plans he shall undertake to bring his devices to pass, "the counsel of the Lord that shall stand."

When a man is brought to the right spot, and is in a right mind to trace out the Lord's dealings with him from the first, he sees it was a kind hand which "blasted his gourds, and laid them low;" it was a kind hand that swept away his worldly prospects—which reduced him to natural as well as to spiritual poverty—which led him into exercises, trials, sorrows, griefs, and tribulations; because, in those trials he has found the Lord, more or less, experimentally precious.

"Many are the devices of a man's heart." Now you have all your devices; that busy workshop is continually putting out some new pattern; some new fashion is continually starting forth from the depths of that ingenious manufactory which you carry about with you, and you are wanting this, and expecting that, and building up airy castles, and looking for that which shall never come to pass: for "many are the devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand;" and so far as you are children of God, that counsel is a counsel of wisdom and mercy. The purposes of God's heart are purposes of love and affection toward you, and therefore you may bless and praise God, that whatever be the devices of your hearts against God's counsel,

they shall be frustrated, that He may do His will and fulfil all His good pleasure.

## Man's Misery and God's Mercy

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, September 22, 1867

"Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: and he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies." Psalm 106:43, 44, 45

The children of Israel were, as you well know, a typical people, representative by their relationship to God, through a national and external covenant, of that chosen generation, that holy nation, that peculiar people, who stand in a nearer, higher, and more permanent relationship to him through that everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which is all their salvation, and, as made known to their heart by a divine power, is all their desire. (2 Sam. 23:5.) Now there were sundry reasons, and all of them stamped with the manifest impress of infinite wisdom, mercy, and grace on the part of God, why he chose a nation thus to be his peculiar people in external covenant.

1. *First*, it was that he might fulfil that gracious promise given immediately after the fall, whereby he pledged himself by his own word that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was necessary, therefore, that the Messiah, thus promised to come in the flesh to destroy the works of Satan, should spring from the seed of the woman; and that there should be a direct genealogical line preserved and put upon clear and positive record, so as to put it out of all doubt and question that he sprang lineally from Eve. This was secured by God's choosing and calling Abraham, whose genealogy was clear and direct first from Seth, and secondly from Shem, and as such carefully preserved, and adopting the fruit of his loins as a separate and peculiar people. To him, therefore, God renewed in a more clear and positive manner the promise of the Messiah, by declaring that "in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed;"

so that when Christ came according to the flesh, his lineal descent from Abraham could be clearly traced.

2. Another reason was, that God might have a people upon earth who should know his name, serve him acceptably, and worship him according to the rites of his own institution. When we look at the state of the heathen world, both in ancient and modern times, we see that but for this special provision all knowledge of God would have been lost out of the earth. The arts and sciences of civilised life might have attained, as in Greece, the greatest height; but sin and Satan would have reigned triumphantly in every place, and not a solitary soul been found to worship God in spirit and in truth. But by taking a people and communicating to them the true knowledge and worship of himself, God not only made himself known on earth by external revelation, but also raised up and maintained in their midst a spiritual seed to love, serve, and obey him.

3. Another reason was, that there might be an inspired revelation of his mind and will in a written record. There never was a time when the saints of God were without the spoken word, and by this, as proceeding out of the mouth of the Lord, they lived. (Deut. 8:3.) But there was no written word till the time of Moses. He is therefore said to have received the lively (that is, living,) oracles to give unto us. (Acts 7:38.) Among then the special privileges of Israel after the flesh was the being made trustees and depositaries of these written oracles, as the Apostle speaks: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Rom. 3:1, 2.) And to this solemn and weighty trust they were faithful. Among all the sins of the Jewish people, this was not one, that they mutilated, corrupted, or depraved the word of God. Though a standing record against their innumerable crimes, and a faithful witness against their repeated and aggravated idolatries, they never destroyed, mutilated, or softened the accusing testimony, nor blotted out the threatenings and curses whilst they preserved the promises and blessings. If they disobeyed the law, they still

revered it; if they afterwards made it of none effect by their traditions, they scrupulously preserved the letter of it in all its purity and integrity. Their faithfulness here has proved an unspeakable mercy to us who have succeeded to their inheritance. Through God's tender care over his own word, the grand charter remains uncorrupted, and we possess heaven's own title deeds undefaced, uninjured, neither shorn by violent hands, nor swollen by interpolating fingers.

4. Another reason was that God's dealings with them, and their dealings with God, might be upon permanent record, so that the Church in all ages might read as in a glass its own character as typified by the children of Israel, and the character of God as represented by his dealings with them. Now this is the reason why a Psalm like this, which gives us an epitome or brief history of the character and conduct of the children of Israel, both in the wilderness and in the promised land, as ever sinning and rebelling against God, and of his tender mercies toward them in spite of, and amidst all their sins and backslidings, is so instructing, edifying, and encouraging, that we see on the one hand, in their conduct, a representation of our own; and see on the other, in the dealings of God with them, a representation of the merciful dealings of God with us. But as I hope, with God's help and blessing, to show these two points more completely in opening up the words before us, I shall now, without further preface, approach our text, in which I seem to see these four leading, prominent features:

I.—*First*, God's *numerous deliverances* of Israel: "Many times did he deliver him."

II.—*Secondly*, Israel's *base requitals*, and their sad consequence: "But they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *tender regard* with which God beheld them when in their affliction they cried unto him: "Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry."

IV.—And *lastly*, God's *merciful remembrance* for them of his covenant, and the repentance that moved his gracious heart: "And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies."

If you see and feel with me, you will see and feel great beauty and sweetness in the words of our text. I invite you, therefore, who belong to the spiritual Israel, you who know both what you have been and are towards God, and what he has been and is towards you, to listen this morning to a history of yourself, in which you will find abundant matter for shame and sorrow, and to a history also of the goodness and mercy of God, in which you will find abundant matter for praise and thanksgiving.

I.—I have first to show the *numerous deliverances* of the literal Israel as typical and figurative of the numerous deliverances of the spiritual Israel. "Many times did he deliver them."

i. When we read the history of the children of Israel, as so fully and faithfully rendered in the Old Testament, how again and again do we find these words fulfilled. But out of these numerous deliverances, I can now only name a few.

1. Look first then at that great and signal deliverance, when they were bond slaves in Egypt, in seemingly hopeless and helpless servitude. Call to mind their groans and tears, their bruised backs and still more bruised hearts, when the cruel task-masters, at Pharaoh's command, set them to make bricks without straw, and yet exacted the same number as before. See with how fast and firm a hand the cruel Egyptian tyrant held them in that miserable country; how God sent plague after plague, and judgment after judgment upon him; and yet that wicked king hardened his heart and would not let them go. At length, when all other means failed, God sent forth the destroying Angel to smite the first-born, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive in the dungeon, so that through Egypt there was a universal cry, for there was not a house where there

was not one dead. Then, and not till then, did he send them out of the land in haste. But even then, no sooner had they buried their dead, than all God's judgments were forgotten. This implacable king was still determined to hold Israel. He pursued them with his chariots and his horses, and overtook them at the Red Sea. With the foaming waves before, and a ferocious foe behind, how completely did they seem cut off from all help or hope. Despair seized them, and they even quarrelled with their deliverer. "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" (Exodus 14:11.) But how Moses stilled their troubled hearts. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Exodus 14:13, 14.) In this their deep extremity, God spake the word; he bade Moses stretch forth his hand; the mighty waters parted on either side, and through the walls thus made, all the Israelites passed safely, men, women, and children, without suffering the least injury. But when their foes essayed the same, at God's command the waters returned and overwhelmed Pharaoh and all his armed host in the depth of the sea. What a deliverance was this.

2. See again how, when they came into the wilderness, God again and again stretched forth his hand to deliver them. He delivered them from famine by sending down manna daily for food. He delivered them from perishing by thirst by bidding Moses smite the rock, and the waters gushed out. Though he chastised them sorely for their sins, and though the carcasses of the rebels fell in the wilderness, yet he never failed to supply their needs. In that beautiful epitome of their history, which we find in the prayer of the Levites, Nehemiah 9, how truly and touchingly do they speak. "Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou

gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst." (Nehemiah 9:19, 20.)

3. If from the wilderness we follow them into the land of Canaan, we still see God's delivering mercies, as the same prayer acknowledges. "So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness." (Nehemiah 9:24, 25.) And how did they requite the Lord for all those mercies? "Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocation." (Nehemiah 9:26.) What then followed? Heavy judgments, repeated captivities, grievous oppression from their enemies. But did the Lord forsake them? No. When they cried unto him he heard their cry. "Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies." (Psalm 106:44, 45 )

ii. Now can we not see in these dealings of God with Israel of old, thus recorded in the word, some similarity to God's dealings with his spiritual Israel now?

1. Was there not a time when, like Israel in Egypt, they were held in bondage by sin, Satan, and the world? Was not that then a great and wondrous deliverance, when by the power of his quickening grace he brought them out of their hard bondage with a strong hand and outstretched arm? Was Pharaoh a worse



enemy to the children of Israel than Satan was to them? Were Pharaoh's hard tasks harder tasks than sin set them to perform? Were the stripes inflicted upon the back of those who did not render the tale of bricks heavier than the stripes laid upon them by the scourge of a guilty conscience? And yet how the Lord was pleased to stretch forth his hand, and bring them out of the world and the bondage of sin, by a power which, if not as openly and evidently miraculous, was yet as real and as effectual.

2. Similarly when they came in soul experience to the Red Sea and feared there was no deliverance from the curse of the law, and the condemnation of a guilty conscience, Satan pressing upon them, like Pharaoh, from behind, and the anger of God against their sins meeting them like the waves of the sea in front, and there seemed to be no hope of escape, how the Lord opened a way even through those deep waters, and brought them safely through, so that they saw their enemies upon the sea shore. The cross of Christ is to these waters what the rod of Moses was to those of the Red Sea. They part asunder as it is stretched over them, and the redeemed pass safely through them; but the same waters, when they return to their strength, overwhelm their enemies.

3. But do we find no similar parallel also in the other deliverances which I have named as given of old to Israel? Has the manna from heaven, the smitten rock, the pillar of the cloud by day and of fire by night, and other wilderness mercies—have these continual deliverances from famine, from thirst, from being lost in a barren and trackless desert, no spiritual fulfilment? Taken even literally and providentially, has there been no daily food given, no daily water, no daily raiment, no deliverance from time to time out of pressing trials in providence? As the children of Israel had to learn to live by providence, so have we. And where did they learn this lesson? Not in Egypt, where they sat by the flesh pots and ate bread to the full, but in the waste, howling wilderness. So

it is with the family of God. The daily providence of God over them, his watchful eye, his loving heart, his bounteous hand, his tender care, are learnt—not in the world, but in the wilderness; not in wealthy Egypt, but in the barren desert.

But view it spiritually and experimentally, and see in wilderness sins and wilderness mercies, a reflex image of our behaviour to God, and of his dealing towards us. Out of how many trials, temptations, exercises, afflictions, how many seasons of bondage and captivity, brought upon ourselves by our own misdeeds, and wandering after our own idolatries, has he delivered us. Taking a review of all that we have been to him, and of what he has been to us, can we not set to our seal, "Many times hath he delivered us?"

Now it is these delivering mercies that endear God to the soul. Tracing his hand in this and that deliverance; seeing how, when none but he could help or deliver, the Lord appeared in this or that conspicuous instance, we learn or at least should learn to watch his hand and ascribe all the power and the glory to him. So Israel at the Red Sea saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore, and under the impression of that signal deliverance feared and believed. "And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses." (Exod. 14:31.) As the Psalmist declares in the Psalm before us, faith was in their heart and praise in their mouth. "Then believed they his words; they sang his praise." (Ps. 106:12.)

Now what should we expect would be the fruit and consequence of those numerous deliverances? That for the future we should mistrust ourselves, and having seen, clearly seen, felt, deeply and painfully felt, the miserable consequences of taking counsel of the flesh, should take counsel of God. We have his word as our written guide; we have his Holy Spirit as our inward guide.

Should we not then reverently and submissively take counsel of God's word; take counsel of his Holy Spirit how we should best glorify him, how walk most tenderly in his fear, how most render gratitude to him for his conspicuous deliverances in providence and in grace? Have we done so? Have we taken counsel with God's Spirit how to act? Have we made the book of God our daily companion? Have we sought direction from the sacred page, and have we requited God as we should have done for his various deliverances? Oh, how few can say that they have! How for the most part they must confess, to come to our second point,

II.—Their *base requitals* and the *sad fruits and consequences* of then. "They provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity."

I. Alas! Alas! Instead of taking counsel with the Spirit of God, how often we have taken counsel with our own spirit, and thus gone aside by being brought under a wrong influence. How often instead of taking counsel at the word of God and seeking direction from the sacred page, we have taken counsel with friends who have misled us with false advice, or taken counsel with our own lusts to gratify them, or taken counsel with our own pride to indulge it, with our own ambition to feed it, with our own profit to promote it, or with our own comfort to enjoy it. Instead of taking counsel to please God, we have taken counsel to please self; instead of taking counsel from the word of God, we have rather sought to blunt its edge if too pointed, to neglect its warnings, disregard its precepts, overlook its cautions and admonitions, and pay no heed to its holy and wise instructions, and have rather listened to the pleadings of our own self-indulgent mind and the cravings of our restless, dissatisfied flesh. Such was Israel of old. "They waited not for his counsel;" or in the words of the text, "They provoked him with their counsel." Thus they committed two evils. They neglected God's counsel and they follow their own. They rejected the good and chose the bad.

His kind and tender, suitable and salutary precepts and directions they despised; but all the promptings and inclinations, lusts, and devices of their own mind they eagerly and greedily followed. Now this must ever be the case when we slight the word of God. In religion there is no neutral position; no standing-place between good and evil, between obedience and disobedience; no nice balancing of motives and actions; no careful, cautious steering between the landmarks of right and wrong, as if we could just graze the edge of the shoal without touching it; no trimming between such a compliance with the will of God as shall please and satisfy him, and such a compliance with the will of the flesh as shall please and satisfy it. Saul tried this way; so did Ahithophel; so did Demas; with what success you know. To hold the gospel in the one hand and the world in the other; to please God and not displease man; to be religious enough to get a name to live, and be carnal enough to secure a good share in the profits and pleasures, esteem and favours of the world—this is the grand feat of the day; and though men unhappily need no instruction either to devise or carry out a plan so specious and yet so suitable, Satan equips thousands of ministers to teach them more effectually to juggle with their own consciences and smooth the road down to the chambers of death. It is now as it was of old. The people love to be deceived, and the prophets love to deceive them. "Which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." (Isa. 30:10.) "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:30, 31.)

But are we, who profess to be a people separated from all such doctrines and all such ways, clear in the matter? Have not we too much provoked God by our counsel? And is not this displeasing to God? A requiting his deliverance with base ingratitude? This is not what he expects at our hands; this is not that which is worthy of

his great name, and of the obligations which he has laid upon us. And yet I believe there is not one amongst us who, were the matter pressed home to his conscience, would not be obliged to hang down his head and blush for shame with a confession before God that the charge is true. For the Lord regards the heart; his searching eye glances into our inmost bosom, and there he reads all our counsel. The plots, the schemes, the contrivances, the speculations that take place in the chambers of imagery, all lie naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. He sees how again and again we have consulted our own interest, comfort, and benefit, instead of the glory and honour of God; have sought to please ourselves instead of pleasing him, and to obtain something for our gratification, instead of aiming to know his will and do it. If we have sometimes had right thoughts, desires, and feelings, how they have faded away before they bore solid fruit; with what murmurings and fretfulness have we seen our idols taken away; and how grudgingly and unwillingly have we walked in a path of self-denial, and halted, looked back, or sat down at every little hill of difficulty or rough piece of road. Is not all this highly provoking to the Lord? If a father has heaped all possible benefits upon his son, given him the best of educations, liberally supplied all his wants, never denied him any one thing that was for his real good, nursed him in sickness, helped him in difficulty, discharged all his debts, and been to him the kindest and best of parents, would he not reasonably expect some return of gratitude and affection? But if instead of repaying his parents by affection and obedience, this son so carefully educated and tenderly indulged were to turn out a base character, and what is worse, were he to practice every manoeuvre to deceive his father, hide as far as he could all his misdeeds from him, put on an appearance of what is moral and good, and yet secretly was indulging in all manner of profligacy and vice, should not we cry shame upon such a son and such a course of conduct? Or if we had a friend whom we had loaded with benefits, to whom we had done all the good we could, and sought in every way to serve and

oblige, and then found that he had been taking counsel how he might injure us, and was secretly plotting some design how he might more deeply wound us, how we should lift up our hands and say, "O the ingratitude of man." Or if we had from time to time walked to the house of God in the company of one of whom we had hoped well, if we had confided to him some secret of our inmost bosom, and found, too late, that he was a traitor to God, truth, and friendship, we should wonder at man's iniquity and be surprised there could be any so vile. And yet all this is but a faint transcript, but a feeble copy of what we are internally, for I will not say that we have practised all this externally, before the eyes of a holy God. It is thus that we "provoke him with our counsel." The Lord has not allowed us, it may be, to put into active execution the various snares and contrivances of our wicked heart; has not suffered us to walk as we would have walked unchecked; has not permitted us to rear on solid ground our airy castles, or build and plant our visionary paradises. But the counsel was in the heart to do it, and this provoked him, though he would not suffer the plot to ripen into execution. Have you never plotted any secret lusts, and devised plans to carry them out? Have you never rolled and revelled in imagination in scenes of wickedness, and carried out a whole drama of sin, from the conception of a lust to its full execution? Have you never fed your lusts instead of starving them, and given way to a temptation instead of withstanding it? Have you not again and again speculated, contrived, and planned something that your conscience knew was evil and hateful to God?

And now with all that your conscience has registered, and all that your conscience has forgotten, can you look up to God, and say, "I have never provoked thee by my counsel; I have never had a thought in my heart, word in my lips, an action in my hands contrary to thy holy will? I have always contrived that which was most for thy honour and glory, and never indulged in any plan or scheme to promote my own interest, gratify my own mind, or

please my own flesh." O you hypocrite! O you poor deceived creature, thus too mock God and man. What a veil must be over your heart thus to hide from your sight both sin and self; for had you one right view of what sin was in the sight of holy God, you would have said, "It is of the Lord's mercy I was not consumed when plotting and taking counsel with my wicked heart, and sinning in speculation and imagination if not in positive action."

ii. But now let us see what the effect of this provoking God by their counsel was. They "were *brought low* for their iniquity."

God takes great notice of what goes on in men's hearts, and as he is provoked by their counsel, so in due time he brings them low; and that is "for their iniquity," for he is a God of knowledge, and by him not only actions but thoughts are weighed. "The thought of foolishness is sin." God has various ways of bringing down high looks. "The day of the Lord is to be upon every high tower, and the lofty cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan;" for "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." (Isa. 2:11.)

But the Lord has various ways of executing this determination of his heart.

1. Sometimes he brings his people low in *circumstances*. You have been scheming and contriving how to get on in the world; perhaps have succeeded in some measure, and your heart is lifted up. Now comes a stroke from God in providence, and you are brought low. Your work fails or your wages decrease; your business seems by degrees to dwindle and diminish; customers do not come as before into your shop; you lose good ones and get bad ones; an opposition establishment is set up near you, and you have the mortification of seeing your trade leaving you for your rival; or you make bad debts; bills come in that you can scarcely meet, and difficulties arise from quarters you could

scarcely have expected. Or your farm becomes unprofitable; you have great losses among your sheep or cattle; or blight upon your crops; or something in a way of marked adversity which seems pointedly to show the hand of God against you. Or if you are not in business, through a bank failure, or railway reverses, or lending money which the borrower has speculated with and cannot repay, you scarcely know whether you will be able to act the honourable man, or be brought through with the respect and credit you have always maintained through life. These heavy strokes make you examine why you are thus dealt with, and you soon begin to see that you are brought low for your iniquity; that pride, or covetousness, or worldly mindedness has mastered you, that you have been taking counsel with sin and self instead of with the Lord, and that this wrong conduct has brought this stroke upon you.

2. Some God brings low in *body*, lays upon them a complaint which may make life miserable without much shortening it, such as a nervous affection, or a low and melancholy state of mind, springing out of and connected with some bodily affliction, so that life itself may still endure, yet day after day brings with it gloom and misery.

3. Sometimes the Lord sends a blight upon the *family*. How often godly parents, sometimes even ministers of truth, have disobedient, ungodly children, whose conduct not only by contrast, but really and actually exceeds the wicked life and actions of those who have never known the restraints of a religious home, have never heard a godly father's prayers, or a gracious mother's admonitions. One would think that this was enough to bring the parents low both before God and man, and to ask themselves, "Is there not a cause? If thus afflicted in my family, have not I been guilty of some neglect, and in some measure brought this trouble upon myself by my undue severity or my undue indulgence?"



Or you may have suffered from painful family bereavements—may have lost a dear wife or beloved husband, an excellent son or an affectionate daughter, and your pleasant plants have been laid waste.

4. Others again the Lord brings low more especially as regards their *souls*. He permits them to be much exercised with doubts and fears, allows Satan to fall upon them with his suggestions, suffers them to be tempted day by day, and night by night; and by these severe and cutting temptations they are brought down so low as sometimes or even often to question whether they have a spark of grace in their hearts, or a grain of godly fear in their souls. In these and similar ways the people of God are often brought very low.

But now observe the effect of these dealings of God with them. Their eyes become opened to see the hand of God in these dispensations of his providence or his grace. They are made to feel that they are brought low for their iniquities; that there was some secret sin indulged, some ungodly counsel followed, some base requital of the kindness and mercy of God; and they can see, if brought low, they have brought it upon themselves. "Hast thou not procured this to thyself?" They can see that they were cumbered with much serving; had got into a worldly spirit; had been drawn aside from the strait and narrow path; had become languid and careless in the ways of the Lord; had lost much of their former love, zeal, and tenderness of conscience, and had fallen into a dead and barren state. Now they plainly see why they are brought low and find the word to be true, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

But shall they be left there? No; they have a merciful God to deal with. They have not a hard taskmaster over them like Pharaoh; they have not a cruel enemy like Satan: but have a merciful God, whose compassions fail not. We therefore read, which brings us

to our next point;

III.—"Nevertheless"—O what a "Nevertheless!"—"He *regarded their affliction* when he heard their cry."

Here is the mark of the life of God in the soul; for when the Lord's people are brought low for their iniquity, there is usually a sigh and a cry after God put into their heart; and as this sigh and cry is sincere, and they are not like those of whom we read, "They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds;" as it is the special fruit of God's grace, and is the Spirit's interceding breath in them, he bows down his gracious ear and regards the voice of their supplication. And though they cannot pray fluently, for their fluent prayers in times past are now turned into sighs and groans; though they cannot approach the Lord with any measure of confidence and sweet assurance, as having so basely sinned against him, yet there is this wrought by his Spirit and grace within them, that they cry out of the depths of a broken heart and contrite spirit. Nay, they are sometimes obliged to go back to their first prayer, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." They are made to confess their sins, and to mourn over them; they are made to lament and grieve that ever they have taken counsel with the flesh, and requited the Lord so basely for his former deliverances. No spot is too low for them, no posture too humble, no confessions too abject and unreserved. They confess themselves to be the chief of sinners, the very vilest and worst of all transgressors, the basest and blackest of all backsliders, the most daring of all rebels, and the filthiest and guiltiest of all trespassers on the long-suffering and mercy of God.

Now, when they thus cry, their prayers enter the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. He regards their affliction. One of the most painful things you often feel is this, that the Lord regards not your afflictions. You that are afflicted—afflicted in circumstances,

afflicted in body, afflicted in family, afflicted in mind,—how often you feel or fear that God does not regard your affliction. You say, "If God regarded my affliction, would he not remove it or support me more under it? If he regarded my affliction, why does he not stretch forth his hand and alleviate it, if not utterly take it away? But instead of that, he adds grief to my sorrow, and rather makes the load heavier than lighter. Why does he thus add cross to cross and blow to blow? Or if he see fit still thus to afflict me, why have I not more faith, more patience, more submission, more power to bear what the Lord lays upon me, and why do I not reap more profit from it? Where is my humility? Where my submission to the will of God? Where my thankfulness even for the smallest of his mercies? Where my sense of his vast goodness to me, in spite of, in the midst of my many troubles? It all seems swallowed up in my affliction. I am so troubled that I cannot speak; my afflictions are so heavy they seem to crush me down." But, notwithstanding all these murmurs and anxious inquiries, the Lord regards your affliction. He did not bring this stroke upon you without intending it for your good. Why has he brought you down in circumstances, why has he afflicted you in body, tried you in mind, and brought you low in spirit, but because he meant to bring good to you out of it? And has not good already come out of it? Has it not broken to pieces the counsel you took with self, and made you fear lest you should be entangled once more in besetting sins? Has it not made you dread lest you be again caught in Satan's snares; made you see more of the holiness of God, his purity and majesty, and the dreadful evil of sin; made your conscience more tender, caused the fear of God more to grow and thrive, humbled you, and laid you low in the dust before him? Is there no good here? A Christian, as he grows in grace, like ripe corn, will bend down to the ground. He will not lift up his stalk as when the ear is first shooting forth; but like the ripening ear, will more and more bend down his head. He cannot get too low; and the more grace he has the lower he will get, for the richer the ear and the riper the corn, the more it droops its

head. Barren professors lift themselves up on high. No stalks grow so high as barren stalks; no ears look so proudly as those that have all chaff in them and no corn. Winds and rain lay heavy crops; you never see laid wheat when the crop is light. So if you feel or fear that God does not regard your affliction, yet if your affliction has humbled you, brought you down, made you prize mercy more, shown you more of the evil of sin, made your conscience more tender, brought you more out of the world, and more into union with God's dear family, it has done you good. There was a purpose in it, and that purpose has been thus far already accomplished. "Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry." It is, I was going to say, insulting to the Majesty of heaven, to say that God does not regard your affliction. It is denying his all seeing eye, or his almighty hand, or his tender, merciful heart. He *does* regard your affliction when he hears your cry.

But how does he show this. Has he no means of displaying his mighty hand and stretched out arm? Is he ever silent? No!

IV.—Observe then fourthly God's remembrance of his covenant and repentance toward his children. "And he *remembered* for them his covenant, and *repented* according to *the multitude of his mercies.*"

God made a covenant with Israel. He swore unto Abraham that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And God having bound himself by oath and covenant, it was incumbent upon his veracity and faithfulness never to depart one jot or tittle from it.

i. But there is something exceedingly striking in the words, "He *remembered* for them his covenant." It is almost as though God had partially forgotten it, or rather as though he was almost tempted to break it. I have thought sometimes that if God had

not bound himself by covenant, the sins and iniquities of his people are so great that he would have been provoked beyond all endurance, to cast them off for ever and send them headlong to perdition. Therefore, if I may use the expression, he tied his own hands by the bond of his own veracity. He bound himself by a covenant that he might not be provoked beyond endurance; so that when his arm was about to be let loose to sweep them from the earth, his covenant held him back. We see this represented in the Psalm before us. "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them." But how did Moses stand before him in the breach? By reminding him of his covenant, as well as telling him what the Egyptians would say if he destroyed his people in the wilderness. "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidest unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." (Exodus 32:13.) And what was the effect of this plea? "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." (Exodus 32:14.) It was in this way that Moses, as the typical mediator, stood between God and Israel and held back his outstretched hand. God remembered for them his covenant.

But now let us view this point in a New Testament sense as bearing upon the covenant of grace. God made a covenant with his dear Son on behalf of his chosen people. In this covenant he engaged to pardon all their sins; to clothe them with a robe of righteousness in which they should stand accepted and justified; to bless them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; to carry them through all the storms of life, and set them before his face in glory. The Son undertook to save all those given to him, to wash them in the fountain of his own most precious blood, to live, die, and rise again for them, and so fully and faithfully to execute the trust committed to him, that, as

their Surety and Mediator, he might stand up at the last day, and say, "Of them which thou gavest me, I have lost none."

Now if God had been provoked by the sins of any one of his people to let loose his hand and sweep him into destruction, he would have broken his covenant. He covenanted to accept and bless every member of the mystical body of Christ, so that if one were lost the whole covenant would have been broken. It is with this heavenly as it is with earthly covenants. Take, for instance, a lease or a contract. If you break any of its conditions, the whole is made void. So if any one of God's dear family should perish by the way, the covenant of grace would have been broken. Therefore, "He remembers for them his covenant." Though he hates their sins and brings them low for their iniquities; though grievously provoked by their disobedience, yet he remembers for them—that is, upon their behalf—his covenant. It is not their good deeds he regards, nor their bad. He looks higher than either. He looks at his dear Son, with whom he has made an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. He looks at the seal whereby it was sealed with blood, for we read of "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and as in Egypt, he remembers the blood, and passes by their sins, as he passed over the houses of blood-besprinkled Israel.

O the blessedness of having a manifest interest in the blood of the covenant, and thus to have a testimony that God has made a covenant with his dear Son upon our behalf; that our names are written in the book of life; and that Christ is our Mediator at the right hand of the Father. What are all earthly blessings compared with this? What are health and strength and riches and all the goods of life; what is everything that the carnal heart can desire or the covetous mind grasp; what is all compared with an interest in the everlasting covenant, and in the love and blood and righteousness of the Lord the Lamb? What is earth, with all its attractions, compared with an interest in the precious, precious

blood of a dying Jesus? You will find it so when you come to lie upon a bed of languishing and pain; when the cold drops of sweat stand upon your forehead, and the last enemy is about to grasp you by the throat. What will your anxious strivings to have something and be something more than you have or are—aye, I may add, your successes,—what will they do for you then? Only be so many ghastly spectres of the past to terrify and alarm your conscience, to see what shadows you have been seeking to grasp to the neglect of solid substance. But in that solemn hour to have a testimony from God of pardon and peace, will make smooth a dying bed; will calm all anxious fears; and will take you safe through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

ii. But now for a few words on the last clause of the text: "*He repented according to the multitude of his mercies.*" It was, as I have said just now, as if God were about to make an end of them. But see how this bears upon our daily experience. Sometimes when you have been plotting and contriving, and perhaps spent half the day in scheming how you shall accomplish this or that worldly design, at night you begin to reflect on the business of the day; and the plots and schemes which have passed through your busy mind fall with some weight and power on your conscience. And now you wonder how God could bear with you; how he could suffer a wretch like you to live and indulge such schemes and plans for your own honour, gain, or ambition, and consult so little the honour and glory of God. Now you are led to see that the Lord would, if he gave full scope to his anger, make an end of you; but instead of that he repents—that is to say, he will not do that which he would otherwise do. Not that we are to ascribe repentance to God as we should to man. But as a term borrowed from the language of men, he so far repents as not to put into execution the thoughts of his holy, indignant heart. Thus instead of sweeping us into destruction, he draws us to his bosom; instead of judgment he manifests mercy; instead of wrath he reveals his grace; and thus he repents

according to the multitude of his mercies. What a sweet expression it is, and how it seems to convey to our mind that God's mercies do not fall drop by drop, but are as innumerable as the sand upon the sea-shore, as the stars that stud the midnight sky, as the drops of rain that fill the clouds before they discharge their copious showers upon the earth. It is the multitude of his mercies that makes him so merciful a God. He does not repent according to a drop or two of mercy: that would soon be exhaled and gone, like the rain which fell this morning under the hot sun. But his mercies flow like a river, yea, like that "river of God" which we read "is full of water." There is in him a multitude of mercies for a multitude of sins and a multitude of sinners. And thus he repents according to the multitude of his mercies.

This felt and received in the love of it breaks, humbles, softens, and melts a sensible sinner's heart; and he says, "What, sin against such mercies? What, when the Lord has remembered me in my low estate, again visited me with the light of his countenance, and manifested once more a sense of his mercy,— what, shall I go on to provoke him again, take counsel of my own heart again, walk inconsistently again, be entangled in Satan's snares again? O, forbid it God, forbid it gospel, forbid it tender conscience, forbid it every constraint of dying love!"

Thus God takes occasion, by the very necessities of his people, to melt them into obedience, to soften them into contrition, to dissolve them into repentance, and thus to bring a crop of praise and gratitude out of the furrows which he waters so abundantly with his mercy. He thus reaps to himself a revenue of eternal praise in heaven, whilst he secures that obedience whereby he is glorified even now upon earth.



## The Manifestation of the Son of God

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Christmas Day Morning, 1858

*"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."* 1 John 3:8

The origin of evil is a problem that has ever baffled, and will doubtless always continue to baffle the keenest human intellect. But we may see a stream of which we may never view the spring. The Nile rolls down its turbid flood through the land of Egypt, but no European eye has ever yet seen its source. So it is with evil and its origin: none can see its source; all may see its stream. But there are two things connected with evil so palpable that they cannot be denied. First, its *existence*: to *that* every town, every street, every house, I may add every heart, bears infallible witness. And secondly, that *God could not have been the author of it*; that holy Being could not have originated it. It must arise from some source distinct from a pure and holy Jehovah. It evidently existed before this world had a being, before man was created to dwell in it, and before sin became manifest in the Adam fall. The mystery is, how sin could ever enter the courts of heaven. When we view for a few moments the majesty of God, and what heaven is as his own dwelling-place, where he sits in the brightness of his own effulgence, in the rays of his own eternal glory, surrounded by myriads of bright angelic beings whose every thought is obedience and love; then to conceive how sin—that hateful thing so abhorrent to the holiness of his presence—could enter into those courts of purity and bliss, and by its subtle working, could cast down from heaven's battlements into an abyss of eternal misery and horror, a numerous host of once glorious spirits, converting them, with Satan as their head, into damnable and hellish fiends: this, indeed, is a mystery which surpasses all our understanding, and baffles our keenest research.

Again: why God was pleased to permit sin to enter into this lower scene; why, when such consequences had already taken place, from its original invasion of heaven, as to sully the purity of thousands, if not millions, of angelic spirits, the Lord did not set up an effectual bar against the entrance of evil into this world also, but should suffer Satan so far to triumph as to infect man, created in God's own image, after his own likeness, with hell's infernal poison; when we attempt to penetrate into this mystery, do we not find it baffle all our mental powers? But when we have sought in vain to penetrate into this deep mystery, we feel at length obliged to come to this conclusion in our own minds, beyond which we cannot pass and in which alone we find rest, that God decreed in his own eternal mind to permit the entrance of evil into this lower world; that he did not and could not himself put his hand to such an accursed work, for that would make the pure and holy Jehovah the author of sin; but that it was consistent with his most sacred will that sin should come into the world, in order to manifest and magnify thereby his own glory. We cannot think that sin entered into the world unforeseen by the all-seeing Jehovah; that the Adam fall broke in upon him suddenly and unexpectedly, as the Holmfirth flood surprised the sleepers in their beds: that he who sees the end from the beginning, and to whom past, present, and future are but one eternal Now, was taken at unawares, and that the Serpent glided under the leaves and amidst the flowers of Eden unwatched, undescried, by his all-discerning eye. To think so is Atheism, or making the living Jehovah a Baal, who, when the standing or falling of man was at stake, was talking, or pursuing, or on a journey, or peradventure was sleeping, and must be awaked. (1 Kings 18:27.) Nor again can we think that God would have permitted sin to enter into the world, and death by sin, unless it had been for the execution of some all-wise purpose and for the display of his own glory. Thus we are brought to see and believe these three distinct points, from which there is no escape, and beyond which there is no advance—1. that sin exists; 2, that it was the permissive will of God that it should exist; and 3, that all will be over-ruled in the end for the display of the glory of a triune God.

But if the conclusions to which I have brought you do not fully satisfy your mind, I think that you will not quarrel with the following statements: that there is such a dreadful thing in this world as sin—a fact which must be palpable to every man who has a conscience in his bosom; that this dreadful thing called sin must ever be hateful to God; that his justice, holiness, and purity, are so in diametrical opposition to it, that he is called upon to punish it; and that unless some means be found to avert this punishment, it must be executed upon every guilty head.

In all this thick darkness, how blessedly does our text shine as with a ray of light! How clearly does the Holy Ghost here, by the pen of John, tell us how this work of the devil is abrogated and abolished, and all its dreadful consequences removed, by that wondrous gift of the Son of God, which is here spoken of as his manifestation in the flesh. And I think that as we are this morning gathered together in the Lord's name—I leave the point as to celebrating or not celebrating the festival called Christmas; I waive all question as to whether the Lord was really born upon this day or not: it is sufficient for you and me to find ourselves here this morning, and it may be, with God's help and blessing, a means of leading our minds up to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, and the object and purpose for which that blessed Redeemer came; so that waiving all minor questions upon this point, I shall this morning confine myself to these three things, that seem to me declared in our text:—

I.—*First, what are "the works of the devil?"*

II.—*Secondly, the manifestation of the Son of God.*

III.—*Thirdly, the purpose why, "the Son of God was manifested"—"that he might destroy the works of the devil."*

I.—It is evident that the works of the devil must be of great strength and magnitude, that there should be a necessity for the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy them. We do not send

out an army of a hundred thousand men, with all the proportionate munitions of war, to fight with a few naked savages, who have nothing wherewith to defend themselves but bows and arrows. There is a necessary proportion betwixt the object to be overcome, and the means taken to overcome it. If, then, it were necessary for the Son of God to be manifested in the flesh "to destroy the works of the devil," it is evident that the devil must have thrown up and fortified some most tremendous works, when nothing short of this could shatter them to shivers, and scatter their very dust to the wind. Fix, then, this point firmly in your mind, as a most important truth, that the works of the devil must be of awful magnitude, since nothing short of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh could destroy them. Men usually think very lightly of sin. The drunkard takes his cup; the swearer fills his mouth with oaths; the nightly depredator robs and plunders; the murderer attacks his victim; and, apart from these atrocious crimes, men of higher cast and character go on day after day indulging themselves in every excess of wickedness and iniquity, drinking down sin like water. What little idea they have of the magnitude of the crimes that they are committing! What little conception they possess of the holiness, purity, and majesty of that great and glorious Being against whom they are sinning with so high a hand! For, in looking at sin, we must view the Person against whom sin is committed. If a man were to offer an insult to our Sovereign, it would be viewed in a very different light from an insult offered to a person of his own rank. There was a wretch of a man calling himself a gentleman who, some years ago, struck our Queen with a switch. How the outrage aroused the indignation of the whole country! Had he struck one of his own rank in a similar way, would that have caused such a general ebullition of feeling throughout the land? It was the dignity of the Sovereign that made the insult so atrocious. So it is the majesty of God, his purity, holiness, and infinite greatness, that make sin to be so enormous an evil; it is the dignity of the Person against whom the offence is committed, that stamps it and invests it with so awful a magnitude. We may perhaps think, in the folly and unbelief of our hearts, that there was no great crime in Adam eating an apple; we may fancy that the

transgression was not so very enormous in his listening to the suggestion of his wife, or in her complying with the temptation of Satan. In fact, infidels and sceptics have ridiculed the whole transaction as what they call "an Eastern myth," that is, a fable of the same character as the gods of Homer, or the traditions of our Saxon ancestors; and even men who profess to believe the Bible is an inspired book, have indulged in many unbelieving and erroneous views about the fall of man. They do not see that Adam in a state of innocency stood as our federal head; that he was not, as we are, prone to sin by nature, but though able to fall, was free to stand; that as he was able, so he was bound by every consideration to keep the positive and express command that God had given him not to touch the forbidden fruit; and that by wilfully and deliberately breaking it, he as it were struck a blow against the very majesty of heaven, insulted his Maker to his face, and did a deed that God most justly abhorred as being committed with such signal aggravation. At this gate entered sin and death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12) This, then, was the great work of the devil, the masterpiece of Satan, to deface the image of God in which man was created; to separate the creature from the Creator; to introduce into the very heart of man that infernal poison which filled his own veins; to enlarge the domain of evil; to triumph over God by turning this beautiful earth into a second hell; and to glut his fiendish hate by involving man in the same hopeless misery into which he himself had been cast. It was therefore not only an act of the most damnable treachery on the part of Satan the tempter, but it was an act also of the greatest sin on the part of the tempted. Adam deliberately refused to listen to God, and gave ear to Satan. He wilfully trampled upon the solemn command of God, and preferred the counsel of Satan to the authority of his Creator and Benefactor.

Again: one might think, as many have not only thought but said, that the entrance of sin into the world by the fall of Adam could not have affected the whole human race, or entailed the same penalty on all his future offspring. It may be asked, how could

one sin thoroughly destroy the image of God in which Adam was created, and carry death both into body and soul? But do we not see an almost similar effect naturally in the case of certain poisons of great potency and malignity? There is a poison unhappily too well known by the name of strychnine, so powerful that one grain will destroy human life with the most agonising convulsions. A drop of poison from a venomous snake, such as you can hardly see upon the point of a needle, will course through every artery and vein in a man's body, and speedily turn it into a mass of putrefaction. If, then, poison, whether vegetable or animal, of so small a magnitude, possess such destructive power over the juices of the body, can we not see how the poison of sin may act in an analogous way upon the soul, and turn, so to speak, all its once wholesome juices into a mass of loathsome corruption? But whether the figure apply or not, it is most certain, from the unerring word of truth, that the one sin of Adam ruined his own nature throughout. He was duly forewarned by the mouth of God—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." That sentence took place. Though Adam's natural life was prolonged for more than nine hundred years after this, yet mortality and disease, at the very instant of the fall invaded his frame, and from that moment he began to die; and not only so, but death without a moment's delay took place in his soul: he became dead in trespasses and sins on the very spot where he fell, and in falling lost the image of God in which he had been created.

Now we, as Adam's descendants, are daily and hourly feeling the consequences of his fall. He sinned not alone; he fell not as a single solitary individual, for the whole human race was in his loins and fell with him. The word of truth declares, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that [margin, "in whom"] all have sinned. By the offence of one, [or "by one offence," margin], judgment came upon all men to condemnation." (Rom. 5:12, 18.) Adam, we read, "begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness." (Gen. 5:3.) Indeed, how could he beget any other? All beget after their kind; and a sinner begets a sinner as naturally

and necessarily as a beast of prey begets a beast of prey, or a vulture begets a vulture. It may seem hard that we should suffer for Adam's sin; but do we not daily see similar instances of the transmission of a sad inheritance? How many a child is at this very moment feeling the consequences of its parent's transgression! How many little things are born into this world just to struggle through a few years of misery, entirely in consequence of their parents' profligacy or debauchery! How scrofula, consumption, insanity all run in the blood and taint generation after generation! We may say how hard it is for little children to suffer for their father's sins or inherit their mother's maladies. It is hard, and it has wrung thousands of parents' hearts, to see many a fair daughter pine away like a lily, many a gallant son droop and die under consumption's deadly stroke, because the mother or the father carried its taint in their bosom. It is grievous to see children swept into poverty through a gambling father; or a mother's sin taint the child with a life-long disgrace. Before then you complain of, or quarrel with the consequences of the fall, see whether you can adjust these minor matters; and if you admit the present transmission of disease and suffering from parent to child, look higher, and see whether sin may not be transmitted as well as sorrow. You cannot but see that sin exists;—that it has filled the world with misery—has polluted this beautiful earth—and rules and reigns from shore to shore. Whence came this deadly plague, under which thousands and tens of thousands perish under the wrath of God? From the fall, that work of the devil; that is the fountain head. But look at the stream as well as at the fountain. Wherever you see sin, you see a work of the devil. For Satan does not cease to work. He was not satisfied with introducing sin in the first instance into the world, and thus ruining Adam and all his future race. One would have thought he might have stopped there, and not pressed on his conquest. One would have supposed, did we not know how that proud and fallen spirit is filled with the direst malice and enmity against God and man, that he would then have stayed his slaughtering hand. But nothing stops him. Though he knows that it will but eventually aggravate his own misery, he will still go on seducing and deceiving man, until he is shut up for ever in the

bowels of that hell which God has prepared for him, and into which he and all his reprobate angels will be cast, with all the nations that know not God. Why does a dog worry a whole fold? Is not one lamb enough to appease hunger? Why night after night wound and tear what he cannot eat? The mad thirst for blood that boils in his veins hurries him blindly on, till the stake or the gun finish his career. So with Satan. He was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), and he will be a murderer to the end. Wherever mischief is to be done, there he is. As in Eastern climes, directly a carcass falls the vultures are seen hovering in the sky and congregating from all quarters to prey upon it; so wherever there is the scent of crime upon the gale, there Satan and his infernal agents are. Has this vulture never seen from afar the risings of sin in the heart? Who knotted the halter for Ahitophel, put the sword into the hand of Saul, and tied the noose round the neck of Judas? Who filled David's heart with lust, and planned the death of Uriah? Who enticed Absalom into rebellion and incest, and then hung him up in the oak as a mark for the darts of Joab? Who tempted David to number Israel, and turned Solomon, the wisest of men, into a poor old, foolish, idolatrous dotard? One answer suffices. The same foul spirit who is continually stirring every sin of the human heart, kindling every evil passion, working upon every lust, and stimulating every vicious, ungodly desire. It is hard, I fully admit, for us to distinguish, especially when blinded by temptation, between the workings of our fallen nature in itself and the agency of Satan upon it. The sea sometimes heaves and rolls with what is called a ground swell when there is not a breath of air in the sky; at other times the winds distinctly agitate its bosom and raise up the stormy waves. So sometimes the heart heaves and swells without any direct Satanic influence; at others he evidently makes it cast up mire and dirt. But he is worst when least seen. Judas, when the thought first entered his mind to betray his Master, did not see that Satan prompted the desire. Covetousness, enmity against the Lord, jealousy of Peter and John, the secret infidelity of his heart, weariness of the restraints of religion, fear of persecution, and other mixed motives—for men are not usually led into crime by one temptation—might have been the strings



that drew him toward his horrid deed, but Satan pulled the last cord that plunged him in. The devil, we read, put it into his heart (John 13:2), but was there no seed-bed ready for the hellish suggestion to root in? Thus, though Satan "put it into his heart," Judas saw not his hand; though the very inspiration of hell, it so mingled itself with his own breath after money and revenge, that he could not distinguish one from the other. Though not like him abandoned to Satan, it may still be hard for us to distinguish at all times between the workings of our corrupt nature and the influence of the Prince of darkness, I doubt not we can sometimes do so. But we may depend upon it, that where sin is present, Satan is not far absent. Wherever there is anything to be done to disbelieve or disobey, to bring reproach upon the cause of God and truth, to distress the mind of others, to grieve one's own conscience, cripple one's own usefulness, injure one's own character, and, but for grace, eternally ruin our soul, we may be sure that Satan or some of his agents are not a great way off. Were our eyes miraculously opened to perceive the true state of the case, it might be that we should see ourselves, when under the influence of temptation, surrounded with these infernal fiends, in the very contrary sense, and with a very different prospect from that which was displayed to view when the Lord opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, and he saw the mountain surrounded with horses and chariots of fire to protect his master.

But Satan's main seat is the unregenerate heart. Here he has erected his strong citadel, and from this, as from the centre, he is continually prompting every wicked desire, suggesting or fostering every ungodly thought, and stimulating the first incipient movement of sin, until it breaks forth into open action.

We see it more particularly in the world without, as it comes sometimes under our observation. When men are alone, sin is plotting in their heart; when they get together, they put it into execution. Can any crowd of men be assembled without sin being inflamed by the concourse? The more that men are gathered together, the more sin acts by mutual contact. As in a conflagration, the larger the risk the greater the flame: as in a

gunpowder magazine, the more materials the greater the explosion. A mob will do what an individual durst not; and many a youth has been plunged into grievous crime, as one of a company, who would have shuddered to commit it alone.

We see "the works of the devil" also in the Church of God. What divisions—what animosities—what unkind thoughts—and what harsh, cutting expressions are continually manifesting themselves even among those who profess to be the disciples of Jesus! How rarely we find two or three of God's people who can walk together even comfortably, without jarring and without strife! How few churches are there in which there is not some root of bitterness—in which the members are knit together in the close bands of brotherly affection and love!

How few families are there (to take another view of the case) in which there is even common harmony—in which there is decent affection—in which husbands and wives, or brothers and sisters, are walking together in a spirit of mutual concord and peace. O could the veil spread over many houses be rudely torn off, how many bickering husbands, fretful wives, jealous sisters, quarrelsome brothers, and families making each other mutually wretched should we see! Smiles abroad, frowns at home; kindness for company, sullenness for the fireside. Is not this the work of the devil, especially when a profession of religion is thrown as a cloak over the whole?

And when we come closer still—to our own bosom, how continually we find Satan at work there! What infidelity, at times, can he stir up in our carnal mind! What wicked desires, or if not so far as that, what wicked thoughts can he infuse into our breast in our most sacred and solemn moments! Upon our bended knees before the throne of grace; in a place of worship when hearing the word of truth; in conversation with the saints of God; even at the very ordinances of God's House, who can shut out thoughts of the most intrusive character, to use no stronger language to describe them? A man who watches his own heart will see how Satan is ever at work, continually suggesting or fostering matter

of evil, applying the torch to the train that seems already laid to his hands, and as such ever ready to explode! Surely, a man can see little of the evil of sin, can know little of the workings of it in his own mind, who cannot, from personal and painful experience, set to his seal that this is true. We have so clear a view sometimes of Satan's infusing or fostering vile thoughts, that we start back with horror, and almost if not actually cry aloud against him, as we should do if we caught a thief in our house.

O, the works of the devil! How they stand before us as so many heaps of ruin. How he has marred this beautiful earth, and filled it with lamentations and woe! O the thousands and millions, by his plots and his instrumentality, consigned to eternal misery! O the grievous sorrows of mind, the intolerable anguish of body, whereby thousands are at this moment racked and tortured! O the distress of conscience, the guilt, bondage, and fear with which many of God's saints are now exercised! O the wide-spread havoc which has made the world a very Aceldama—a field of blood, not of gory bodies, but of bleeding hearts! What destruction thou hast wrought, thou enemy of God and man!

But what a rich and unspeakable mercy it is that there is some means of escape from them—that these works of the devil have not eluded the wisdom of God, nor are beyond the reach of his omnipotent arm. Infinite wisdom that foresaw the ruin, combined with infinite love and mercy to devise and execute a way to break them down. However formidable, however extensive; however to human skill and power impregnable, a means has been found in the counsels of heaven "to destroy the works of the devil." And this leads us to our second point:—

II.—*The manifestation of the Son of God.* "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested." Could nothing else but this suffice? Could no other way be found? Was it absolutely needful that the Son of God should be manifested to destroy these works? What a view this gives us, if we can see it by the eye of faith, what these works are, when nothing short of the manifestation of the Son of God could destroy them! Have you a son? Do you know what the

feelings of a father towards a child are? We must bear in mind that the Son of God is to the Father what a son of ours is to us, though in a way of which we can form no conception, as being so infinitely beyond all the thoughts of the human heart. Still, as we find in the Scripture mention made of the fatherly love that the Father bears to the Son, and of the filial love that the Son bears to the Father, we believe what we cannot understand, and feel what we cannot reach. Ever bear in mind that Jesus Christ is God's co-equal, co-eternal Son, not by office, but by nature; that his very essence, his very mode of subsistence from all eternity, is to be the only begotten Son, and that any other view but this strikes a fatal blow at the Trinity itself; for if he be not the eternal Son of God, and as such of the very essence of the Father, there is neither a Trinity of persons nor a unity of essence. Hold then by the eternal Sonship of Christ as your very life, lest you deny the Son, and so have not the Father. (1 John 2:23.) Amidst every storm may this be our sure anchorage—"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68, 69.)

Now, it was the eternal purpose of God to manifest his dear Son. But how could he be manifested? Can God be seen? Is he not invisible, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto?" We can no more see the Son of God in his eternal Deity than we can see God the Father himself; for "no man can see God and live." Therefore, that he might be manifested, he took a nature in which he could be seen; and that nature was a nature like our own; for "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Thus was accomplished the manifestation of the Son of God. But he was still the Son of God. He never laid aside his Deity or Sonship: he could not do so without ceasing to exist. He ever was what he ever had been; he ever is what he ever must be—the eternal Son of God. But to be manifested, brought to light, made known, revealed; to be seen, touched, handled, embraced, and realized, it was needful for him to assume a nature that could be touched, handled, realized, and looked upon. As John speaks in the

beginning of this epistle—"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; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness." In order, then, that the Son of God might be manifested, he took our nature into union with his own eternal Deity, and thus God and man were united in one glorious person as God-Man, Immanuel, God with us.

He was manifested, in the first instance, as a babe, born at Bethlehem and laid in a manger, for there was no room for him at the inn. He was born of a pure virgin, for he was not conceived by natural generation as we are. Had it been so, his human nature must have been involved in all the consequences of the first transgression: it must have been stained and tainted with original sin as ours is; for wherever there is natural conception, there must be sin attending it. "In sin hath my mother conceived me." But being conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, the blessed Lord assumed of the flesh of the Virgin a nature in all points identical with ours; yet preserved in the very moment of its conception from all speck or spot of sin. When that babe was born at Bethlehem; when he was presented to the eyes of the wise men from the East; when the shepherds looked upon him as he lay in his mother's lap, there was the Son of God manifested. O, the mystery, that the Son of God, he who fills all heaven with his glory—by whom the world was created and by whom it stands—the great, glorious, and eternal Jehovah, for such he is—then dwelt in that holy babe lying in infantile weakness upon the lap of the Virgin Mary! That babe grew up as ours grow; for he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." He grew to be a man, and there is reason to believe that he worked with his reputed father at his mechanical employment; for we find it said of him, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3.) When he was about thirty years of age his ministry more immediately commenced. But all the time during which he was manifested, he was bearing sin: for he was the sin-bearing Lamb of God from the moment of his conception up to his expiring

breath upon the cross. He was born to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," not only in the garden and upon the tree, but as being from the very first designed as a lamb for the slaughter. It is not only when laid upon the altar that the sacrifice begins. When the victim is taken; when it is led to the altar; when its limbs are bound; when the stroke is being waited for; when the knife is sharpening; when fear and trembling make every muscle quiver; when the sharp blade pierces the throat and the hot blood gushes forth—all are but parts of one and the same sacrifice. So with regard to the sufferings and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. We must not limit them to the garden and the cross. Was his not continually a life of suffering? The inward experience of the Lord as the sin-bearer is but dimly shadowed forth in the gospels. It is in the Psalms, more especially Psalms 22, 40, 69, 102, that you will find the suffering experience of Jesus. The cross has but the consummation, the last act and suffering, the final sacrifice and bloodshedding of the holy Victim. But long before that, grief and sorrow were the cup of Jesus. Your conscience sometimes may be grieved by seeing the sin practised in the world. When the Lord has blessed you, or favoured you with some sweet and solemn moments of communion with himself, how grievous to you is the conversation of the wicked! Your righteous soul is grieved, as was Lot's in Sodom, with sins in which you take no part, such as profane language or loose conduct in a railway carriage, or scoffing speeches from members of your own family. Now look at the Lord Jesus Christ, and see how his pure and holy heart was pained and grieved by seeing the sin that ran down the streets like water. The world is often a wilderness to us. What must it have been to him who for ever lay in his Father's bosom as his only-begotten Son! To be out of heaven was misery; to bear sin was hell. The very hardness of heart of his own disciples; the weakness of their faith; their striving for the mastery among themselves—has not that all too a cause of suffering to the Son of God? To have Judas the traitor ever before his eyes to show that he was fostering, so to speak, a hypocrite in his bosom; to see him putting his hand into the same dish; walking with him as a disciple; listening, with seemingly devout attention, to his words; preaching and performing

miracles in his name, and wearing the mask of the most devoted discipleship, when his black heart was full of infernal wickedness—was not that a source of grief to the Lord Jesus? We look at his sorrowing agony, his groans and tears, in the garden we see, by the eye of faith, his sufferings on the cross; we view his holy feet and hands pierced with nails, a crown of thorns upon his head, and intense bodily anguish stamped upon his languid eyes and marred visage. But when we have seen this, have we seen all the baptism of blood and all the cup given him by the Father? Was not his holy soul tortured far beyond the tortured body, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But O what an object of faith, as such, for those poor, guilty, self-condemned sinners who have had a long and painful experience of the works of the devil! For their sakes he was manifested on the cross—held up before their eyes as a bleeding sacrifice that they might look and live. But there is another manifestation which they need, and at times enjoy: when he manifests himself to their souls, and by his blood and love destroys inwardly and experimentally those works of the devil which they so deeply feel within. For *there* it is that the battle is fought and the victory won; it is *there* that the strong man is disarmed by a stronger than he; it is *there* that the triumphs of the cross are made known, and the mighty conqueror becomes seated on the throne of the affections.

And this leads us to our third point.

III.—*Why* the Son of God was manifested—"*that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" We have been considering those works; we have said how mighty they are; but language would fail to describe their magnitude, extent, and effect. One thing only can convince us of their nature and magnitude—that the Son of God alone could destroy them. What then must sin be if nothing but the manifestation of the Son of God could destroy it? You have thought perhaps that a few tears, confessions, expressions of sorrow, desires of amendment, various attempts to alter the

course of your life, were sufficient to do away with the sins into which you have fallen. If such have been your thoughts, you have been bold enough to think that the works of the devil might be destroyed by a few falling tears, a few mumbled prayers, a few acts of almsgiving, and a little extra attention to the duties of religion. But of course if this be all that is needful for you, it is all that is needful for others. Now, just see what this comes to—that a few religious duties are all that is necessary to destroy the works of the devil. The works of the devil to be destroyed by duties! You might as well send a number of school children with straws in their hands to beat down the walls of Delhi, or attack Sebastopol with pop guns, as to attempt to overthrow the works of the devil with a few tears, or a few promises of amendment, or a few half-crowns or shillings dropped with a grudging hand into a charity plate. Why need God have sent his own Son to destroy the works of the devil if tears could have blotted them out? Shed tears over the walls of Delhi. Would all the tears of Cawnpore, or all the sighs and groans of that night of anguish, when our fair countrywomen fell one by one under the butcher's knife, dissolve those walls and melt them as the snow before the sun? Make a few resolutions to take the city; give a few shillings or half-crowns as a charity dole to the widows and orphans of the soldiers; repeat a few prayers; bind vows and promises about your neck. Will that drive out the rebels? So Satan is not to be foiled by a few hypocritical resolutions or a few crocodile tears. He has not set up his fortifications in the heart of man—he has not manned the works with all the artillery of hell to be vanquished by an arm of flesh. Sticks and straws will never batter down even the outworks, the practice of sin; much less the citadel, its love and dominion. Only one thing can do both: the manifestation of the Son of God.

I have already opened up this as accomplished in the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. But this is not enough. It must be manifested to our souls. It is not sufficient for personal, individual salvation, that he was manifested in the flesh. It has been so manifested. Are all men saved thereby? Who is really benefited by his sufferings and sorrows in the garden and upon the cross?



Are all men benefited thereby? Is a general gaol delivery proclaimed? and do all men in consequence of it enter the courts of Heaven? Surely not. "The wicked are still turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Only those, then, who believe in the Son of God—only those to whom he is manifested as the power and wisdom of God—only those who receive him by faith and love into their heart—are benefited by his death and resurrection; for only as he is spiritually and personally manifested to the soul does he destroy the works of the devil. Where are the works of the devil? In your heart. What must come to destroy them? Power into your heart. Unless you get something into your heart which is stronger than the works of the devil there, how are those works to be destroyed? Look how sin has ruined your soul—how it has brought you under the wrath of God. See how you have been entangled in sin. Look at the long catalogue of crimes which you have committed—if not in deed, in word or thought—since you lay in your mother's lap. Think only of the sins of a single day: what carnality, what unbelief, what pride, what covetousness, what selfishness! But I need not go through the catalogue. I could not stand up to read, nor could you sit to hear, article by article, the contents of that long dark scroll. The human heart is too deep an abyss of sin to be laid bare to open view. It is like the common sewer: it is best covered up by a culvert. There is stench enough at the mouth, without penetrating through the whole length of its hideous contents. What does conscience say? Does that not testify that there is sin in your heart, and that sin is the work of the devil? Let your life be circumspect and your character without a blot, still is not sin there? If then this work of the devil is to be destroyed, you must have that come into your heart which has sufficient power to destroy it; and I am very sure that nothing short of the manifestation of the Son of God in the very place and spot—the citadel itself and stronghold of sin—can effect this. His blood applied to the conscience can alone take away its guilt. His grace received into the soul can alone deliver from its power. His love shed abroad in the heart can alone overcome its love; and his truth vitally known can alone liberate from its practice. He must be manifested to be known, revealed to be seen, and felt to be

enjoyed.

And this not only in the first manifestation of the Son of God—in the first reception of mercy—in the first proclaiming of salvation through his blood, when the great works are broken up, and ignorance, unbelief, enmity, and self-righteousness are laid low by the mighty conqueror. Satan, that crafty engineer, is ever seeking to cast up fresh intrenchments. As soon as one is demolished, he builds up another, and often in a corner little suspected, till they seem to have become almost as strong as before. Then there must come a fresh manifestation to destroy them. Fresh backslidings want fresh healing; new sins require new forgiveness; and the breaking out of old inveterate lusts, like the rising up of so many gaunt spectres from the dead, needs a fresh power to lay them in the grave. Sin in us is not a dead thing, which, once killed by a view of Christ, lies a corpse for ever after in the recesses of the human heart. It has a million lives; in fact, it never dies, until death separates body and soul. It therefore revives again and again with fresh energy. Pride this day may seem overcome and buried: it rises with new strength to-morrow. Infidelity may seem to have received this hour a mortal blow by some manifestation of the Son of God: it springs up the next, like a phoenix from its ashes; with redoubled strength. Unbelief may seem to be so thoroughly slain by a view of Jesus that the soul many fondly dream it will never be tempted to doubt again: the next day many witness it rising up with greater power than ever. Old lusts may seem to be dead and buried: opportunity comes, temptation is presented, the object that once allured allures again; the lust rises out of its grave, like a giant refreshed with wine, and seems as though it fought against your soul's salvation and sanctification with greater vigour than ever. There is not a sin in the human heart that is killed outright at regeneration. The old man is crucified, but dies hard: and sometimes it appears as if not a single nail were driven through either his foot or his hand. Sin will ever struggle for the mastery: it will live as long as we live. Therefore we are always needing the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy these works of the devil. He has done it virtually already in the cross,

for he has led captivity captive. His is a finished work; and he can and will destroy them in the heart wherever he comes with power.

But there will be no thorough destruction of sin within until the body drops into the grave, and the soul mounts aloft to be with the Lord: nor a full destruction of its effects in the body until the resurrection morn, when the body shall be raised from the sleeping dust and changed into the glorious image of the body of the Son of God, meet companion for the immortal soul. Then will the victory be complete; then will Christ appear, shining forth with the lustre of a million suns; then will be the glorious manifestation of the Son of God, and the works of the devil thoroughly destroyed. The burden of heaven's anthem, the grand theme of eternal adoration, will be the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The redeemed will look down from the battlements of heaven and see what works have been executed by the devil: they will see millions of fellow-beings consigned to eternal misery, weltering in hell, whilst they view themselves safe in the arms of eternal love. They will see the Son of God, without a veil between, manifested to their eyes in such heart-ravishing glory as the three disciples had but a feeble, dim view of on the Mount of Transfiguration. It will be their joy to see him as he is. He will always wear his human nature; he will never lay that aside. That will always shine resplendent with all the glory of Godhead: that will be the object of eternal admiration and love: and to that glory of the God-Man all the saints in bliss will be for ever looking and for ever adoring, for sin will no longer have a being in them, but they will be conformed to the glorified image of the Son of God, and be celebrating for ever the grand triumph of the cross.

It may be that some of you who are toiling and grovelling here below feel more of the works of the devil than the power whereby those works are overcome. You may be even now groaning under the power of sin and the temptations of Satan, and yet be looking up with a believing eye to the Son of God as your only help and hope. Look on. He can save to the uttermost. He is able to send

down messages of peace and pardon to your soul. He is able to deliver you. Thousands and tells of thousands have been in your case.

"Once they were mourning here below,  
And wet their couch with tears."

The Lord appeared for them, and now they are singing his praise. And this is ours also, if the Lord enable us to look beyond the works of the devil to him who came to destroy them—to hang with all our strength and hope upon the Son of God, believing that he is able to save, and to save to the uttermost; for his own words are—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."

## THE MARKS OF GRACE

Preached at Zion Baptist Chapel, Bedworth on Tuesday evening, April 20th, 1852

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

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

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

God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God: for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thess.1:3-5).

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

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

The second mark which he gives as being a partaker of the grace of the gospel, is, "and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

I believe we shall find these two marks in every child of God. If we set up a very high standard, many of the Lord's children cannot raise up their heads so high, but here is a standard of God's own raising. The apostle brings forward and points to two marks of grace in the souls of these Thessalonian converts, and if

the Lord hath touched our heart with the same gracious finger that he touched their's, we shall find, if he is pleased to shine on our souls, these two marks. These Thessalonians, bear in mind, were a Gentile church, and therefore had worshipped idols in the literal sense of the word. They had bowed down before idols of wood and stone. What is the reason we have in the world so much outward idolatry? Wherever we look to, or turn to the heathen nations, we shall see something more or less of idolatry; worshipping gods of wood and stone. There must, therefore, be some principle in the human heart which brings it to worship wooden and stone gods. There must be something in man's fallen nature that teaches him to worship these gods. Say you, "We do not worship and never have worshipped gods of wood and stone;" yet all men's hearts are the same. There must be that in our nature which is idolatry. There is the nature of idolatry, though not outwardly seen, as in the case of these heathens.

Now what is idolatry? What is an idol? The bringing or meeting together in the human heart of two opposite principles. These are in every human heart, and are seen in various shapes and lusts, and mixed with natural religion. Idolatry embodies two things that are quite distinct and opposite. Idolatry embodies a false notion of God, at the same time it deifies some lust or corruption. These heathen idolaters had their god of war, of love, of murder, of wine, and the god of death. Their idols were deified vices, lusts, passions, corruptions, and the wickedness of the human heart. These they deified, and made gods of. Such was the working of Satan on the human mind, that he brought forth an idol, representing two things apparently distinct, yet united, religion and lust, worship and devilism. The prostration of the body before a god that truly was nothing less than some deified lust and corruption.

Now if we look at our own hearts, we shall see how exactly, in our fallen nature, we have these two opposite principles. Thus idolatry is the bringing together of two antagonistic principles, two things that in themselves are quite opposite. This is devilism, a false religion, worshipping some lust or corruption under the

mask of religion; our natural corruptions under a profession; worshipping our pride, our respectability, our covetousness, or love of the world; all these are worshipped under the garb of religion, which is idolatry. And this is what every man does, except so far as he is delivered from it by the power and the grace of God. Men must worship something. All have a natural religion. When the mind is dark through sin, the heart ignorant, the old veil remaining on the heart, no teaching of God in the soul, we must worship something. As the Athenians of old had an altar to the "Unknown God," we must worship something; and if what we worship is not the true God, then we worship idols.

Some persons bow down before the great golden idol that Nebuchadnezzar set up; many, very many hearts are set on this golden idol: they give a little money towards religion, and if they appear to be liberal in the cause, then they think in other things they may be as covetous as they please; so that they have a religion just as the heathens: they worshipped golden gods, these worship their gold. They imagine, by giving a little away, that it is sanctified, and therefore they can worship it. So a man worships his own righteousness under the mask of religion; worships this self-righteousness, falsely called holiness. He prides himself upon his gloomy and solemn countenance. Thus he indulges his pride, and makes his religion a mask to cover his sin. This is what the Lord's people do, more or less, until they are brought out by the Spirit of God. Some attend the means [of grace] constantly, go to the Sacrament as a means to wash away their sins; as a man once said, he could not commit sin so greedily, until he had said his prayers; so men, to pacify their conscience, will not go to rest, or rise in the morning without saying their prayers, then they can rush into sin with greater pleasure: this is idolatry, deifying their sins, worshipping their lusts under the garb of religion.

In order to know what idolatry is, we have no occasion to go to the heathen; it is not merely worshipping a wooden or stone god, but it is the lust and depravity in the human heart. If we dig down into the heart, deep down, we shall see the principle



embedded there, like the coal in the pits at Bedworth; as the deeper you dig to discover the seams of coal, so it is with your heart, the deeper you go, the more you find: "Son of man, .... thou shalt see greater abominations." Our Saxon ancestors were idolaters; they worshipped the sun's day, or Sunday; the moon's day, or Monday; their Tuiseo's day, or Tuesday; their Woden's day; their Thor's day; their Friga's day; and their Seater's day, or Saturday. I merely name this to shew what idolatry there is in the human heart.

Now here is a mark of grace, a mark of the Spirit, that you have turned to God from idols. There is no real religion until God is pleased to touch the heart with his gracious finger. There is no spiritual light until the Lord is pleased to shine into the soul. No spiritual life until life is breathed into the conscience. This light comes from God. Life is breathed into the soul simultaneously with light. Though before pleasing themselves with a religion which was nothing better than idolatry, when light and life come into the soul by the power and teaching of God, they turn to God from idols. Now when the Lord is pleased to work in the soul, one thing he shews to us is that we have been wrapped up in a false religion, in self-righteousness, that we have been deceiving ourselves, and trying to deceive him; that we have mocked him with prayers and pretences, in which there was nothing but hypocrisy; hypocrites, such as make a profession of religion, and yet destitute of a real work of God on the soul. Nothing cuts more deeply, when the Lord is pleased to lay his finger on the conscience, than the pretences we made, not having a reality, and we turn to God from this false religion, which is idolatry. Having turned to God, is a clear proof that we have had a manifestation of God to our souls, whereby his fear is put into our heart, so that we know him to be the only true God, by his shining into our soul, manifesting himself. Therefore the apostle says, Ye are "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." See the contrast. The god they served before was a dead god, like Baal, or his priests, who, for the time, were more sincere in their way than many now; they cut themselves with lancets. We should not find many that would do this. There are

not many so earnest in religion, not so zealous as to dig into their flesh with knives, until the blood streamed out: they wounded themselves, cutting themselves, yet Baal never heard, and the prophet, therefore, mocked them, saying that he was asleep, and must be awakened; but there was neither voice, nor answer, nor any regard paid to their cries: so, if our God is a dead god, there will be no answer. God has never spoken to the soul. There is no answer to prayer, no pardon of sin, no manifestation of mercy, no shining in of light, life, liberty and love; no application of God's truth, no sweet breathing of God's promise, no worshipping God in spirit and in truth, no power, no feeling in the soul, no work of faith, no labour of love, no patience of hope. It is a dead religion, addressed to a dead god. When the Lord is pleased to begin his gracious work, the soul turns from idols to serve the living and true God: the living God, who fills all time and all space; a God who reads all hearts, a God who knows all motives, a God who sees into the depths of our being. I do believe that no man knows the everlasting God, until he is pleased, in some measure, to manifest and shine into his soul; then he knows the living God. As the psalmist says, in the 139th Psalm, "Thou art about my path, and about my bed: and spiest out all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue: but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether." 20 This is the beginning of true religion, to know the living God: a holy God, a sin-hating God, a sin-punishing God, a God who will not be mocked, a God before whose awful bar we must stand at the great day, a God who reads all hearts and knows all motives, a God who knows what sins are indulged in, a God who beholds all the evils working in the heart, and who drives us out of all the holes and corners in which we may take refuge, a God who lifts up the veil of unbelief from the heart, and whose awful prescience sees all our impurity at a glance, a living God who must have a living worship. A dead god may have a dead worship; but a living God must have a living worship. There is no living worship of a living God, until he himself is pleased by his Spirit to give it. He is a Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

If you look back at the first dealings of God in your soul, much

you will see of living worship. A dead religion would not satisfy you. Dead prayers would not do, you wanted living prayers, living sighs, living groans, and a living movement towards God, a living feeling, a living religion, because it is addressed to him who liveth and abideth for ever. 20. Psalm 139:2,3. Philpot here quotes from Coverdale's Translation of the Psalms which appears in *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments .... According to the use of The Church of England*. Philpot having seceded from the Church of England on 28th March, 1835 would still, no doubt be very familiar with that translation used in the Prayer Book. Now when the Lord would manifest himself to the children of Israel, he sends to them, by Moses, his great name "I AM hath sent me unto you." He was not known to them before as the great I AM, the self-existent Jehovah, whose awful majesty, terrible justice, universal presence, a solemn tremendous being, couched in the words, "I AM THAT I AM." He was not known to them by that name before, nor is he known to the soul now, until he is pleased to reveal himself as the great I AM, the self-existent Jehovah, a God of all power, who lives for ever and ever. And he is not known as such, until he is pleased to make it known to the soul. In the first teachings, in the manifestations of his awakening gracious presence, then he is known to be the living God, a God who is worshipped as the living God, a God before whom we tremble, a God who hears and answers prayer, a God whose law becomes a living law, whose threatenings are living threatenings, whose wrath is living wrath, whose displeasure is living displeasure, whose declarations are living declarations, who saith, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Thus a soul in worshipping a living God is alive, whereby he knows him, and just in proportion as we know him to be a living God, shall we have a living religion; in our approaches to him we shall know that a living God produces living feelings; we shall realize, from time to time, a living God, living desires, living prayers, living cries, living groans, feeling them go out of our heart with a living faith, living repentance, living sorrow for sin, living contrition, a living turning to God from idols, a turning from a dead god to a living One, from a dead religion to a living one, from a dead faith to a living faith, as the Lord is pleased to raise up a spirit of hope. Thus we

have instead of a dead hope a living hope, a man's religion becomes a living religion, coming from a living God, and leading to a living God.

The more he knows and feels the presence, power, majesty, and glory of a living God, the more his soul will be living near to God, and the more a living religion will be felt in his heart. The child of God is a wonderful paradox, is a mystery to others, and he is a mystery to himself. Every branch and member of the old man still continue within him. Therefore among the members and branches of the old man, is that member, idolatry. Remember, that though a child of God has a living God for his God; and that this living God will have living service and worship; that those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth: yet idolatry is still in his heart, lusts, pride, self-righteousness, unbelief and every member of the old man is still in you. Among these members of the old man, is that member, idolatry. Now what is an idol? It is something my carnal mind loves. How may I know whether my carnal mind loves it? When it thinks of it. If my carnal mind loves it, then it is very much pleased with it; we pet, love, and fondle it, dallying and playing with it, like a mother with her babe: see how she takes the little thing and gazes at it; her eyes are fixed on it, she dotes upon it, because she loves it, and it too often becomes an idol. Thus we may know an idol, if we examine our own heart, by what our imaginations, desires, and secret thoughts are going out after. Most men have some idol or other. I do believe nothing is too small or too insignificant, which at times may not be an idol. A man may make an idol of even a tulip or a gooseberry. What a wonderful large gooseberry, what a beautiful tulip? I know this is the case in Lancashire: one walking up and down his garden on the Sunday morning, looking at his gooseberry bushes, how fine and large the fruit is! Another may dote on a tulip, or an anemone; he looks at it, he admires it, fearful the frost has done it some injury: is not all this idolatry? Something which the mind prefers to God. Instead of reading the Bible, he goes into his garden, to see whether the frost has hurt his cauliflower, or done the broccoli harm: is not this idolatry? Thinking more of these things, than the things of God; his mind

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

Now, I say, the child of God has all these propensities working in him. At one time I should not have believed it, if this had been told me; but I know it, and it is from knowing what I have in my own heart, that I can read others. I know your heart by mine. From painful experience I know there is idolatry in every man's heart. One has one thing for an idol, another something different. What is my idol, may not be yours; I know it by the thoughts and affections of the mind, which most run after. But what a mercy it is, that we turn to God from all these, turn from all these idols to serve the living and true God. When is this? No man will, until the Lord makes him. Then his prayer is, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." This was the prayer of the ancient prophet Jeremiah. When the Lord is pleased to turn us, then we shall be turned. Something like our blessed Lord, when he turned and looked upon Peter, what was the effect? It broke Peter's heart; he went out and wept bitterly. As the Lord is pleased to turn the king's heart as rivers of water, which way he will, so he turns the heart of his children. What a blessed thing it is, now and then, to be turned to God from these idols; to feel the misery, wretchedness,

and dissatisfaction which these idols cause. There is something in idolatry which is so debasing, so unsatisfying; it makes a man so thoroughly miserable, when he has been indulging in idolatry, worshipping his idols, and his heart departing from the living God.

The Lord in mercy does sometimes by his gracious Spirit and presence turn to us; when he turns, then we turn from idols, and serve the living God. What is it to serve the living and true God? The apostle says, "Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son." First, to serve God in spirit, not with our bodies; because we may be serving God with our bodies, and serving the devil with our souls. There is a great deal of wickedness committed on a man's knees: a man may be on his knees, and his heart in all manner of wickedness; a man may sit in a chapel hearing a sermon, and his heart practising all manner of abominations. That is serving God with the lips, but not with the spirit. In other words, being made partakers of that blessed Spirit; serving him in spirit, from a feeling, believing, affectionate heart; serving in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter, with some manifestations of mercy and love to the soul; this is to serve in the Spirit in the gospel of his Son.

See how much is contained in these words; what marks of grace the apostle here sets up: to turn to God from these idols, to serve the living and true God, because the living and true God is served with the spirit in the gospel of his Son. If God is not served with the spirit in the gospel, it is merely bodily exercise; it is not evangelical obedience, not gospel obedience, but obedience in the letter, an obedience according to the beggarly elements of the law. What a mercy then to be able to serve God in spirit; to have the proud heart brought down, willing to serve God. The greatest privilege God can give a man, is to make him his servant, to bow down before him, to walk in his ways. The greatest privilege God bestows on a man, as the Church of England well says, is perfect freedom. What is freedom? If the truth makes us free, we are free indeed; free from slavish fear. Another sweet and blessed mark of grace is, to "wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the

wrath to come." Now this waiting for his Son from heaven, is not to be considered here in its primary signification: no doubt it means, waiting for the second appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall come the second time without sin unto salvation; then shall he appear with all his saints in glory. Thus the saints in God's Word are represented as waiting until then. Their happiness will not be completed until they see him as he is, until he comes the second time; when the body and soul will be reunited: their happiness will then be complete, and never will they be truly happy until they get to glory. "To wait for his Son from heaven:" waiting for a manifestation of the Lord Jesus, who is now in heaven, at God's right-hand. Here then are the two marks: the state of a child of God, and the marks of grace in the soul. One is, as I have endeavoured to shew, turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God; the other, waiting for his Son from heaven.

Why should a soul wait for the Son from heaven, unless he knew God had a Son in heaven, unless he had some life, feeling and desires towards the Son of God in heaven. How do you know that God has a Son in heaven? Well, say you, God's Word says so. That is good, but have you no other evidence? If God's Word says so, how do you know the Word of God speaks the truth? That is shocking, say you, to doubt of that. So it is: but this I believe, we cannot know in our own souls that God has a Son in heaven, until he is seen by the eye of faith. There is no seeing the Son until he is revealed by the Spirit. If we do not have a manifestation by the Spirit to our souls, we do not know God's Son. We must see him in some measure as Stephen saw him. If we do not know for ourselves, in the court of conscience, whether God has a Son in heaven or not; when the blessed Spirit is pleased to set Jesus before our eyes as the Son of God in heaven, we see him by the eye of faith, as the Lord is pleased to manifest him to our hearts, as the God-man, the glorious Immanuel, God with us. Then we know for ourselves that God has a Son in heaven. When we know, by the Spirit's teaching, God has a Son in heaven, then the thoughts, desires, and affections of the soul, go out after the Son of God in heaven. The soul is all filled with desires, longings and

breathings, after a revelation, clearer views of the Saviour; deeper, clearer, and more powerful manifestations of the Son of God in heaven.

Let me illustrate this. A woman is married, and has an affectionate husband. When he leaves his home for a time upon business, saying he shall be back at a certain day, when the time arrives, she is waiting for his appearance; she knows his step, knows the very way he turns the handle of the door. So it is with a soul who is married to the Lord. There is a spiritual union between Christ and the soul. He is absent, does not come, but he will come; the soul is waiting for his appearing. "To wait for his Son from heaven." The soul knows his touch upon the handle of the lock, how he puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and makes the very bowels melt. The soul knows his voice: "His own sheep .... know his voice," and every shining in of his presence, every drawing near of his most gracious person. Why does he delay coming? Why delay the wheels of his chariot? Oh, that the Lord would visit my soul, and bless me with his presence, shine into my heart, speak the promise home to my soul. So we talk with him, so we have sweet communion with him, "waiting for his Son from heaven."

See what sweet and blessed marks they are: marks of grace in the soul. Do not be contented or satisfied with yourself, unless you find, more or less, these two sweet and blessed marks. You know what you have been, what a wretch you have been, how in time past you have acted vile and base; but the Lord worked on your conscience, and turned you from these cursed idols to serve the living and true God to bow down before him, worship him in spirit and in truth, fear his great name, tremble at his law, at his almighty displeasure; to feel a living God taking possession of you, by his shinings in your soul by his Spirit and grace.

This is turning from idols to serve the living God, worshipping him in spirit, desiring his favour, having all this living religion wrought in the soul by the living God. This is the way the Lord is pleased to work in your soul, so that you daily repent, and grieve and



groan because of these idols, because of this teraphim in the camel's furniture (Gen.31:34, cf. v.19 mg): so still with the heart waiting for his Son from heaven, waiting for the word of peace, pardon and mercy, waiting for a smile, some testimony of an interest in his precious atonement. "Waiting for his Son from heaven," with earnest prayer. "Waiting for his Son from heaven," in hearing the word upon your bed at night, to have a secret persuasion that he will appear. "Waiting for his Son from heaven:" to be able to cast all your care upon him. This is a proof of the reality of the work upon your soul, to bring us to the knowledge of the living God, to know this living and true God as the Son in heaven. To wait for him, here is the mark of a believer; to wait for him, not like a presumptuous professor, as the poet tells us: "Who rushes in where angels fear to tread."

But waiting, longing, hoping, expecting; sometimes drawing back, sometimes moving on. "Waiting for his Son from heaven:" looking upward and inward, in hope Jesus will hear, will reply, speak the word, will dispel the cloud, will remove the burden, deliver from sin, and appear for the soul's good and the Lord's glory. This is to wait for the Son from heaven.

The man that has these two marks in his soul, will have a deal of work between God and conscience, because he finds continually this idolatry in his heart drawing him aside. What a deal he suffers from; how it plagues and tries him. Like the man in the fable, that found a dead viper, at least dead to appearance through the cold, what a pretty looking thing it is; he puts it in his bosom and warms it, when it revives and bites him. Thus is it with a man who plays with his lusts, indulging them; his carnal heart goes out after them, until at last, like the dead viper, it turns to a living adder, and stings him. What a deal of work for conscience this brings to man that lets his thoughts, desires and affections wander from God. In this way, my friends, things in themselves, to use a common expression, innocent, things in themselves quite allowable, when indulged in often bring guilt on the conscience, and great grief to the soul. A man may have a hearty appetite, but if indulged in to excess, it may be a snare to

him. So in many other things, as children, wife, family, and conversation. How soon may they deteriorate into idolatry, occupy the thoughts and affections, and turn the soul away from God. Like David who idolized Absalom, Eli with his sons, or Samuel, that great and good man, who made his corrupt sons judges in Israel. How this idolatry is rooted in a man's heart, how it steals upon his soul. Whatever is indulged in, how it creeps over him, until it gets such power that it becomes master. What work for conscience to get out of this snare; how the conscience is defiled when these idols become an object of worship.

There is something so detestable and abominable in an idol, from which it should be our earnest prayer for God himself to deliver us. If a man knows any thing of the idolatry of his fallen nature, he knows also the desire to serve the living and true God. He will know that he never can blend these two things. He may try to do it, while serving idols to serve God, but he cannot "for what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" There is no communion between a dead soul and a living God. The only way is when the grace of God is in operation. How these things make a man wince, to give up the idol and to part with it. How he pleads so hard, just this time. What work it makes, especially if the conscience is tender, struggling with the idolatry of the heart, the lust, concupiscence, and devilism of our fallen nature. I have compared it to a spider watching a fly. The poor little fly has just been caught in the extremity of the web; the spider lies in a hole, as soon as he sees the web shake, down he flies, and draws the threads around his victim, kills him, sucks his carcase, and leaves it. Thus the devil may be compared to the spider lurking in his web, waiting in reality to suck the very bones and blood of a child of God, and cast him to hell: and so he would, were it not for preserving grace.

What conscience work there is, between the idols struggling for mastery and for the grace of the Spirit of God; groaning, crying, and sighing continually to cast these idols out. Then we turn to God with weeping and lamentation; turn, as the prophet Joel

says, rending our hearts and not our garments; turn to the Lord with weeping and supplication; yes, weep tears of blood for these idols. A man does not know himself, if he does not know what power this idolatry has over him. None but God can make the man know it; and when he is delivered, he turns to God from these idols. He says, What a vile wretch I have been, what a monster I have been; I have gone after idols, I have loved this thing and that thing, and let my imagination go after it, a wretch, a monster of iniquity, the vilest wretch that ever crawled on the face of God's earth, to let my wicked heart go out after these idols. When the soul is brought down to a sense of its vileness, and its baseness, and God's long-suffering and forbearance, it turns to God from idols to serve the only living and true God, waiting for his Son from heaven, who pardons the idolater, heals the backslider, and communicates special mercy to his soul. He restores the poor idolater, he brings him back once more to "worship God in spirit and in truth;" he is raised from the dead to life. "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: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." The Lord raises the poor soul up; he is raised from the dead.

What a blessed doctrine is the resurrection of Christ; what a glory there is in it. The resurrection of Jesus is my triumph over death, sin, hell, and the grave, lifting his poor people up from the grave of their misery and wretchedness, raised from the dead. When we experience the power of Christ's resurrection, our souls are raised from the grave of our lusts and corruptions, and stand in the presence of God, raised from the dead, delivered fully and freely, eternally, perfectly, and everlastingly "delivered us from the wrath to come," which we find drawn down upon our guilty heads through these idols; delivered us from the wrath to come, by interposing his body and blood; waiting for his Son from heaven; triumphing over death, hell, sin, and the grave; delivered his people from wrath, the tremendous displeasure of God's hand that will be poured out upon a guilty world, upon all idolaters who live and die in their idolatry, upon all false professors, false

religionists, upon all that are not turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Jesus died to deliver us from the wrath to come; God raised him from the dead, and he is at his right hand. "To wait for his Son from heaven," for his smiles, his mercy, his deliverance. What a mercy to be enabled to find these two marks standing up in your soul, though they are sometimes buried.

Suppose some antiquarians had information that at Bedworth there was an old Roman mile stone; they would soon come to the town, and as soon as they discovered the stone, though the head might just peep out of the ground, what a digging down to find the inscription; they would dig and dig till they cleared away the rubbish that they might be enabled to read the inscription. So very often the marks of grace, like the old Roman mile stone, are buried in the earth; if the top is just seen of this stone, antiquarians dig down to get at the inscription. Thus if God has put this blessed stone, this Ebenezer in your heart, and the inscription is covered up with mud, mire, filth, and earth, if you want to have the inscription read, you must dig down. May the Lord, under the operation of his blessed Spirit, enable you to dig down, so that every obstacle may be taken out of the way. I hope the Lord has enabled me this evening to clear away a little of this rubbish round this stone, so that you may be able to read the inscription, and tell how many miles you are on the road to heaven, and to tell me that you have some reason to hope that the blessed God has caused the corruption, sin, and the devilism of your heart to flee away, that you have a mark that you are a child of God. To a poor soul sunk into carnality and sin, with every thing that is base and horrible, what a mercy it is to have some little evidence of a work of grace on the soul. Here is the mile stone found; first turning to God from idols. The man or woman that has turned to God from idols, can read the inscription; "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;" besides that, he can read another, that is this, "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which hath delivered us from the wrath to come." Whoever can find these two marks, written with the finger of God in the soul,

let the devil and unbelief say what they may; if they have these two scriptural marks in the soul, bless and praise God for his mercy, and thank him for his most unmerited favour.

## The Master's Bounty, and the Servant's Obedience

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Elie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 9, 1846

"Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word." Psalm 119:17

What a fund of true and vital experience is contained in the 119th Psalm! What simplicity and godly sincerity shine through it! What breathings after God's presence and manifested favour! What desires to live to the glory of God! What fervent pourings out of the Psalmist's heart, that he might be enabled to keep God's precepts!

Three features especially seem to my mind stamped upon this blessed portion of God's word. *One is, a deep sense of the Psalmist's sinfulness and helplessness.* "My soul," he cries, "cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word." (ver. 25.) "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." (ver. 176.) And indeed, what I may call the *substratum* of the whole Psalm is, creature weakness and helplessness. This feeling lies under well-nigh every petition; and springing out of it, and built upon it, is David's earnest cry that the Lord would supply his wants. The *second* feature that strikes my mind as stamped upon this Psalm is, *the desire of David's soul to experience the quickening and reviving teachings and testimonies of God the Spirit in his heart.* Being completely weaned from creature strength, and having felt from time to time the blessed teachings, guidings, and leadings of the Lord the Comforter, he here pours out his soul after those reviving influences and quickening manifestations. The Psalm is full of them: "Quicken me after thy lovingkindness." (ver. 88.) "I opened my mouth, and panted." (ver. 131.) "I have longed for thy salvation." (ver. 174.) "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." (ver. 135.) "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation." (ver. 123.) And the *third* striking feature, which in fact shines through nearly

every verse of the Psalm, is, the *desire of David's heart to understand and keep God's word*. The tender affection that he displays to the word of God; his fervent desires to have that word brought into his soul; and the breathings he pours forth, that he may speak, and act, and live in perfect conformity to its precepts—is a feature peculiarly stamped upon the whole Psalm.

In the text, we find, *first, a petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant;" secondly, what David knew and felt would be the fruit and effect, if that petition were granted, "That I may live and keep thy word."*

I.—What is man in a state of nature? We are never to forget our base original; we are continually to look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Israel was ever to say, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." (Deut. 26:5.) We are, therefore, continually to look to the fall of man; for only so far as we are acquainted with the fall, can we experimentally know the remedy that God has provided for this desperate malady.

1. What, then, is man in a state of nature? He is, as the Apostle so emphatically describes, Romans 6:17, "*the servant of sin.*" Before, therefore, he can become the servant of God, as David in the text declares himself to be, a mighty revolution must take place in his soul. By nature we are bond-slaves to sin; as the Apostle says, "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." (Titus 3:3.) We served them eagerly, we served them greedily; they were our willing masters, and we were their willing slaves. During the time that we are thus wearing the chains of servitude to the basest lusts, to the vilest sins, we are ignorant of our state as sinners before God. We know not that "the wages of sin is death." We are hurrying on to the chambers of destruction; yet we know not, we care not, whither we are tending.

2. But we are also, *the servants of Satan*. "When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." This mighty

conqueror has with him a numerous train of captives; this haughty master, the god of this world, has in his princely retinue a whole array of servants who gladly do his behests: him they cheerfully obey, though he is leading them down to the bottomless pit; for though he amuses them here awhile with a few toys and baubles, he will not pay them their wages until he has inveigled them into that awful gulf of destruction in which he himself has been for ages weltering.

3. Again. In our natural state, we are *the servants of the world*. What the world presents, we love; what the world offers, we delight in. To please the world; to get as large a portion as we can of its goods; to provide in it amply for ourselves and our children; to obtain and to maintain a respectable station in it,—this is the grand bent of man's carnal heart.

And lastly, we are *the servants of self*. Self in its various forms, proud self, lustful self, covetous self, righteous self—self in some shape or other, is the idol before whom all carnal knees bow, the master whom all carnal hearts serve.

See, then, the state into which every child of Adam is fallen and sunk—the servant of sin, the servant of Satan, the servant of the world, and the servant of self. He loves his master, hugs his chain, and delights in his servitude, little thinking what awful wages are to follow.

But if we look at the expression in the text, David calls himself *God's servant*, "Deal bountifully with *thy servant*." If, therefore, we are to be brought off from being servants of sin and self, it must be by some change taking place in the soul; for the Lord says, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt 6:24.) We cannot serve sin and righteousness; we cannot serve the world and God; we cannot serve Satan and the Lord; we cannot serve self and Jesus. A mighty revolution must, therefore, take place in the soul, in order to bring us into that state and posture where David was, when he said, "Deal bountifully with



*thy servant."*

In what way, then, are we made God's *servants*? It is true, that so far as the Lord has adopted us into his family, we are God's sons; "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." But we are not only sons of God, so far as the Lord has begotten us unto eternal life, we are *servants* also. The one relationship does not destroy the other. It is often so naturally; the son will often be to the father as a servant. He shall assist him in his labours; he shall take a share of his daily toils. Jacob was Laban's servant, though his son by marriage. "I *served* thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle" was the complaint of the aggrieved patriarch. (Gen. 31:41.) Jacob's own sons afterwards kept their father's flock. And does not the Lord call himself Master as well as Father? "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?" (Mal. 1:6)—one relationship not annulling the other. Nay, the very angels who are called in Scripture "sons of God," (Job 1:6, 38:7), are yet called "servants of God;" as the angel said to John, "See thou do it not; I am *thy fellow servant*, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book." (Rev. 22: 9.) And thus we find the Apostles, when writing to the churches, call themselves "servants." For instance, "Paul and Timotheus, servants of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:1.) "James, a servant of God." (James 1:1.) "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:1.) As if their highest title, and their most blessed employment, was to be servants of the living Jehovah.

But how are we brought into this relationship? for the Lord finds us in the chains of slavery; the servants of sin, self, and Satan. Must, then, not some mighty change take place before we can be made the servants of the living God? There must. The change takes place in this way.

1. First, the Lord, by casting divine light into the mind, and bringing his holy word with quickening power into the conscience, alarms, terrifies, deeply convinces the soul of its state by nature,

as "serving divers lusts and pleasures." This is the first stroke that God usually makes to loosen the chains of slavery off the hands, and the fetters off the limbs. By piercing and penetrating the conscience through the communication of light and life, sin is felt to be sin, and its wages are known to be death.

2. But this is not sufficient. This does not strike the fetters off the captive's limbs. He may still clank his chains, though he clanks them in misery. Other processes are necessary before the manacles can be stricken off. One is, *to make him fairly sick of sin*; not merely to arouse the soul, to awake the conscience, to alarm the mind by the convictions of the Spirit from the application of God's law, but also to make him fairly sick of sin, sick of the world, sick of Satan, and sick of self; to make him feel such bondage, such darkness, such wretchedness, and such miserable sensations, as to loathe those lusts in which he has been so cruelly entangled, to loathe the world which he has so gladly served, to loathe Satan who has so perpetually drawn him aside, and loathe himself as the vilest and worst monster of all.

3 But even this is not sufficient. By these means we are brought to hate our servitude; by these means our chains and fetters are somewhat unloosened, and the links are partially struck off the limbs. But still, we want something more before we can be servants of the Lord. "Thy people," we read, "shall be willing in the day of thy power." *We want some manifestation of the Lord's mercy, grace, and favour to our hearts*; and when this is felt, we gladly leave the old servitude, and enlist ourselves, so to speak, under a better master, and yield our hearts, our affections, our bodies, our souls, our spirits, our all—we yield them all up into his hands who has made himself dear, near, and precious to our souls. This is to obey the counsel which the blessed Spirit gives the Bride, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly delight in thy beauty; *for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.*" (Psa. 14:10, 11.)

4. But a *fourth* thing is necessary to complete it—to *be crucified*

*with Christ*, entering by living faith into a knowledge of the sufferings of Jesus, his blood, and his righteousness; and thus being crucified and dying with him, to be killed to sin by virtue of his death. This is the point so beautifully set forth, Rom. 6:2-6, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." And this was Paul's own blessed experience. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.)

Thus, by these powerful operations of the Spirit of God upon the heart; *first*, awakening and alarming the conscience; *secondly*, sickening and surfeiting us completely of our fetters; *thirdly*, making Jesus dear, near, and precious by some discovery of his beauty and glory; *fourthly*, leading us into some fellowship with him in his sufferings, some knowledge of his death and resurrection—by these distinct operations of the Spirit of God upon the soul, are we brought to be his willing servants, to delight in serving him, to feel it to be our highest privilege and our chiefest pleasure to yield ourselves up unto the Lord that we may be eternally his, that he may mould us into his image here and take us to be with him in a glorious immortality hereafter.

David, then, was in this posture and state of soul, when he breathed forth the words, "Deal bountifully with *thy servant*." He had been enlisted into the service of this blessed Master. He had been delivered from serving sin, the world, Satan, and self. He had been brought to yield up his heart's affections into the hands of Jesus, to be his in life and in death, for time and for eternity. But, like all other children of God, he felt, deeply felt, his own

sinfulness, helplessness, and inability to bring forth in his own heart that which he longed to realise there. He therefore makes use of this as a plea before the mercy-seat. As though he would say, 'I am thy servant; it is my desire to live to thy glory; I would serve thee with singleness of eye; I would renounce everything incompatible with my service to thee; I desire to be thine, thine only; and that thou wouldest "work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure." "Deal then bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.'"

But what is it for the Lord to "*deal bountifully*" with the soul? All that the Lord does for his people, he does in a way of bounty. There is nothing to be gained by merit; there is nothing to be obtained by creature service. The servant of the Lord does not bring his services to the foot of his Master, and thereby lay a claim to God's goodness and favour. Whatever is communicated to him, is communicated as an act of mercy; whatever he receives, he receives as an act of grace. And yet feeling a desire after those bountiful mercies and favours which God has to bestow, he puts in his lowly plea. How earnestly and yet humbly he lays his petition at his Sovereign's footstool, "Deal bountifully with thy servant!"

But in what way does the Lord "deal bountifully?"

1. When he gives a sweet *manifestation of the pardon of sin*, he deals bountifully; for when the Lord pardons sin, he pardons completely; he makes no reserve; he pardons sins past, sins present, and sins to come; his forgiveness is extended to every thought of the heart, every look of the eyes, every word of the lip, every action of the hand: it is a complete, irrevocable amnesty. Therefore the Scriptures use such declarations as these, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." (Isa. 38:17.) "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19.) "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." (Isa. 44:22.) "In those days, and at 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.) When, then, a man's conscience has contracted guilt; when he feels himself indeed to be one of the vilest wretches that crawls upon God's earth; when temptations press his soul down; when there is little else felt but the workings of inward depravity, filth, and iniquity—does not he then long for the Lord to deal bountifully with him—freely to pardon, graciously to accept, mercifully to forgive him? to reveal this full pardon to the heart, to seal this entire forgiveness upon the conscience, and to bless the soul with a clear testimony that the Lord has put away all his iniquities and blotted out all his transgressions?

2. The Lord deals also bountifully when he *opens up the treasures of mercy, grace, love, and salvation* that are stored up in the Saviour's fulness. "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and therefore the Apostle John says, "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." Now, the Lord unfolds, from time to time, the riches of Christ's grace to his waiting family. This is the covenant work of the blessed Spirit, "He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you." The blessed Spirit takes of the things of Jesus; and shows, at times, the glory of his justifying righteousness, and the balmy sweetness of his atoning blood and dying love; and as he unfolds these blessed things to the soul, he raises up in the heart earnest desires to experience them, to enjoy them, to realise them, and have them divinely shed abroad in the heart. We are not satisfied with eyeing these blessings at a distance; that is but a Balaam's view, "I shall see him, but not nigh." We are not contented with reading of them in the word; we are not contented with knowing that Jesus has this and that blessing to bestow; nor can we be satisfied with seeing, by the eye of faith, all the grace and all the glory stored up in his inexhaustible fulness. We want something more; we want a communication of these blessings to the heart. When the ground is parched and dry, it does not satisfy the farmer to see the clouds rolling over his head filled with rain, unless they let fall their rich showers upon his fields. It does not satisfy a hungry man to see the table loaded with a noble banquet, unless some of that ample fare reach his mouth. Nay, the sight without the

enjoyment raises up jealous feelings against the guests, if we see the table richly spread, and may not approach ourselves and feast. When, therefore, the Psalmist says, "Deal bountifully with thy servant," it is as though he had said, "Lord, I see such grace and glory in the blessed Jesus; I view such mercies and blessings stored up in him; I behold in him a Saviour so suited to my need; he so has and is everything that my poor lost soul can desire; O deal bountifully with thy servant by satisfying my need, by pouring into my heart some of those unspeakable riches, by bringing down into it a measure of those blessings, and communicating them with thy bounteous hand to my needy, naked soul." All this seems comprehended in the petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant."

3. Again; *the superaboundings of God's grace over the aboundings of sin*, seems also implied in the petition put forth here. Sure I am, if we watch the movements of our heart; if we daily mark the various thoughts, desires, and workings that from time to time pass through our minds, we shall feel that sin indeed abounds in us. Pride, hypocrisy, covetousness, deadness in the things of God, selfishness, sensuality—a thousand evils are perpetually struggling and lifting up their heads in our souls. Who that knows himself does not feel, painfully feel, that sin is perpetually working and striving for the mastery in his heart? that evil in all its shapes, in all its subtle and various forms, is perpetually abounding in him? What then does one thus taught want? Is it not to feel the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of these sins? Is it not to feel the superabounding grace of God freely blotting out, freely putting away, freely covering, freely justifying from, and freely spreading its divine glory over the aboundings of these inward and horrible iniquities? When, then, he says, "Deal bountifully with thy servant," it is as though he said, "Lord, I sin with every breath that I draw; my eye, my hand, my tongue, every member of my body is continually committing some evil; but, Lord, where sin has thus abounded, there let thy grace much more abound."

But there is something, also, to my mind, very sweet and very

experimental in the expression, "*Deal* bountifully." It is as though the Psalmist longed to experience some special and sensible dealings of God upon his soul. He wanted to feel the fingers of the Almighty in his conscience. He was not satisfied with merely reading or hearing about grace; he wanted some manifestations and testimonies, some inward witness, some word applied with power, some smile from the Lord's countenance, some gracious promise from his lips to cheer and encourage him. And this is the feeling, more or less, of every living soul, and of none but a living soul; for by this the Lord's family are distinguished from all others—that they, and they only, have dealings with God, and God only has dealings with them; that to them only the Lord speaks, in them only the Lord works; that to them only the Lord appears, and upon them only the Lord smiles. They are the favoured of the Lord; he guides their steps, he directs their way, and guards them every moment; he keeps them as the apple of his eye. "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." (Isaiah 27:2, 3.) The Lord's people are, as it were, in a blessed circle, on which alone the sun shines, and on which alone the rain falls. All but the Lord's garden is left a waste wilderness; all but the Lord's people are suffered to perish in their sins; all but the Lord's family are left unprovided for in the economy of grace, unredeemed by the blood of the Son, unblessed by the work and witness of the Spirit. But when the Lord's people are dark and dead, when their souls are barren and dry, when they can only see their vileness, and feel as though they had little to distinguish them from those dead in sin, they cannot but pour out a simple and sincere desire Godward, "Deal bountifully with thy servant."

II.—But there were certain *fruits and effects* which David knew would follow, if the Lord would but "deal bountifully" with him; and it was these effects and these fruits which would be a proof to him of God's bounteous dealings. It is not with the child of God, that so long as the Lord appears for him he cares for no gracious fruits to follow. He wants certain effects and fruits to be brought forth; and knowing his own deadness, feeling his own

hardness, and being thoroughly convinced of his own helplessness, he is looking up to the Lord, as he enables him, that he would work in him; for he knows that if the Lord will but work in him, these blessed fruits and effects must follow. Two of these fruits are mentioned in our text: "That I may *live*, and *keep thy word*."

1. "*That I may live.*" David, no doubt, at times felt, as you and I so often and so painfully feel, great deadness of soul. Is not this one of the chief standing lamentations of God's family? Go amongst the Lord's family, the deepest taught, the most highly favoured, and those whom we could envy most for the leadings and teachings of God upon their heart; and you will hear them lamenting their great deadness of soul, their darkness and barrenness in the things of God. And go to others who are not so deeply taught; who are less highly favoured, and you will find them with the same language of complaint upon their lips—bemoaning their coldness, deadness, and barrenness Godward. The saints of old felt this. Paul says, "Death worketh in us, but life in you." The Psalmist cries, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust."

But can the child of God rest contentedly in these feelings of deadness and darkness? Are they not sources of continual lamentation? Can we take no notice of these feelings? Can we say, they shall not be a burden to us? Can we wholly set them aside, and say, so long as we are interested in Christ's love and blood, it matters not how dead, dark, cold, and barren we are? Such language may suit those who know nothing of the vital teachings of God the Spirit in the heart; but a living soul cannot, dare not, use such presumptuous language. It is his lamentation, his grief, his complaint, that he is, day by day, so dead, so cold, so stupid, and so hard-hearted in the things of God. But the very lamentation proves that there is a principle of life that feels deadness: the very mourning and sighing shew that there is a tender conscience which groans under it; the very desire to be delivered out of it proves there have been times and seasons when the light and life of God have been inwardly felt: and the very bondage and misery that these feelings create, manifest that there have been times when the Lord has been the light of our



countenance, and liberty and love have been felt in the heart. It is the contrast, the painful contrast, between light and darkness, life and death, liberty and bondage, spirituality and carnality—it is this painful contrast that makes the soul so lament and mourn its darkness, deadness, and barrenness in the things of God. But can the creature help itself? Can the creature bring itself out of these wretched feelings of darkness, death, and bondage? No; it is utterly impossible for any child of Adam to quicken or keep alive his own soul. Therefore, the Lord, from time to time sends forth the blessed Spirit into the heart; and as he revives his work in the soul, the child of God pours out this simple petition: "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live;" that I may not always be dead and cold; that I may not ever be dark and stupid; that I may not perpetually be in bondage and carnality; but that there may be those sweet revivings, those blessed renewings, those divine inshinings, and those heavenly testimonies whereby the heart being enlarged runs in the way of God's commandments with perfect freedom; "Deal bountifully with me, *that I may live.*"

But in what way "*live?*" We can scarcely call it life when we are in that dead, cold, stupid, indifferent state where there is just enough life to feel our death, just enough light to see our darkness, just enough liberty to mourn over our chains. As to life, we cannot call it life, except there be some manifestations from the Lord, some revival of soul, some shining-in of the light of the Lord's countenance, some bountiful dealings of God himself with the heart. But no sooner does God begin to "deal bountifully," no sooner does he begin to work with his own blessed Spirit upon the heart; no sooner do light and life, liberty and love, flow out of the fulness of Christ into the soul—than it lives, it lives! it revives! New feelings are experienced; life flows in and life flows out; prayer comes in, and prayer flows forth; the Lord is endeared to the soul; what the Lord loves the soul loves, for he makes himself very precious; and this is living, living indeed! "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I *may live.*"

But when we "live," *we live by faith*; as the Apostle says, "The life

which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." We live by faith when the Lord is pleased to communicate true faith, the precious gift of faith to the heart. Then indeed we *believe*. We then believe in Jesus, believe in his blood, believe in his righteousness, believe in his person, believe in his dying love; and as faith begins to lift up its drooping head in the soul, we begin to live a life of faith upon the Son of God. And as we begin to live, we also begin to *love*. When we are in darkness, coldness, and barrenness there is neither love to God nor man; the very ways of God are a perfect misery to us; the Bible is neglected, and prayer is little attended to; under preaching we are cold, dead, and listless; the company of God's people is forsaken, and the things of eternity seem to fade from our view. But let the Lord revive his work upon the heart, let him bestow a gracious renewing, let him drop the unction of his Spirit, let the rain and dew of his grace fall, let him manifest himself with life and power; then the whole scene changes. It is like spring after a dreary winter; it is like the outpouring of the rain from heaven after a long season of drought, "Thou renewest the face of the earth." There is a blessed change when the Lord himself is pleased to appear in the soul. Then it begins to live. There is life in prayer, life in the reading of God's word, life in hearing the truth preached, life in conversing with God's people. Life must ever be experimentally felt in the soul when the Lord is pleased to deal bountifully with his servant.

And this life will manifest itself in various ways. Whilst we are dead, prayer is a burden; when we have life, prayer is our very breath. When we are dead, the very thoughts of God are grievous; when we are alive, the thoughts of God are sweet and pleasant. When we are dead, our affections cleave to the things of time and sense; when we are alive, our affections mount upward. When we are dead, the world is our home, though it is but a miserable one; when we are alive, we are looking upward to heaven as the home of the soul when time shall be no more.

But we are utterly unable to produce these feelings in our own soul. We feel our deadness, and mourn over it; we lament our

barrenness, and cry unto the Lord, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But to revive our own souls, to bring life and feeling into our own hearts, to lift ourselves up out of the pit of carnality, is beyond our power. We want sovereign grace to do this; we want almighty power put forth in our hearts to bring about this blessed change; we want a touch from the Lord's finger, a smile from the Lord's countenance, a manifestation of the Lord's mercy. But when he deals bountifully with the soul, then it lives; and when he does not deal bountifully with it, then it droops and dies.

How different is this experience of a living soul from those deceived and deceiving professors, who think they can do something to revive their own hearts! Poor deluded creatures! they have not yet felt the misery of slavery. Poor deluded wretches! they have not yet learnt this lesson, that in them, that is, "in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Poor blind creatures! they know not the depth of the fall into which man has sunk. Therefore, they may talk of doing this and doing that; of reviving their own souls, and of cultivating this or that grace. But the Lord's people, who have felt both sides of the question, and know what it is sometimes to sink and sometimes to rise, sometimes to be miserable, and sometimes happy, sometimes to be in bondage and sometimes in liberty, sometimes shut up and sometimes able to come forth, sometimes dead and sometimes alive—they know, painfully know, experimentally know, that no man ever quickened, and that no man ever kept alive his own soul; and if they are to live, if ever they are to have gracious revivals, if ever their soul is to enjoy the presence and favour of God, come it must as a gracious gift from him who deals bountifully with those whom he makes and manifests as his servants.

2. "*And keep thy word.*" David earnestly desired to keep God's word. However men may slight and despise God's word, or however little they may think about obeying it, David was not so minded. Read the 119th Psalm, and see what godly sincerity and simplicity run through it, what earnest desires, what fervent breathings, that he may keep God's word. But he could not do it

himself. He could not obey God's precepts; he could not shape his life in conformity with God's will; he could not for a single half hour keep his thoughts upon God; nor could he obey God's revealed will except by the Lord's grace. But he was not therefore satisfied with neglecting God's word. He could not pack it off upon the "old man," or upon the devil, and say, 'If I am one of the Lord's people, it does not matter whether I keep God's word or not.' He well knew that without God's power he could not keep it; his inability and helplessness were too deeply wrought in his soul; he was too acutely sensible of the awful fall of man, and the carnality of his depraved nature to think of keeping God's word unless he enabled him. But he was looking up to a higher power to help him to obey God's precepts. Still there was that principle in his soul, that love of God, that holy fear, that tender conscience, that desire to please God and that dread to offend him, which made the real bent of his mind to desire to keep God's word. Seeing, therefore, what a blessed thing it was to keep God's word, but feeling his inability to do so, and yet desiring to have this obedience brought forth in his heart, in his lip, and in his life, he goes to the footstool of mercy, and pouring out his soul there in simplicity, he breathes forth this petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and *keep thy word.*"

But when do we *keep God's word*?

1. We keep it when we *feel any part of it to be very precious to our soul*. Is it not so in nature? We are very careful of that which we value; bank notes, gold, silver, jewels, precious stones—how carefully these are kept because a certain value belongs to them. So if the word of God is ever made precious to our souls, we keep it. It is with us like the Virgin Mary, she "pondered these things in her heart." They were kept by her, pondered over, diligently treasured, carefully stored.

2. But again. *If the Lord has ever applied any word to the conscience*; if any portion of his blessed truth, has ever come home to our hearts, has ever enlightened our eyes, has ever been made sweet to our souls, has ever enlarged our captivity,

has ever delivered us from temptations, has ever broken a snare, has ever made Jesus precious, has ever melted us at the footstool of mercy—*that word* is kept. It is God's word; it has been made life and spirit to the soul, and it is kept because a high value is put upon it. When the Lord deals bountifully with his servant, it is, for the most part, by dropping a word into his soul, by opening up some precious Scripture to his heart, by giving him some manifestation from the revealed word of his goodness and love; and then, as this word drops from the mouth of God, it is caught up by the hungry and thirsty soul, lodged in the heart, stored and locked up in the treasure-house of his conscience.

3. But we also keep God's word when *we obey it*, attend to it, act upon it, when it is our regulator and our guide; as the Psalmist says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." If the Lord give a check, to attend to it; if he drop an admonition, not to despise it; if he send a reproof, to submit to it; if he bring a warning, to heed it;—in this way we keep God's word. The word is thus made life and spirit to the soul; it is brought with power into the heart; and the soul keeps it, because the Lord applies it with savour and unction to the conscience.

The Lord's family are, more or less, exercised in this way; and thus they can all, more or less, join with David in this petition at the footstool of mercy. Do not all the Lord's family, for instance, feel at times their deadness and darkness? Do not they all sensibly mourn over their coldness and barrenness in the things of God? Is it not their daily complaint? Is it not sometimes their hourly burden? Is it not often a dark cloud that seems to depress and cast them down, and spread itself over every faculty of their soul? And when they feel this, they feel also that none but the Lord can remove it. How often they cry, sigh, beg, and groan, 'Lord, that thou wouldst remove this deadness! O revive my heart, strengthen my soul, shine upon me, lead me, guide me, hold me up, visit me, bring me out of this coldness, deadness, and darkness!'

And do not all the Lord's people earnestly desire to keep God's word? They have a holy fear of offending him; they have an earnest desire to please him; they know him to be a kind Father, a tender Parent; and the longing of their souls is, to live according to his word. But they cannot do it. Their wicked heart draws them aside in one direction, Satan drives them aside in the other direction. Sometimes lust entangles, sometimes pride inflates, sometimes hypocrisy seizes, sometimes presumption swells, sometimes one corruption, sometimes another so lays hold upon them, that they cannot obey God's word. Then conviction comes, and guilt follows; their hearts are burdened, their souls are bowed down, and they desire again to keep God's word, "O that they could live to God's glory! O that they could obey him always! O that their hearts, lips, and lives were all directed according to God's revealed will and word!" But they cannot create these fruits in their own hearts, lips, and lives; and therefore, when the Lord brings them, as he does bring them, from time to time, to the footstool of mercy, they lift their hearts, if not in the very words, yet in the substance of this petition, "'Deal bountifully with thy servant;" Lord, appear for me; give me some smile, melt my heart with some discovery of thy mercy, bring a sense of thy love into my soul, visit me with thy salvation and the light of thy countenance, and give me those sweet teachings and divine testimonies whereby I shall live and keep thy word.'

Thus the feeling sense of our own deadness becomes overruled to bring us more fervently to the footstool of mercy; and a feeling sense of our own sinfulness becomes divinely overruled to bring us more earnestly to the Lord that he would enable us to live to his glory. And thus the Lord takes occasion by our very complaints, our very mourning, our very lamentations, our very self-aborrence and self-loathing—the Lord takes occasion by these things to manifest more of the riches of his sovereign grace, and to shew that "where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound."

But can the Lord deal any way but bountifully with his servants?

Why has he made you his servants? Why did he strike the chains of former servitude off your hands? Why did he bring you out of the service of sin, the world, Satan, and self? Why did he ever make himself precious to your heart, win your affections, and enable you to give yourselves wholly unto him? That he might cast you off? that he might mock your calamity? that he might trample you one day into hell? that he might leave you to yourself? that he might suffer Satan to overcome you; permit your lusts to destroy you; or allow your sins to be tied one day, like a millstone round your neck, to sink you into hell? O, can our heart ever indulge thoughts so derogatory to sovereign grace? Was it not because the Lord had bounty in his heart towards you, that he first turned your heart towards himself? Was it not because the Lord had purposes of love towards you, that he first led your feet into his paths? Was it not because God first loved you, that he gave his Son to die for you? Now if he has taught you, led you, upheld you, kept you, all this time, is it to cast you off *now*—to let you sink at last? He cannot do so, will not do so. Those whom he loves, he loves to the end; the good work which he has begun, he will accomplish, and bring to final perfection; and therefore, all the Lord's acts are acts of bounty.

But your soul may say—'Why, then, am I so straitened? Why am I so imprisoned? why so dark? why so dead? why so deserted? If the Lord "deal bountifully with his servants," and I am one of his, why does he leave me to all this carnality and wretchedness?' Why, the Lord has a purpose in so doing; he means to humble you more thereby; he means to lead you thereby more deeply into an acquaintance with the fall; he means, in the end, thereby to endear himself more to your soul; that you, sinking more and more deeply into nature's wretchedness and ruin, may more bless his precious name when he appears on your behalf. If you are his, he must deal bountifully with your soul. Let us never entertain such niggardly thoughts of God as to think that he can deal in any way but bountifully. He has a princely heart, he has a royal hand; and he therefore never has dealt, and never can deal in any way but bountifully with those that are his. Did not bounty move him to give up his only begotten Son? Did not bounty lead

him first to deal with your conscience? Did not bounty induce him first to bless and deliver your soul? Did not bounty move him to keep you every step of the way? And will not bounty lead him to take you safely home? It is high treason against the Majesty of heaven to think he can deal niggardly, sparingly, scantily with his people. It is treason against his princely hand and his royal heart. He declares of himself, "I am God and not man;" and being God and not man, he therefore deals bountifully with all his servants. They live upon his bounty here, and they will live upon his bounty hereafter. He admits them to a seat at the table below, that they may sit at his board above; and thus he gives to his people all the comfort, and gets to himself all the glory.



## **The Meeting at the Mercy Seat**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, June 8, 1862

"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." Exodus 25:22

God and man once were friends; but this friendship rested on a mutable basis, for it depended wholly on the continued obedience of one who, though created after the image of God, was made free to stand, yet free also to fall. Now, as long as man, thus created upright, was on terms of amity and friendship with God he was happy; for it is impossible, in the very nature of things, that happiness, real happiness, happiness worthy of the name, can subsist apart from God, still less ever dwell in the bosom of any created intelligence, whether man or angel, who is at enmity with the glorious and omnipotent Author of his being.

Seeing, then, this happiness in the divine favour enjoyed by our first parents, Satan, whose very name signifies the "enemy," the implacable enemy of God and man, plotted to overthrow that state of innocence in which man stood before his Maker as created "in his image after his likeness;" and with his innocence to destroy his happiness. The towering pride and passionate jealousy of Lucifer, once the bright and radiant Son of the morning, could not brook the sight of a creature raised out of the dust to occupy a position of happiness and innocence from which he had fallen, and to enjoy that favour which he himself by disobedience had irreparably lost. But a worse—if there could be a worse—a more infernal feeling than envy against man, moved the arch-fiend to plot his deep-laid scheme. There burnt in his bosom a desperate, an undying enmity against the God of heaven; and he determined, if I may use the expression, to spite God, to defeat his plans, to overthrow his purposes, and to mar

that fair creation of which he had made man in this lower sphere the ruling head. If he could but ruin man as he himself had been ruined; if he could but deface the image of God in him, and draw the slimy trail of sin over this lower world which God had pronounced so very good, it would seem to afford him some such gratification as we may conceive a fiend would feel in hovering, like a vulture over a battle field, to glut eyes and ears with sights and sounds of woe. In the depths of his infinite wisdom, the Sovereign Ruler of all events permitted him to succeed in this hellish plot. The God of all grace had thoughts of mercy and peace in his own bosom which were in due time to be brought to light. Counsel had already been taken between the Father and the Son in the fore-view of the creation and the fall; a glorious plan of salvation devised, a book of life written, and the names of the chosen saints of God inscribed therein. The Lord, therefore, suffered this plot to succeed. Satan tempts the woman; the woman tempts the man; he falls under the power of temptation; he disobeys the express command of God; sin enters into the world, and "death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.)

But what, we may ask, was the *immediate* consequence of this fatal act of disobedience? The subsisting friendship between God and man was instantly broken; man became an enemy and an alien; the ground itself was cursed for man's sake; this fair scene, this lower creation on which God had stamped his own approbation, became utterly debased by sin and corruption into that wreck of misery and crime which now appears everywhere spread before the spiritual eye.

But were God's purposes to be thus defeated? Shall the arch-fiend prove himself stronger than Omnipotence and wiser than Omniscience? more potent to destroy than God to create, more powerful to plot ruin than God to overthrow his scheme? No. In the eternal plans of God provision had been already made against the schemes and plots of this hater of God and destroyer of the bodies and souls of the sons of men. Can we believe, for a single moment, that the fall was some unforeseen event which broke in

unexpectedly upon the mind of God; that it was an unlooked-for accident, and therefore that the whole plan of redemption was a scheme unthought of till the fall of man made some remedy necessary? Was there no "book of life of the Lamb *slain before the foundation of the world?*" And if the Lamb were in the purposes of God "slain from the foundation of the world," the Book of Life must have been written from as ancient a date. (Rev. 13:8.) Do we not read also of "the *blood of the everlasting covenant*" (Heb. 13:20); and of the saints being "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world?" (Eph. 1:4.) How evident, then, it is that the whole plan of redemption by "the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" was foreordained together with him before the foundations of the earth were laid or the day-spring knew its place. (1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Job 38:4, 12.)

This glorious scheme of redeeming love lay, however, deeply hid in the bosom of God till the time arrived for bringing it to light. But as soon as needed the wondrous plan dawned into view, and was first ushered into birth from the lips of the Most High in the very garden where man sinned, and was wrapped up in the judgment then pronounced and the verdict given; for in the bosom of that condemning sentence the first promise of redemption was lodged, and out of it was brought to light that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." This was the first intimation that the schemes of Satan should be disappointed. "The seed of the woman"—of the very woman whom he had so entangled—should "bruise" that "head" in which lay all that subtlety which had planned the scheme, and all that poison which was poured forth into man's nature when its fangs fastened for the first time upon human flesh. An intimation was also given at the same time of the sufferings of the Son of God to be manifested in flesh by the declaration that "the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel." Sacrifices were then first instituted, and the worship of God thus put upon a new basis; which Abel received in faith and acted upon, but which Cain rejected, as preferring, in his waywardness, the former mode of bringing of the fruit of the ground as an offering unto the Lord—

agreeable enough to the worship of God by man in his innocence, but now unacceptable from him as a sinner. Time rolled on. I need not enter in detail into the various circumstances which gradually issued in a clearer revelation of God's eternal counsels. But one point I must draw your attention to as closely connected with the subject of my text. In order to carry the promise of a Redeemer from the seed of the woman into effect, God chose to himself a people which was to spring from the loins of Abraham. This people was to be a peculiar and separate people, not only that the descent and lineage of the Messiah from Abraham might be carefully preserved, but that there might be set up upon earth the true worship of God until his dear Son should appear in the flesh. This people, after 400 years' bondage in Egypt, he brought into the wilderness, thus in a peculiar manner separating them from all the nations of the earth, that he might manifest more clearly and positively the counsels of his eternal wisdom, to provide redemption through the atoning blood of his dear Son. After, therefore, he had given the law of the ten commandments, commonly called the moral law, God called Moses up into the Mount, where he was forty days and nights, and there he opened up to him in type and figure the mystery of the Gospel by showing him the pattern of the tabernacle with all the vessels of service which belonged to it. His words to Moses were, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exod. 25:8, 9.) The tabernacle was "the sanctuary," for therein was the most holy place, in which God dwelt in a visible manner between the cherubims. But this sanctuary was a type of the sacred humanity which the Son of God was to take into union with his own divine Person, and in which should dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

But you will observe that the first thing which he bade Moses make after giving him this direction was *an ark*. "And they shall make an ark of shittim wood; two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with

pure gold; within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about." (Exod. 25:10, 11.) Upon the ark there was to be "a mercy seat" of the exact size of the ark itself, so as completely to cover it. "And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth thereof." (Exod. 25:17.)

But let me now repeat once more the words of my text; for it is in connection with the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat upon it that they were spoken by the Lord to Moses. "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

In bringing before you the spiritual and experimental instruction contained in these words, I shall aim to dwell,

I.—*First*, upon "*the ark of the covenant*," both in its literal and spiritual meaning, and particularly upon "*the mercy seat*," which formed the lid, so to speak, of that ark.

II.—*Secondly*, upon the *promise* which God gives here, that "he would *meet with*" Moses, and, by implication, not only with Moses, but also with all who fear his name and worship him in spirit and in truth.

III.—*Thirdly*, upon the *gracious declaration* in connection with the promise, that "he would *commune with him*" from above the mercy seat."

IV.—*Fourthly*, that this communion should be upon *all things which God should give him in commandment* unto the children of Israel.

We have thus four leading objects proposed to our faith, if God enable me spiritually to open up the subject for your

consideration this morning: 1, *The Ark of the Covenant* as a typical representation of *the mercy* of God in the face of his dear Son; 2, The gracious *Condescension* of the God of heaven and earth in *meeting with* his people at the mercy seat; 3, The *Communion* with which the Lord indulges them when they are brought there by the power of his grace; and, 4, The *Subjects* on which he thus graciously communes with them.

I.—We will first, with God's help, look at the ark of the covenant as directed to be made on the holy mount. We will examine it in various points of view, in order to show more clearly its typical character; what it spiritually represented; and what gospel truths it was meant, under a visible form, to prefigure.

i. The first thing which deserves our notice is *the purpose* for which it was constructed. It was intended to hold "the testimony," that is, the witness which God gave of himself in the law delivered from Sinai's burning top. "In the ark thou shalt put *the testimony* that I shall give thee." This "testimony" was so called as being God's witness, whereby he testifies of himself that he was a God of holiness and justice, for the two tables of the law written by the finger of God were standing witnesses of the covenant then made between God and his people. For the sake of their careful preservation these tables were to be laid up in the ark, it being constructed for the express purpose of receiving them in its bosom. "And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou breakest, and thou shalt *put them in the ark*. (Deut. 10:2.) In the very object, then, for which the ark was constructed, we have, in type and figure, a blessed prefiguration of our gracious Lord, for he came for the express purpose of fulfilling that law; and that not only by an external but by an internal and perfect obedience to it. Thus we hear him speaking, "Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." The law of God, therefore, was in his heart, as the two tables of stone were *in* the ark of the covenant. It was absolutely necessary that the law should be fulfilled in every minute particular. It commanded perfect love to God and perfect

love to man, and this obedience was to be rendered from the heart. Man could not render that obedience, for he had not a heart to render it: he had lost in and by the fall both will and power. Yet that law must be obeyed, in order that the inflexible justice of God should be maintained without speck or stain, for without that perfect obedience righteousness could not be imputed or the Church justified. But as God is a searcher of hearts, and requires an obedience as holy and as perfect as the law demands, it could only be fulfilled by its being in the heart of a Mediator who, by the possession of a perfectly spotless nature, could think, speak, and act in the most perfect, unwavering love to God, and the most perfect, unwavering love to man. O glorious plan of justifying sinners doomed to die, righteously cursed, and justly condemned by original and actual transgression! How glorifying to God! how suitable to man! for "blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. 4:8.) But in what consists this blessedness? In the imputation to him of righteousness without works; and how can this be, except being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? (Rom. 3:24.)

ii. But let me now direct your attention to the *materials* of which the ark was constructed, for I think that we shall be able to see in them also a blessed typical reference to our Lord.

1. It was a kind of oblong chest, reducible in English feet to about the following dimensions: four feet four inches long, two feet nine inches broad, and two feet nine inches deep. Thus it was not very large nor conspicuous in size—apt figure of our Lord's lowly state when here below, as a root out of a dry ground, having, in the eyes of men, neither form nor comeliness.

2. Yet, though small in size, the materials were exceedingly *valuable*. It was made of "shittim wood." This was a tree of great value, which grew in some parts of the desert of sufficient size to be cut into boards, for both the boards and the bars of the tabernacle were constructed of it; and so also were the staves of the ark and the altar of incense which stood in the holy place.

This is the same tree as "the shittah tree," which the Lord promised he would plant in the wilderness, together with the cedar, the myrtle, and the oil tree; and is said by naturalists to be the same tree as that from which is now gathered the gum arabic of commerce. But, whether so or not, it had four peculiar properties, which made it suitable as an emblematic representation of the human nature of our blessed Lord. It was, 1, Exceedingly *durable*, so as to be almost indestructible by time, and thus aptly represented the durability of our gracious Lord, as wearing for ever and ever that human nature which he assumed into union with his divine Person. It was, 2, *Incorruptible* by the gnawing teeth of any insect or worm; and thus an apt representation of that sacred humanity which, even in death and in the grave, knew no corruption. 3, When worked up for use, it was exceedingly *beautiful* in grain and general appearance, admitting of a high polish, so as aptly to represent the beauty of that pure humanity of our blessed Lord on which the eyes of God ever rest with infinite satisfaction. And, 4, It was, when burnt, very *fragrant*, and thus aptly represented that holy human nature of our gracious Lord, which ever gave forth and still gives forth an acceptable odour, a sacrifice of a sweet smell, before the Lord of Hosts.

3. But, besides the shittim wood of which the ark was constructed, and which, as I have endeavoured to show, beautifully prefigured the pure humanity of our most gracious Mediator, there was an addition made to it which invested it with still greater and more conspicuous value. It was *overlaid with pure gold both* without and within, according to the words of the Lord to Moses: "And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold; within and without shalt thou overlay it." (Exod. 25:11.) This pure gold I understand typically to represent *the Deity* of our most blessed Lord; and there were two features connected with this overlaying which seem to me to invest it with this emblematic character. 1. The pure gold was in the closest, most intimate union with the shittim wood, as overlaying it in every part within and without, and yet was utterly distinct from it though the union of both made but one ark. So Deity, represented by the gold, and the



humanity represented by the shittim wood, constitute but one Person, the glorious Person of Immanuel, God with us. But, 2, as the pure gold was in itself intrinsically more precious than the wood, so the Deity of our precious Lord is intrinsically more precious than his sacred humanity. Yet who shall separate the one from the other, any more than the two natures of the Lord can be separated in their intrinsic, eternal union, or in time view of faith?

iii. But I have now to direct your attention to "the mercy seat," which, as I have before pointed out, was a kind of lid or covering of the ark. "And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt put a mercy seat above upon the ark." (Exod. 25:17, 21.) You will observe, therefore, that the mercy seat was of the same exact size with the ark, fitting it accurately and covering it from view; the word translated, mercy seat, meaning literally, "a covering," as concealing the tables of stone which were deposited in its bosom, and so typical of the covering of sin: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32:1.) I have before shown that within the ark were deposited the tables of the law which the Lord gave a second time to Moses after he had broken the first; for we read that when Moses "reared up the tabernacle in the first month in the second year on the first day of the month," that is, when they had been now in the desert for a year, "he took and put the testimony into the ark." (Exod. 40:17, 20.) This testimony was the two tables of stone like unto the first on which the Lord wrote the words that were in the first tables which he brake. (Exod. 34:1.) But we are told by an old Rabbinical tradition that the broken tables which Moses cast out of his hand upon the Mount, when, in a flame of holy indignation at seeing the calf and the dancing, he could no longer restrain himself, were deposited in the ark, as well as those tables which God subsequently gave them. Though it is but a tradition, yet there seem to be strong elements of truth in it, for we read nowhere what became of those broken tables, for though broken they still had been written by the finger of God, and thus in

themselves were as holy as those which were unbroken. I think we have every reason then to believe that both were alike deposited in the ark, and thus were alike covered by the mercy seat; the eye of God, so to speak, being thus prevented from looking on the broken tables. If, then, the unbroken tables in the ark represented the fulfilment of the law in the heart of Christ, the broken tables, as covered by the mercy seat, represented the covering of our iniquities by the propitiation of Christ. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sins." (Psalm 85:2.)

iv. But there were some other circumstances connected with this mercy seat which demand a few moments' investigation, as casting a light upon the Mediatorial work of our blessed Lord.

1. Among these you will recollect that Moses was bidden to make "*two cherubims* of gold of beaten work," that is, not molten in a mould but formed with a hammer, and therefore more solid as well its more beautiful and precious. These cherubims were placed upon the two ends of the mercy seat, and stretched forth their wings on high, covering it with them, and their faces looking to each other and to it. The cherubims, thus looking down upon the mercy seat, seem to represent angelic beings, according to the words of Peter: "Which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Pet. 1:12.) This view of the cherubims gives us a beautiful representation of the holy angels ever contemplating, and yet, with all their seraphic intelligence, unable fully to comprehend the mystery of salvation by the incarnation, sufferings, sacrifice, and death of their own Creator, the eternal Son of God. And this interpretation is confirmed by a remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, from which we gather some insight into this heavenly mystery: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:10, 11.) What beauty and glory do we see in this? What a contrast to the subtlety of the arch-fiend whom we have seen successfully plotting man's overthrow, and doubtless rejoicing with his

accursed mates in the success of his scheme! God holds up in the mercy seat, as if before the eyes of the holy angels, his eternal purpose, and therefore only brought to light by the success of Satan in the fall, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord to exalt human nature in the person of his dear Son, and give him a bride in the church wherein and whereby he should be for ever glorified. The "principalities and powers in heavenly places" herein see "the manifold wisdom" of God. Thus the elect angels, confirmed in their standing by the incarnation of God's dear Son, have a part, and a blessed part, in this incarnation, not as redeemed by atoning blood, for redemption they needed not, but as gathered up into one family with the Church. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." (Col. 1:20.) And again, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." I cannot enter further into this subject, but I have said enough to show you why the two cherubims typify, as two heavenly witnesses and two personal representatives, the angelic host, as ever contemplating the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God.

v. But you will also remember that the mercy seat had a peculiar connection with the *great day of atonement*. I cannot, therefore, pass by what was specially transacted on that solemn day, for on it certain rites were performed by the High Priest, all of which were of a typical character, and pointed not only to grand gospel truths, but had a spiritual and experimental bearing upon the work of God on the soul.

1. On that day, as being the solemn day of atonement, atonement was made in a special manner for sin. The high priest killed a bullock as a sin offering for himself and his house, and a goat for the sins of the people. When he had thus offered a sacrifice, he was to take of the blood of the bullock for his own sins and of the goat for the sins of the people, and carry it into the most holy place within the veil. But he was bidden to take "a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the brazen altar and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small." As he entered

within the veil, and you will remember that he was permitted to do this only once a year, and that upon this solemn day, he sprinkled the incense beaten small upon the burning coals, and for this purpose, that the cloud of incense might cover the mercy seat and fill the most holy place with its sweet fragrance. Every part of this was highly typical and full of the sweetest instruction. The incense beaten small represented the bruised body and soul of our blessed Lord; the coals of fire from the brazen altar represented the ever-burning anger of God against transgression and transgressors; the cloud of incense covering the mercy seat represented the mediation of Christ in connection with the propitiation made by him for sin: and the filling of the most holy place with the cloud of fragrant incense represented the present intercession of our great High Priest in the presence of God for us.

2. But, secondly, the high priest, when he went within the veil, entered, as the apostle speaks, "*not without blood*, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." (Heb. 9:7.) The command given him by Moses was, "And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon this testimony, that he die not. And he shall take the blood of the bullock and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward, and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times." (Lev. 16:13, 14.) All this was a typical and most blessed representation of the atonement for sin offered by the Son of God when he was made the propitiation for our sins. The blood represented the precious blood of the sacred humanity of the Son of God in intimate conjunction with his eternal Deity. It was sprinkled upon the mercy seat, to show the connection between the sacrifice which our blessed Lord offered for sin and the covering of transgression from the sight of God by his blood and righteousness. Its being sprinkled before the mercy seat seven times—a perfect number—represented the full remission of sin, the entire pardon and thorough blotting out of all the transgressions of the people of God. And its lying, as it were, continually upon the pavement in the most holy place from year

to year before the mercy seat, represented that "blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel," and which, as sprinkled, so to speak, upon the pavement of heaven, is ever interceding for the Church of God.

vi. One remark more I must make before I pass on to our second point, which is to observe that there was "a *crown of gold* made upon the mercy seat round about." (Exod. 25:11.) Only one other vessel of the tabernacle was so adorned, viz., the altar of incense, which was also made of shittim wood, and, like the ark, overlaid with pure gold. (Exod. 25:23, 25.) This crown of gold in both these instances seems to represent the royal crown which our blessed Lord wears as King as well as Priest; for he was to be "a priest upon his throne" (Zech. 6:12) and "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," which was a royal priesthood. (Heb. 7:1, 2.) You will observe that both the mercy seat, as being in the most holy place a type of heaven, and the altar of incense, represented the present intercession of Christ as now King and Priest. Nor was the table of shew bread without this golden crown as typical of the presentation of the people of God before his presence continually. But there was a peculiar propriety in the crown of gold being put upon both the ark of the covenant and the altar of incense, on which morning and evening Aaron was bidden to burn incense: "And shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning; when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it; a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." (Exod. 30:7, 8.)

II. But we will now, with God's help and blessing, direct our attention to our second point—the *gracious promise* that the Lord *will meet* with his people at the mercy seat, comprised in these words: "*There will I meet with thee.*"

i. In considering this gracious promise, I shall first direct your attention to the *place* in which the ark of the covenant was put, as this circumstance throws great light upon its typical intention. You doubtless remember that in the tabernacle a vail separated

the holy place from the most holy, and that in the most holy place the ark alone stood. But I will read to you God's direction to Moses: "And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony; and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place." (Exod. 26:33, 34.) The most holy place represented in type and figure heaven, as is plainly evident from the language of the apostle: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;" and again, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." (Heb. 4:14.) In heaven, then, in the immediate presence of God, is the mercy seat now set up. The old covenant decayed and waxed old, and is vanished away. (Heb. 8:13.) We have now, in the Son of God at the right hand of the Father, the true, the great, the only High Priest over the house of God; for he is passed within the vail; and where he is, there is now the mercy seat. It is of this the apostle speaks, when he says, "let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

But as another proof that the most holy place was a typical representation of heaven, we may observe that God in Scripture is often represented as dwelling between the cherubims. Thus, in the words of our text, we read, "And there I will meet with thee from above the mercy seat from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony." So the Psalmist prays, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims shine forth;" and again, "The Lord reigneth: let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims: let the earth be moved." (Ps. 99:1.) This dwelling of God between the cherubims is called sometimes the shekinah. The word, which means a dwelling or resting, has reference to the cloud of glory between the cherubims whereby the immediate presence of God was manifested. "I will appear," he says, "in the cloud upon the mercy seat." We do not read of

any lamp or candlestick in the most holy place. No; it was not needed there; for as in the glorious city which John saw in vision, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb was the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23), so this shekinah, or cloud of glory upon the mercy seat, filled the most holy place with a glorious effulgence.

But let us now view the typical representations I have gone through, and see how they bear upon the mercy seat as now set up in the very presence of God by our great High Priest, who is risen from the dead, and is even now in the presence of God for us. His promise to Moses was, "There will I meet with thee." Moses is dead and the prophets. The ark of the covenant is dust; the golden mercy seat has perished, for it was capable of being lost or abused to vile purposes, being a corruptible thing. (1 Pet. 1:7, 18.) Where, then, would be the promise made by God unto our fathers if, when the literal mercy seat had passed away, there was now no longer a place of which God could say, "There will I meet with thee?" But thanks be to his holy name, as "we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13:10), so we have now a mercy seat also, though the tabernacle, with all its vessels, and those who served it, have alike passed away. Our mercy seat is where our great High Priest is—in the heavens; and it is at and before that mercy seat that God and man still may meet. What a blessed view is this for the eye of faith when it can look unto Jesus as thus ever interceding for us above!

Having, then, this mercy seat set up in the highest heavens, and Jesus continually presenting before it the fragrant incense of his intercession as ever rising from his body bruised and his blood shed upon the cross, we are invited by a whole cluster of gracious invitations and encouraged by a host of sweet promises to come and bow ourselves before it. There he has promised to meet with us now, as he did with Moses in the wilderness. This indeed is the only spot where God and a guilty sinner can freely meet; for there is the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; there is the blood of sprinkling; there the advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and there, and there

alone, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

ii. But, having taken a glance at this mercy seat in the highest heavens, let us now see how all this bears upon the experience of the saints of God; and to do so, we will take the child of grace at the very beginning of God's work upon his heart, and show how, from time to time, he is brought to the mercy seat, and that God meets with him there.

1. When the Lord is pleased to begin a work of grace upon the sinner's heart, he *convinces* him of sin, for without this he knows nothing really of his lost, undone condition, and therefore can have no sense of his need of mercy. What can he know therefore of a mercy seat? But together with those arrows of conviction, which never miss their aim but stick deep in his guilty conscience, the Lord almost invariably pours upon him a Spirit of grace and supplications. This is one of the first evidences of divine life, one of the first marks that God is about to bring him to the mercy seat. This is the fulfilment of the promise, "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications." (Zech. 12:10.) And what is the effect? "They shall come with weeping and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31:9.) I know that such at least was the case with me; for when the Lord began his gracious work upon my heart, one of the first visible marks of the change was the receiving what I was before as ignorant of as the very beasts which perish—a Spirit of supplications. Until this be given, there may be a pouring in of convictions, but there is no pouring out of supplications; nor can we fulfil the gracious command, "Ye people, pour out your heart before him." We may have feelings and very deep feelings; convictions and very painful convictions; but there is no power to utter them before the throne unless the Spirit help our infirmities, and amongst them the infirmity of utterance, by himself making intercession for us according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26, 27.)

2. Now when the Spirit of grace and supplications is given, it first



vents itself in *confession*. Divine light makes the sinner see, spiritual life makes him feel, and heavenly grace enables him to confess his sins before a heart-searching God. Thus he comes with a burden on his back, but with divine life and feeling in his soul to the mercy seat, to the throne of grace, though he scarcely ventures to hope he may find mercy, and perhaps hardly knows the meaning of the word grace. But the Lord "leads the blind by a way that they know not;" and thus grace is secretly leading him on, for the Spirit of supplications is also the Spirit of grace, and brings him to that mercy seat where "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life," and superabounds over all the aboundings of sin. How plainly we see this in the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner," was his inmost cry. He had found a mercy seat, a throne of grace, in that temple which he seemed almost to defile by his presence, and there he came with downcast eyes and throbbing breast. Nor were his supplications rejected, for his simple cry brought down into his bosom an answer of peace which sent him home a pardoned, justified, accepted sinner.

3. But as the Lord is pleased to lead his child on in his blessed ways of mercy and truth, he communicates *faith*, or, to speak more correctly, draws into exercise that faith which he bestowed in the first breathing of divine light and life into his soul. But in order to do this, he casts a divine light upon the way of salvation through the blood and obedience of his dear Son; and as the Lord works in a variety of ways this may be done in a different manner, and yet all lead to the same end. In some instances it is done in it moment; in others more gradually. And the way and manner differ as much as the time. A child of God is exercised and distressed about his state. How does the Lord send him relief? Some passage of Scripture is opened up to his mind and its hidden spiritual meaning discovered to him as he never saw it before; or, in the providence of God, he is brought under the sound of the gospel as experimentally preached, "which now becomes the power of God unto salvation;" or, in a most unexpected moment a ray of light suddenly shines into his heart, whereby he sees light in God's most blessed light; or he meets

with some book in which the truth of God is clearly and spiritually set forth, and this is made a blessing to his soul. These are instances, but the Lord has various means of dealing with the hearts and consciences of his people; but however widely these may seem to differ, they all tend to the same end, to show salvation to the poor sinner through the blood of the Lamb. As, then, a ray of divine light shines into his heart, it directs him to the throne of grace, and there he finds unexpected liberty to pour out his soul before the Lord. This is the spot to which Job longed to come: "O that I knew where I might find him; that I might come even to his seat." (Job 23:3.) And what did Job say he would do if he were enabled to come to God's seat? "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." (Job 23:4.) So the poor sinner whose case I am here describing fills his mouth with arguments. And of what nature are these? Chiefly twofold. His misery and God's mercy. Thus he tells the Lord what a sinner he has been and still is. But O, is there mercy for such? Can he indulge the hope that his soul may be saved? Knowing that there is forgiveness with the Lord that he may be feared, he then pleads hard that he may receive a sense of mercy into his breast. As he thus pleads, his faith sometimes seems, as it were, to now plume its wings; and as it is thus more sensibly drawn forth to embrace the promises, the invitations, the encouragements which the blessed Spirit sets before his eyes, he pleads more earnestly still for a manifestation of pardoning love; for this alone, he feels, can fully relieve his burdened, aching conscience. This favour is not then, perhaps, granted, but as a pledge and foretaste of it, the Lord is pleased to drop a sweet hope into his bosom. A comforting promise, a gracious intimation, a kind whisper, a friendly smile, a soft touch begins to move and melt his heart, and this raises up what the Scripture calls "a good hope through grace." We see much of this in Psalm 119., where David speaks again and again of "hoping in God's word:" "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." "My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word." "Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I hope in thy word." (Psa. 119:49, 81, 114.) Now as this hope in God's word is thus raised up, it makes him more earnest still,

gives him some firmer standing ground at the throne of grace, and puts more holy boldness into his heart and mouth. But by and by, as he still keeps at the mercy seat, the Lord gives him a sweet and precious revelation of his dear Son; makes Jesus, in a greater or less degree, known to his soul; holds up before his eyes the King in his beauty; shows him the atoning blood; reveals in him the mystery of the cross, and sheds abroad his love in his heart. These fresh and clearer favours make him prize the mercy seat still more; for now he has stronger faith to believe, a firmer hope to anchor, and more fervent love to embrace the Lord Jesus; for all these graces of the Spirit are communicated at the mercy seat, that they may bring about a meeting between God and the soul that seeks him there; for God says, "I will meet with thee there." Thus as the fulfiller of his own promise, the God of heaven and earth can come and meet with a poor sinner at his mercy seat. Whatever be his guilt and shame, whatever be the amount of his sins, whatever his darkness and bondage, doubt or fear, if a poor sinner be drawn by the Spirit of grace to the mercy seat, God is faithful to his word: he has promised to meet with him there and he does meet with him there. Thus every sweet access which the soul finds to God in prayer; every enlargement of heart before the throne; all power to wrestle and plead there with the Lord; every acting of faith, going up of hope, or embracing of love, all, all are due to God's promise, "I will meet with thee there."

Have you not been sometimes loaded with a heavy burden of sin, felt full of guilt and bondage, fear and confusion, and yet most undeservedly and most unexpectedly found sudden relief? Why was this relief given? Because God has promised, "I will meet with thee there." We are so blind and ignorant, always looking to ourselves to find something good there, not seeing that all the good is in God's dear Son, and that in him and from him all salvation is. Whatever be our sins in number or nature, he can be gracious in the Son of his love; he can show pity and pardon to guilty sinners through the blood of the cross. When, then, his Spirit draws sinners to his feet, then, according to his own words, he meets with them at the mercy seat on the footing of grace, on

the ground of mercy, through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son.

iii. But after a child of God has enjoyed something of the goodness and mercy of God revealed in the face of his dear Son, he may wander from his mercies, stray away from these choice gospel pastures, and get into a waste, howling wilderness, where there is neither food nor water; and yet though half starved for want, has in himself no power to return. But what has brought him for the most part into this state? Forgetfulness of the mercy seat; and as the Lord meets his people only there, a gradual estrangement from him. But in due time the Lord seeks out this wandering sheep, and the first place he brings him to is the mercy seat, confessing his sins and seeking mercy. Faithful to his own word, once more the Lord meets him there; and O, what a meeting! A penitent backslider and a forgiving God! O, what a meeting! A guilty wretch drowned in tears, and a loving Father, falling upon his neck and kissing him! O what a meeting for a poor, self-condemned wretch, who can never mourn too deeply over his sins, and yet finds grace superabounding over all its abounding, and the love of God bursting through the cloud, like the sun upon an April day, and melting his heart into contrition and love.

iv. But this is not all. The Lord is pleased sometimes to show his dear people the evils of their heart, to remove by his Spirit and grace that veil of pride and self-righteousness which hides so much of lost self from our eyes, and to discover what is really in us—the deep corruptions which lurk in our depraved nature, the filth and folly which is part and parcel of ourselves, the unutterable baseness and vileness so involved in our very being. Now this in itself would drive us from the throne of grace. "Can God dwell here?" is the sinner's feeling. "Can I be possessed of the fear of God when such thoughts and feelings overflow my mind, and seem to fill me as if with the very dregs of hell?" Yet still he is drawn from time to time to the throne of grace to confess those sins before the mercy seat, for he cannot, dare not, stay away from it; and again God is true to his word "There will I

meet with thee." There once more he reveals a sense of his mercy and goodness, and once more shows that, whatever the sinner be in himself, he is faithful to his own promise.

v. But again, take a view of the poor child of God suffering under various troubles and trials; see him burdened with many cares and sorrows, and trace the faithfulness of God in still making the promise good: "There will I meet with thee." Does not the Lord give his dear people encouragement in every trouble and difficulty, be it in providence or in grace, still to come to the mercy seat, still to pour out their hearts before him? "Trust in him," it says, "at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." "I sought the Lord," says David, "and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." But what various ways the Lord has to meet with his people at the mercy seat! Sometimes he meets them with a gracious word, which he drops in a most unexpected manner into their souls; sometimes by manifesting his presence without the intervention of any special word; sometimes by bestowing an enlargement of heart which gives a sensible token that his ear is open to their cry; sometimes by granting a marked answer to their prayers. The Lord ties himself down to no rule, time, or way of meeting with them at the mercy seat. Though he fulfils his promise, he fulfils it according to his own will; and yet the whole fulfilment is in the most perfect harmony with his written word, in the sweetest accordance with the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, and suitable to the exact circumstances of those with whom he thus graciously deals.

vi. But what heart can conceive or tongue describe the blessedness of this heavenly truth that at all times, under all circumstances, and in all places there is provided a mercy seat, a throne of grace, at which the God of all grace and a sensible sinner may freely meet without let or hindrance, if indeed there be any spirit of prayer in the petitioner's breast? As no place, so no circumstance, is too dark for his eye not to see; as no covering is too thick, so no circumstance is too obscure for his

sight not to pierce through: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Jer. 23:24.) So felt the Psalmist: "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." (Ps. 139:11, 12.) By night upon our bed; by day in our various occupations; in the crowded streets or in the lonely fields; surrounded by the ungodly or in company with the Lord's people, we may, if the Lord the Spirit enables us, lift up a hearty sigh, utter a confessing word, and pour forth one simple desire. This may not to some seem to be sufficient to warrant the gracious fulfilment of the promise, "There will I meet with thee;" and yet every relief thereby obtained proves that it is so; for wherever, or whenever we get any sense of the Lord's presence or of the Lord's power, any intimation that his eye is upon us for good and his ear listening to our cry, be the prayer short or long, be it uttered on our knees or sighed out on our feet, be it in the quiet room or the bustling street, we have in it that evidence which each believer knows best in the sweet experience of it, that God does fulfil his own gracious word, "There will I meet with thee."

III.—But we pass on to our next point, the communion with which the Lord there favours his people, "*I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat.*"

1. In the tabernacle, as set up by Moses in the wilderness, God manifested himself visibly between the cherubims, which, as I have shown you, spread their wings over and upon the mercy seat. This visible presence of God is called sometimes the "Shekinah," which means literally dwelling, for God dwelt between the cherubim in the form of a cloud of glory, which covered the mercy seat. This was a type and visible representation of the glory of God shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ. On earth there is now no mercy seat, no mystic cherubim, no glorious Shekinah. These as types and figures have all passed away. But we have the glorious substance of them all

in the heaven of heavens, where the Son of God sits in all the glory of the Father. Now, as God bade Moses come to the mercy seat under every difficulty, promising that he would "commune with him," so does he now invite his poor needy family to come under all circumstances to the mercy seat, for there he has promised not only to meet but to commune with them. These are not the same things, though they intimately belong to each other. Persons may meet but not speak; or one may speak and the other not answer. Neither of these is communion; for communion implies not only two parties meeting together, but mutually conversing one with another. Nay, it implies more than this. Strangers may converse together, but strangers do not commune together. To commune together they must open their hearts to each other, feel union with each other, and disclose, by word or deed, openly or tacitly, to each other the affection that dwells in the bosom of both. We know in a measure what communion is with the saints of God, which is, as it were, an index of a higher and more spiritual communion with the Lord. We may have, for instance, a dear friend, one whom we love in the Lord, one with whom we have close union of spirit. Now when we can meet together and converse on the things of God in a spirit of humility and affection, with a mutual confidence in each other, we can tell one another the inmost feelings of our heart, and what we hope and believe the Lord has done for our soul. Heart meets to heart, and soul unites to soul, and with this there is communion of spirit. There must be no jar, no strife, no pride, no self-exaltation, in order that the union may be cemented by communion. Now take this in a higher sense. That the Lord may commune with us, we must be of the same mind; we must have the *same Spirit*; we must love the same things; and we must be able to tell each other the inmost thoughts of our bosom. Without this, or a measure of this, there may be prayer, so called, but there is no communion. In order to have communion with the Lord, we must be of one spirit with him; as we read, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) If then I have nothing of the Spirit of Christ in me, it is impossible for me to have any union with the Lord Jesus Christ, for I only have union with him through the Spirit. But if I possess his Spirit, the Spirit of God in me has

union with the Spirit of Christ, as two drops of water running down a pane, or two drops of oil, or two drops of quicksilver meet together and melt into each other because they are of one substance. Water and oil mingle not; oil and quicksilver mingle not. But each meets with each, and melts into each other which is of the same nature. Thus if I am to melt into sweet union with the Lord, I can only do so by being a partaker of his Spirit; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If, then, I am led to the mercy seat and my Spirit meets that of Jesus, my spirit meeting with his they melt into each other, and so far there is union and communion, and no farther.

2. But again, if we are to have real and spiritual communion with the God of heaven, with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—for all these three Persons of the Godhead meet at the mercy seat, and, in meeting at the mercy seat meet with us there, we must have the *same mind*, that is, our thoughts, ends, and purposes must be of the same character; for if God think one thing and I think another; if he intend one thing and I the contrary; if he regard his own glory and I am regarding mine, there is, there can be, no unity of mind between us. But unity of mind is indispensable to unity of spirit. Take it upon mere natural grounds. Look at a family, in which the head and husband is of one mind, the wife has, as it is sometimes called, a mind of her own, and the children as many minds as individuals, and each and all determined to have their own way. What union, what harmony, what happiness can there be in a family rent and torn like this? But when husband and wife are like-minded, and the children submit to their parents' united will and rule, then, and only then, is there family harmony. The Lord himself says, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos. 3:3.) Thus, if husband and wife are pulling different ways; if one is spiritual and the other carnal; one all for grace and the other all for free will; one for Christ and the other for the world, union and happiness there can be none. So in grace: if we have not the mind of Christ, there can be no union or communion with Christ. But it may be asked, "What is it to have the mind of Christ?" It is as if to see with Christ's eyes, to hear with Christ's ears, to walk with Christ's



feet, and to feel with Christ's heart. Just as much as we do this we may be said to have the mind of Christ; and just in proportion to the measure of it is there union and communion with him.

3. But a third ingredient is needful still—*love*. Love is the cementing tie, and is that peculiar tie which especially binds Christ and his Church together. Therefore the apostle says, "Above all those things put on charity or love, which is the bond of perfectness:" that is the most perfect bond. It is love that brings people together, and love that keeps them together, for by love they are knit together to the Lord and to one another. There is no tie so strong, there is no union so firm, as the union of love. It is so in all the relationships of life. Husband and wife, father and children, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, are only united as they are united in love. So it is in the things of God. The union of love is the grand cementing bond between Christ and his Church. He loved her and gave himself for her, and she loves him because he first loved her and made that love known to her soul, as he himself speaks: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." But if we love the Lord we shall love also his people, his word, his will, his ways; in a word, shall love what he loves and hate what he hates. In the exercise of this love there is union with the Lord; and if we have union with him, then so far as that union is drawn forth it becomes communion, for communion stands upon union, and as it were grows out of it, as a tree from its roots.

But this union and communion can only be at, and from above the mercy seat. For whatever measure we may possess of the Spirit, or the mind, or the love of Christ, there will always be so much sin and corruption in us, that we shall always want the mercy seat as the place where this union is felt and this communion granted. Ever being in ourselves poor guilty sinners, we must have a view of the atoning blood sprinkled on and before it, before we can feel any holy boldness or any access unto God. The apostle, therefore, speaks of our "coming to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:24); and tells us that we have "boldness to enter into the

holiest by the blood of Jesus." Our heart, then, has to be "sprinkled from an evil conscience," as the mercy seat was sprinkled with the blood, that we may draw near with any confidence of being heard. (Hob. 10:19, 22.) If God ever commune with his people, it is only from above the mercy seat. So that whatever you may have of the Spirit, or of the mind, or of the love of Christ, these things in themselves, though they give union and communion, are never for a moment separated from the atoning blood of the Lamb of God, or from the mediation and intercession of the great High Priest within the veil. Thus none are admitted to communion with the Lord for their merit, and none excluded for their demerit; their righteousness gives them no title to draw near, and their sinfulness forms no real, though often a felt, hindrance to keep them back. At the mercy seat all the family of God are on a level. The aged father and the newborn babe, the convinced sinner and the rejoicing saint, alike meet here. Here all their differences cease, and here all their union begins.

But how does the Lord commune with his people from off the mercy seat? Communion, as I have pointed out, implies mutual intercourse, and an intercourse not only of thoughts but of words. The Lord then must speak to us as well as we speak to him. How, then, does he speak to us? By a voice from heaven? No; that is not his way. He speaks to us through his *word*, that written word which we hold in our hands. But does not the Lord speak to every one in the Scriptures? In a sense he does, for as the apostle speaks, "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." (Rom. 10:18.) Of wisdom, too, we read: "She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is unto the sons of man." (Proverbs 8:2, 3, 4.) But though the Lord thus speaks to the sons of men in his word, it is really only his people who hear his voice. To them, therefore, he speaks peculiarly, if not solely, in his word, for to them he has given ears to hear. Thus he communes with them from above the mercy seat, sometimes by

opening up his word to their understanding, as the Lord "opened the understanding of his disciples that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45); sometimes by casting a ray of heavenly light upon the sacred page; by applying some sweet promise to their hearts; or by raising up faith in their souls to embrace in love and affection what he has revealed in the Scripture of truth. This is what the apostle calls "receiving the love of the truth to be saved thereby." (2 Thess. 2:10.) As, then, the Lord is pleased to shine upon the word, or through the word upon their heart, or to apply some precious promise to their soul, or bring some kind, encouraging testimony to strengthen their faith and hope, he communes with them from above the mercy seat. In this way the Lord communed with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. They were communing together, but whilst thus communing Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But how did he commune with them but through the word, for "beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself?" But what was the effect upon their hearts? They themselves shall tell us: "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and when he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32.) In a similar way now he communes with his people, and makes their heart burn within them by opening to them the Scriptures, for it is through his word applied to the heart with power that he reveals himself. He is the incarnate Word, and the Scriptures are the written word. Both have one name, "The Word of God" (Rev. 19:13); and thus through the written word the incarnate Word makes himself known to the soul.

iv. But not only does he make *himself* known through the written word, but through the same medium does he reveal his mind and will. See how he spake to Moses in the text, "I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, *of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*" There was not a single commandment which he gave through Moses unto the children of Israel in which he did not commune with him from above the mercy seat. Moses was the typical Mediator, as we

read of the old covenant: "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." He, therefore, spake to Israel for God, and to God for Israel; for the people could not bear to hear the voice of God speaking from the terrible mount. Therefore they said to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it." (Deut. 5:27.) As this typical Mediator, then, Moses had liberty to speak to God for Israel; but only at the mercy seat. There he had liberty to bring his trials before the Lord and there to get his deliverance. Whatever difficulty, therefore, he might get into, or be entangled in beyond any solution by his own wisdom, the Lord promised him that when he came to the mercy seat he would freely commune with him upon it. The people brought their trials and difficulties unto Moses, and Moses brought them before the Lord. This we see running through all their history. Now have you not found your difficulties often, in a similar way, relieved in an unexpected manner at the mercy seat? You have come sometimes with very heavy trials, and you have found unexpected deliverance. The Lord communed with you of the things which he had given in commandment. He had commanded a trial to come upon you, a difficulty, or a temptation. You brought it to the mercy seat. He communed with you upon it. He did not perhaps take the trial off your shoulders: that still remains. But he made your will submissive to bear it; or if still unremoved, supports you under it; or enables you to believe it is working for your spiritual good, and that you must bear it during the short time you will be in the wilderness; or is conforming you to the suffering image of the Son of God; or that for some unknown reason it is his will that you should be thus afflicted. We see this blessedly opened up in the experience of Paul with his thorn in the flesh. Thrice he brings it to the mercy seat. The Lord communes with him from above it, and speaks this word into his heart: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." But what was the effect of this gracious word spoken from the mercy seat? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. 12:8, 9.) When, then, the Lord answers prayer in this way, it gives us strength to bear

trials and afflictions, and, under the influence of his Spirit and grace, we would rather walk in the path thus chosen for us by God than choose a path for ourselves; we would rather have the trouble and the Lord's support than be without the trouble and miss the support; sooner be chastened among the children than be let off with the bastards; sooner carry the cross than lose the crown; sooner have the rod than go short of the smile; and sooner enter the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation than have our portion in life and death with this ungodly world.

Is not, should not this be sufficient for us? What promise is there of happiness below the skies, or of anything in this world besides a deliverance from it? Whatever difficulties or perplexities, trials or temptations may distress the soul, if we are enabled by the help of the Spirit to come to the mercy seat and lay our burden there, if we do not get immediate relief, yet sooner or later the Lord will meet with us and commune with us, yea, answer us to the joy of our heart. And every past evidence that the Lord has heard and answered prayer; every relief given in time of trouble; every intimation that he is gracious; every sweet hope in his mercy, are all so many encouraging testimonies that he will go on to perfect his work; will never leave us nor forsake us; will support us under every trial, and bear us up and carry us through even unto the end. It is in this way we learn to prize the mercy seat, and to bless the Lord for ever meeting us there.

I will not detain you longer, but will close the subject with two observations:—First, under all circumstances, at all times, and in all places, the mercy seat is free to us to approach. Secondly, that we are never really safe, except so far as we are found lying before it.

## The Mercies of a Faithful God Displayed Toward His Loving Saints

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford

"Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him, I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Psalm 91:14, 15

If you were to find a casket of precious jewels in the street what would you do? You say, "Certainly as an honest man I should try to find the owner." Just so. And if in examining this rich casket, you saw the owner's name engraved upon it, it would enable you at once to do so. It is a similar case here. I have lighted on this casket of precious jewels—of precious promises, more precious than jewels; and, in looking at this casket, I see the very name engraved—the owner's name. Look at the jewels—the promises. "I will answer him." "I will be with him." "I will deliver him." "I will set him on high." "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Well, to whom do these promises belong? Who is this blessed "him" that shall have these things done for him? The Lord has told us. There are three things said of him. One is, "He hath known my name:" another is, "He has set his love upon me:" another is, "He shall call upon me." Now first then, let us look at this character described in these three ways.

I.—First. "*He hath known my name.*" Though this is not mentioned before it is said of him that "*He hath set his love upon me,*" yet we know that it comes first in experience. A man must know the Lord's name before ever he can feel any real love to the Lord. "*He hath known my name.*" Now this is needful, this is what the Lord does for his people, he causes them to know his name. "They shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest." (Jer. 31:34.) "They shall all;" they shall. The Lord has declared it. They shall know me. Now what is the name of the

Lord? When God revealed himself unto Moses, did he not say, "I AM THAT I AM!" This was the way God taught Moses his name, and we may gather from it that whatever God is, that is his name. God is holy—God is just—God is merciful—God is a God of love. Now the sinner must know this. He must know that God is a pure and holy God, and at first when he is beginning to learn this lesson he is completely astonished and appalled by it. He is terrified. It causes him to shrink away and hide himself from God. "How can I appear before God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" And so you see it brings distress into his conscience. It is the first work of the Spirit. "He shall convince of sin," and a sense of God's holiness is that which brings us this conviction—our sin and God's purity. How can the sinner appear before and approach to God? and while he is under the terrors of the law, he is full of distress, and at times, perhaps, wishes he had never been born, and at other times he is tempted with hard thoughts of God, reaping where he had not sown and gathering where he had not strawed. This is how God is seen in his perverted mind. The devil is at him, and tries all he can to harden his heart against the Almighty. But the terrors of the Almighty have taken hold of him, and he tries many ways to get these arrows extracted; but all his tugging and pulling only make the wound worse. And so he goes on until he is brought to see that God is a God of mercy, and this is revealed to him in and through the Lord Jesus. This is what clears up the mystery, when he sees Christ bleeding on the cross. Here he sees God is both a just God and a Saviour. God is pure and holy, and exacts to the utmost farthing all the enormous debt he owes, and yet to the bleeding broken heart, he, through Christ, can and does manifest his mercy. Here we see how God's name is really in him. As it is said of old, "My name is in him" (Ex. 23:21), and is it not said of the Lord Jesus, "I am Alpha and Omega!" (Rev. 1:11.) "Alpha" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and "Omega" is the last letter. The "A" and the "Z," including all. So is the Lord Jesus, and in him we see all the attributes of Deity—all that GOD is. He is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, and all is included in him. Here we see God is love. We don't see it anywhere as we see it in a crucified Christ. Herein is

love, that God gave his only begotten Son! (John 4:10)—was ever love like this—to die for the ungodly? Yes, when we were without strength, in due time, the appointed time settled in covenant mercies, Christ died for the ungodly. Oh! what a sweet word that must be and is to my soul. "For the ungodly." I come in here; if it were not for that, that he died for the ungodly, I should now despair; but he died for the ungodly, and herein we see God indeed is love, and all that God is we may see in the Lord Jesus. "Now this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

II.—"*He hath known my name.*" Now this leads him to love—to love God—to set a love upon him. And we see the cause. "Because God first loved us:" therefore it was we were brought to set our love upon him. Yes, we don't love we know not what! When Paul went to Athens what did he see? An altar with this inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." (Acts 17:23.) Ah! God is in some measure known—the God that the child of grace is brought to worship, and it is this knowledge of God that causes us to love him—and mark you, it is the knowledge of God by the remission of sins. What a striking word this is to give unto his people, to give to them this knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins! As much as to say you will never know God—not really, not satisfactorily—till your sins are pardoned. Then will the mystery be opened. Then it will not be a speculative point, a mere matter of opinion, you will know it,—for yourself you will know it; feelingly, by the remission of sins. This is how God gives to his people this knowledge of salvation. It is not God's way to give the knowledge of salvation, and afterwards the remission of sins, but actually by it—by *it*—through the remission of sins. Because then we have a knowledge, then we know it. And does not the prophet Isaiah say, "Butter and honey shall he eat!"—and what is the result?—then he knows and can discern between the evil and the good, so as to refuse the evil and choose the good. (Isa. 7:15.) Now there are some people that are in legal bondage, and have never been brought to the knowledge of the truth, yet they are set up as critics in the church, and they will find fault with this and that. But does not the prophet say, "And in this mountain



shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things," &c. (Isa. 25:6), evidently writing of the blessed gospel—the gospel of the grace of God. He shall feast upon the gospel. Then he shall discern, then he shall have a right knowledge of things, he shall know how to refuse the evil and how to choose the good, when he has had this gospel feast. "He hath set his love upon me." Yes. This is the result of the knowledge with which he is favoured. We cannot know the Lord and not love him. It is a contradiction. It is impossible to know him and not to love him. Our blindness, our ignorance, our unbelief often prevail, and our love waxes cold. But when this knowledge is communicated, and when our eyes are opened to behold him, we see him and we are ravished with his beauty. "He hath set his love upon me."

III.—And there is another thing said of him: "*He shall call upon me.*" "He shall." What, after all this that he has done? We may well suppose that he calls upon God that he may know him and have his heart's affections set upon God. Yes, and he shall call upon him after that; and it is here plainly intimated when it is he calls, or "*shall call*" upon the Lord. Even in trouble. What! shall he be brought into trouble? Yes, he shall; his heart pants when his pardon is signed, and his peace is procured, but from that moment his conflict begins, and a conflict it is. He finds fresh troubles coming in upon him constraining him to ask God that God would help him, that God would appear for him, and give him a fresh token for good. Like the poor woman who said "Lord, help me." Every fresh case of distress that he is made acquainted with, every trouble he is brought into, gives him an errand to the throne of grace. "He shall call upon me." And this is the result of knowing and of loving God. "Because he has known my name, he knows I am able to deliver him, and, therefore, it is in his heart to look to me; for none else can help but the Almighty God. He knows my name, he knows I am a God of love, that I sympathize and feel compassion for my children, and this encourages him." We have not a high priest to go to that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity. No; but he was made acquainted with these things, he has borne our cross, he has carried our sorrows, he has been tempted in all points like as we are, and he is so

gracious and so merciful he never forsakes the poor and needy sinner that calls upon him. How this encourages us to go unto him! Where shall we go? To whom shall we look? Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life! He is encouraged by this knowledge. But if he has not all this encouragement, if he has not sufficient life in the exercise of prayer, he shall be urged on by the pressure of his trouble. Partly, as it were, driven, partly drawn. This is how God's people are made to call upon him. The urgency of the case is one thing, the absolute necessity of the matter in this time of need, and then we have to be drawn by what God has done for us in former days, and this encourages—"He *has* delivered, he *does* deliver, and I trust he *will* yet deliver." Is he not the same God? Is he a fickle and changeable being? No, and, therefore, he rests upon him. He is ever the same; therefore, cast all your care upon him; for he changeth not.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." I must hurry on. There is so much in this part, so many precious promises are herein contained, that I cannot linger. Let us look at these promises. The first that I mentioned is, "*I will answer.*" What would be the use of his calling if the Lord did not answer? "He shall call and I will answer him." Now here is something by which to weigh up our state and our religion. We may know what it is to bend our knees at the footstool in prayer. We may know what it is to utter words or we may know what it is to seem to be in earnest prayer, but what do we know of the answer? You would not like to be writing letters continually to an individual at a distance and never, never receive one word by way of answer. You expect an answer. Now, after prayer, are you looking out for an answer? God says of his people that they shall call upon him, and that he will surely answer them. Now, how does God answer his people? He answers them by his precious word, dropping it into their heart. Is the soul in trouble? Yes. And does that constrain it to call upon God? Well, what is his trouble; for according to the trouble so is the answer. Is it a sense of sin and guilt? Is it that that casts you down? Maybe the Lord drops down a word like this, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and thy sins as a cloud." (See

Isa. 43:25 and 44:22.) Oh! what a precious answer! Did God ever drop such a word upon your soul, or one equivalent to it; for that is a type and symbol of many precious words, where the Lord promises to wash away filth and guilt. "There is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." Is it open—open to you? Has God spoken a word to your heart, a word opening this fountain? Is it that you are in trouble in worldly matters? Why, God can and will in his own time give you a gracious answer. "Leave it with me, cast your burdens upon me. Your heavenly Father knows what need you have of temporal things; there is not a hair of your head, no, not a single hair, but what is numbered." What? are you troubled about what you shall eat or what you shall drink? The Lord answers all these things. He says, "My children, take no thought at all about it; am I not your Father, your heavenly Father, and I know what need you have of these things?" Is it that the soul is perplexed with a thousand cares, so that everything seems opposed, everything seems contrary? The Lord drops upon the heart such a word as this: "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28.) These are apparent contradictions. All, all these things that seem to jar, they shall all sweetly harmonize. They shall all work together for thy good. How many gracious answers the Lord drops upon the hearts of his people! Every promise that has been applied sweetly to you is by way of answer,—an answer to all these doubts and fears, all this questioning, all this misgiving. These precious words are the Lord's words, and he speaks them—he speaks them to the heart. David might well remind the Lord and say, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." (Psa. 119:49.) You see he brings his holy crutch, I may say, that holy, precious promise, and it never wears out, it never waxes old, in one sense, after the language of men, but it is ever new and sweet, and God makes it so. The child of God brings the old word and says, "Lord, remember this word. Didst thou not speak it once to my heart?—'I will answer.'" The Lord declares he will answer. And he says another thing: "I will be with him, in trouble I will be with him." That is more than sending an answer. You may have an answer if you write to a distant correspondent, and he may give you to a certain extent

satisfaction in the answer. But if it is a father or a husband you want him home. What he says to you at a distance, and by way of letter, does not fully satisfy. It may in some measure do for a time; but you wait his return. And then he says, "I will be with him," "I will be with him in trouble," "I will," "I will manifest myself unto him." Ah! this precious manifestation of the Lord; that is sweeter than all. Now, you know what the Lord said to his disciples just before his departure—"I will see you again. I am about to go away, and it is expedient for you that I do go away, but I will come again. I will." (See John 16.) Well, he went away according to his word, and though they had the promise to rest upon, though he did say, "I will come again," though he did say it was expedient for them that he should go away, but that he would come again, still they were not satisfied, still they wanted something more. What was it they wanted? Why *himself* actually to be present. And you remember how the eleven were met together in despondency, gloomy it may be, and casting down one another, or maybe they were trying to cheer one another, we don't know what they were conversing about; but we know they were in a strait. The Lord was not with them. But the Lord came, the doors being shut, and he said, "Peace be unto you;" and he showed them his hands and his feet and his side. What then? Why, "then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." Ah! this was all they needed to fill up the measure of their joy. They actually had been with the Lord and had him present with them. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. "I will be with him in trouble." I shall never forget one memorable season of trouble that I was in many, many years ago. Oh! I cannot tell the depths of distress I was plunged into! Oh! I wished to have done with time and sense, weary of life, longing to be gone, feeling I could not bear it. I was in such a way I cannot describe it, and all at once this passage dropped upon my heart, "Fear not, I am with thee." (Isa. 41:10.) All my trouble left me; all was gone; peace and light and joy and gladness filled my heart. It was enough—"Fear not, I am with thee," and I felt the Lord was with me; and feeling the Lord was with me, how could I sink "with such a prop as bears the earth's huge pillars up." I could have gone to heaven then. The Lord was with me. "I will be with

him in trouble." And the Lord says more—"I will deliver him." "I will deliver him!" oh what a precious promise! Whatever the trouble be, "I will deliver him." Deliverance is from the Lord. He not only supports and sustains us in the midst of trouble, keeps our head above water, but he can actually deliver us out of it. He can cause us to stand as upon dry ground. He can raise us up out of the horrible pit and miry clay where we are sunk and set our feet upon a rock and establish our goings. "I will deliver him." Have you no deliverances to record, no mercies of any nature? Can you not look back and see when and how the Lord delivered you? "I will deliver him."

"And I will honour him and set him on high, on the top of this rock, and then the waves may dash and beat in fruitless efforts at his feet." They cannot move the rock. The immoveable Jehovah set me on the rock that is higher than I, and higher than these floods, and higher than the range of men or devils. I will raise him up out of the reach of all his foes; they shall not be able to come near unto him. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1.) "It shall not come nigh thee." (Psa. 91:8.) Oh! precious promises! I remember that word once on a memorable occasion coming to my soul—"It shall not come nigh thee." There was a trouble hanging over me like a thick thundercloud, and that word gave me such quietness—"It shall not come nigh thee;" and I shall never forget how this word came to me in a dream of the night. Now, I am not for dreams and visions in a fanciful way; but I had this dream at this particular time. It seemed as though a cloud was over the whole face of the heavens, and at length it burst into a most awful storm and tempest. The lightnings flashed, the thunders roared, and a thunderbolt fell at my feet, but I was as calm and unmoved as I am now. This word seemed to drop at the very moment, and I had no fear—no, not the slightest; and I shall never forget that time and the sweet effects. They were with me when I awoke, and they were with me for days—"It shall not come nigh thee." When Noah was shut up in the ark—Noah and the favoured few—you know how they were tossed about, the rains coming down from heaven, the waters

rushing and dashing below. The windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and while they were thus dashed upon the waters not a drop came in unto them that were within. "It shall not come nigh thee." So you see the believer may be surrounded by these troubles, and yet "it shall not come nigh thee." And there is something more in the expression used in reference to the making of the ark: "And shall pitch it within and without with pitch." (Gen. 6:14.) Now, it is a most remarkable fact that the word pitch in Hebrew (the word is *Gopher*) signifies also *atonement*. Now see, the slime or pitch with which it was daubed within and without kept every drop of water out. Now, this very expression for slime or pitch in the Hebrew signifies also atonement; and is it not the atonement that keeps out the water? Is it anything but the atonement that can keep the soul from the waters of God's wrath and from the floods of vengeance that shall sweep away the world with the ungodly? It is nothing but the atonement. It bears them up and keeps out every drop of rain. "It shall not come nigh thee." "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord mercy shall compass him about." (Psa. 32:10.) "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. 5:11.) "Received the atonement." This is it, to have the "atonement." God cannot exact payment twice for the debt. He is satisfied, he has declared that he is well pleased with the righteousness of his beloved Son. He exacts no more; his justice demands no more; and, therefore, fury is not in him. "I will set him on high, I will honour him, and with long life will I satisfy him and will show him my salvation."

This seems to me to crown the whole; this seems—this blessing seems to be the very topstone in this building. "With long life will I satisfy him." Now, what does it promise him? Does it mean that every child of God shall live to be eighty or ninety years of age? No such thing. It does not mean that; and just think for a moment: let a man live to be ninety and is he content with his age? Is he satisfied? No. There is that in poor human nature that ever shrinks from death, and however long we may live we would still live longer. It is not in the number of our years that we shall

find preparedness for death. It is not the longer a man lives the more will he be satisfied. No such thing. Then, what can it mean? Why, that God will satisfy his people with their length of life, whether long or short. Suppose the Lord had wrought these things that I have been speaking of in the soul of an individual, and that individual has not numbered more than twenty years, and yet the time has come when he shall be gathered home. The Lord does not gather him home without satisfying him. He is satisfied with the length of his life. You will not find a child of God on this deathbed mourning and crying because he has not got many more years to live. No; the Lord prepares when he visits the soul with his salvation; and that soul longs to be with Christ; which is far better than being here. The Lord does not gather his fruit until it is ripe, and you know naturally that a crop is not ripe all at once. Even upon one tree I have known some of the fruit to be ripe weeks before the rest. And then there are some fruits that ripen in the summer time, some in the autumn, and some on the borders of winter. And see, when you touch a ripe pear it will drop into your hands with the touch. So the Lord gathers his fruit when it is ripe, and it is ripe whether he gathers it in July or August; it is ripe. It does not follow that all the fruit shall be gathered in October. No such thing. God takes his children home at all ages, and he always satisfies them. He always brings them to see and feel that this life is empty and vain, and that it is better, far better, to live in his presence. And then, again, "with long life will I satisfy him." Why, this long life may refer to eternal life, and it is eternal life he enters upon when he leaves this vale of tears. He enters upon a better state of being. He begins to live indeed. He now can rejoice in the very presence of God with no sin, no death, with nothing to burden or cast him down, no temptations from the enemy, no more cross, no more sin, no more sorrow. It is now all life and peace and joy and rest, and that eternal. "With long life will I satisfy him." We read of wisdom having "length of days in her right hand and in her left hand riches and honour;" (Prov. 3:16) and, indeed, there is, and if a man or a partaker of grace is taken to glory that child is brought to feel that he has lived long enough. And does not the Lord say, "One day with the Lord is as a thousand, and a thousand as one

day;" and that the child shall die a hundred years old, and so it is.

"With long life will I satisfy him." You may be harassed by the thoughts of death, and be in bondage through the fears of death; and you may be saying, "How will it be with me then?" I will tell you. If you are a child of God I firmly believe you will not be removed unwillingly and reluctantly, but you will be willing in the day of the Lord's power. (Psa. 110:3.) You will be willing to breathe out your soul into his dear hands, to whom you will commend your spirit; you will be willing to be with Christ, which is far better. (Phil. 1:23.) You may not now be willing. If you pluck at an unripe apple it resists the touch, but let it be fully ripe, and how little, how slight a touch will cause it to drop from the tree. You shall be gathered as a shock of corn in its season. Why, a farmer will not gather in his corn until it is fully ripe; and do you think the Lord will gather his corn into his heavenly garner and it be in an unfit and unripe state? We cannot think it. Be that thought far from us, as it is far from the Lord.

"With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Ah! he will never see it except the Lord shows him it; but the Lord will show it him. He says he will: "I will show him my salvation." What can he want more? All that he may want, all that he may need in his journey through this wilderness is there. Is there not a sufficiency there? Is there not that which he feels is enough? If these promises be mine, be yours, and if these promises be fulfilled to you and to me, what can we possibly want more? "I will answer him." What a mercy! "I will be with him in trouble"—actually with him; and then he will not feel the trouble. Why, the three children in the furnace did not feel the flame: it burnt the bonds but not them; no, nor did it even singe their hair. They were kept. They were under this safeguard—the Lord was with them.

"I will deliver him, I will set him on high, I will honour him."  
"Them that honour me I will honour." They may be despised, their name may be cast out as evil, they may be persecuted and



hated; and why are they hated? They are hated because those who hate them have known neither the Father nor me, said Christ. That is why they hate me. Then, if we are hated for Christ's sake welcome scorn, welcome reproach. We "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." (Heb. 11:26.)

"I will honour him, I will satisfy him with long life." He shall live as long as he wants to live. He shall not want to live an hour longer than the Lord's, the Master's time, which is the best time. "He shall be satisfied" (that is he shall want nothing more), "and I will show him my salvation." Ah! may God grant that these precious words may have an abiding place in our hearts.

Mark you: these promises are in the future. "I will" do this, "I will" do that. We may look thus forward to the future, for the Lord will fulfil his words. God is faithful to his promises. Now, we may have had a foretaste of these things; and what shall this foretaste that we have experienced of these things do for us? Why, encourage us. He has been with us, and therefore he will be with us. He has delivered us, and therefore he will deliver us. He who has answered us in times past will still continue to answer. And what an encouragement for us still to call upon his name. He will do all these things for his people. May God grant to you and me to realize these rich blessings, these precious blessings, and set to our seal a hope and experience that God is true.

## A Merciful and Sympathising High Priest

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, April 17, 1859

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:17, 18

We have in the book of Genesis a brief, but a very beautiful account of the sacred intercourse which subsisted between God and man in the garden of Eden, when man stood before his Maker in all the purity and uprightness of his native innocence. Sin and death had not yet invaded Paradise; and thus without any infringement of his dignity or glory God could, as he was wont, come down to commune with man in the cool of the day when all nature was hushed in calm. Being then without sin or shame, unconscious of evil and of its inseparable companion, guilty fear, man held with his Maker the sweetest intercourse which a finite creature could enjoy with his Creator. The foundation of this intercourse was, however, not so much man's native innocence as that God had created him "in his own image, after his likeness." This likeness to God consisted mainly in four things:—First, *in the immortality of man's soul*; for we read, that though God formed man's body out of the dust of the earth, he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Thus whilst his body was earthy, for "the first man was of the earth, earthy" (1 Cor. 15:47), his soul was heavenly—breathed into him from the very mouth of God, and thus immortal. The immortality of man's soul is thus a reflex image of the everlasting existence of God. Secondly, as created in God's *moral image*, which is righteousness and truth, purity and love. Thirdly, as created in what I may perhaps call God's *intellectual image*; that is, made capable of thought, reason, memory, reflection, and discourse. And fourthly, as created in what I may term God's *anticipated* or future image, for as the Son of God was

in due time to assume a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, the body and soul which Adam wore were a representation beforehand of the nature which the Lord Jesus Christ should afterwards assume into union with his own divine Person.

When God then had thus created man in his own image, after his likeness, he placed him in Paradise, in a garden which he had planted with his own hand for man's recreation and delight. There he caused every tree that was pleasant to the sight to spring up, and every tree that was good for food; so that man could look round and not only see himself the object of God's bounty, but could enjoy everything which his nature was capable of as adapted to that state of innocency and happiness. The beautiful trees and shrubs of that fair Paradise gladdened his eyes; the murmuring river charmed his ears; the cool shade refreshed his spirits; the sweet fruits delighted his palate and nourished his frame; and, above all, intercourse with God enlarged, expanded, and fed his soul. But, alas! how soon a dark and gloomy cloud, fraught with destruction and death, came over this beautiful scene! How soon, by the permission indeed of God, but through the craft and malice of Satan, sin invaded this Paradise—this garden of God! And what was the consequence? I need not take up your time and attention this morning by enlarging upon the fall and its dreadful consequences. I will name but two, which became at once and immediately manifest—guilt and shame. Man no longer came forth as before to meet his God. He shrank from his sacred, and now for the first time terrible, presence. He knew that he had wilfully and deliberately, not deceived as the woman, but with his eyes open (1 Tim. 2:14), broken and trampled upon the express prohibition of God. He therefore sought to hide himself, with his guilty partner, amidst the trees of the garden. But could the trees, however dense, hide him from the heart-searching eye of God? Could the leafy foliage give him shelter from the hand that had made, and could now with equal ease destroy him? Ah, no. He was called forth, and he came full of shame, guilt, and confusion into the presence of his justly offended Judge to hear his expected sentence of death. *That,*

however, in a moral sense had already taken place and could not be reversed; for "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent." He had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And thus he had already morally died. But though he spared his forfeited natural life, yet to show his righteous wrath he cursed the very ground for his sake, declaring that "in sorrow he should eat of it all the days of his life," and should return unto that dust out of which he had been originally taken. Still with the curse he gave a blessing, for then and there, in the very garden where man sinned and fell, the Lord bestowed upon the woman that gracious promise which contained, as it were, in its bosom the germ of all future promises concerning the Messiah—that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." By this promise, full of truth and grace, God revealed to the Church that most blessed truth, that his own Son should in due time come into the world, assume of the seed of the woman, the flesh and blood of the children, in order that he might die, and by dying destroy "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," who by his subtlety had brought in such a flood of sin and woe; and not only so, but save thereby an innumerable multitude of sinners then in the loins of Adam. But, besides this promise, the gracious Lord instituted at the same time the rite of sacrifice, as a standing type of the atonement which in due time was to be made by the Son of his love; for we read that "he made coats of skins" and clothed therewith our first parents, which no doubt were the skins of the sacrifices then offered by Adam, and a representation of that imputed righteousness clothed in which alone they could stand without spot or blemish in his sight. In consequence then of, and ever since the fall, man has never been able to stand before God except through a mediator. Sin thoroughly and effectually broke off that intercourse of which I have spoken as existing between God and man in the days of his native innocency; and now man can no longer approach his Maker, at least with any hope of acceptance, any true faith, or any holy confidence, except through the mediator of God's own choice and appointment. Thus we see the necessity that there should be a high priest over the house of God, who in the days of his flesh offered for sin an

availing sacrifice, and now lives at God's right hand, not only to intercede for the heirs of promise, but to make his love, blood, and grace experimentally and effectually known to their hearts.

Those thoughts may serve as an introduction to the subject before us, where we have mention made of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the benefits and blessings which spring out of it. The text contains a deep mine of heavenly truth, which at the best I can but imperfectly handle; but, looking up to the Lord for his help and blessing, I shall—

I.—*First*, endeavour to bring before you *the nature and necessity* of the great High Priest over the house of God.

II.—*Secondly*, how God the Father *chose and qualified the Son of his love* to undertake this important work, and to become this great and glorious High Priest.

III.—*Thirdly*, what are the four *qualifications* of which our text speaks. The first is, "to *make reconciliation* for the sins of the people." The second, to be a "*faithful* high priest in things pertaining to God." The third, to be "*merciful*." And the fourth, to be *sympathising*—"for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

I.—If there were no sin we may safely assume there would be no need of a sacrifice, or of a high priest to offer it. The very circumstance that what the apostle calls "the blood of bulls and of goats" was necessary under the law was in itself a standing representation of the necessity of a sacrifice being offered for sin. But the rite of sacrifice was only a representation, deriving all its value from God's appointment; for as the apostle argues, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." But its object was to teach the ancient church by daily and visible sign and figure that no sinner, as a sinner, can approach unto God except through atoning blood. Nor can any one now draw near unto him who, in his purity, justice, and holiness, is a consuming fire, except through a Mediator; for the Lord himself

has said "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6); and the Holy Ghost expressly declares that "there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5.) Now it is absolutely necessary that this Mediator should be such a one as can effectually and acceptably mediate between the two opposing parties. He must therefore possess in himself sufficient dignity, worth, and glory in the eyes of God to stand near and commune face to face with him; and yet he must partake of the nature of those for whom he mediates that he may have a fellow-feeling with them. As Job beautifully speaks, he must be a daysman that can lay his hand upon them both. But where can such a one be discovered? If God had looked round (so to speak) the courts of heaven, to see whom he could find adequate to sustain this mighty office, where could he be found? What created being, however highly exalted, what holy angel, what burning seraph, in a word, who amongst the hierarchy of heaven could have ventured to approach unto God, to intercede for man's guilty race, or to mediate between the justice of God and their deserved doom? Who among the morning stars that had sung together, or of all the sons of God who had shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid (Job. 38:7), could offer to bear up a sinking world, when, by the shock of the fall, "all the foundations of the earth were out of course?" Surely only he, who, when "the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved" can say, "I bear up the pillars of it." (Psal. 75:3); surely none but the Son of God had sufficient dignity, weight, power, or influence to come forward to undertake so mighty a task. For what created being, however pure, high, or holy, could approach the Majesty of heaven, to offer an obedience available for others, when God could claim from him as a creature the whole? None, none but the Son of God. God's co-equal, co-eternal Son, his "fellow," as he calls him by the mouth of the prophet, could stand forward with sufficient dignity and glory to empower him to undertake such an office as to mediate between God and men. Let this then be fixed as a firm foundation of our most holy faith, that it is the eternal possession of this divine nature as the Son that qualified the Lord Jesus to mediate between God and us. If this foundation be destroyed, what can

the righteous do? We must never, therefore, let it go, for it is our very life. Being his only begotten Son, and therefore of the same glory and power, he can as equal with the Father stand up in our name before him, when the angels must veil their faces. In his hands the glory of the Father is safe. All the perfections of Godhead shine forth in him, who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person, and these, therefore, can suffer no tarnish or diminution in or by him. And as loved by the Father with an everlasting love, he is able to plead with him as one who loves God and as one whom God loves. The Deity and Sonship, therefore, of our great and glorious high priest are essential to his sustaining such a character as the Mediator between God and men; for you know that mediation is an essential feature of the priestly office, as Aaron showed when he took a censor at the command of Moses, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and offered incense for the people. Take away the Deity and Sonship of our great high priest, and you blot the Sun of righteousness out of the sky. The light of the church is gone and darkness covers the scene—that darkness which is the earnest and forerunner of the blackness of darkness for ever.

But again: he must be of the same nature as those for whom he mediates. The apostle speaks very blessedly on this point in the chapter before us:—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." And again:—"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Had he died for angels, he must have taken angelic nature. As he died for men, he must take human nature. This is the sum of the apostle's argument, and most conclusive it is. Thus by virtue of his essential deity and Sonship, he was able to mediate with God; and as taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, he was able to mediate with man. Being as his eternal, only-begotten Son, "in the form of God, he thought it not robbery," that is, an unhallowed, an unallowed claim, "to be equal with God" (Phil. 2:6); and by taking upon him the form of a servant and "being made in the likeness of men," he became man's friend and man's brother. The words of our text are very expressive

upon this point:—"In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." He was made in all things like unto his brethren; and yet in many things he was very unlike them. The apostle, therefore, does not say he was made *as* his brethren, but *like* unto them, as he speaks elsewhere of his being "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3); and yet we know that it was not sinful flesh, for if his flesh had been sinful he could not have been "a lamb without blemish and without spot." Likeness is not the same thing as identity. A person may be like me, and yet not be altogether as I. Here, then, lies the main difference between him and us as regards his humanity, that the Lord Jesus Christ did not assume a fallen, but an unfallen nature. There was in that pure flesh which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin not only no sin, but no liability to, no possibility of it; there was in it no mortality, no sickness; no seeds of disease or death. It was the nature of Adam before he fell—not the nature of Adam after the fall; and yet differing from the nature of Adam in this, that it could not fall as Adam did, not being a person like him, but taken as "a holy thing" into union with the person of the Son of God at the very instant of its conception under the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. Our blessed Lord never was in Adam; for had he been, he must have fallen with him, and been a partaker with the whole human race in his guilt and crime. Thus the apostle makes a distinction between Adam and the Lord Jesus; the distinction being that Adam was our natural, federal head, but the Lord Jesus Christ our new Covenant Head. Therefore he says—"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all," that is, all the elect of God, "be made alive." And again, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; and the last man Adam was made a quickening spirit." And to show us more clearly still the difference between the two covenant heads, he adds, "Howbeit that was not first, which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." (1 Cor. 15:22, 45, 47.) Here the Lord Jesus Christ, as our new covenant head, is set in opposition to Adam, our natural, federal head, Adam being, at the very best, in his first creation, but "a living soul," the Lord Jesus, as the divine giver of spiritual and eternal life, "a quickening spirit;"



Adam being earthy, as formed out of the dust of the earth, and the Lord being heavenly, not only as coming down thence, but as assuming a nature which was of heavenly birth and origin, as produced not by natural generation but by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus though the blessed Lord was "in all things made like unto his brethren," yet he took into union with his own divine Person, not a fallen, frail, and peccable human nature, such as is theirs, but a nature pure and unfallen; and though conceived in the womb of a sinful woman and made of her flesh, yet as being produced, by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, of her substance, it was formed and brought forth without the least taint of sin, sickness, or mortality. And yet, with this exception, "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." He had a body like theirs; he had a soul like theirs; a body of flesh and bones and blood; a soul that could reason and think and feel; believe, hope, and love; suffer and rejoice; be sorrowful even unto death; be grieved for the hardness of men's hearts; and have compassion for the weariness and faintness of a famishing multitude. In partaking, then, of the nature of the children, he partook of all its sinless infirmities. Do they hunger? So he hungered, as in the wilderness and at the barren fig tree (Matt. 4:2; 21:18, 19.) Do they thirst? So he thirsted, when on the cross he cried aloud, "I thirst." (John 19:28.) Do they suffer weariness? So did he, as at Samaria's well. Do they sleep? So did he, for he was "asleep on a pillow" when the ship was in danger from the waves. At the grave of Lazarus he "groaned in the spirit, was troubled, and wept;" before he opened the deaf man's ears, "he looked up to heaven and sighed;" and in the garden he prayed, and agonized, and sweat great drops of blood. Thus, in all their sorrows and sufferings, he was made like unto his brethren; and we may well suppose that his holy body and soul, not being like ours blunted and hardened by the fall, not only felt more keenly the sufferings of our common humanity, but were pained more readily by them, and suffered more exquisitely from them. What heart can conceive or tongue express the infinite depths of the Redeemer's condescension in thus being made like unto his brethren—that the Son of God should assume a finite nature, subject to the sinless infirmities necessarily connected

with a time state and a dwelling on earth; that he should leave the bosom of his Father in which he had lain before all worlds, and should consent to become a denizen of this world of tears; to breathe earthly air; to eat human food; to associate with human beings; to be an eye-witness of, and himself share in human sorrows; to have before his eyes the daily spectacle of human sins; to be banished so long from his native home; to endure hunger, weariness, and thirst; to be subject to the persecution of men, the flight of all his disciples, and the treachery of one among them whose hand had been with him on the table; not to hide his face from shame and spitting, but to be mocked, struck, buffeted, and scourged, and at last to die an agonising death between two malefactors, amid scorn and infamy, and covered, as men thought, with everlasting confusion and disgrace! O, what infinite condescension and mercy are displayed in these sufferings and sorrows of an incarnate God! The Lord give us faith to look to him as suffering them for our sake!

II.—But I pass on to show how *God chose and qualified him* for the work which, according to the eternal purpose and counsel of the three-one Jehovah, he undertook to perform. He did not assume this office himself unchosen, uncovenanted, unqualified, for "no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." (Heb. 5:4, 5.) He was chosen from all eternity for this special work. We therefore read—"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." (Isaiah 43:1.) He is the "living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious." (1 Pet. 2:4.) And why did God choose him for the work but because he was so eminently qualified to sustain it? there being no other in heaven or earth, who was in a position to undertake the work, or who had power to carry it through. For not only his eternal Deity, but his being made like unto his brethren, adapted him in every way to be such a high priest as they needed. A bleeding sacrifice had to be offered. God as God could not do this. The divine nature is not susceptible of suffering. Deity cannot bleed or die. And yet

atonement must be made. The demands of justice must be paid. The law could not be broken with impunity. The perfections of God jarred, and needed to be reconciled; so that, though God, as God, could not suffer, bleed, die, or offer sacrifice, yet it was needful that one who was God should do all this. A sacrifice that an angel might offer would not be meritorious, would possess in it no efficacy for the work of atonement. Angelic shoulders could not bear the crushing weight of imputed sin. If they rendered to God a pure and holy obedience, it was what he could claim justly at their hands. If a seraph burned before the throne of God in flames of seraphic love, it was no more than he could demand as having created him a burning seraph. If the highest angel flew upon his swiftest pinions to obey God's commands—be it to smite the host of Sennacherib, or convey Lazarus to Abraham's bosom—he would be doing that which God could justly require at his hands. He had no super-vacuous obedience to offer; there was no meritorious task of which he could say to God "This I do over and above what I am required to do. Accept this at my hands for guilty man, and impute it to him for righteousness." The highest angel could not use such language before the throne of the Most High. But the eternal Son of God could use such language. Therefore God the Father chose him for the work in his own eternal mind, and prepared for him a body in and by which he could execute it: as we read—"A body hast thou prepared me." (Heb. 10:5.) By this body we are to understand the whole of his pure humanity, for the expression takes in not only his body but his soul, which, we know, had a large part in the work of redemption; for we read, not only of the precious blood which his body shed, but of his seeing "of the travail of his soul." (Isai. 53:11.) When, then, the blessed Lord had been chosen of his Father to do this important work he gladly and willingly accepted the office. His heart burned with love to the children of men; for even in eternity, when he was by his Father "as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight rejoicing always before him;" even then "he rejoiced in the habitable part of his earth; and his delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. 8:30, 31.) His bride, the Church, was then presented to him by his heavenly Father, and he betrothed her for ever to himself; yea "he betrothed her

in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies." (Hosea 2:19.) So that she became his Hephzi-bah, for his delight was in her. (Isa. 62:4.) And his heart shrank not from the task, nor from the suffering however great. He cheerfully consented to accept the task, to finish the work which the Father gave him to do; and though he could only do it by sacrificing himself, yet so full was his heart of love and pity, that he said to his heavenly Father, "Lo, I come to do thy will; thy law is in my heart." Thus Deity and humanity, love to God and love to man, zeal for God's glory and pity and compassion for the wants and woes of the objects to be redeemed, with strength to suffer and power to save, all met and met alone in the person of Immanuel; and thus was he qualified to be such a High Priest as could glorify God, and rescue his people from the depths of the fall.

III.—But let us now consider the four important particulars, by which the Lord Jesus Christ was so eminently and specially qualified, to be the great high priest over the house of God.

1. The first qualification which I named was to *make reconciliation for the sins of the people*. We can form little idea in our minds of what sin is as viewed by the eyes of an infinitely pure and holy God. There may be times and seasons in our breasts when our conscience is made tender in God's fear, and sin lies hard and heavy as a burden which we can scarcely bear. At such seasons we may have some feeble, faint conception of what sin is as viewed by the eyes of infinite purity. If ever, too, we have seen by faith the darling Son of God groaning and agonizing in Gethsemane, or suffering and bleeding upon the cross, we may have felt with grieved heart and weeping eyes what sin must be to cause him such sorrows. But these are with most believers but few and favoured moments. For the most part, we breathe such an atmosphere of sin that we scarcely feel the evil that surrounds us without or dwells with us within. In this we are like a person who has spent the night in a small and confined bedroom: he is not aware whilst he is in it of the closeness of the apartment; but let him go forth in the summer's early morn into the pure and clear air, and then return to his apartment of which

the window has been kept down, how sensible is he at once of its close atmosphere, and he wonders how he could have slept and risen without perceiving it. So we naturally breathe such an atmosphere of sin, that we have, as it were, become insensible to it. I have understood that persons who are afflicted with fever, smallpox, and other diseases most offensive to all who attend them, are themselves almost insensible to the noisome smell of the room in which they lie, and of which they are themselves the cause; so man, eaten up by the cancer of sin, fevered with every raging lust, covered with the loathsome leprosy of evil breaking forth in every part, though a monster in the sight of a holy God, is insensible to his own filth and noisomeness; it being the very nature of man to deceive himself, and not see sin as God sees it. But when light from above enters into our mind, and life with light, and we begin to see and feel what sin is as committed against a God so pure and bright and holy—what an awful thing it is to have broken his law as we have done again and again; what a terrible curse is entailed on those who do break it; what an opening hell awaits those who die without pardon and reconciliation to a justly offended God: then we begin feebly and faintly to have some conception of what sin is in the eyes of a holy and pure Jehovah. Before we feel this, we cannot enter into the nature and necessity of a high priest like Jesus Christ; we cannot understand why it should have been necessary for the Son of God to come down to earth to bleed and to die. We think that sin might surely have been wiped off at a cheaper rate; that tears and prayers, and alms-deeds, and repentance, and sacraments, and good works of various kinds, surely might have been put into the opposite scale. We cannot and do not naturally think that sin is so evil a thing as God declares it is. We are like Lord Nelson, who said almost in his dying moments, "I have not been a great sinner, Hardy;" though he had forsaken his own wife and lived in adultery for years. I have named it with reluctance, and merely to show how sin so blinds the mind and sears the conscience, that a brave, noble-hearted man, the idol of his country, may live in open infringement of the laws of God and man, and yet lull himself in a dying hour with the thought that he has not been so great a sinner as many others. But when God comes near to

judgment he searches the heart, tries the reins, lays guilt upon the conscience as a load grievous to be borne, pierces and wounds the soul with the stings of guilt and remorse, that he may thus bring it down to his feet to cry for mercy. It is cutting, killing work, but love and grace are wrapped up in it; for when the soul is ready to sink under the intolerable load of sin, then is the usual time that faith is given to view the bleeding God-Man as revealed to the heart by the power of God. By this teaching we experimentally learn, how needful it was that Godhead should have been united to manhood in the Person of Christ, for we see and feel that nothing short of blood divine can wash away sins of so deep a dye, of so aggravated a stamp, of so black a hue, as we feel ours to be. No man can have a light view of sin who has seen it either as reflected in a holy law, or in the sufferings of Immanuel, God with us. When then we have been feelingly exercised with a sight and sense of our dreadful sins against a holy and just God, and I may add, against the sufferings and sorrows of his incarnate Son, we begin to see a little into the meaning of the words, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," that is, to atone for them. And yet, with all our exercises, guilt, or distress, we really learn but little of what sin is, as God sees it. But whether we learn little or much, it is a lesson which we must be taught in our own bosom. It is indeed a lesson that is passed over by many who stand high in a profession of religion; but it is one that must be learnt sooner or later by every saved soul. A man never becomes a scholar—I mean a true scholar in the school of Christ—if he passes over the rudiments. He is in grace, what some persons are in nature: they have never learnt the elements of the language or science which they profess to know; they have been imperfectly taught; they passed over the rudiments through idleness or bad teaching, and were pushed on into a higher class before they had mastered the first principles; and therefore during all the rest of their lives they never know any one language or any one science truly and perfectly. Or, to use another figure, they resemble a building reared upon a sandy soil, which has no firm or solid foundation, because that which should have been rock is but sand. Thus, if a man is not well grounded in the beginning of religion, he cannot

be expected to have a middle or an end of any worth or value. It is a great thing then to begin right. It is a great thing to have a good, solid, and deep foundation laid in the heart and conscience by the hand of God at the first setting out. As the Lord himself says, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth." (Lam. 3:27.) It is a good thing for God to begin with us before we begin with God; for God to give us religion before we profess it; for God to take us in hand before we take the truth of God in hand; and for the Lord to work by his own grace in our heart before we speak of that grace, or take that great and holy name into our lips. But when we are exercised by the hand of God bringing us to the light, and thus by seeing light in his light, come to learn, at least in some measure, what sin really and truly is, our eyes get opened, which before were closed, to see also the necessity and nature of a priesthood like that of Jesus, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people;" for we feel these two things, that we ourselves as sinners need to be reconciled to God, and that this reconciliation can only be made by one who is able to effect it. Have you then ever seen an angry God; ever felt his wrath in your conscience; ever trembled at the judgment to come, and feared what your dreadful doom will certainly be, unless he be pleased to have mercy in a sovereign and most undeserved way upon your soul? It is impossible to say how many veils are taken off the heart, how many false refuges are hurled to the ground, and how much self-deception and self-righteousness are broken up by a discovery of sin to a guilty conscience and by some manifestation of a sin-avenging God. This the Lord speaks of by his prophet as done by himself. "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." *He* lays it and not *we*; for if *we* laid it, *we* should hold the line wrong, and tamper with the plummet. And what is the consequence of his laying it, or rather what next follows? "And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." (Isaiah 28:17.) As, then, the refuge of lies is swept away and the hiding-place overflowed, we feel a need of a truer refuge and of a safer hiding-place. And when our eyes are graciously opened to see that a reconciliation has been already made by the blood of the Lamb, we desire to have a manifested interest in that

precious blood. We see with believing eyes that atoning blood has been shed, a sacrifice offered, an obedience rendered, and that through this a guilty sinner may be freely pardoned, accepted, and saved. But still our life may hang in doubt. We may believe that there is a Saviour, without believing that he is *our* Saviour. We may see the atoning blood at a distance, without having it sprinkled upon our heart; we may hear of pardon without enjoying it; may read of salvation without experiencing it; may view the sympathy and compassion and love of Jesus, and yet be strangers to them all in joyful experience. But in every quickened soul there is a yearning for reconciliation to God. He cannot bear to live at enmity with him. He has been an enemy of God long enough. Sufficient has been the time he has spent in things that God abhors. He desires to be experimentally reconciled, pardoned, and accepted, and to feel that God is his Father and his friend. Now Jesus has "made reconciliation for the sins of the people" that are thus taught and exercised; but only as this reconciliation comes into their conscience are they feelingly and experimentally reconciled to God. For bear in mind, that reconciliation in scripture has two aspects: there is a reconciliation of our persons, and a reconciliation of our hearts and consciences. The apostle says, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:20.) He does not there speak as if their persons had not been already reconciled by the blood of the atonement; nor as if they were enemies, who needed to be brought near by the blood of the Lamb; but he desires that they, in their own soul, by receiving the atonement, by experiencing the pardoning love of God, by knowing the blood of sprinkling for themselves, might be inwardly and spiritually reconciled to God by receiving the sentence of justification in their own hearts. A man may view the atoning sacrifice at a distance, but this is not enough; it must be brought near. He may see the atoning blood as an Egyptian might see the blood of the Paschal lamb sprinkled upon the lintel and side-posts of the children of Israel; but it was upon the door of the true Israelite. The Holy Ghost must apply it for us and to us, and when we know the blood of sprinkling savingly by his application of it, we not only know that the Lord Jesus Christ has "made reconciliation for



the sins of the people," but has also personally reconciled us unto God.

2. But a second qualification named in our text is *faithfulness*; that he should be a "faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." Faithfulness, we know, is an indispensable requisite to the right discharge of every undertaken office. It is required in stewards, we read, "that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. 4:2.) If, for instance, you are a man of property or business, and employ any person either himself to do or to overlook others in doing what requires care or skill, you naturally expect him to be faithful in what he undertakes. He requires indeed a certain degree of intelligence and skill to know what he is about, and to superintend others; but you require not merely ability, but faithfulness, uprightness, honesty, and integrity of heart and hand; and this not by fits and starts, but unwavering and undeviating. So God required not only one who was able and willing to become his servant to do the work appointed, but one who would be faithful in the execution of it. Jesus is that faithful one, according to the ancient promise, "I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in my heart and in my mind." (1 Sam. 2:35.) "Righteousness was to be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isai. 11:5;) and thus he was faithful to him that appointed him; not merely as Moses as a servant in the house, but as a Son over his our house. (Heb. 3:2, 6,) O the faithfulness of Jesus! How implicitly can we rely upon it. How can he be otherwise than faithful? Is he not the true God? Has he not in himself all the perfections of Godhead? And are not truth and faithfulness among the glorious perfections, not only of his divine, but of his human nature? Faithfulness to his Father as his only begotten Son; faithfulness to his covenant engagements; faithfulness to his assumed office as the Father's servant; faithfulness to the Bride whom he had betrothed to himself; faithfulness to every promise, rite, type, sacrifice, and prophecy which foreshadowed him; faithfulness unbending to every temptation, unbroken by any violence; how needful, how indispensable, and yet how great and glorious is this faithfulness of our great High Priest! Knowing this

faithfulness, God entrusted to him his own glory. He committed not only the care of the Church, with the salvation of all the elect, into his sacred hands; but he entrusted him with what was dearer to him and nearer still—his own glory. Therefore, Jesus could say at the end of his mission, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4); which was not only to save the Church, but to glorify the Father by his obedience unto death. God gave the persons of the elect into the hands of his dear Son, as Jacob committed Benjamin into the hands of Judah; and as Judah accepted Benjamin, so Christ accepted the Church and undertook to bring it unto God, or he himself would bear the blame for ever. But how this faithfulness was tried! Men tried it; devils tried it; God tried it; but it came gloriously through all. Yet what loads were laid upon it! How the very knees of Jesus, so to speak, staggered beneath it! How, as Hart says, he had

"Strength enough and none to spare?"

How he had to sustain the curse of the law and the load of imputed sin! How he had to drink up a very hell of inward torment! How he had to be agonised in body and more than agonised in soul! What bloody sweat in the garden, what tears, what sore amazement, what heaviness of spirit, what sorrowfulness even unto death; what pangs of body upon the cross, what grief of mind, what distress of soul, did the holy Lamb endure in being faithful unto God! How he might have prayed, and his Father would have sent him twelve legions of angels! He had but to speak, and he might have soared to heaven and left the cross and all its shame and suffering behind. But he was faithful to God and to the work which he had undertaken. Six weary hours he hung upon the cross. Six weary hours he endured the wrath of God, and that most cutting stroke of all, reserved to the last as the bitterest drop in the whole cup, the hiding of his Father's countenance, which wrung from his bosom that cry such as neither earth nor heaven had heard before—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And yet not until he had finished the work did he give up the ghost. So he was faithful "in all things

pertaining to God." And he is faithful, too, in all things pertaining to man. He could say to the Father, "Of all which thou hast given me"—save the son of perdition, Judas: he had no charge to save him from death and hell; but of all the others of whom he had received as his Father's gift, he could say "I have lost none." Thus he was faithful while he was on earth. And how faithful he is now! The High Priest under the law had two offices to execute: he had to offer sacrifice for the people, and to offer prayer and intercession for them. Upon earth Jesus fulfilled the first; in heaven he fulfils the second, as there making by virtue of his presence continual intercession for us.

3. But he is a *merciful* high priest, which is the third qualification the apostle mentions. And how suitable this is for us! We want a high priest, not merely one who offered a sacrifice upon the cross; not merely one who died and rose again; but one who now lives at the right hand of God on our behalf; and one of that tender, merciful, and compassionate heart with whom we can carry on from time to time sacred intercourse; whom we can view with believing eyes as suitable to our case, and compassionating our wants and woes; in whom we can hope with expecting hearts, as one who will not turn away from us; and whom we can love, not only for his intrinsic beauty and blessedness, but as full of pity towards us. If I may use the expression, we want not a dead but a living, not an absent but a present, not a once but a now Jesus; we want a friend at the right hand of God at the present moment; an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and yet pitiful and loving Mediator between God and us; an interceding High Priest, Surety, and Representative in our nature in the courts of heaven, who can show mercy and compassion to us now upon earth;

"Whose heart is touched with tenderness,  
Whose bowels melt with love."

Our wants make us feel this. Our sins and sorrows give us perpetual errands to the throne. This vale of tears is ever before our eyes, and thorns and briars are perpetually springing up in it

that rend and tear our flesh. We want a real friend. Have you not sometimes tossed to and fro upon your weary couch, and almost cried aloud, "O that I had a friend!" You may have received cruel blows from one whom you regarded as a real friend: but you have been cruelly deceived. You feel now you have no one to take care of you or love you, and whom you can love again; and your heart sighs for a friend who shall be a friend indeed. The widow, the orphan, the friendless, the deserted one, all keenly and deeply feel this. But if grace has touched your heart, you feel that though all men forsake you, there is the friend of sinners, a brother born for adversity, a friend who loveth at all times, who will never leave or forsake you. And how it cheers the troubled mind and supports the weary spirit to feel that there is a friend to whom we may go; whose eyes are ever open to see; whose ears are ever unclosed to hear; whose heart is ever touched with a feeling of pity and compassion towards us. But we want this friend to be almighty, for no other can suit our case: he must be a divine friend. For who but God can see us wherever we are? What but a divine eye can read our thoughts? What but a divine ear can hear our petitions? And what but a divine hand can stretch itself forth and deliver? Thus the Deity of Christ is no dry, barren speculation, no mere Bible truth, but an experience wrought powerfully into a believer's inmost soul. Happy soul! happy season! when you can say with the Church, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, ye daughters of Jerusalem." (Song 5:16.) Thus the very wants of the soul instinctively teach us that a friend, to be a friend, must be a heavenly friend; that his heart and hand must be divine, or they are not the heart and hand for us. This friend, whose bitterest reproach on earth that he "was the friend of sinners," is his highest glory in heaven, is the blessed Jesus, our great high priest in the courts above. We find him at times to be very merciful, very pitiful, and very compassionate. And I am sure that we need all the compassion of his loving breast; for we are continually in states of mind when nothing but his pure mercy can suit, when nothing but his rich and boundless compassion is adapted to our case.

4. But there is one more qualification in our great high priest, the fourth and last remaining to be noticed; which is,—*sympathy*.

This is opened up very sweetly in the last verse of our text:—"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." You are tempted, are you not? Is not sin ever at work in your carnal mind? Are not snares every day spread in your path? Can you leave your home for the business of the day without finding traps and gins at every step to entangle your feet? Can you eat, drink, or sleep; speak or keep silence; read, or think, or pray; be at home or abroad, in the church or in the world, without meeting some temptation to evil? Does not the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life start up at every corner, and present continual occasions of temptation? Who can deliver you out of temptation; the guilt produced by it; the sorrow it occasions; the shame, confusion, darkness, and bondage which it creates? Surely, none but the friend of sinners, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. He alone is able to succour them that are tempted. But you want one who can sympathise as well as succour. We often are in states when we want sympathy. But who can sympathise with us in trouble but those who are or have been in similar trouble? The rich cannot sympathise with the poor; the healthy with the sick; the strong with the weak; the Pharisee with the publican; those who are at ease in Zion with the mourners in Zion. We must have been or now be in certain spots in soul experience, before we can sympathise with those who are in them now. So the blessed Jesus is able not only to succour, but to sympathise with them that are tempted. But what makes him able? Not merely his ability as God, but his having suffered as man; for we read in our text, "*In that* he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," where his ability is connected with his own suffering and is said to spring out of it. It is then his having been man as well as God; his having experienced temptation in his own person; his having been assaulted by sin and Satan. Though neither sin nor Satan had any place in him, yet he knew all the temptations to which we are subject by personal experience; and his having suffered under and from them renders him able to sympathise with those that are so tempted. You are tempted to doubt God, the word and truth of God, or your own sonship. Were not these temptations brought

before the mind of our sympathising high priest, when the tempter came to him and said—"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread?" Nor was he tempted to doubt his Sonship only, but to doubt God's providence, and that he might be left in the desert to die of hunger. And have you not been tempted to doubt God's providence too? How he was tempted to doubt God's protecting hand, when he was invited to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple! How he was tempted to turn aside from the path of suffering and sorrow to enjoy all the glory of the kingdoms of this world; and toward the close of his suffering life how, doubtless, he was tempted by the desertion of his friends and the withdrawing of the light of his Father's countenance, to doubt God's compassion and pity, when he left him, so to speak, in the hands of his enemies! Every temptation you are subject to the dear Redeemer experienced in his own person, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are." Therefore he is able to sympathise with you in and under all, for he suffered in and under them. Now how encouraging this is to those who not only know what temptation is, but who suffer acutely from it, that our blessed high priest "*suffered, being tempted.*" Temptation was not to him like the sea dashing against a rock, which repels it without feeling it. Jesus repelled it, and was no more polluted by it than the rock by the waves of the sea beating over it; but he felt it, though he repelled it. It grieved his holy soul; it pained his righteous spirit; it was so contrary to every sacred feeling of his pure breast, that though his heart did not give way in the slightest degree to the temptation presented to it, yet it was a cause of painful and poignant suffering. As Lot, in a much lower sense, did not partake in the abomination of Sodom, yet they vexed his righteous soul day by day as he saw them; so the holy soul of Jesus was grieved by the temptation in which he took no share, and which could not stain or defile his sacred spirit.

As taught then and blessed by the Holy Spirit, we see these four glorious qualifications meeting in our great high priest: first, we see him *making reconciliation for the sins of the people*, putting away their iniquities by the sacrifice of himself. We see him,

secondly, *faithful to God*, and therefore not only to have executed the work with which he was charged, but to have finished it in a way whereby every perfection of God was glorified, and every attribute harmonised. Thirdly we see him *merciful*, so as to have compassion upon poor sinners, who, without that mercy being revealed, cannot live or die; and, fourthly, we see him *sympathising*, so as to pity as well as succour them that are tempted. Need I say how encouraging all this is to every saint who feels his need of this compassionate, faithful high priest? Need I urge any other motive to embolden us to present our wants before him, that from time to time we may receive his love, and blood, and grace into our heart, and live more and more to his praise, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is worthy of it all for time and for eternity?

## **The Mighty God in the Midst of Zion**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, May 21, 1865

"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thy hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." Zeph. 3:16, 17

Of the Old Testament Scriptures, taking of them a general view, I do not know a more difficult part to understand than that which is contained in what are commonly called "the minor prophets;" that is, the series of prophecies commencing with Hosea and terminating with Malachi. They are called, as you probably know, the minor prophets, not because of any inferiority in inspiration, in authority, or in subject matter to the greater prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, but on account of the comparative brevity or smallness in bulk of their compositions; rarely extending, except Hosea and Zechariah, beyond the compass of two or three chapters.

Now if these minor prophets are so difficult to understand, at least I have found them so, there must be some reason for this difficulty. But perhaps you see no difficulty; perhaps you are a thorough master of the whole subject, and have penetrated with an eagle eye into the whole series, so as clearly to see both their literal and spiritual meaning. But will you allow me to gauge by a few questions the depth of this knowledge? Can you understand Obadiah? What meaning would you affix to such a passage as this? "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it." (Obadiah 18.) Are you fully master of Amos? And can you explain the meaning of this verse? "I saw the Lord standing upon the



altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered." (Amos 9:1.) Do you understand the meaning of Nahum, where he says, "Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin." (Nahum 2:11, 12.) And do you think you have sounded all the depths of Joel? "O," you say, "I have not thought about the meaning of such passages as those." Then don't think you understand it until you have considered the subject a little more closely, and sounded some of these hidden depths; for you may depend upon it that these minor prophets, though we may gather up much of their general meaning, are very difficult to understand in their minuter details, and especially when we desire to invest them with a spiritual interpretation. For this difficulty there seem to be several reasons.

1. First, we are but imperfectly acquainted with the kingdoms, states, and persons generally against whom they were uttered, and the events of the period in which the prophets themselves lived; so that many things which they wrote, though perfectly intelligible at the time when they were written, are very obscure to us now. Thus Obadiah prophesies of the destruction of Edom, which was a country to the south of Canaan, and chiefly remarkable for its rock-hewn city, situated in a narrow, inaccessible defile, formerly called Selah, but now Petra. The prophet therefore says, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." (Obadiah 3, 4.) But how little is now known of the ancient state of Edom? So Nahum prophesies the destruction of Nineveh. At the time of their prophecies both of these were

flourishing cities, but now neither of them has an inhabitant; and till a few years ago the very site of Nineveh was unknown.

2. Another reason to my mind is, that some of the events which are prophesied are still unfulfilled: as for instance, "And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead." (Obadiah 19.) The full meaning, therefore, of the minor prophets may not be understood until the events to which they refer are accomplished.

3. There is also a third reason for this difficulty, viz. the harmonising of the literal and spiritual meaning which cannot well be done whilst the former is obscure.

But the question may perhaps arise in your mind, If these prophecies are so difficult to understand, why do you preach from them? This morning you took your text out of Hosea, one of the minor prophets; and this evening you are taking your text out of Zephaniah, another of the minor prophets. Are you come this evening with some of these difficulties—to raise up giants that you may kill them, and set us enigmas that you may solve them?" God forbid! I would rather clear up difficulties than make or state them. But you will please to observe that though there may be great difficulties in fully understanding these minor prophets, yet there are many very blessed passages in them; sweet openings up of experimental truth; most gracious and suitable promises given for the consolation of the church of God in all ages. We must ever bear in mind this feature in all the prophets, that as regards the people of God, all their prophecies are promises; and therefore prophecies being promises, they are all in a state of continual fulfilment. God's dealings with his Church are the same in all ages; for he himself is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and thus if many of these prophecies look forward into the dim and distant future, when they will have their full completion, yet there is a continual fulfilment of them as containing in their bosom every promised

blessing to the saints of God. It is, I may add, this peculiar feature of divine revelation which makes the reading of the Scripture of the Old Testament profitable, and furnishes us, both as ministers and hearers, with food for instruction, consolation, and edification in righteousness.

Bearing then these observations in mind, now look at our text. But take it first as it stands before us in its naked simplicity: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack." Have you any idea of the meaning of these words? Do you think you understand what the Lord intends when he says, "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thy hand be slack?" What is Jerusalem? what is Zion? and what is the exhortation given to each about not fearing and the hands not being slack? And what is meant by "that day?" Is the meaning of all this as plain as the sun shining in the mid-day sky? Is there no difficulty here? If you see and feel this, may I be instrumental in God's hand to clear up any such difficulty, and bring out of it some truth to feed your souls. And then look again at the second verse of our text. Is that all easy and plain? "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Is it all so easy that a child may understand it? I do not claim to myself any great knowledge or wisdom; but I hope God has given me some understanding of the word of his grace. At least if he has not done so, I am not fit to stand here this evening to preach to you, and had better come down from the pulpit and take my seat in the pew. But with the hope that, with God's help and blessing, I may be enabled to bring out of these words some things that may be for your instruction, edification, consolation, and encouragement, I shall approach the passage which I have undertaken now to speak from; and in so doing I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First*, take up what the Lord says in a *way of promise*, or rather, to speak more correctly, of *exhortation*, to Jerusalem and to Zion: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not:

and to Zion, Let not thy hands be slack."

II.—*Secondly*, consider *the basis* on which God grounds the reasons why Jerusalem should not fear, and why the hands of Zion should not be slack.

When we come to examine this a little more closely, we shall see that, in laying down this firm basis, the Lord presents himself to the church in a beautiful and blessed light: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty." How full of truth and beauty is every word. "The Lord *thy* God"—there is personal possession; "in the *midst* of thee"—there is his immediate presence; "*is mighty*"—there we have *his omnipotent power*. Now out of the presence of the mighty God in the midst of the church there flows these three encouraging considerations:—1, his *determination* to save: "he will save;" 2, the *fulness of his joy*: "he will rejoice over thee with joy;" "he will joy over thee with singing;" 3, the *rest* which he has in his eternal love: "he will rest in his love." And he holds these blessed considerations up before her eyes, that they may be so many encouragements why Jerusalem should not fear and why the hands of Zion should not be slack.

I.—Every reader, at least every intelligent, spiritual reader of the Scriptures, for many read the Bible who have neither intelligence nor spirituality, must observe the frequent recurrence of the expression, "In that day." There is scarcely a page of prophecy in which you will not find some mention of "that day," or of an expression of the same import, "The day of the Lord." But if you examine the passage in which "that day" or "the day of the Lord" is spoken of, you will find them for the most part of a twofold, nay, of an opposite character and meaning; indeed so opposite to each other, that at first sight it may seem difficult to reconcile them. Thus, "that day" sometimes is spoken of as a day of trouble: "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.) Again, "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?" (Amos 5:18, 20.) In Isaiah too we have a description of what shall be done in "the day of the Lord," of which the sum is: "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." (Isa. 2:17.) How strong also is the language of Zephaniah, the prophet from whom I am speaking this morning. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." (Zeph. 1:14, 15.) Nor does the prophet Isaiah speak less strongly: "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them; and they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames." (Isa. 13:6, 7, 8.) From these and other passages we gather that "the day of the Lord," or "that day," is a day of trouble, distress, affliction, and sorrow; of breaking down the pride of man, and the manifestation of the terrible wrath of a justly offended God. But if you examine the prophetic Scriptures a little more closely, you will find quite another feature often stamped upon the expression, "In that day." Again and again it is spoken of, loudly heralded and joyfully proclaimed as a day of deliverance, of surpassing mercy, of boundless grace, and, in its effects, of praise and thanksgiving. You must well remember the words of that short but sweet chapter, Isaiah 12, which thus commences: "And 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. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." (Isa. 12:1, 2.) And again: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." (Isa 26:1.) And who that fears and loves God has not felt the sweetness of those words? "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we

have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."  
(Isa. 25:9.)

But now comes the question, "How can these two opposite things be reconciled? How can we have in the same day deep distress and blessed joy, heavy trouble and sweet consolation?" The answer is easy, I think, and admits of a twofold solution. First, view the day as regards God's dealings with his out-stretched arm in a way of judgment. He has to deal with foes as well as friends; and his foes are his Church's foes. The same day, therefore, shall be a day of woe and sorrow to the one, and a day of deliverance and joy to the other. Was it not so in that signal day when the Lord delivered Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh? That day was a day of trouble and destruction to Egypt, but a day of deliverance and joy to Israel. Thus, the same day is a day of trouble and of joy—of trouble to the defeated and destroyed oppressor, of deliverance and rejoicing to the oppressed who are delivered.

But there is also another solution of this apparent contradiction, when the words are viewed in connection with the experience of God's people. Do not these two things go together in the experience of the living soul? Is not the same day often, if not usually, a day of darkness and light, of oppression and deliverance, of sorrow and of joy? It was so with Hezekiah, David, the publican, and the prodigal. What is a day of deliverance but a day of deliverance out of trouble? What is a day of joy but a day that brings us out of sorrow? And what is a day of singing but a day in which a new song is put into the mourner's mouth after a night of mourning? Does not David thus speak? "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psa. 30:5.) Thus the first part of the day may be a day of darkness, and the second part of the day be a day of light; the first part of the day be a day of trouble, and the second part a day of joy, and yet all be but one day.

But observe, also, that whether it be of trouble or of joy, its

distinctive feature is that it is "the day of the Lord." If it be a day of trouble it comes from the Lord. It is his day. Whence comes all real soul trouble? From the Lord; does it not? No man can bring trouble upon his own soul, distress his own conscience, or break himself down into repentance. It is the Lord's word and the Lord's work to do this; and the day in which it is done is that day of days which may well be called "the day of the Lord." How many go on for years with a shilly-shally religion—a poor, worldly, lukewarm, Laodicean profession, and too often a very inconsistent life, for want of this day of the Lord—this day of distress and trouble to break them to pieces, shake them out of their false standing, and cast them down into the dust of death. But how this day of the Lord prepares them for the other day of the Lord, such as that of which our text speaks,—a day of salvation and deliverance.

It appears, then, that there is a day in which it shall be said to Jerusalem, "Fear thou not;" clearly implying that there is a day when Jerusalem fears, and one in which God speaks with power to her heart, and says, "Fear thou not."

What is intended here by "Jerusalem?" I shall omit all mention of any literal fulfilment of the words as referring to the dim future, though I have no doubt myself of some such literal fulfilment, and shall confine myself to the spiritual interpretation as that in which we have the nearer and more personal interest. Spiritually viewed, then, you may take "Jerusalem" as a symbolic representation of the Church of God, for we find the word so applied in the New Testament. Thus Paul speaks: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." (Gal. 4:26.) So also we read: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." (Heb. 12:22.) We have thus ample warrant for our spiritual interpretation of Jerusalem, as mystically representing that glorious Church of which holy John speaks, and which he saw in vision in its last phase as coming down from God: "And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a

bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2.) Viewing, then, the text in its spiritual meaning, we may apply the exhortation, "Fear thou not" to the Church of the living God; and the day spoken of as that day when she is in trouble and sorrow, and beset with many fears on account of the number and strength of her adversaries. But as the members of the mystical body of Christ are all partakers of the same afflictions, though each in its different measure, we may consider the words as addressed personally to each individual believer who is beset with doubt and fear. By so doing we seem to make the words more distinct and more personal, and to speak more pointedly to the heart and conscience of each sufferer in and with Christ.

When we look around at the suffering Church of Christ, how many of the dear family of God do we see in circumstances under which they are greatly afraid and much distressed. Let us look at some of these circumstances to give our subject greater point and distinctness.

1. Take, for instance, when God, in the language of the prophet, "*lays judgment to the line* and righteousness to the plummet;" that day when he brings the soul to book, when he searches Jerusalem with candles, when the light and life of the Holy Spirit visit the heart, rend asunder the veil of ignorance and unbelief spread over it, and discover the sin that lurks and works there, which has been the fruitful source of that long stream of iniquity which has defiled lip and life, and now distresses the awakened conscience. However God may for a time have seemed to take no notice of the sins of his people, sooner or later a day surely comes when he arrests them by his word, brings them before his holy bar, searches every inmost thought of their heart; and not only recalls to their mind and memory actual transgressions, many perhaps till then buried and forgotten, but sets their secret sins in the light of his countenance, manifests his inflexible justice, immaculate purity, and eternal displeasure against all iniquity; and by these dealings and doings brings them down before him into the dust. Now this day is a day of great fear, because in that day a holy God and a guilty sinner meet together.



In that day a righteous law and a guilty conscience come together face to face. In that day the inflexible justice of God and hosts of sins open and secret are brought to look upon each other without shield, shelter, or refuge. How the soul now hangs as it were trembling in the balance lest the sentence go forth of eternal destruction from his presence. Have you never had such a day as that—the day of your soul trouble—when God brought you to book, laid the weight of sin upon your conscience, and made you see what you were in his sight as a justly condemned transgressor? I do not wish to lay down a rigid, unbending standard, and decide how deep or how long this trouble may be; but I cannot see that we can even breathe out our soul for a sense of mercy unless we have in some measure been thus convinced of sin and brought down before the Almighty. It may have been a gradual work, but it must have been a sure one to make it a day of the Lord.

2. But the words, "In that day," will also apply to *a day of trial*. Have you not from time to time had days of trial? Perhaps you are under some very heavy trial now. There may be a heavy load of temporal trouble even now pressing upon your shoulders, and a heavier load of spiritual trouble pressing upon your conscience. The two often go together, as with Job and Hezekiah; and it is this meeting together of the two waters that makes the trial so heavy. This made the wise man say, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Prov. 18:14.) It is then perhaps a day with you of deep trial, both of temporal difficulties and much exercise of mind in spiritual matters. Wave upon wave, billow upon billow are rolling over your soul. But are you not one of the citizens of the new Jerusalem? Have you not in times past felt something of the liberating power of God's truth, and are thus a son and daughter of that free Jerusalem above which is the mother of us all? If so, you are one of the children of promise. (Gal. 4:28.) Unto you then God speaks in our text, "Fear thou not."

3. But with another it may be a day of *great temptation*. You seem under the influence of the Prince of darkness; Satan plies

hard at you with his fiery darts, and shoots the very artillery of hell thick and fast even now into your carnal mind, scarcely allowing you breathing time, or, as Job speaks, "to swallow down your spittle." In prayer, in reading, in hearing, in your daily employment, at home and abroad, wherever you are, Satan is pressing you hard with his temptations, so that you often fear where the scene will end. Still God says to you, "Fear thou not." "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4.) Our gracious Lord "has spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in his cross." (Col. 2:15.) "Through death he has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14); and his promise is, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Therefore fear thou not. Satan knoweth that he hath but a short time, and is therefore come down upon you having great wrath. (Rev. 12:12.) But fear thou not, for the Lord has said, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." (Luke 10:19.)

4. But with others it may be a day when you are *looking forward to the future* with great apprehension. Some dark cloud in providence is gathering in the distance, and as it approaches gradually nearer and nearer you fear lest, instead of breaking in showers upon your head, it should burst forth in a thunderstorm and you be exposed to its fury. Still the Lord says, "Fear thou not." Does he not hold all creation in his grasp? Are not the gold and silver his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? Has he not always appeared for you in your past troubles; and can he not, yea, will he not appear in that which now fills you with dread in its dim and distant apprehension? How true are the words, "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." (Job 5:19.) You have had the six, and found deliverance; now in the seventh, your present one, there shall no evil touch thee.

5. Or it may be a day,—for I wish to take in as many of these days of the Lord as I can, to throw the net wide to catch as many as I can of the fish now swimming about the ship,—it may be a

day of *great darkness* with you, of much soul desertion. Many difficulties and perplexities may try your mind, and many doubts and fears as to the goodness of your state teem all in arms against you. You are terribly afraid lest all your profession prove a delusion, lest all which you know should be in the flesh; that you never felt or believed anything aright, and that no work of grace has been wrought in you. Now these exercises are not marks of death but rather of life, and are often made very useful and profitable to the soul. God puts you into these spots, not only to try and prove you, but that he may have a word to say to your heart. These sharp and severe exercises are not meant for your destruction, as you may fear. They are not intended as intimations from God that he may clear himself of having any hand in your deception, but he brings you into these spots that you may listen to his voice, attend to what he says in the word of grace, that there may be a place in your heart for his word to come into. To you who are passing through that day, the day of Jacob's trouble, God speaks in our text, and says, "Fear thou not." You are beset by many fears; you have fears in Providence and fears in grace; you fear that your spot is not the spot of God's children; that there is no reality in what you have hoped was a work of grace upon your heart; that what you tasted, felt, and handled of the things of God may prove a delusion; that you have not been led in the right way; that you began wrong, have gone on wrong, and will end wrong; that there is something peculiar in your case, something in your experience, that if it were thoroughly searched into would prove you to be unsound to the very core. Circumstances, too, have come upon you which have made the stroke keener and the blow heavier. A day of affliction, temptation, and trial has come upon you; a weakly body, a sickly frame, and an apprehension whether some stroke has not come for your end. With all this a whole host of fears has sprung up like so many armed men, and you do not know what to do with them, or what to do with yourself. Distressed, cast down, and exercised, you know not how to deal with them, get rid of them, or put them away. Thus you are in a strait where none can help you and where you cannot help yourself. Now God says to you, "Fear thou not." I shall by and by show the ground of his

admonition to you and blessed counsel; but for the present I will content myself with God's own language. I repeat, then, art thou passing through that day? God says—listen, O, listen to his words—"Fear thou not."

ii. But he speaks to *Zion* also, and says to her, "Let not thy hands be slack," or "faint," as we read in the margin.

By "Zion" here we may understand the same thing as Jerusalem, for Zion was a part of Jerusalem, a lofty eminence on which David built his palace, and is therefore combined with it by the apostle: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" and what is this but "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven?" (Heb. 12:22, 23.) I shall, therefore, assume that the people of God are here spoken to in the day of their fear, and that to them is addressed the exhortation, "Let not thy hands be slack." How suitable, how appropriate is this word to their case. For is there anything which makes our hands so slack as this day which I have already described as the day of temptation, or the day of affliction, or the day of trial, or the day of searching Jerusalem with candles? Now in this "day of the Lord," instead of proving ourselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, putting on the whole armour of God, and going out manfully to battle, we tremble and fear; and thus our hands are slack, or, as the word means, droop and hang uselessly by our side. At the very moment, in the very circumstances when we need all our armour and all our strength against our enemies, what with inward guilt, strong unbelief, killing doubts, cutting fears, dismal apprehensions, weighty trials, and urgent temptations,—in the very day and hour when we should be most strong to meet our enemy, we are most weak. Instead of boldly and manfully taking the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and the weapon of all prayer, which we are bidden to do, through guilt and fear and dismal apprehension, the hands droop: the girdle gets slack, the shield falls, the sword slips out of the hand, the breastplate gets loose, and the helmet drops off the head. Thus our hands are slack in the use of this

armour of God, which we are to take that we "may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6:10-18.) How do you meet a trial, a temptation, a perplexity, a chilling doubt, a cutting fear? Can you rise above it? Are you like an active swimmer in the sea, who, when a towering wave comes, breasts it with skill and vigour and mounts over it? Or are you rather like a poor half-drowned wretch who is dashed by the wave upon the rock, or carried out by its reflux into the sea? Take the generality of God's people. Are they not more like a poor half-drowned sailor, under a heavy wave, who is just saved and only just saved at the last gasp, than a bold and active swimmer who can breast the wave and rise above it? God speaks then to his Zion under these circumstances when heart and hands alike droop, and says, "Let not thy hands be slack." O faint-hearted soul! O tossed with tempest and not comforted! O poor afflicted one, why dost thou give way to thy doubts and fears and dismal apprehensions? Fear not; let not thy hands be slack; play the man; look at thine enemies boldly in the face; stand to thy colours; take up thy shield and sword, and once more front thy cruel foe. But Zion says, "Alas! I cannot. My heart is full of fear, my hands are slack, and they drop the weapon as soon as I take hold of it." Are there not those here whose experience finds an echo to my words? Are not your hands too often slack to fight and slack to pray? Are you not such as the apostle exhorts? "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees." (Heb. 12:12.) As I speak not thus to blame you, for I am too often myself in the same spot of weakness and fear, I do not stand here to scold but to sympathise, to help not to hinder, to lead on not to drive back, to strengthen not to weaken, to take burdens off not lay them on. Is not this a part of the minister's office? Does not the Lord himself bid his servants strengthen the weak hands and to confirm the feeble knees? "Say to them that are of feeble heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you." (Isaiah 35:4.) The Lord never gives us an exhortation without confirming it by a suitable promise.

But this brings us to the second part of our text: "The Lord thy

God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." (Zeph. 3:17.)

II.—We see then here how the Lord comes and gives his Zion blessed reasons why she should not fear and her hands should not be slack. What is the first encouraging word that he speaks to her, and by her to our hearts that we should not fear, and that our hands should not be slack?

i. *"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty."*

How he presents himself here as being in the midst of his Church. How he represents himself as standing in the very centre of Zion, that he himself may fight her battles and bring her off more than conqueror. But before I enter into the meaning of these words, let me ask you one question, and do you put it home to your heart and conscience, that you may be enabled to gather up some balm to your wounded spirit out of these words of the Lord. Did you ever feel God to be in your midst? When you have been cast down sometimes with soul trouble, hard pressed by doubt, guilt, and fear, was your soul ever blessed with the presence of God? In your room, upon your bed, in the house of prayer, was there ever a solemn visitation of the power and presence of God to your heart? Then he was in your midst. The way to prove that God is in our midst is to feel him there. True religion is a religion of feeling. The true way to realise that God is in our midst is to feel him in our heart, and to know that he is with us by the manifestation of his presence and of his power.

But let us see in what way God is "in our midst." It is good to see the foundation on which this rests—how firm, how stable; how independent of all change, all mutability of events, all vicissitude of circumstances, it is that the God of heaven is in our midst. It is in the Person of his dear Son. When our gracious Lord took part of the flesh and blood of the children, he came into our midst as one of us. He said, therefore, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee."

(Heb. 2:12.) His name is "Immanuel," that is, God with us—God in our midst. As our Mediator he is in our midst; for the word Mediator means a middle person—one who can stand in our midst between God and us. John saw him in vision in the midst of the seven candlesticks, representing how he stands in the midst of the churches. (Rev. 1:13.) But for this Mediator and for his divine mediation God could not be in our midst. Sin must have eternally separated between us and him; but now God in Christ can come and dwell with us, according to those words: "I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6:16.) This was the distinguishing glory of the children of Israel that God was among them. No other people could say this, and no other people knew this, as the Lord said of old: "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God." (Exodus 29:45, 46.) This made the Psalmist sing in the triumph of expectant faith: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." (Psa. 46:5.)

As we then, poor Gentile sinners, have succeeded to Israel's place, being grafted into the good olive tree from which they were broken off, so as to partake of its root and fatness, the promises made to Zion belong to us who believe. If God then is in your midst, to you I speak who believe in his dear Son, whom need you fear and what need you fear? Your sins, it is true are great, mountains high, oceans deep; your crimes, for so I may well call them, are of the blackest dye; your iniquities of the deepest hue. What can you do with them? Can you put them away, speak pardon to your own conscience, bring a sense of forgiveness into your own soul, and view all these sins rolling away from off your burdened mind like a summer cloud dispersed from the firmament of heaven by the rays of the sun shining bright and clear? You cannot do it. But if God is in the midst of you, he has done it already. Your sins are pardoned, blotted out, forgiven, and cancelled: they were all laid upon the head of Jesus your Surety on the great day of atonement; he has satisfied the

justice of God on your behalf, and all your sins are cast behind God's back. What you never could do God has done for you, by laying your sins upon the head of his dear Son, that by the efficacy of his atoning blood, sacrifice, and death, the sins of the Church might be for ever blotted out. Now if God is in the midst of you, you need not fear his wrath, or be under dismal apprehensions of judgment to come. You stand before God without spot or blemish, accepted in the Beloved. "Ah," but you say, "this is the very thing which I want to prove." But have you never realised the sensible presence of God, if not to bring peace and joy, yet to awe your mind, fill you with reverence of his glorious Majesty, make sin truly hateful, yourself loathed, and holiness presented to your view as something blessed and desirable? Have you never longed to be holy, hated sin with perfect hatred, mourned and sighed over your sinful self, and felt cut to the very quick that your iniquities so often, like the wind, have taken you away? God was in the midst of these prayers and desires; and the Holy Spirit was helping your infirmities, and interceding in and for you with groanings which cannot be uttered. These movements of godly fear and holy reverence show that God is in your midst. So Jacob felt when God first appeared to him: "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. 28:16, 17.) You may have had similar feelings in your bedroom, or in the house of prayer; if so, God is in your midst.

2. But take another view of the case. You have heavy trials, deep family afflictions, painful bereavements, dark providences, gloomy apprehensions of what may soon burst forth; and you are much tried and exercised what the issue and event of all these things may be. Fear them not, believing child of God: if God is in the midst of thee, is he not able to deliver? Who has enabled you to stand to the present hour? Who has been your kind friend and bounteous Benefactor through life? Who has again and again made crooked things straight and rough places plain, and held you up to the present moment? What! Cannot you look back and



see the handwriting of God's providence from a very child, and how circumstance after circumstance and event after event have all denoted the special care which he has displayed over you? These are so many pledges that the same God who has appeared for you in time past will appear again. Your faith is so weak and your fear so strong, that you can scarcely believe it. But is he not in the midst of you? Have you not at various times realised his presence and his power? Does not this clearly prove that he is in your midst? Is he not even now in the midst of your heart, in the midst of your conscience, in the midst of your thoughts, in the midst of your desires, in the midst of your affections? Through the long hours of the day, through the still hours of the night, how eternal things occupy our thoughts and exercise our minds. How they bubble up as from a deep well, and like springing water burst through the stones, the clay, the mud, the thick grass, moistening and softening the heart, sometimes to make it tender and contrite, and sometimes to rejoice and the bones to flourish like an herb. (Isai. 66:14.) It is thus we are kept alive from day to day, that our leaf should not wither, or we cease from yielding fruit. (Psa. 1:3; Jer. 17:8.) Now if this be your experience, be assured that your sympathising High Priest Jesus is in your midst; for if he be in the midst of your affections, he is in the midst of your afflictions. Was not the Son of God in the midst of the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so that they took no hurt? (Dan. 3:25.) And do we not read? "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them." (Isaiah 63:9.) Surely then he will come in his own time and way to deliver and save you out of all your troubles; for "many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

3. But perhaps your temptations are very great; Satan presses very hard; his fiery darts come so thick and fast; there are such storms of infidelity, blasphemy, and obscenity raised up against you, and as if beating upon your poor defenceless head, that you hardly know how to stand against them. Let me ask you, which is stronger, God or Satan? Is God truly and really in your midst? Can he not, will he not bruise Satan under your feet shortly? Has

not Jesus "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage?" Does not the promise still stand good? "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13.) James bids us even "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2); and Peter says in almost similar language, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. 4:12, 13.) But you complain that your trials and afflictions press you down so, that you cannot rise above them. You would believe if you could; but you are so overborne with the weight of your troubles that you can scarcely look up. But so have been other saints of God before you. Hezekiah said, "Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." (Isaiah 38:14 ) And what a mournful note Heman uttered, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." (Psalm 88:6, 7.) Still I will ask, Is not God in your midst? Is there no secret support? Do you not find his strength made perfect in your weakness? Does no timely word come in? Is there no breaking of the dark cloud, no access to the throne, no word of his grace that drops in to suit your circumstances? Do not so belie your God; be not such a wretched unbeliever when your God is in the midst. Do not provoke and grieve his holy Spirit by denying his work upon your heart: for as I said before, you have found God in your midst, and if so, it is nothing but giving way to Satan and unbelief to deny it. How encouraging it is to believe that God is in our midst; in our midst this evening to help me to preach, to help you to hear, and to bless the word from my lips to your heart. If God is in our midst, what need we fear? whom need we fear? and why need we fear? Let not our hands be slack: God is in our midst: he will help us right early.

ii. But is this all that God says of himself? He goes on adding word to word, and truth to truth, and promise to promise, to strengthen Zion's faith, to calm her doubts and fears, and raise up her drooping hands. He says he is "mighty."

What a mighty God we have to deal with. And what would suit our case but a mighty God? Have we not mighty sins? Have we not mighty trials? Have we not mighty temptations? Have we not mighty foes and mighty fears? And who is to deliver us from all this mighty host except the mighty God? It is not a little God (if I may use the expression) that will do for God's people. They need a mighty God, because they are in circumstances where none but a mighty God can interfere in their behalf. And it is well worth our notice that the Lord puts his people purposely into circumstances where they may avail themselves, so to speak, of his omnipotent power, and thus know from living personal experience, that he is a mighty God, not in mere doctrine and theory, but a mighty God in their special and particular behalf. Why, if you did not know feelingly and experimentally your mighty sins, your mighty trials, your mighty temptations, and your mighty fears you would not want a mighty God. O how this brings together the strength of God and the weakness of man; how it unites poor helpless creatures with the Majesty of heaven; how it communicates to feeble, worthless worms the very might of the Omnipotent Jehovah; and what a blessed realization it gives in faith and feeling of the power of God put forth in our defence and salvation. This sense of our weakness and his power, of our misery and his mercy, of our ruin and his recovery, of the aboundings of our sin and the superaboundings of his grace—a feeling sense, I say, of these opposite yet harmonious things brings us to have personal, experimental dealings with God; and it is in these personal dealings with God that the life of all religion consists. O what a poor, dead, useless religion is that in which there are no personal dealings with God—no calling upon his holy name out of a sincere heart; no seeking of his face or imploring of his favour; no lying at his feet and begging of him to appear; no pitiable, lamentable case for him to have compassion upon; no

wounds or sores for him to heal, no leprosy to cleanse, no enemies to put to the rout, no fears to dispel, and I may almost say no soul to save. And yet such is the religion of thousands. They draw near to God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him: they serve God with their bodies, but they serve sin with their souls; they attend his house whilst their mind is a den of thieves; and whilst they outwardly say, "Lord, Lord," they inwardly say, "This man shall not have dominion over us." If you differ from them, and want a God near at hand and not afar off, a mighty God in the very midst of your soul, of your thoughts, desires, and affections, you may well bless him for the grace which has made you to differ, and thankfully bow your neck to sufferings and trials, as means in his hand to bring you and him together.

iii. But the Lord gives another reason why Jerusalem should not fear, and why Zion's hands should not be slack. "*He will save.*"

How firm the word! how certain the promise! "He will save." Not "he may," or "he can," or "he would if he could;" or "you must do your part to help him;" or "he has put you into a salvable state, so that if you are lost after all that he has done, it will be all your own fault." God in his holy word does not speak in such a halting, faltering, indecisive, deceptive tone. Such hesitating language would be as unworthy of the divine Majesty as unsuitable to us. Can we think that the great, immutable Jehovah suspends his eternal plans upon the fickle will and mutable mind of man? What security could there be for poor fearful Jerusalem if salvation depended upon her doings and duties? Whom then will he save? Fearing Jerusalem and slack-handed Zion. If any think they can save themselves, let them put their eternal all upon that bottom. Let them go to sea and sail to the shores of eternity in that crazy bark—in that leaky ship. The Lord keep us from sailing with that crew in their desperate voyage, for in good truth, besides its leaky state, it sails under a rebellious flag, and will go down in the first storm. I would stand upon the pier-head with the gospel trumpet in my hand, and blow so loud a blast as would warn all within hearing against putting out to sea in any ship which is not

owned, chartered, equipped, officered, and manned by the Captain of our salvation, and of which he himself is not both Commander and Pilot. Salvation, then, does not depend upon peradventures and maybes. It stands upon God's fixed purposes, firm decrees, eternal oaths, covenant engagements, and the finished work of his dear Son. Salvation is not made up of peradventures, and contingencies, and creature circumstances, as if the breath of man could create it, and the breath of man disannul it. It stands as immutable as Jehovah's eternal throne, as firm as the very being of God himself, for it rests upon "two immutable things," his word and his oath. Therefore, he will, he must, he shall save all who believe in his dear Son. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) And how sure are the words of Jesus, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:27, 28.) But you may say "Am I one of his sheep?" Have you heard his voice, and are you following him? Or take the evidence in our text. Is he in your midst? If you have felt his presence and known his power, he will save. He has saved you already in the Person and work of his dear Son, for salvation is a past act, "*Who hath saved us and called us.*" (2 Tim. 1:9.) But our interest in this we only know as God saves us manifestly by bringing that salvation into our heart. The great difficulty is to realise what God has already done for us. To do this is the grand province of faith: to believe and realise what has been done; not so much what remains to be done, but what has been done already. Does not the apostle declare that "God hath blessed us," already blessed us, "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" (Eph. 1:3.) Faith then has to receive these blessings which are stored up in Christ Jesus in heavenly places, where he sits at the right hand of God. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." (Col. 1:19.) Out of this fulness, then, we receive by faith (John 1:16); and so far as we do this, the life which we live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God. (Gal. 2:20.) Now "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

(Eph. 1:7.) Thus all is done, already done; and salvation is a perfect and accomplished act to which nothing can be added, as from it nothing can be taken away. He has saved you already who believe. Faith's work, then, the grand exploit which faith has to perform, is to believe what is already done, and to believe it was done for me; when he shed his precious blood, he shed his precious blood for me; when he said "It is finished," it was finished for me; and when he rose from the dead, triumphed over death and hell, he rose triumphant for me. This is the work of faith with power—realise that what has been done has been done for me. This, therefore, brings matters to a close issue, takes salvation out of the region of peradventures, perhapses, and uncertainties, and makes it a firm, irreversible reality, which faith fixes as her own.

But you say, "This is what I want to realise." If you have never realised it and don't want to realise it, I should like to know what you think about your religion; I should like to know what sort of evidences you have of divine life, or what marks of grace you bear. I am very sure of this, if you have not realised it, and are not longing to realise it, you bear very few marks of having a work of grace upon your heart. But have you—for I want to bring your religion into a small but true compass—have you ever realised anything of the grace of God in your own soul? Have you ever realised that God was in your midst? Was Christ ever revealed to your soul by the power of God, and were you ever blessed with the presence of God? Then all the rest follows. Make that point sure; get your feet upon that rock; all the rest is as certain as that to-morrow's sun will rise. For "he will save." He has saved you already; all that remains to be done is to bring that salvation into your soul. To do this is the special work of the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the heart. Salvation is like a river, ever flowing in streams of crystal purity, such as John saw when he was shown a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What then is wanted? A sip and a taste of that stream, a bringing of the fulness of it into your heart. You never can be saved more than you are saved already. You may

have, and I hope will have, greater openings up, sweeter enjoyments, more blessed discoveries, till your peace flows like a river. But you never can be saved more than you are saved already by the finished work of the Son of God. What you want is to realise it, enjoy it, feast upon it, and live and die under the sweet testimonies of your interest in it. But as to any other salvation than that which is already accomplished there is none. This was Peter's testimony when he spake, "filled with the Holy Ghost:" "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) But this salvation is a past act: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18.) Observe the expression, "unto us which are saved," that is, already saved. Bear this then firmly in mind, that we are already saved in time if we are to be saved in eternity; and stand before God without spot or wrinkle now as much as we shall stand at the last day faultless before the presence of his glory.

iv. But the Lord adds another word, for he is very kind, very gracious, as if he would still every doubt and fear. *"He will rejoice over thee with joy."*

God rejoices as much in saving your soul as you can rejoice in your soul being saved. Say I "as much?" His joy is infinite and yours is finite, his the joy of God and yours but the joy of man. Do you believe that God rejoices to save, delights in saving? Why else should he have given his dear Son? Do the angels rejoice over repenting sinners? Is there no joy then in the bosom of God to save a sinner too? How this takes us up, as it were, into the very realms of bliss, and reveals to us the wondrous character of God in his Trinity of persons and Unity of essence, that there is a rejoicing in the salvation of the Church, so that God himself, so to speak, is filled with eternal joy in the salvation of his people. When his dear Son offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, and thus put away the transgressions and iniquities of the Church by his own blood-shedding and death, overcame death and hell, and washed us in his blood from all our filth and guilt and shame,

God, so to speak, rejoiced with infinite joy in the completion of the work of his dear Son. It was the fulfilment of his eternal purposes of wisdom and grace. It was the manifestation of his glory to men and angels. It was the triumph of good over evil, of holiness over sin, of mercy over judgment, of love over enmity, of wisdom over craft, of the counsels of God over the devices of man, and, above all, of the Son of God in his weakness over Satan in his might. It was peopling heaven with an innumerable multitude of saints by whom eternal anthems of praise should be sung to God and the Lamb. Thus we may see how the God of heaven even now rejoices with holy joy over every one whom he brings to the enjoyment of a salvation so free, so great, so glorious.

v. But we have not even yet done with what the Holy Ghost reveals to us, if I may use such an expression, of the very heart of God: *"He will rest in his love."*

"God is love." When, then, he rests in his love, he rests in himself. The words imply also a holy, settled determination of God. To punish is, as it were, a going out of himself. It is, therefore, called "a strange act:" "For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." (Isa. 28:21.) Though infinitely just, and though his justice demands the punishment of transgressors, for "he will by no means clear the guilty," yet it is not his delight: His delight is in revealing his love, in manifesting mercy, as the prophet beautifully declares: "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." (Micah 7:18.) When the Lord showed Moses his glory, he passed by before him and proclaimed, as if that heaven and earth might hear, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6, 7.) Thus, there is in God a solemn approbation of, a blessed resting in, the perfection of his love. It is beautifully unfolded by Moses under the parable of an eagle and her young: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over



her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings." (Deut. 32:11.) The eagle is represented as "fluttering over her young," with a kind of warm, tremulous motion; brooding over them (as the word means), and as if delighting in the nearness of her eaglets to her breast, in the warmth she communicates, and the protection that she gives. May she not be said to rest in her love when she has all her callow brood safely folded under her outspread pinions? So God is said to "rest in his love." And will he not eminently do so when all his saints are gathered home into their heavenly mansions, and all are one, even as God and his dear Son are one? (John 17:22.) And may I not add, if God thus rest in his love, he cannot, he will not, so to speak, have any rest till he brings each and all into his own rest—that rest which he promised of old? "If they shall enter into *my* rest." How, too, he bids his servant put him in mind of this: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (Isaiah 62:6, 7.) O that we might be enabled to give him no rest till he bring us into that rest which remaineth to the people of God, and into which we enter by a living faith in his dear Son.

vi. One more word before I conclude, on which I must be brief: "*He will joy over thee with singing.*"

Singing in the word of God, is always put forth as the emblem and expression of joy and exultation. How, again and again, in the Psalms we read, "Sing ye to the Lord a new song." Now this expression of thankful joy in the mouths of men is put by a strong figure into the mouth of God. It is as if the Holy Spirit would represent the joy of God in the salvation of his people to be so great that he gives it forth in the very voice of song. Of course this is a figure, but it is meant to show us the exceeding joy of God, that he rejoices over Zion with a joy so holy, so full, so intense, that it gives itself forth in such an utterance.

The thought itself is sufficient to overwhelm us with wonder and

astonishment. God, in his infinite mercy, grant that we may taste a little of that wondrous love here, so as to be eternally satisfied with its fulness hereafter, when we shall see him as he is, and know even as we are known.

## **THE MIGHTY PUT DOWN, AND THE LOWLY EXALTED**

Preached on Friday Afternoon, Dec. 25, 1840, at the Opening of Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." Luke 1:52, 53

It is a question often agitated, whether it be right to set up a certain fixed standard in religion. There are those who say that there can be no uniform standard of experience set up; and there are others who contend that there must be such an undeviating standard, and that without it all is confusion and perplexity. As to myself, I cannot for a moment doubt that there must be a standard set up, for without it we can have no guide to discern between the precious and the vile, and no rule of measurement amongst the members of the living family themselves. Without a standard, the living and the dead, as well as the babes, young men, and fathers, are all jumbled together in one mingled mass of confusion. Whether, then, there is to be a standard or not, is, to my mind, a question very easily disposed of. If a man denies there is a standard, I put to him these questions:—Can a man be saved without faith? To which if he answer, "No;" then I say, "Is not then faith a standard?" Or can he be saved without repentance? Then repentance must be a standard. Or is there any internal distinction between the living and the dead? Then such internal distinction must be a standard. So that, unless we deny the power of vital godliness altogether, we must commence at the very threshold with a standard. The real difficulty, to my mind, is, "What shall this standard be? how high, or how low?" I think we move on safe ground when we say that it should be so high as to be beyond the reach of every hypocrite and self-deceiver, and so low as to take in all the quickened family of God. Now, if we look at the Word of God, I think we shall find there set up a standard of this nature. We see there a standard embracing two opposite extremes, a standard for depth, and a standard for

height; and either extreme too deep, or too high for any, save the living in Jerusalem. This standard dips down into poverty, helplessness, beggary, bankruptcy, and thorough insolvency. Therefore we cannot do with any standard of experience that does not descend into the felt poverty, guilt, filth, nakedness, helplessness, condemnation, and self-abhorrence that lie at the bottom of a spiritually instructed heart. A standard that shall not measure the Spirit's teachings in the conscience must be radically defective. Again, if we are to have a standard that shall embrace things essential to salvation, it must be high enough to reach manifestations of mercy and love, testimonies of God to the soul, visitations of his presence, and the enjoyment of his kingdom set up in the heart. Both these extremes are equally out of the reach of all but the living family. But now we come to another question. Is there any fixed way in which the soul is to be brought down to the depth, or up to the height of this standard? Or is there any prescribed **time** for these truths to be learnt in? My firm persuasion is, that there is no such prescribed way, and no such fixed time. The question with me is not so much what has been the road, as what is the spot where the traveller has arrived. There were no roads tracked out in the wilderness, and yet the Lord "led forth the children of Israel by a right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." It is not so much whether a man has been three months, three years, or thirty years, learning that he is a poor needy insolvent, helpless, guilty, and filthy wretch, as whether he has really and effectually learnt it by God's teaching in his soul. Nor whether he has been three weeks, three years, or thirty years, learning the mercy and love of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but whether he has been taught it by Divine manifestations. The Philippian jailor seems to have learnt more in three minutes, both of judgment and mercy, than some of us have learnt in three or thirteen years. "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The one Infinite Eternal NOW takes no note of time.

The chief standard set up in the Word of God is not a standard of way or time, but a **standard of character**. To explain my meaning more fully. I observe certain characters addressed in the

Word of God as objects of mercy, and certain characters spoken of as objects of wrath. For instance, the poor and needy, the outcast, the broken-hearted, the captive, the mourner, the weary and heavy laden, the hungering and thirsting, the lost and undone, sinners without help, hope, wisdom, or strength—to such characters I see in the Word of God promises, invitations, and encouragements, addressed. Again, the proud and lofty, the stout hearted, the mirthful, those that are at ease in Zion, that put far away the evil day, that are settled on their lees, "that anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph"—against these, and the like characters, I see judgments denounced. With characters, then, not with persons, I have to deal, and therefore, if I follow the Word of God, my standard this afternoon must be a standard of character.

Thus in the text we find two opposite and distinct characters spoken of.

**First**, those whom God calls "**mighty**," and whom he is said "to put down from their seats;" and, **secondly**, those "**of low degree**," whom he is said "to exalt." We meet with the same two distinct characters in the second verse of the text, where we read of "the **hungry**, whom he feedeth with good things," and "the **rich**, whom he sends empty away."

"The mighty," then, and "the rich," are the same characters, viewed in different points; and "the lowly" and "the hungry" are the same characters, viewed also in different bearings; and it will be my business, with God's help and blessing, to unfold these two distinct and opposite characters, and show the separate end of each.

1. We will begin, then, with "the **mighty**," whom the Lord puts down from their seat.

"The mighty," here, may be looked at in two different points of view. If we look at it with respect to the experience of her that used the words, the Virgin Mother of the Lord Jesus, she seems to have had a special eye to the great and noble matrons of

Israel, whom the Lord had put down from their seats of pride and dignity, by passing them all by, and conferring upon her, a despised maiden, the glory of bringing forth the promised Redeemer. Thus we may apply the expression to all those mighty professors of religion, who deem themselves worthy of God's favour, and pride themselves upon possessing something in self which may conciliate the Divine approbation.

But there is another sense in which the word "mighty" may be considered, and that is as pointing out a certain unhumiliated mightiness in the hearts of God's people.

**All** that are mighty are to be put down from their seat; for "the day of the Lord of Hosts is to be upon **every one** that is proud and lofty, and upon **every one** that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." **Isa 2:12** "The loftiness of man **carnal and spiritual** shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men **elect and reprobate** shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." With this striking difference, that the one are put down in wrath and eternally, and the other in mercy and experimentally. The same observation applies to the characters called in the second verse of the text, "rich." There are those who are "rich" in self-righteousness and vain-confidence, whom the Lord has never beggared in the slightest degree; and there are those amongst God's quickened people who have never been thoroughly broken down into the depths of soul poverty. Both are sent empty away; the former, because the Lord never bestows upon them one grain of pure gold; and the latter, because whilst in this Laodicean state, the Lord never drops into their heart one smile to make them rich indeed.

Thus, in opening up the characters of "the mighty," and of "the rich," I shall endeavour to show, **first**, who they are strictly and wholly so, whom God puts down and sends empty away in judgment; and **secondly**, those who are partially and delusively so, whom the Lord puts down and sends empty away in mercy. This will be drawing a narrower line, and coming to closer quarters, than if we considered the mighty and rich reprobate

only, and did not trace out the internal dealings of God, as well as the external.

Let us first cast a glance, then, at the mighty, as pointing out a large class of nominal professors. As the Virgin Mary was blessed with a spiritual blessing in being the mother of the promised Messiah, she, doubtless, viewed the mighty as such not in a worldly, but in a religious light. The mighty, then, are not necessarily kings and princes, but the strong, wise, religious, and confident in self, the unstripped and unhumbled, the unbeggared and unemptied. These having never felt the powerful hand of God in their heart, are strong in righteous self, in religious self, in professing self, in undiscovered, unmasked self. Their eyes stand out with fatness, their heart is as hard as a piece of the nether millstone, and their tongue walketh through the whole earth. They have never had their heart brought down with labour, never abhorred themselves in dust and ashes, never tasted the wormwood and gall, never groaned under weakness, helplessness, guilt, and bondage. Sin and temptation, doubts and fears, and the plague of an evil heart have never sapped their strength, nor brought them down into the dust of death. Therefore waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

But these mighty ones are said to have "**a seat.**" "He hath put down the mighty from their seats." The word "seat" seems to carry with it various meanings. There is, **first**, an idea of **security and ease**. A sitting posture implies quiet and rest, an absence of labour and toil, a state of indolence and repose. Thus, these mighty ones are what some people call "established Christians." That is, not established in a sense of their own misery and God's mercy, of their own helplessness and Christ's strength, of their own folly and the blessed Spirit's wisdom; but settled down in a dry doctrinal establishment. They are not sitting at Christ's feet; no, nor sitting with the princes of his people, as being lifted up out of the dunghill, but seated in an easy chair of carnal security. Their vile heart does not plague them, there being in them no opposition between flesh and spirit; the devil does not harass them, because he holds them fast in delusion;

the world does not hate them, because they are one with it; and God does not chastise them, because he reserves his rod for his children.

Again, there is the **seat of judgment**. To sit is the posture of the judge, to stand that of the criminal. Thus these mighty ones enthrone themselves on the judgment seat, and there pass their sentence of condemnation on all who differ from them, but especially on those of God's living family, who feel themselves criminals at his bar. They have never stood at the felon's bar themselves. Their court of judgment never arraigned self. All God's people have "a Spirit of judgment and a Spirit of burning," which passes sentence first on self. For judgment begins first at the house of God; the sword is first undrawn in the sanctuary **Eze 9:6**; and "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." But these high and mighty judges never began, where God begins, **at self**. Therefore, having no internal sentence of death and condemnation to engross all their thoughts, they have abundant leisure to look at others; having no lawsuit at home to make them cry, "Let my sentence come forth from thy presence," they can quietly sit to pass judgment on their neighbours. But whom does the judge pass sentence upon? Not upon the nobles of the land, because they are privileged by birth to sit on the same bench; not on the bystanders and spectators, who are looking uninterestedly on; but on the trembling criminal. Thus these mighty ones pass no sentence on those that are at ease in Zion, or on the idle lookers-on, but on the poor children of God who stand as criminals. They pass sentence on their experience as wild and visionary, on their trials as of their own making, on their temptations as part lunacy and part delusion, and on their persons as troublers in Israel, perverters of the truth, and possessed with a bitter and bad spirit.

And there is also another seat, and that is **the seat of the scorner**. A man soon passes from the seat of judgment to the seat of scorn and contempt. Sentence is passed first, and execution follows. To condemn a man first, and scorn him



afterwards, are steps not widely separated. Thus the Jews first condemned Jesus, and then mocked him.

But it is said in the text that the Lord "**putteth down** the mighty from their seats." How does he perform this act of judgment on his enemies? Why, in various ways. Sometimes he enlightens the eyes of God's people to see through them, and clearly discern all their emptiness and hypocrisy. When a soul has been well plagued with internal temptations, and been much and long exercised and harassed with, a body of sin and death, it is often led into the sanctuary of the Lord's presence, and seeing light in his light, reads the end of all such characters. Thus Asaph **Ps 73:17**, after being long plagued with those "who were not in trouble as other men," learnt their real condition and awful end. And by their inward teaching God put down before the eyes of his mind these mighty ones from their seat of security, judgment, and scorn. Their first seat, then, he envied not, their second seat dreaded not, and their third seat he heeded not. He saw them fall whilst they were yet in slippery places.

The children of God, who have passed through temptations and trials, carry scales and weights in their hands. In these balances of the sanctuary they weigh up others as well as themselves, and they soon find these strong, self-confident professors, false weight. Having had their own religion well weighed up, they look to **quality** more than to **quantity**; and looking to find that in others which they want to find in themselves, they readily perceive a total deficiency. Thus the Lord experimentally puts down these mighty ones from their seat in the conscience and judgment of his people. He removes the film from their eyes, and gives them to see that a religion which does not stand in the power of God is no religion at all; that where there is faith, there will be the trials and exercises of faith; that those who have no changes fear not God; that where there is no humility, there is no spiritual exaltation; that those who have no fear are devoid of the beginning of wisdom; and that those who have no chastisements are bastards, and not sons.

Again, sometimes by solemn judgments, the Lord puts down these mighty from "their seats." Some he lets fall into sin, and some into despair. Some go into the world, and others fall into error. Some renounce their profession, and others walk so carelessly, that all men see their shame. Some become eaten up with covetousness, others with the pride of life, and others with their fleshly lusts. Thus concerning faith they make shipwreck, and tumble headlong from their seat into the jaws of eternal despair. And in this way the Lord makes manifest to all men the end of a religion which stands in presumption, and has not himself for its author and finisher.

But, as I hinted above, there is another and a very different class, who may in a certain sense be said to be "the mighty," whom the Lord puts down from their seat. And this includes those of God's people who are for a time internally infected with a similar disease. "Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled?" Thus some of God's own living family prove, by painful experience, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." They are, perhaps, connected in a church with those that are at ease in Zion. The Lord for a time leaves them to themselves that they may be filled with their own ways. He suspends the use of the rod. The world smiles; prosperity in worldly circumstances attends them; health is strong, and family affliction at a distance; trials and temptations in a measure cease, and all is calm without and within. Now is the time for them to drink into the spirit of delusion, and mistake this false peace for the assurance of faith. Thus "they cover themselves with a covering not of God's spirit, and add sin to sin"—the sin of presumption to the sin of hypocrisy. Now, then, they seem established in faith. And why? Because the storm is lulled, and they have a temporary ease. They have slunk out of the battle, and call that peace, which is really desertion. Tired with storms, they creep into a little harbour, and think that the end of the voyage. And the Lord having a secret purpose in view, winks for a while, and disturbs not their ease. Now, no sooner has a living soul drunk down this intoxicating draught, than he becomes one of the mighty, and gets into a seat—first the seat of carnal ease and security, then

the seat of secretly judging and condemning the tried and exercised family of God, and then the seat of secretly scorning all experience which does not centre in the unwavering assurance of faith. But the Lord has a rod reserved for this fool's back, and knows how to put down this mighty one from his seat. Thus, he brings some trouble into his soul, or breaks down the hedge, and suffers Satan to shoot his arrows at him, or causes fearfulness and trembling to take hold of him, or sets his secret sins in array before him, or afflicts his body, or takes away his property, or works a secret condemnation in his conscience. "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down." Under these sore and painful exercises, this mighty one tumbles down from his seat; first, from his seat of security. As Job says, "God thrusteth him down, not man," and he thrusts him down effectually. All his fake faith, hope, and confidence, vanish as a dream, and he falls into deep soul trouble. The same hand thrusts him down from the seat of judgment. He has now plenty of work to do at home. Like Ephraim, he is now "broken in judgment." **Ho 11** He has so much sin discovered in his own heart, that he cannot pick up stones to throw at others; and is so confused and baffled in judging what is his own religion, that he shrinks from passing judgment on his fellow-sinners. He has now some solemn transactions to carry on with him, "by whom actions are weighed;" and having close business between God and conscience, he leaps off the judgment seat, and takes his station as a trembling criminal at the bar. He had long dropped down from the seat of the scornful—a place which he will never occupy again.

The Lord's subsequent dealings with him, we shall see in that part of the text which speaks of his "exalting them of low degree," which I therefore pass over for the present, and proceed to his work of sending the rich empty away.

2. But who are these "rich?" Why, I believe, as we have seen in the case of the mighty, that two distinct characters are set forth, the mighty dead and the mighty living, so in the expression "rich," we have the rich amongst the reprobate, and the rich amongst the elect shadowed forth. Looking, then, at the rich in

this light, we may say they are not such as are rich temporally. The Lord himself, indeed, said that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," though he added, that "though this was impossible with man, with God all things were possible." When the text, then, speaks of "the rich whom God sends empty away," it means those who are rich religiously, rich in self-confidence, rich in self-righteousness, in a good opinion of their own religion, and resting upon these things to save them. Like the rich fool in the Gospel, they say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry." Poverty has never come upon them like an armed man. Their houses are safe from fear; want and beggary have never entered into their souls, nor eaten and drunk up all their stores. But whence come they to be so rich? Because they have never had a glimpse of what real riches are. They are like a lunatic who has collected shells and stones, and thinks them money. So these have no inward consciousness of what Divine riches are, and know not that all is poverty and want which is not communicated and breathed into the soul by the Holy Ghost. If notions, opinions, doctrines, texts of Scripture, false confidence, consistency of life, and church membership can make a man rich, they are rich sufficiently. But when there is no gold but that bought in the fire, and no religion, not an atom or a grain, but what God himself communicates, all their riches are but heaps of dirt.

Now, these the Lord in judgment "sends empty away." That is, he never feeds their soul with the bread of life. They do not go empty away with respect to that which they themselves call riches. They may have a clearer insight into gospel mysteries, a more accurate understanding of a text, a judgment better informed, a conscience somewhat more pacified, a vain confidence more strengthened, a self-righteousness more established. The Lord himself "chooses their delusions," and "feeds them with judgment." But they are sent empty away, with respect to power and Divine teaching. No filial fear, no humbling sense of God's love, no taste or sip of his mercy, no spiritual rebuke nor reproof, no unction, dew, or savour, no humility,

tenderness, or brokenness, no contrition or godly sorrow, no meekness nor self-loathing, no breaking up or melting down, no ardent cries nor burning desires were ever let down from above into the heart of a reprobate. On these rich self-sufficient professors, the God of all grace never deigned to smile, nor did he ever let fall one drop of his love into their soul. He never did and never will sanction and crown with his presence a religion that stands in the flesh. He never indulged such with soul communion and the secret of his manifested presence; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and to them **and to them only** will he show his covenant." His presence never went up with his enemies, nor did his favour as a cloud of the latter rain ever drop into their hearts.

But there are those who are "rich" in another sense, as I before hinted, that is, those of God's awakened family who have never been reduced to soul beggary. That the children of God may fall into this snare is clear from the Laodicean Church, who said that she was "rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, and knew not that she was wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." **Re 3:17** This was a Church of the living God, though sunk into this self-deceiving condition. Solomon speaks of "a making haste to be rich," and says of all such that they "shall not be innocent." He also says, "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." **Pr 28:20,22** Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and thus, unless powerfully restrained, we soon rush into error. Many of God's quickened family get impatient of the yoke, and grow wearied of ploughing always in the same toilsome furrow. They then begin to run after dry doctrinal preachers, who shoot their arrows at all doubts and fears, and set up a standard of unwavering assurance. As these men are abundantly furnished with texts, they soon preach them into what they call liberty, but which is really presumption. Thus they become rich and increased with goods.

But the Lord has his own mode of dealing with such. Having godly fear at the bottom, a dread of self-deceit, and a living desire after

honesty and sincerity, they are not really easy in their consciences. The hardened professor, the old dead Calvinist, has no spiritual life at the bottom of his religion. There is therefore no secret lever turning him up from the foundation. But the living child, though he may be too rash in building hay, straw, and stubble, has the foundation right, though the superstructure is wrong. And as grace and nature, spirit and flesh, never really united, there was always a secret rent between the two. Now, the Lord sends these rich children of his empty away. Their hearts really desire something beyond texts and doctrines. There is a secret sigh after power and feeling, an inward longing after manifested favour; but they are so covered up with false riches, that the Lord sends them empty away. Thus he never gives them a smile whilst in this state, nor a look of love, nor a token for good, nor a visitation of his presence, but sends them empty away of such favours. They have got, perhaps, into a cavilling, criticising, censorious mood, discontented with self, and with everybody else, and the Lord sends them empty away from the chapel, from his mercy-seat, from the table. Their only spiritual food from him consists in rebukes, reproofs, and frowns, producing a guilty conscience; but as to the rich savoury meat of the Gospel, of that they are sent empty away.

3. But we will proceed to the other characters, which are not only distinct, but diametrically opposite. The poor, and those of low degree, not merely differ from the mighty and the rich, but are poles asunder from them. These represent those of God's people, in whose hearts he has wrought a sense of poverty, beggary, and utter insolvency; and whom, having thus brought down, he proceeds to lift up and bless.

The first character that we will take notice of is, he who is called in the text "of low degree." "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." The translation here seems rather to have departed from the original; and I prefer the old rendering preserved in the Common Prayer-book, "the humble and meek." For the word here has a reference not only to degree and station of life, but to spiritual qualities. I would,

therefore, rather call them "lowly," than of low degree,— "humble," as made spiritually so by God himself. These lowly souls, then, whom God exalts, are such as he himself has first brought down. For "the Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up." This humility, then, is not feigned, but real humility; not tongue humility, whilst all the time the heart is as proud as Satan; not a humility of dress, or of countenance, or of manner and appearance, or of religious regimentals, still less of hypocrisy, can't, and whine; but a humility of soul, wrought there by the hand of God himself. If a man is humble, he must have had something to humble him, or else it is the worst covering of hypocrisy. Humility is not to be cultivated; no, nor plucked out of the Scriptures, as a man plucks a flower of the garden, but is to be beat, driven, and forced into a man. He that is really humble has had a true right of himself, and carries about with him a deep and abiding sense of his vileness and filthiness. The base pride, presumption, and hypocrisy, of his fallen nature has been turned up by the share of God's plough in his conscience. He therefore loathes himself in his own sight as a monster of iniquity, and feels that he has sin enough in his heart to damn a thousand worlds. He sees and feels himself one of the most abominable, carnal, sensual, earthly, and vile wretches that can crawl on God's earth. He feels that he contains in himself the seeds and buddings of those crimes that have brought hundreds to the gallows. And these feelings he carries about with him, not as a theory floating in his brain, nor as a doctrine gathered from the Scriptures, but as a solemn reality, lodged and planted by God himself in his soul, a conviction fastened and screwed into him by an Almighty hand. This is the way that a man learns humility, not as a cultivated grace or religious duty, but as a lesson spiritually taught him. Now, he sees what a base, helpless, needy, naked wretch he is. Such were David's feelings when he exclaimed, "From the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed." **Ps 61:2** As though he were the farthest distance possible from God—the whole width of the earth asunder from him. And what drove him thus, as it were, to the end of creation? It was the solemn sense he had of God's holiness, and of his own filthiness before him. This infinite

disparity between a holy God and a guilty soul, drove him, as it were, to the very limits of creature existence, the remotest spot where man could dwell. The Lord never throws away his favours. He will teach us to prize them before he bestows them. He never clothes the already dressed, sends bread to a full cupboard, or enriches those who have money in the bank. Nor does he give the Spirit to those who can do with the letter, nor communicate power to those who are satisfied with the word. But those who are nothing, and have nothing, who cannot stir an inch, nor lift a finger to help themselves—to these he freely communicates out of Jesus' fulness. "He exalts them of low degree."

But how does he exalt them? In self? Oh, no! not in self. He has dethroned that idol; he will not set it up again, as the image of jealousy in the holy place. But he exalts them out of self into Christ. He sets before their eyes Jesus and his great salvation, holds up in their heart his suitability, grace, glory, atoning blood, dying love, and justifying righteousness. He shows them that he is mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him. The Holy Spirit kindles faith in the soul to receive the testimony that he has given of Jesus in the Word, and thus exalts Christ in the affections, as all its salvation, and all its desire. In Jesus they see all that they want for time and eternity; and receiving him into their souls as their only hope, cling and cleave to him as their all in all. Instead of exalting this debases self. The vile monster self is never so low as when the soul is brought in faith and feeling to sit at Jesus' feet. Thus the Lord exalts the lowly, and lifts them up into a knowledge of Christ, into an experimental acquaintance with the treasures of his atoning blood and justifying righteousness. They are thus made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places, and they love him as the only salvation for their needy guilty souls.

4. But we find the living family of God set forth also under the character of **the hungry**, whom he feedeth with good things. Let us see what they are hungering after. Is it pleasure, honour, promotion, respectability? Oh, no; these toys and baubles cannot satisfy the spiritual hunger of a living soul. They cannot hunger



after that on which they cannot feed. They hunger, then, after righteousness, as the Lord said—"Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness." They hunger after God himself in his blessed manifestations—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." **Ps 42:1** They hunger after the bread of life which came down from heaven, that a man should eat thereof and not die. They hunger after Christ and his manifestations of himself. Christ, in the letter of the word, cannot satisfy their keen appetite. They must feed upon him internally, or their famine still continues. Hunger implies desire accompanied with pain, an appetite after food which must be gratified or the body perishes, and this is, appetite after suitable food. To these hungry famishing souls, to have Christ in the letter is like a starving beggar standing outside a shop where there are plenty of provisions, and not to have a farthing to buy them with. What is Christ in the letter? Will a sight of Christ in the Word of God remove the burden of guilt, bring peace into the soul, purge the conscience, subdue the power of sin? Will the mere doctrine of Christ draw up the affections to him, cast out the world, dethrone self, or purify the heart? Alas! we say, by painful experience, not one jot, not one jot. But the presence of Christ in the soul can at once do all these things. Thus a hungry famishing soul can only be pacified by Christ coming into his heart, as the hope of glory.

I spoke of a standard in the beginning of this discourse with two ends to it,—the one dipping down into the felt misery, ruin, and helplessness, that the awakened soul groans under; the other reaching up to the discoveries of mercy and love. Cannot you come in at one end, if you cannot reach the other? What are you hungering after? Can anything satisfy your soul but a revealed Christ, and are you not at times earnestly panting after the visitations of his blessed presence? Are you not longing after the dew drops of God's favour in your soul, to fill you with that peace which passeth understanding? What are all your sighs, cries, groans, tears, and midnight wrestlings, but after the coming down into your soul of a loving Jesus; and do you not cast aside all consolations but those which spring from him? Then you are

one of the hungry whom the Lord will feed with good things. A child of God cannot do with counterfeit food, and his appetite soon teaches him to see through all deceptions.

But what are some of "the good things" that the Lord feeds the hungry foul with? Whatever he feeds them with must be good, as coming from the source and fountain of all good.

**Pardon of sin** is one of these good and perfect gifts. Guilt makes the soul hunger after pardon, and fits the conscience for the reception of it. A filthy conscience and atoning blood sweetly suit one another, just as a starving body and a loaf of bread are well met. None of God's children can die until fed with this good thing, for "he pardons all those whom he reserves." But he does not say how much, or how long they shall hunger after it before they are fed.

**A drop of God's love** is another good thing that he feeds, sooner or later, all his hungry children with. But what a previous longing, panting desire, what a stretching forth of the hands, what a reaching forth of every breath of the soul after it! "Oh," says the soul, "were it only a drop! I want no more. One drop! one drop!" And what anxious listening after the voice that shall inwardly whisper it! what sinking down into the old spot of condemnation, doubt, and fear, when denied the eagerly sought favour!

**Communion with God** is another good thing that he feeds the hungry soul with. What is all prayer, falling down upon one's knees, and offering words to the Most High, where the heart is not engaged in the work? This will satisfy Pharisees and hypocrites. But living children are hungering after soul communion; to feel their whole heart and affections drawn upwards to God; to be enabled and privileged to drink at the fountain head; to feel able to walk with God and talk with God, as though they and he were alone in one solemn sacred spot, and there was no other believer on the face of the earth.

**Deliverance from temptation** is another good thing that the

Lord feeds his hungry people with. Oh, the power of temptation over a man! Oh, his weakness and helplessness against it! Oh, the struggles, groans, sighs, prayers, and tears to be delivered from it! Oh, the importunate, almost angry, petitions to be saved from its power and presence! None but tempted souls know these conflicts. When the Lord delivers the godly out of these temptations it is a good thing; for none but he can break the hurtful snare, and let the poor prisoner free.

**A good hope through grace that we belong to Jesus** is a good thing that the hungry soul is sometimes fed with. When the Lord gives the tempest-tost soul to feel that there is for it a peaceful haven and quiet dwelling place after all the storms of life, and drops down some foretaste of it, and enables the soul to cast anchor within the veil, until that harbour is entered, that is indeed a good thing.

Time will not suffer me to enumerate all the good things that the hungry are fed with, as they include all the spiritual blessings that God hath blessed the Church with in Christ.

But, my friends, in order to get at any or all of these good things a certain path must be travelled in. There is no climbing over or creeping under the strait gate and the narrow way. It is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen, contrary to flesh and blood, opposed to human reason, and mortifying to all the pride of man. None are in the path of life but those that are, more or less, lowly, teachable, sincere, simple, hungering and thirsting, tender hearted, and feeling. Oh, it is a good thing, when inwardly, in the depth of soul extremity, in poverty and nakedness, we can feel and find something stirring in our hearts, which has been breathed there out of the eternal fountain of life and love. To have something brought into our heart that wears a spiritual stamp, and carries God's own impress upon it.

But he that will get at these things must get at them in God's way. And, therefore, the soul that is anxious after these blessings, so great, so unspeakable, speaks thus—"My flesh

shrinks from the trials, but my spirit wants the blessings. Has God joined them together? let me not seek to put them asunder. Let me be made willing to walk in a painful path, not one strewn with flowers, but of the Lord's own choosing. Though my flesh may rebel, make me, O Lord, willing to be nothing. Let me only be favoured with thy smiles, and not be one of the rich whom thou sendest empty away."

## The Mighty Watcher, and His Twofold Work

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 11, 1847

"And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 31:28

True religion,—vital godliness, (the words with me are synonymous), has two sides to it. And by this mark it is distinguished from all pretension without actual possession.

If, for instance, we cast a glance at the profession of some, it is all upon the *bright side* of things. Constant, unwavering assurance, continually triumphing in Christ, complete victory over doubt, fear, sin, and Satan, is the staple of their religion. And they would fain have you believe, that they are actually and experimentally before God what they profess to be before men. But when we come with near and jealous eye to watch the fruits, internal and external, that spring from this splendid profession, how little do they correspond with the profession itself! Pride, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, levity, frivolity, a hard, contentious spirit, irreverence in divine things, bitter and contemptuous speeches against God's tried and tempted family, intermingling with politics, and, in many cases, love of strong drink, running heedlessly into debt, and general looseness of conduct—how often are these dark marks stamped upon this bright profession of 'always triumphing in Christ!'

But again. We may cast a glance at others who are always upon the *dark side*; who never seem to rise beyond a knowledge of the evils of their heart, and the power of temptation; who are continually falling into open sin, and seem to know nothing of faith in Christ, of hope in his mercy, of love to his name, nor any deliverance from time to time by the hand of God from besetting

lusts; nor again, anything of sighs, cries, groans, holy mourning, godly sorrow, or self-loathing for their vileness and baseness. The staple of their religion, as well as the warp and weft in the web of their conversation, is man's fallen condition by nature, and his helplessness and weakness; and yet this seems more expressed than felt, as sin never appears their grief and burden.

Thus of these two classes in the religious world, one is all upon the malady, the other all upon the remedy; both hold truth doctrinally, but each only a part of truth; and the work of the Spirit upon the heart seems to both alike unknown.

From these two extremes, true religion, vital godliness, is distinguished by having two sides, and these as intimately and closely connected as the mortice and the tenon. It is not all light, it is not all darkness; it is not all faith, it is not all unbelief; it is not all joy, it is not all sorrow; it is not all life and holiness, it is not all death and devilism. And I think, if God enable us to see the mind of the Spirit in the words before us, we shall discover something of these two sides in our text; and then it will be found not a dream of the brain, not a fiction of mine or of any other man's imagination, not a crafty substitution of mere natural feelings and nervous impressions for the work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart—in a word, not "a cunningly devised fable," but a spiritual reality, and one which God himself has stamped with his own divine testimony.

Two things we may observe, then, in the words before us. *First, the watching of God to pull down; and secondly, the watching of God to build up.* And these two things, corresponding to the two clauses of our text, I shall, as the Lord may give strength, wisdom, and utterance, endeavour to set before you this evening.

I.—"*And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict.*" Every expression here demands a separate examination. Gods word cannot be lightly passed over. Every syllable dictated by the Holy Ghost is pregnant with

instruction; and if we cannot dig deep into this mine of spiritual and experimental truth, the fault is not in the mine, but in the miner. The vein of spiritual ore is deep and inexhaustible. We indeed may not have wisdom or experience to penetrate beyond the surface; but let us not complain of the thinness of the vein when we should rather complain of our ignorance how to reach the treasure that coucheth beneath.

i. "And it shall come to pass, that like as I have *watched* over them." Is there not something very expressive in this word?—the Lord watching over his people to bring about a certain work before designed in his own eternal mind? To my mind, the word contains much worthy of our closest enquiry and deepest observation. Several things may be gathered from the expression.

1. *The all-seeing eye, and the all-accomplishing hand of God.* Does he leave anything here for the creature to perform? Is one iota of the work put into the hands of man? No; God claims it to Himself as his own inviolable prerogative to watch over his Zion for a peculiar purpose.

2. Mark, too, a *certain tenderness* connected with God's spiritual watching over his people to bring about in them the secret purposes of his good pleasure. The fond mother watches over the cradle of her child; so the Lord, challenging a comparison with the tenderest mother that ever breathed, says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Isa. 49:15.) Thus as the fond mother watches her sleeping child till it awakes, so does the Lord tenderly watch over his Zion till his sleeping purposes awake on her behalf.

3. But the word "watch" points also to a fixed time in God's own bosom when a certain predetermined work is to be brought forth. He is watching (if I may use the word with all reverence) for a time to expire which was before purposed in his own eternal mind—"the set time to favour Zion."

4. It also points out how *every circumstance is fore-arranged*—that no event comes by chance, or springs out of the dust; that they are not the fruit of human wisdom, or the product of human industry; but are so foreappointed in the eternal mind that it is as if God has "watched" for every circumstance to arise whereby he means to bring his purpose to pass.

5. The word also points out (for we have not yet exhausted all that is lodged in the expression) the *means, ways, and instruments* which God designs to make use of in order to execute his own purposes.

6. And, not to draw too much out of the word, it also points to this, that God will *never cease to watch* until his work is fully accomplished.

Carry, or endeavour to carry these things in your mind, while I attempt, in the Lord's help and strength, to open up what he is watching to do.

"And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord."

What a repetition of apparently almost synonymous expressions is here, all pointing to one work! But dare any say, a needless repetition? Dare any one charge God with that which he forbids in us, to think to be heard on account of much speaking? Has God forbidden us to speak to him with "vain repetitions;" and will he use vain repetitions when he speaks to us? We may not indeed be able to enter into the fulness of every word here; yet doubtless, these varied expressions have each their separate and distinct meaning. As God may enable, then, let us endeavour to bring something spiritual and experimental out of each. I feel my ignorance and inability. The Lord teach and enable me to open up his own blessed mind out of the text.



ii. The first thing the Lord "watches" to do, is "*to pluck up.*" What is the idea contained in that expression? Carry your mind to a field covered with noxious weeds, overspread with thorns, thistles, and briars—is not "plucking up" an operation needed there? Take your eyes into your own bosom; look at that field by nature! Does not a field covered with thorns, thistles, weeds, and briars, represent in some measure what your heart is by nature? It was once the garden of the Lord, a smiling Eden; but sin came in; and through the entrance of sin, these briars and thistles have sprung up. Must they not be plucked up? "Ye are God's husbandry." (1 Cor. 3:9.) "My Father is the husbandman." (John 15:1.) God here takes to himself the name, title, and prerogative of cultivating the soil, the barren soil, of the human heart. And his first operation is, to "pluck up" the weeds he finds there. Does not the Lord himself say, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up?" (Matt. 15:13.) And is not this true of the elect inwardly as well as of the ungodly outwardly?

One of the first weeds which the divine Husbandman plucks up is—our *own righteousness!* O that weed! how thickly it is spread over the surface of the soil! Sometimes, as we journey through the country, we see whole fields covered with weeds; some blazing with the scarlet poppy, others yellow with the blossoms of the charlock. Our eye tells us in a moment that the weeds, the noxious weeds must be plucked up before good corn can grow there. And our own righteousness!—is not our heart by nature overspread with it, as the field before alluded to blazes with the poppy, or is all yellow with charlock? It must, then, be plucked up. And will plucking up be very easy and pleasant work? When the husbandman sets to his hand to "pluck up" by the roots our own righteousness, must not pain attend the operation? Could the earth feel, and speak as well as feel, would she not groan and shriek as the plough tore open her bosom? And as the plough of God's holy law enters into the conscience of a guilty sinner to turn beneath the soil the weeds of nature, shall his bosom be like a nether millstone, and feel no inward pang? It cannot be, it

cannot be; pain must attend the operation.

And O how many things, did time suffice to enumerate them here, have to be "plucked up." What prejudices! what secret love to sin! what cleaving to the things of time and sense! what embracing in the arms of our carnal affection things that God hates! O how spread, how overspread our carnal mind is with everything hateful and horrible, noxious and loathsome in the eyes of infinite Purity!

But God, in the case of his Zion, "watches" over her to "pluck up." Time, circumstances, means—all are in God's hands. Time cannot be hastened; circumstances cannot be created; causes cannot be produced, except as God "watches" over his Zion to bring about the purposes of his heart. But as sure as God has foreordained to "pluck up" self by the roots—be it righteous self or unrighteous self, profane self or professing self—the time will come, circumstances will arise, and causes will appear, all in the hands of God, and do his work. It may be under a sermon; it may be by reading the experience of gracious men; it maybe in conversation with a godly person; it may be upon a bed of sickness; it may be upon a bed of death! All these things are in the hand of God; for he "watches" over his Zion to do a certain work; and as sure as you belong to his Zion, will he "watch" over you to "pluck up" your weeds and briars, if that operation has not yet taken place.

iii. *"And to break down."* What is the idea contained in this expression? View a city built in, as Jerusalem was, with towers and bulwarks, and almost impregnable. Shall that be broken down? It shall; and not one stone left upon the other shall mark the place where the temple stood. Is not this true spiritually? What towers, what bulwarks, what walls are in our heart!—like the cities of the Canaanites, "walls built up to heaven." What enmity against God's truth! what obstinacy of mind! what determination to have our own will and way! what perverseness! what self-esteem! what self-conceit! what deceitfulness! what delusion in all its shapes and forms!—walls, towers, bulwarks, these all built up against the entrance of God into the soul! And

can the King of Zion find entrance into our breast when every gate bristles with battlements against him, and the very walls of our heart are armed to resist him? But forth he must come, conquering and to conquer; for the ancient word to him is, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride on prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." (Psa. 45:5, 6.) Thus the Lord goes forth, and "watches" over Zion to break her down.

And what a mercy it is to be broken down! To have our prejudices against God's truth broken down; to have the carnal enmity of our mind against God in some measure broken down; to have the obstinacy, waywardness, and wilfulness of our heart in any degree broken down; to have unbelief, infidelity, and all the suggestions of our evil nature against God and godliness broken down! The conquerors of old did not enter the city through the gates; the walls were broken down for the triumphant chariot to enter in. So with King Jesus. The walls of prejudice, unbelief, carnal security, and enmity against God, like those of Jericho, must fall before the ark; the battlements of wilfulness, waywardness, and perverseness must all be broken down that Christ may come into the heart, and take possession of the soul.

iv. *"And to throw down."* What is this idea? Something lofty. To "break down," embraces the low as well as the high; it takes a general sweep against all that stands in the way of the Almighty: but to "throw down," points to those lofty buildings which are violently hurled down, as if by an earthquake. And is not this the case spiritually and experimentally in God's Zion? O what airy castles have we in time past built up, their very tops lost in the heavens! And have not some of these airy castles been thrown down? O youth, youth! what pleasing prospects danced before our entranced eye in youth! What future happiness in a long vista of coming years! What daydreams did buoyant youth and cheerful spirits picture forth!—days, alas! that never came. And it is our

mercy they never did come. To picture days of happiness, prosperity, and joy for ourselves, and not one thought of God in them!—does the Lord approve of these airy castles thus built up? No. How can he approve of them? Were they not, like the Babel of old, built up in defiance of God? Was not this the secret language which every one of these airy castle builders uttered? 'I can be happy without God; I can have pleasure without those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; I want not the Lord to make me happy; let me have what my carnal heart desires, it is enough.' Treason, treason against the Majesty of heaven! The Lord cannot, then, consistently with his own perfections and purposes, allow these castles to stand. Throw them down; level these proud pinnacles in the dust; hurl them into deserved ruin. But O how painful to have these airy castles dissolved like the clouds of a summer's evening! When the sun was dipping beneath the horizon, how they shone gilded with his expiring rays and beams, but when he sunk, they were turned into pitchy darkness! And O, how many clouds, springing from youth and cheerful spirits, and once gilded by the unclouded sun of health and strength, instead of proving substantial realities, have dissolved into thin air, or burst in storms over our heads! Throw them down.

And is there not in our hearts what I alluded to this morning—an idol worse than Juggernaut? Self! self! And must that idol stand where God in Christ deigns to dwell, and make it his temple? for "God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6:16.) Shall this Juggernaut self, then, stand in the place where God himself means to dwell? It cannot be. For "Christ hath no communion with Belial." It must be thrown down. Worldly self, righteous self, professing self, profane self, holy self—down they must go into the dust that the Lord alone may reign supreme.

v. *"And to destroy."* This word is of stronger import than any of the preceding. To "pluck up" weeds, to "break down" walls, to "throw down" towers, fall short of the expression "destroy." We may explain perhaps its import by the words of the Apostle—"a

removing of those things that are shaken;" (Heb. 12:27)—or by God's command with respect to the abominations of Canaan, "Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire." (Deut. 7:5.) Our hearts are by nature full of Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations, which must be destroyed. Lusts after evil things, adulterous images, idolatrous desires, strong hankerings after sin, besides evils which have the impudence to wear a religious garb, such as towering thoughts of our own ability; pleasing dreams of creature holiness; vain conceits of what we mean to do for God; swellings up of pride and presumption, trussed out and painted in all the tawdy colours of Satanic delusion—how can these abominations be allowed to remain rampant in the human heart? The altars and religious rites of Canaanites were to be destroyed as much as their idols; and thus we may say of that religion, very religious being—man, that his false worship and heathenish notions of God must be destroyed as well as his more flagrant, though not more dangerous, lusts and abominations. The sentence against both is, "Destroy them." They must not, they cannot stand consistently with the honour of Immanuel, who is to have the preeminence in all things, and who is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." And O what a mercy it is to have our fleshly and religious abominations alike destroyed; for I am sure that God and self never can rule in the same heart, that Christ and Belial can never reign in the same bosom, each claiming the supremacy.

vi. "*And to afflict.*" And is this what God is "watching" over you also to do? 'How cruel! how cruel!' at once whispers a voice in the secret bosom. Recall that thought; it is unworthy of a moment's lodgment in your breast. It may sometimes even escape our lips; but self-pity is at the root. Reflect for a moment in your mind upon what I endeavoured to bring forward to point out what the word "watching" means. Does it not imply the deepest tenderness, the most anxious care, the most sacred affection? Yes; it does. If, then, the Lord "watches" over Zion "to afflict," the afflictions that you now may be passing through are not by chance; your heavenly Father is "watching" over you, and bringing these afflictions upon you. Are you afflicted in body, in

circumstances, in family, in mind, or by any of the various troubles that each heart knows and suffers most bitterly from? O could we believe it is the gift of God! O could we believe that the hand of God is in every affliction, in every trial, in every exercise, in every dispensation, however dark, however mysterious! And not only so, but that he is "watching" over the soul with the utmost tenderness, and yet with the utmost wisdom. The affliction must not go beyond its work; it would then cease to be such an affliction as God is bringing about. He "watches" over you. He sees that the affliction which you are suffering under is the affliction, the very affliction that you need. No other would suit you *now*; it is exactly adapted to your case and circumstances. Any other affliction at this moment would not be profitable; but this affliction, whatever it be that you are now suffering under, is exactly suitable to your present case.

God, then, "watches" over you who are his Zion "to afflict." It shall not be too long; it shall not be too deep; it shall not be too heavy; it shall not be too overwhelming. Why? Because he who "holds the winds in his fist," "watches" over his Zion "to afflict." And can he afflict her too long? can he afflict her too much? can he afflict her (shall I use the word?) with an *unfeeling* heart? He cannot; for he loves her with an everlasting love. Love moves him "to afflict" her for her good and his own glory.

Now, how many of you have been thus passing under the hand of God? Take a review; cast a glance at the dealings of God with your soul. Let them not be unheeded, or cloaked in mystery. God give us eyes to see his dealings! And O, can you not see the truth of these words, that God has "watched" over every plucking up, every throwing down, every destroying, every affliction, for the abasement of your pride, of your self-esteem, of your self-righteousness, of your self-conceit? Can we not at times see how God has "watched" over every thing that he has thus brought upon us? But we may not now see it. No; unbelief may hold our eyes. When the disciples were journeying to Emmaus, they knew not they were walking side by side with their adorable Lord; yet their eyes being "holden" was no hindrance to Jesus being there!

When broken-hearted Mary Magdalene saw the gardener as she thought, she knew not the Person of Jesus till he spake to her: yet ignorance of who he was did not prevent him being Jesus, nor prevent his being before her. The horses and chariots of fire surrounded the mountain where Elisha stood; yet the servant could not see them till his eyes were opened. But did his eyes being opened place the chariots there? They were there all bright and glorious, when his eyes were sealed in darkness.

Is it not so spiritually and experimentally? The afflictions under which you are suffering have a voice in them; but you cannot hear it. You cannot see the hand of God in the exercises under which you are labouring. No; seeing eyes are the special gift of God. Still, though it is the gift of God by which we see his hand in every thing we pass through, our not seeing it does not put the hand of God away. If so, the infidel, who says, "there is no God," has annihilated Jehovah, if a word can do it. Our unbelieving, infidel heart indeed may say, 'Can good spring from these afflictions? Can a blessing to my soul come out of these trials? Does this come from God? Does that come from God?' Our unbelieving heart, I say, may mutter these things as much as the unbelieving lord, who said, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?" (2 Kings 7:19.) But he was punished for his unbelief. And we, though not trampled down into hell like him, as we justly deserve for it, yet may be chastened. Still, our unbelief does not alter the truth; God forbid. Shall the suggestions of Satan; or the infirmities, unbelief, infidelity, questionings, and suspicions of our heart alter the eternal truths of God! "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. 2:13.) He is the same, unchanging and unchangeable and he "watches" over his Zion for her spiritual benefit, whether it be to afflict or to comfort, to throw down or to build up.

II.—But we pass on to consider the other side of our subject. "*So will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord.*" May we not, must we not, carry with us still the same idea? Yes. What does "watching" here imply? That all is fore-appointed in

the mind of God; all designed to be brought about at a certain time, and in a certain way, by certain means to perform certain purposes, and to effect a certain work. In all these the eye, the heart, and the hand of God are intimately concerned.

1. "So will I watch over them *to build.*" But what comes first? Does not plucking up, breaking down, and throwing down precede building? It must in nature, much more in grace. What? if there is a hovel, a filthy hovel, standing upon the site designed for a palace, shall that hovel stand to be an eye-sore to the sovereign, or occupy the ground on which a noble edifice is to be erected? Common sense would answer, 'Sweep it off the face of the earth; let not one vestige remain. It must not, it cannot occupy the ground that the palace is to stand upon.' So, if my righteousness, my prejudices, my pride, my hypocrisy, my carnal nature in all its shapes and forms, is to stand up in all its native arrogance, can the lowly Jesus come and take up his abode in my bosom? No; these things must first be broken down; I must be a poor broken-hearted sinner. My pride, my self-righteousness, my self-conceit, my vain hopes and false confidence must all be broken down, laid low, and swept away; not a vestige must remain when the temple of mercy is to be built up in all its fair proportions. I do not mean to carry the figure fully out. I am well aware, (no man better, if I may speak with all humility,) of the rubbish, the legal, the carnal rubbish, that seems at times to choke up the heart. Still there must be "a breaking down" before there can be "a building up."

But what does God build up? *His own work in the soul.* Nothing more, nothing less. He does not rebuild the old ruined temple with stones taken out of nature's quarry; but he builds up his own temple, springing up in harmonious proportions, as the temple of old, under his constructive hands. He builds up true hopes instead of false hopes; faith instead of unbelief; divine love instead of creature affection; Christ's righteousness instead of our righteousness; true holiness instead of fleshly holiness. Thus he builds up the soul upon its most holy faith; builds up the temple of mercy in the heart. And this springs up instantaneously. When the Lord appears, the temple rises to receive him; the building



springs up in a moment to receive the heavenly Builder. So when the Lord of glory appears, the temple is prepared to receive him; and those words sound, or may sound (though not wholly applicable) in the depths within, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." (Psa. 24:7.)

2. But the Lord "watches" over his Zion, not merely "to build" but "*to plant.*" I endeavoured to show, that by the figure "plucking up," there seemed to be some allusion to the human heart as a field—the Lord's husbandry. Now, in that field, once overrun with thorns, thistles, and briars, he "watches to plant" his fear in the heart, his blessed graces in the soul. But let us enter into a few of these graces thus divinely implanted. *Humility*, for instance, never grew in nature's soil; it must, therefore, be planted in our souls by a divine hand. *Sincerity and godly simplicity* are not to be found among the charlock and the poppy of natural growth. They must be planted in our souls by the hand of the Lord himself. *Faith in Jesus* to the saving of the soul; *a good hope* through grace in his mercy; *a love* to his precious name; tender affections, holy desires, heavenly breathings, sweet sensations, divine enjoyments, manifestations of mercy, and discoveries of God's love to the soul—all these trees of paradise are to be found in this heavenly plantation.

These are some of the blessed fruits which this divine hand plants in the field (the garden, we may rather say) of the human heart; "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse." (Song 4:12.) "I am come into my garden," he says. (5:1.) "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." (4:16.) "My Beloved is gone down into his garden," is the language of the church. (6:12.) The Lord watches to plant. When he has plucked up our righteousness, he plants his own. When he has plucked up our pride, prejudices, ignorance, and carnality, he plants his own image—brokenness, tenderness, humility, and godly fear. When he has plucked up the thoughts of our heart that rise up against his divine Majesty, he plants those graces and fruits in the soul that spring up to his praise. And thus

he plants every grace of the Spirit, and causes each and all to bear fruit to the honour and glory of his great Name.

And he brings forth *outward fruits* too. Consistency of life, separation from the world, honesty before men, integrity of lip and integrity of hand, uprightness of conduct, honourable principles and honourable actions; "whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," the Lord causes to spring up in the garden that he himself plants and waters with his own hand. God give us these fruits; and where given, grant us a blessed increase of them!

But let us for a few moments recapitulate and run over the things spoken, that I may succeed, if the Lord enable, in leaving some definite and solid impression upon your hearts. What brought you here at this time? Was it merely to while away an idle hour upon a Sunday evening, or to listen to the breath of the preacher? God forbid his dear family should come here with such a motive! In their right mind, they hear for eternity; that something may be communicated to their souls which may not pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew, be dissipated by the world, "or prove like the hasty fruit before the summer; which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up." (Isa. 28:4.) And my desire is, that the Lord would cause some abiding fruit to spring out of what may fall from my lips; that it may not be spoken to amuse, entertain, interest, or please you; no, but to profit you; and that not for an hour, a day, a week, or a month; but that some lasting fruit may be sown in your soul to all eternity. And this is why, as the Lord enables me, I desire to bring forth *his* truth and *his* words, not *mine*, that he may seal his own truth with power upon our hearts, and rivet it with his own divine hand in our conscience. What I have been laying before you are solemn realities and eternal truths, whether we believe and feel them or not. God grant that we may increasingly believe and feel them! They are of the deepest importance; God lay them with greater weight and power upon our souls!

Bear with me, then, for a few moments; and let us endeavour to look into our hearts (it is *there* where God works—it is to our conscience that God speaks.) What has been the experience of your soul? Can you look back, and see how there has been this plucking up, breaking down, throwing down, destroying, and afflicting work in your soul? 'Yes,' says one, 'my life, my spiritual life has consisted of little else. But two things try me: one is, I do not see the hand of God plainly in these exercises; my mind is so obscured; my judgment so dark; I want faith to believe that the hand of God is in them. And the other thing that tries my mind is, it seems so much with me affliction and trial, breaking and throwing down, and so little building and planting.' Well; but has there been this work carried on in your conscience? Has there been this plucking up, breaking down, throwing down, destroying, and afflicting? If you cannot see God's hand, can you see the fruit? What is your case? A poor broken-hearted sinner at the footstool of mercy? a beggar, a bankrupt? a poor and needy, lost, and undone wretch? The Lord has done all this. If this be the genuine feeling of your soul before his heart-searching eye, he has "watched" over you in tenderness. You may not see it. The sleeping babe does not see the watchful eye of the tender mother; but the mother watches still, though the babe perceive it not. You may not have perceived, and may not now perceive, the hand of God in your affliction; but the hand and the eye of the Lord are there though you see them not. And be sure of this (the Lord assure us of it, we cannot be sure of anything of ourselves!) that as the Lord has "watched" over you in the dispensations of his providence and grace, in plucking up, breaking down, throwing down, destroying, and afflicting; so, also, the Lord will "watch" over you "to build" and "to plant."

The time will come which God has designed; circumstances will arise, causes shall work, and the Lord himself will effect his own purposes. The promise stands fast; the word is sure to be accomplished. As he has "watched" over you to do the one, so also will he "watch" over you to do the other. As he has "watched" over every circumstance, the very minutest circumstance, of your soul adversity; so will he "watch" to bring

about every, the minutest circumstance, of your soul prosperity.

## **MIRACLES NOT CEASED**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, August 3, 1845

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matthew 11:6

A question has been raised, whether in sending this message to the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist wished to satisfy his own mind, or the minds of his disciples. Some have thought that John the Baptist could never have entertained any suspicion in his mind whether Jesus was the Messiah. And thus to vindicate John's honour, they have supposed it was the unbelief of his disciples that John wishes to remove. I do not profess to have a decided opinion upon the matter; but I cannot see why John, considering the circumstances in which he was placed, might not have had suspicions working in his bosom. Was he not a man like ourselves? Did he not carry in his bosom the same unbelieving and infidel heart that we are possessed of? And considering his circumstances, that he was shut up in prison, that the Lord did not appear to release him, might not a suspicion of this nature have crossed his breast—'Am I the Forerunner of the Messiah, and will he not come to release me out of this dungeon?' I do not see that it impairs the character of John to allow he had these suspicions, these doubtful thoughts in his mind, knowing what unbelieving hearts we all possess.

But, whether it was to satisfy the mind of John, or whether it was to satisfy the minds of John's disciples, the answer of the Lord was, "Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." It appears from a parallel passage (Luke 7:21), that the Lord wrought several miracles before their eyes: "In that

same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." Thus, he could appeal to their own senses, and say, "Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." Does he doubt my mission? Does any suspicion cross his bosom whether I am the Son of God? Tell him what ye have seen, what ye have heard, that these things may support his wavering faith, that they may strengthen his faltering feet. Tell him the miracles which you have seen performed by my hands, "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them;" and then, as an intimation adapted to the wavering faith of John the Baptist, or of his disciples, he adds, "and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The miracles of our Lord were not merely testimonies of his mission from God, not merely manifest evidences of his almighty power, not merely temporal blessings to the objects of those miracles; but they had also a spiritual bearing; they were typical and figurative of spiritual blessings communicated from the same gracious hands. And in this way I shall this evening, with God's blessing, consider the words. I shall not speak of the miracles here spoken of as miracles wrought upon the body, but as miracles wrought upon the soul.

Miracles wrought on the body have, for the most part, ceased. The Lord of life and glory is now at the right hand of the Father in majesty and power, and has ceased, as once upon earth, to drive away sickness by a word or a touch: but he puts forth that power in men's souls that he once put forth in men's bodies. So that though miracles are changed as to their character, yet miracles have not ceased as to their existence. We behold indeed no natural miracles now; we see no blind Bartimeus restored to sight; we view no dead Lazarus come out of the tomb. But wherever a work of grace is begun and carried on in the soul, there are blind eyes opened, there are the lame made to walk, there are the deaf made to hear, there the leper is cleansed, the dead raised up, and to the poor the gospel is preached.

I shall therefore, with God's blessing, take up the words as they lie before me in this spiritual sense, endeavouring to trace out one by one **the character** first; and then, **the miracle wrought upon that character**.

I.—"**The blind receive their sight.**" This is by the putting forth of the power of God in their souls. For in what state and condition are we by nature? Are we not blind to our state as sinners before God? blind to the spirituality and condemning power of the law? blind to the majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity of God above? blind to the beauty and preciousness of Immanuel? blind to the personality and operations of God the Spirit? And is not this blindness a feature that universally prevails? Are we not, in a spiritual sense, born blind? Do we not grow up in that blindness? And can any natural power remove it? Can any light in the judgment, can any doctrines received in the mind, can any profession of religion, can anything that nature has done or can do, remove that blindness? It may be increased, and it is increased, when darkness is put for light, and light is put for darkness; but it cannot be removed by any power of man in himself, or for others. It is the special work, the grand prerogative of the only-begotten Son of God, to remove this blindness by communicating spiritual eyesight. And this is done in a moment. We may not indeed be able to trace out the very moment that quickening grace visited our souls, though we shall, for the most part, be acquainted with the period within certain limits. But it was done in a moment of time; there was an instant, though we may not be enabled to recollect it, when divine light was brought into our dark minds, and the blind received sight.

But how do the blind know that they have received sight? The way of the operation of the Spirit of God is hidden from us. This is the Lord's own testimony, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8) "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with

child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Eccl. 11:5). The way, therefore, of the Spirit's operation is to us unknown. But we begin to know that we see, by having objects presented to our mind, and by having an internal perception of those objects. Our natural eye sees everything but itself. A child when it begins, what is called, 'to take notice,' that is, to observe and understand objects, does not reason, perhaps lives and dies without ever reasoning, as to the process whereby it sees. But when objects are presented to the eye, there is a perception of those objects, and a feeling connected with them. So it is spiritually. A child of God cannot understand how. or why it is. but he knows that "whereas he was blind, now he sees:" that there is in his soul an inward perception: and that this inward perception is attended with certain sensations, to which sensations he was a stranger in times past.

1. For instance. He sees that there **is a God above, the holy, invisible, and eternal Jehovah, who looks into the secret chambers of his soul,** whose penetrating eye searches through every veil, and pierces into the depths of that heart that is hidden from all eyes but that of a heart-searching God. This is what a man never sees by nature; this is the special work and act of faith; for by faith we endure, "as seeing him who is invisible."

2. But again. Whenever the blind receive sight, they see **the purity and spirituality of God's character.** Before the blind receive sight, they think that God is such a one as themselves; they have no idea of, no internal acquaintance with, the infinite purity, holiness, and spirituality of Jehovah. They therefore never bow down before him; there is no trembling of heart at his great name, no bringing down of proud imaginations at his footstool, no inward shrinking into self before the loftiness of the Most High, no perception of his glory, no yielding up of the heart in subjection, no adoration nor admiration of his eternal Majesty. But wherever spiritual eye-sight is given, and the purity and holiness of Jehovah are made known to the heart, there will be, as we find all through the scripture, self-abasement. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee;



wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job. 42:5, 6) "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" (Isai. 6:5). The purity, holiness, and spirituality of God's character, produced in the saints of old this prostration of soul before him.

The Lord God Almighty reveals in the soul these perfections to drive it from a broken covenant: he makes known his purity, spirituality, and holiness to bring guilt upon the soul, drive it out of every lying refuge, and beat out of its grasp every hope but that which he himself implants. I cannot define—who can?—how much we shall know of God's purity, how much our hearts shall be broken within us by a sense of his majesty, what sensations of inward reverence, what feelings of guilt, fear and condemnation shall be produced by his holy law. But I am sure of this—if they do not beat us out of every false refuge, if they do not strip us of every natural hope, if they do not remove from under our souls every creature prop, they have not done their work yet. And why God displays his terrible majesty, why he sets our secret sins before our eyes, why he lays them with weight and power upon our conscience, and why he searches the very bottom of our hearts—why is all this preparation, but to bring us near the Son of his love, to draw us to the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, and make him dear and precious to our souls?

3. In due time, therefore, the blind receive sight to see the **Person, blood, righteousness, glory, and beauty of Immanuel.** "But we see Jesus." Did your eyes ever see him? Do look into conscience—did your eyes ever see Jesus? I do not mean your natural, your bodily eyes; but the eye of faith, the eye of the soul. I will tell you what you have felt, if you ever saw Jesus. Your heart was softened and melted, your affections drawn heavenward, your soul penetrated with thankfulness and praise, your conscience sprinkled with atoning blood, your mind lifted up above all earthly things to dwell and centre in the bosom of the blessed Immanuel. Do you think, then, you have seen Jesus by the eye of faith? Then you have seen the perfection of beauty,

the consummation of pure loveliness; you have seen the image of the invisible God; you have seen all the perfections and glorious character of the Godhead shining forth in him that was nailed to Calvary's tree. I am sure such a sight as that must melt the most obdurate heart, and draw tears from the most flinty eyes; such a sight by faith of the beauty and glory of the only-begotten Son of God must kindle the warmest, holiest stream of tender affection. It might not have lasted long. These feelings are often very transitory. The world, sin, temptation, and unbelief soon work: infidelity soon assails all: the things of time and sense soon draw aside: but whilst it lasted, such, in a greater or less degree, were the sensations produced. Now, if you have ever seen Jesus by the eye of faith, and ever had a tender affection going out toward him, you will see him in glory. But you will never see him in glory, if you have not seen him in grace; you will never see him eye to eye in the open vision of eternal bliss, unless you have seen him now upon earth by the faith of God's elect in your heart.

But we must not tarry over this portion; we must go on to consider the other parts of the text.

II.—"**The lame walk.**" By the word "lame" here we are to understand, not one who is generally understood by the expression, that is, one who has, in a measure, the use of his limbs; for if so, it would not be applicable. The lame often do walk, though feebly. The word "lame" rather means a **cripple**—one unable to move his limbs—unable, however feebly, to use any motion whatever of the body. Now, does not this set forth the state and condition of Adam's fallen progeny? and of the elect as springing from the loins of this sinful parent? Has not Adam's fall crippled every faculty of our soul? Has it not blinded our eyes? Has it not withered our arms? Has it not maimed our legs? Has it not dried up our hearts? Has it not affected our memory, our understanding, and our imagination? In a word, has it not so crippled every faculty of our souls, that they are altogether dead Godward?

Now, when the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, God's people are made sensible that they are in a crippled state. Not merely lame, for that might imply that they could shamble a little forward, that they could get hold of a crutch or a strong staff, and by that means manage to walk in the strait and narrow road; but that they are more than lame, that they have lost more than the use of one limb, that they are crippled, paralytic, bedridden, unable to lift up a leg or a finger. And this is what exercises and tries many of God's people. We know the fall in theory better than we do in practice. We know the fall in our head better than we know it in our heart. We say that man is dead in sin, that his faculties are all crippled, that he is utterly helpless in the things of God. This is our creed. But when we come to carry this out, we are exercised, perplexed, troubled, often distressed, because our creed is so true. We believe with our judgment perfectly, that we are altogether crippled; but when we begin to feel how unable we are to move forward, and how thoroughly we are what we say we are: when the light in our judgments descends into our heart to become life there, how it shackles the mind! Crippled in prayer, so as to be unable to pour forth the heart; crippled in reading, so as scarcely to understand, or feel a single portion of scripture: crippled in hearing, crippled in speaking, crippled in thinking, crippled in acting; all blighted, all withered, all torpid, all unable to move forward. When a feeling of our helplessness thus lies upon our conscience, how deep it cuts! But the promise is—and there is a sweet fulfilment of it sometimes—that "the lame walk." How? In their own strength? No; not in their own strength. In the strength of the Lord. We read, "they shall walk up and down in the name of the Lord;" that is, in the strength of the Lord. "My strength," said Christ to Paul, "is made perfect in weakness." "From me," says the Lord to his church, "is thy strength found."

Sometimes, then, the Lord enables the soul to walk on in his paths. The crippled state is for a time removed. Prayer is sweet—the word of God is precious—the heart is enlarged—the soul is enabled to move cheerfully on in God's ways (**"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my**

**heart;")**—religion and the things of God are no longer a burden—the heart and conscience, the memory and feelings are no longer paralysed and crippled; but sweet life is poured into the soul—the vigorous sap that flows out of the stem penetrates and reaches to the remotest twig in the branch. And as the mighty sap penetrates through every branch, and as the life-blood from the Head pervades every limb of the body, there is power to walk cheerfully in the Lord's ordinances, to walk in sweet communion with a Three-one God; to walk in light, life, and liberty, in the enjoyment of gospel means, and in the shinings of God's uplifted countenance. When this is fulfilled, when we leave our bed where we have lain, perhaps, bedridden for months; when the limbs are supernaturally strengthened, and we move cheerfully forward; when the Lord himself lays the everlasting arms underneath;—then, like the cripple at the beautiful gate of the temple when his ankle-bones received strength, there is a leaping, praising, and blessing the Lord. Have you not felt this? You are not always crippled and lame, if you are child of God. It may be your experience, say, nine times out of ten: but the tenth time, is there not some feeling in your heart, some life in your soul, some sweet enlargement, some heavenly love, some divine sensations? This is walking: and wherever this is felt in the heart, there is a fulfilment of the miracle, that "the lame walk."

III.—But we go on to another case—a more desperate case than any that we have already handled. We have looked at the blind, and O how pitiful their state seems to be! We have viewed the crippled, and how helpless their condition appears! But what do you think of a man, not merely blind, not merely lame, but also **leprous?**—"from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores?" Leprosy was a natural disease, but it was also figurative of something spiritual. The leprosy of the body was a significant type of the leprosy of the soul. If you remember, there were no means to be used in the Old Testament to cure leprosy. God himself reserved its cure in his own hands. But when the leper was cured, there were certain ceremonies to be performed, as we find in the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus. The leprosy, however,

was a figurative disease—figurative of the deep-seated disease of the soul. Now, I believe in my conscience, that every child of God will, sooner or later, feel himself to be a leper. He will have the upper lip covered, he will dwell alone, and will cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' He will feel himself, sooner or later, to be a leprous wretch. He will feel the sores of sin, not merely externally, but internally. He will have the 'quick, raw flesh,' and every symptom in his soul corresponding to the symptoms of the leprosy in the body.

The Lord of life and glory, when he was upon earth, shewed forth his almighty power in cleansing lepers. We read of several instances. We read of one who came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And we read of his cleansing ten lepers at once, though one only, and he a Samaritan, returned to give him thanks. Now, this was typical and figurative of the cleansing power of the Lord of life and glory in the soul. Am I a leper spiritually? I can no more cure myself of my leprosy, than the leper could naturally. Was leprosy a disorder that kept spreading, deepening, and increasing, till, unless God cured it. it brought its victim to a premature death? So spiritually. If I live and die with the leprosy of sin uncleansed, where God is, I cannot come. The leper must be cleansed—cleansed, not merely by the shedding of atoning blood upon the cross, which is the actual cleansing of him from filth and guilt in the sight of God: but he must be cleansed also by the application of that atoning blood to his soul, by having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and thus enjoying a testimony of the everlasting favour of God.

Now, when a man is convinced in his soul that he is a leper, to whom can he go for cleansing, but to the Lord of life and glory? We may try a thousand remedies: they will all prove insufficient: but "the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin," has never proved—no, not in one case—insufficient. Do not some of you think, sometimes, your wound incurable—your heart so hard, that it seems nothing can soften it—the disease of sin in you so desperate, that it seems at times to you utterly impossible you

can be anything else but a sinner? Now, the deeper we sink into a spiritual knowledge of our leprosy before God, the more do we seek after, the more do we cleave unto, the more do we value, and in due time, the more do we prize that balmy blood which cleanseth from all sin. What else can take out the stains from so deeply-dyed a soul? What else can present it pure before the eyes of infinite Purity? What else can pluck a sinner out of the depths of the fall, and make him whiter than an angel of light before the throne of the Most High? The blood of the Lamb of God revealed in the heart, applied to the soul, and sprinkled upon the conscience, takes out the deepest stain of guilt. Whatever our sin has been (**except the unpardonable one, which cannot be committed by a child of God**), however deeply ingrained our iniquity is—if it be of the most awful nature, the blackest dye—the blood of Jesus, applied to our soul, will take it all away, and purge the conscience from guilt, filth, and dead works to serve the living God.

IV.—**"The deaf hear."** Who are the deaf? Are they not spiritually and figuratively those who, in a state of nature, have no ears to hear the voice of God, and live? Yes: by nature we are all deaf—deaf to warnings, deaf to condemnations, deaf to threatenings, deaf to precepts, deaf to promises, like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears, and will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Who can describe the deafness of man by nature to every warning, every threatening, every portion of God's word? It is indeed an awful part of the fall. But when the Lord the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, he circumcises the ear. He thus opens it to receive instruction. He gives a new faculty to the soul, whereby the truth of God is received as from the mouth of God. Has not this been the case with some of you? When you heard the law, in times past, its threatenings rolled over your heads, like the thunder, without making any impression; when you heard of the love, blood, and sufferings of Jesus, there was no softening, melting, humbling of your soul. Were you not deaf, utterly deaf? Had you any one divine sensation in your soul? any one tender feeling? any breaking down of spirit? Not one.

But when God the Spirit mercifully removes this deafness to all the truth of God—then the deaf begin to hear. This is one of the first marks of life in the soul. They hear the threatenings of God's law, and every threatening reverberates in thunders in their hearts. They hear, and they believe what they hear, that he will bring the wicked to judgment; that there is appointed a day to judge the world; and that those who live and die in their sins will be swallowed up in an awful gulf of misery. When the Lord the Spirit opens their ears, they hear the voice of the Son of God; for he says, "My sheep hear my voice;" and again, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." They hear the "still, small voice" whispering in their souls. They hear the feeblest intimation of his mercy and grace. They hear what he says in his precepts, and obey. They hear what he says in his promises, and hope. They hear what he says in his invitations, and believe. They hear the voice of the Lord, which "shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory." This voice of majesty and mercy sounds through every chamber of the heart, and penetrates with almighty power, still and gentle though it is, into the most secret recesses of the conscience.

In hearing the word, have you not sometimes heard things that broke your heart all to pieces? Have you not sometimes had your sins turned up to view, and cutting convictions produced? Have you not sometimes had your evidences brightened, your hope encouraged, your affections drawn out, your path cleared up, and your souls graciously comforted and strengthened? If so, a miracle has been wrought in your heart. The Son of God, sitting at the right hand of the Father, has as much, by divine power, opened your ears spiritually (**or you could not hear**), as ever, in the days of his flesh, he opened the ears of the deaf naturally. O what a mercy it is to have the hearing ear, and the believing heart! Not setting ourselves against the majesty of the Most High: not rushing on the thick bosses of his buckler—but to be

broken down and humbled; to kiss the Son lest he be angry, to touch the hem of his garment, and to hear, or to long to hear him speaking in soft whispers to the heart, "Fear not; thou art mine."

V.—"**The dead are raised up.**" The "dead" are those who by nature are dead in sin. These dead are raised up when life from God visits their souls. They are raised up to faith in Jesus—raised up to hope in his name—raised up to a sense of his dying love to their souls—raised up from doubt and fear—raised up from the depths of despondency, to look unto him and be saved. What a mercy it is that the Lord of life and glory still puts forth the same power in the hearts of his people, that he once put forth in their bodies, and that he raises them up from their state of death and deadness! Do we not often feel so dead, as though we had not a particle of the grace of God? So dead, that it seems scarcely possible to have a sensation of spiritual life again? So dead, that we almost fear whether the power of God was ever felt in our hearts? Now, the Lord raises up life and feeling in our souls, by putting forth the same power that called Lazarus out of the tomb. And every lifting up of the heart towards him—every panting desire to know him, and the power of his resurrection—every breathing of tender affection—every sigh, cry, and groan—yea, every feeling, however short, however transient, Godward—is a proof that the Lord of life and glory is still putting forth his power in the hearts of his people.

Now, just in proportion as we know and deeply feel our state by nature, shall we experience and value these spiritual miracles. In the days of the Lord's flesh, who valued him? and who wanted miracles to be shewed forth? Was it not the characters whom he shewed to the disciples of John? the blind, the lame, the leper, the deaf, and the dead? And the more inveterate and the more irremediable these cases were, the more the power and the glory of Jesus were shewn in bringing them out of this forlorn state, and giving them health and cure. Is it not so spiritually? If I am not by nature totally blind—if I am not by nature thoroughly crippled—if I am not a leper to the very core—if I am not completely deaf—if I am not altogether dead—I cannot know, I



cannot value when known, the power of the Lord in removing these diseases. But if I am deeply sensible of my lost and ruined condition, and know that I am by nature a complication of maladies—that every disease meets in me—that I am not only blind, but also lame—and not only lame, but also a leper—and not only a leper, but also deaf—and not only deaf, but also by nature dead: then I learn to put an inestimable value upon every breath of life, every teaching of the Holy Ghost, every mark of God's favour, and every testimony that I am one of his.

VI.—But the Lord adds another word, which throws a sweet light upon the whole—"**The poor have the gospel preached to them.**" Why should the Lord mention this among his miracles? Was there any putting forth of miraculous power in this? Was there anything resembling, anything analogous to, giving sight to the blind, strength to the lame, cure to the leprous, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead? There was, considering the circumstances of the times. The poor, in those days, as is too much the case in our own, were generally despised. We see what the spirit of the Pharisees was, in what they said to the blind man—"Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." The poor were looked upon more as brutes than men. The rich, the noble, the educated—these were admired; but the poor were looked upon as the common herd whom any oppressor might trample under foot.

But when the Lord of life and glory appeared upon earth, he came as a poor man. God was determined to stain the pride of human greatness: he therefore sends his only-begotten Son into the world, to be born in a stable, and cradled in a manger: to be the son of poor parents, and to work with his hands for his daily bread. Therefore they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?.... How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" The very parentage of Jesus, though it was from David himself, was obscured by the low condition in which he was born. When he came into the world, poor men were his companions. He chose poor fishermen to be his disciples, and he associated for the most part with the poor. It was therefore a miracle that these poor

people naturally should have the gospel preached to them. And being so contrary to every practice then known, it stood on the same footing, as a proof of his heavenly mission, as his raising up the dead, giving eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame, and cleansing the lepers.

But there is a deeper meaning than that; there is a spiritual interpretation connected with the words. The "poor," understood spiritually, are the "poor in spirit," the broken in heart, the contrite, the lowly, the troubled, the emptied, and the exercised, who are nothing, and have nothing in themselves spiritually good.

Now to these the gospel is preached. It is their very poverty which makes the gospel received by them, and makes the gospel precious to them. As the blind needed eye-sight, and received eye-sight—as the lame and crippled needed power to walk, and received power to walk—as the leper needed cleansing, and received cleansing—as the deaf needed hearing, and received hearing—as the dead needed raising up, and were raised up: so the spiritual poverty of the poor in spirit prepared them for, and made them receive the gospel.

And what is the gospel? Is not the gospel a proclamation of pure mercy, of superabounding grace? Does it not declare the lovingkindness of God in sending his only-begotten Son to bleed and die, and, by his obedience, blood, and merit, to bring in a salvation without money and without price? Is not this the gospel? Not clogged by conditions, nor crippled by anything that the creature has to perform; but flowing freely forth as the air in the skies? The poor to whom the gospel is preached, value it; it is suitable to them; it is sweet and precious when the heart is brought down. But if I stand up in religious pride, if I rest upon my own righteousness, if I am not stripped of everything in the creature, what is the gospel to me? I have no heart to receive it; there is no place in my soul for a gospel without money and without price. But when I sink into the depth of creature poverty, when I am nothing and have nothing but a mass of sin and guilt—then the blessed gospel, pardoning my sins, covering my naked

soul, shedding abroad the love of God, guiding me into everything good, and leading me up into enjoyment with a Three-one God, becomes prized. When such a pure, such a blessed gospel comes into my heart and conscience, has not my previous poverty of spirit prepared me for it? Has not my previous beggary and necessity made a way for it, made it suitable to me, and when it comes, makes it precious to me? We must, then, sink into poverty of spirit, that painful place, in order to feel the preciousness, and drink into the sweetness and blessedness of the gospel of the grace of God.

We often know the theory of the gospel before we know the experience of the gospel. We often receive the doctrines of grace into our judgment before we receive the grace of the doctrines into our soul. We therefore need to be brought down, humbled, exercised, stripped of every prop, that the gospel may be to us the gospel—more than a sound, more than a name, more than a theory, more than a doctrine, more than a system, more than a creed—that it may be soul sensation, soul enjoyment, soul blessing, and soul salvation. When the Lord the Spirit preaches the gospel, "without money and without price," to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped, and exercised—it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed to the sinner's broken heart.

VII.—And then the Lord closes his message to John, by pronouncing a blessing upon a certain character, "**Blessed is he whosoever shall no! be offended in me.**" What is the meaning of the word "offended?" It signifies stumbled. This is the meaning of the word in the New Testament.

Now there are many things in Jesus that stumble us by nature. Have you not been stumbled by his Godhead? Has not your reason been shaken to the very centre, and has not every sort of infidel suspicion crept over your mind concerning it? This was stumbling. Do not the precepts of the Lord of life and glory stumble most men? are they not too high for them to cross, and a stumbling-block in their path that they cannot get over? Is not Jesus generally a stumbling-block to the sons of men? When God

laid the stone in Zion, was it not for two purposes—to be for his people a foundation, and to be for his enemies a stone of offence and a stumbling-block? All then, but God's people are offended in Jesus. They stumble upon that stumbling-stone. His precepts are too rigid—his yoke too heavy—his cross too burdensome. His precious gospel is distasteful to the carnal mind; therefore all natural men are offended, and stumbled. They like not the pure gospel. The unconditional gospel is not lowered sufficiently to their carnal heart. But the Lord's people are, by divine teaching, brought through these difficulties. They may be stumbled, and that painfully, at times, at the infinite Godhead of Jesus. They may be stumbled to know how his blood can cleanse from sin; a thousand difficulties may perplex their mind: but they will not stumble so as to fall. They may totter and stagger, but not stumble so as to fall entirely.

Now, do look at the blessing that the Lord has pronounced— "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." (Matt. 6:6.) What is the feeling of your heart toward Jesus? What is the solemn desire of your soul? that he would come and make your heart his abode? that he would visit your soul with the light of his countenance? that he would sprinkle his blood upon your conscience? that he would make himself very near, very dear, and very precious? Do you count one word from his lips worth a thousand worlds? a smile of his countenance worth thousands of gold and silver? Then you are blessed. You are not stumbling upon the dark mountains of error. You are not stumbling at the perfections of the Son of God. You are not offended at a free gospel, an unconditional salvation. No; the Lord in mercy has slaughtered your prejudices, subdued your enmity, and brought you to receive the gospel as a little child.

'Well,' but some may say, 'I believe all this; but then, I have doubts and fears whether the Lord has begun his work in me, whether I am one of his family. I cannot enjoy the power of truth as I would wish.' But, does not the Lord say, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me?" You are not offended and stumbled at Jesus. No: your very lamentation is, that you

cannot enjoy him, cannot feel him precious, cannot love him, cannot delight in him, cannot have sweet smiles from his countenance, cannot have a blessed revelation of his love in your heart. Now, if you were offended by a pure gospel; if you turned your back upon wisdom's ways: if you preferred the indulgence of some vile lust to obedience to the Lord of life and glory: if you were fighting against sovereign grace, and against the Person, work, and blood of the Lamb, you would be under the curse. But if there be in your heart, in spite of doubts and fears, in spite of suspicions and apprehensions, an earnest desire to know the Lord of life, and to breathe out all your soul into his bosom; if this be the reigning feeling within—that none but Christ revealed in your heart can do you good, and you would sooner have a precious Jesus in your soul than thousands of gold and silver:—you are blessed, for you are not offended in Christ. You may be offended at many things in yourself, but he is to you, at times, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. And he that is not offended in him, but is enabled to receive him as the Christ of God, to look to him, to believe in him, and at times to feel him precious—he comes under the blessing which "maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it".

## **MOAB AT EASE FROM HIS YOUTH AND SETTLED ON HIS LEES**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, 21st July, 1867

"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and be bath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." Jeremiah 48:11

We find in the Old Testament not Only what are usually called types, that is, representative things, but typical persons, that is, representative characters. Let me explain my meaning a little more clearly and distinctly. And first, what is the exact meaning of the word "type?" The word "type" signifies literally a blow, and thence the effect of a blow—a mark or impression made by it. Thus we find Thomas speaking after the resurrection, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails." The word "print" is, in the original, "type;" that is, the impression made by the nails driven into the hands of Christ upon the cross. If you were walking by the sea-side and pressed your foot down into the damp sand, the impression left by it would be a type or mark of your foot as well as of the force whereby you brought it down upon the sand. The Queen's head upon the coin of the realm is a type or representation of the head of the Queen, and is so as being the effect of a blow or other force impressed upon the die. Similarly the metal letters, used in printing, are called types, as being representations of certain forms derived from what is termed the matrix, that is, the mold or cavity in which the letter is formed, and which gives it its peculiar shape. You will excuse these simple explanations as they may serve to give you a clearer and fuller idea of what is meant by the word type when applied to spiritual things. A type then in this sense means a representation of an object, and as found in the Old Testament, a prophetic representation of a New Testament object, which is usually called the anti-type, because it corresponds to, and is the fulfillment of

the original type. The Old Testament is full of these types or prophetic representations of New Testament objects. Thus the paschal lamb was a type of Christ as the Lamb of God. The Tabernacle set up in the wilderness was a type of the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. The brazen serpent was a type of Jesus bearing our sins on the cross. The scapegoat over which the sins of the people of Israel were confessed and laid was a type of Christ, as having our sins put upon his head and bearing them away to a land of forgetfulness. In fact, all the various rites and ceremonies of the Levitical law, together with the sacrifices which were offered up, were all types of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the blessings and benefits derived from his sufferings, bloodshedding and death.

But besides these typical representations of the Lord Jesus Christ in his various covenant characters and relationships, there were also typical **persons**, as distinct from typical things, who represented him in a shadowy outline, and yet sufficiently plain and clear to draw forth the faith of the Old Testament believers upon the Son of God, who was to be manifested in due time. Thus Joseph was a typical person, and as such, typical of Christ; the chief difference between a typical thing or type, in the strict sense of the word, and a typical person being this, that the former is more marked, distinct, and clear than the latter. In a type every part, or well nigh every part, has its significance, as you would see by carefully reading and spiritually understanding the solemn transactions on the great day of atonement. But you could not say that every part of Joseph's or of David's life was typical and representative. It is quite sufficient that the main outlines should correspond with the anti-type, and not every particular. Thus that Joseph was sold by his brethren for the price of a servant, that though cruelly treated by them he still loved them, that he delivered them from famine, made himself known to them, bore with all their ingratitude, fed and nourished them—in these various points Joseph resembled and typified Jesus. But we cannot take every event of Joseph's life and say that it was a typical representation which found its fulfillment in the Lord

Jesus. So with David, who was eminently a typical representative of the Lord Jesus. But who could take all the events of David's life and make out of them a typical representation of what Christ was in the flesh? In a similar way, and with similar limitations, Aaron was a type of Christ as the great High Priest, over the house of God. Moses, as the mediator of the law on Mount Sinai, was a type of Christ as the Mediator between God and man. Jonah was a type of Christ in being three days and three nights in the belly of the whale. But I need not take up time and attention with dwelling upon these typical personages as it is a point sufficiently clear.

But I shall now draw your observation to another point—that in the Old Testament we find also what I may call **representative characters**. The typical persons of whom I have just spoken typified the Lord Jesus Christ in dim and shadowy outline, but those whom I call representative characters do not so much typify Christ as they represent the characters of men under various phases. Abraham, for instance, is the representative character of a believer; for those who are blest with faith are said to walk in the steps of faithful Abraham; and as being called "the father of all them that believe," whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 4:11) he is made a pattern or representative of all who believe with that same faith which was bestowed upon him. Job is a representative character as eminent for patience, and therefore James says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." Similarly Elijah was a representative character of a man whose prayers reached the ears of God, and who, so to speak, shut and opened the windows of heaven at will. James therefore quotes him as an example how "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In the prophet Ezekiel God mentions the names of three men—Noah, Daniel, and Job, as eminent for righteousness; they may, therefore, be viewed as representative characters of righteous men.

But we have also in that wonderful book, the word of the living God, representative characters of **things**. Thus Ahithophel, a double faced hypocrite, who could go to the house of God in



company with David, and then sell him into the hands of his worst foe, may be viewed as a representative of hypocrisy; Doeg as a representative of a man of blood who would shrink from no crime, and fall upon the priests of the Lord, when the servants of Saul would not put forth their hand against them. So Nabal is a representative of a drunken, covetous churl, whom wealth has hardened and drunkenness besotted till he is ripe for the sword of slaughter. Similarly Jonathan may be accepted as a representative of warm, affectionate, brotherly love; and his father Saul, as an awful instance of gifts without grace, and that a man may be an instrument in the hands of God to accomplish His purposes who lives and dies in his sins.

But to what do all these observations tend? To this point—to show that Moab also, the Moab of our text, was a representative character; and that as Abraham represented a believer, Job one eminent for patience, and Jeremiah a prophet who wept over the calamities of Israel; so Moab represents a character which is to be found in the church of God, and which will be my main object to unfold to your view, that, with God's blessing, you may gather up instruction, encouragement, or if need be, warning, reproof, and admonition from it.

If, then, we look carefully at our text, we shall see some very striking things said of Moab in it: "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed."

With God's help and blessing, then, in attempting to unfold the meaning of this striking description, I shall

**I.—First,** direct your attention to the **general character** of Moab.

**II.—Secondly,** to the **special features** which are represented here as peculiar to him.

**III.—Thirdly,** to the general **effect** and **result** of these features so strongly impressed upon him.

But in tracing out this description, I shall, as the Lord may enable, endeavor to compare with these features of Moab, corresponding or to speak more correctly, contrasting features in the Lord's family; and if **I** succeed in so doing, **I** shall not merely hold up to your view such a character as Moab is by way of warning, but take occasion from what is said of him to draw those peculiar features which distinguish the people of God, and which are all the more visible as standing in such striking contrast with this representative character.

I.—Our first point, then, is the **general** character of Moab.

**i** His **birth** and **parentage** may be viewed as having an important bearing upon his general character. Who and what was he by birth? He was the offspring of an incestuous connection between Lot and his eldest daughter. He had therefore some natural connection, so to speak, with a good man; and yet what a dreadful connection it was; and how the passionate desire for offspring in Eastern women must have overpowered every right feeling to have prompted these two daughters of Lot to resort to such a way of obtaining progeny. This is a point worth noting. Not that I mean to extenuate their crime, which makes one almost shudder to think of; but it was not the ebullition of animal passion, which was not likely to their own father, but a scheme that they might not die childless, and thus avoid that terrible reproach; for in that time and clime it was viewed as a mark of the curse of God. And how strong must this feeling have been, that they who had been preserved chaste in Sodom should have preferred incest to childlessness. But though it was a horrible connection, and Moab and Ammon sprang from it, yet God had such tender regard to both these people, as being in some way sprung from Lot, that he would not suffer the children of Israel to oppress or exterminate them, as they were commanded to do to the seven accursed nations of the land of Canaan.

Now does not Moab's very origin, birth, and parentage, connecting him with a good man, cast some light upon Moab as a representative character? **I** shall by and by show you that he represents a professor in the church of God destitute of divine grace. **I** do not mean to lay it down as an absolute rule, but as a matter of general observation it may be remarked that there is usually some connection between a graceless professor and a gracious father or a gracious mother, or some one from whom he has got his creed without getting grace with it. Moab had the blood of Lot running in his veins, but he had not the grace of Lot working in his heart. So many a professor of religion may have the blood of a godly parent in his body, but not the grace of a godly parent in his soul.

**ii** But now look at Moab's character in another light. He lived in a **very fertile land**. If you cast your eye upon a map of Palestine, you will see the river Jordan separating it into two parts. On the west side was the land of Canaan, where the children of Israel were located; on the east side the two tribes Reuben and Gad, and half Manasseh. But Moab you will find at the south-east of the Dead Sea, just below the portion of Reuben, and the Ammonites a little higher up. If you still continue to examine the map, you will see next the portion of the tribe of Reuben, then that of Gad a little further north in the fertile land of Gilead, and then a little higher up that of half Manasseh nestling in the large and wealthy territory of Bashan, so celebrated for its pastures, producing those "bulls of Bashan" of which the Psalmist speaks. Now there was this great difference between the country on the east of Jordan, which was not properly the land of Israel, and the country on the west side of Jordan, which was emphatically the land of Canaan or the promised land, that whereas Israel's portion was for the most part mountainous and sterile, Moab's portion, and in fact the whole of the east of Jordan, was eminently fertile, being well watered by rivers, and especially adapted to feed sheep and rear cattle. But what was the consequence of the difference of these two lands? Simply this. The children of Israel were poor, and the Moabites, Ammonites,

and other occupants on the east of Jordan, wealthy and prosperous. You will perhaps recollect that it was David who first subdued them and made them pay tribute, as we read, "And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death: and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants: and brought gifts." (2 Sam. 8:2.) Now this tribute was not only very heavy, but from its amount clearly shows the great wealth of that country; for we read that in the days of Ahab, at whose death the king of Moab shook off the yoke, that "Mesha, king of Moab, rendered unto the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams with the wool." (w Kings 3:4.) In reference to this tribute thus broken off, the prophet Isaiah sends a warning word to the people of Moab: "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion." (Isai. 16:1.)

But why do I mention this peculiar feature in the typical and representative Moab? Because it finds its counterpart in the character whom he represents. Moab of old was rich and prosperous. He had his portion in a fertile land, and was surrounded with flocks and herds. Similarly his typical descendant is for the most part prosperous in this world. He is not one of those of whom James speaks as poor in this world and rich in grace, but is thriving in business, successful in his schemes, and rarely encountering those reverses and disappointments which seem to be the appointed lot of the family of God. And indeed this is one of the reasons why he is so much at ease—a special feature in his character which I shall have presently occasion distinctly to trace.

**iii** Another general feature in the character of Moab is that he was a very **great snare** to the children of Israel. Balaam could not bring the wrath of God down upon the children of Israel by curses and imprecations, but was even compelled to bless when he would fain have cursed them. But with all the subtle malice of a baffled and disappointed limb of Satan, he devised an effectual way of moving against them the anger of God. And this was by

entangling them with Moabitish women. We have an account in Num. 25 of the sin of the children of Israel in this matter, and of the anger of the Lord in consequence, so that twenty-four thousand died of the plague, besides the heads of the people, who, as they were first in rank, appear to be first in sin, and therefore, as a special mark of God's fierce anger, were taken and hanged up before the Lord against the sun. And have not Moabitish women been in all ages snares to the Israel of God? For these women appear to have inherited the charms of the daughter of Lot from whom they sprang, and, as dwelling in so rich a land, being well fed and housed, were singularly attractive to the men of Israel, who had before their eyes only the tanned, sunburnt, and dried up women who had come with them out of Egypt, and who were probably as black as the tents of Kedar. But what provoked the Lord even more than their guilty connection with these fascinating daughters of Moab was that they made them partakers of their filthy idolatries for we read that "they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods, and Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor." Now this Baal-peor was worshipped in such a way as cannot be named with any due regard to modesty. The prophet Hosea therefore says, "They went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame;" or, as it means, shameful idol; "and their abominations were according as they loved." (Hos. 9:10.) How strong is the language of the prophet. First they fell in love with the women, then they separated themselves from the worship of God to bow down before the shameful idol, Baal-peor; and thus the filth of their abominations was in proportion to the measure and fury of their abandoned love. How carefully need we watch the first movement of our heart from God when such and similar temptations are cast in our path. Well has Solomon said, "Let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her." (Prov. 7:25, 26.) Who so strong as Samson? Who so wise as Solomon? But Moabitish women overthrew the strongest and the wisest, for the strength of sin is stronger than the strongest, and the subtlety of sin is subtler than the wisest.

In, then, these three points of view, Moab is a general representative of a professor in the visible church, without the grace of God in his heart. He has an indirect connection with the family of God; he is for the most part well to do in the world; and he or his daughters are ever spreading snares and temptations in the path of the just, and what is worse, too often succeed in entangling their feet so as to bring down upon them the just displeasure of God.

II.—But the Holy Ghost is not content with merely setting before us Moab as a representative character generally in what I may call a broad outline such as I have sketched, and which perhaps might demand some study and thought, and examination of the word of God rightly to apprehend. He has also stamped upon him for our instruction certain very **peculiar marked features** of simpler and easier observations, which I shall now endeavor to bring before you.

Of these peculiar features as distinct from the broad general outline, two are **positive**, and two are **negative**. The two positive features are, **(i)** that "he had been **at ease** from his youth;" **(ii)** that "he hath **settled on his lees**." The two negative features are, **(i)** that "he hath not been **emptied from vessel to vessel**;" and **(ii)** "neither hath he **gone into captivity**."

We will, with God's help and blessing, examine these features in the order that I have named, and contrast them as we go on with the dealings of God in the souls of his people, that we may see more distinctly from them what a man is in a profession without the grace of God, and what a man is in a profession with the grace of God.

**i "Moab hath been at ease from his youth."**

We gather from these words that Moab was now no longer young. The character then whom he typically represents is not one only

just in a profession of religion, but who for many years has lived in it. And it would appear from the text that his profession, such as it was, began very early in life. Now I am not against what I may call a youthful religion, for I said very lately, if you remember it, that I believed for the most part God began the work of grace upon the souls of his people when they were young. But without limiting the grace of God or denying that there are such beginnings, **I** confess myself very jealous of that profession which begins in the Sunday school; and more than jealous if its beginning be such as is here ascribed to Moab as being "at ease from his youth;" in other words, that he began with ease, has gone on with ease, and is now established in ease. His religion came to him from the first very easily. It did not begin with any degree of soul trouble. There were no arrows of the Almighty in his conscience, no wrath of God found or felt in his soul, or fear of hell living or moving in his heart. He took his religion from his father as he would his father's business, and got his father's creed without getting his father's godliness, for many of these professors, at least in our chapels and amongst our people, are sons and daughters of gracious parents who were not at ease from their youth, but who had to get their religion in the fire. But their children took an easier path. Thus, Moab's religion came to him very easily: it sat on him like an old glove in which he could put his hand even from the first without any difficulty and without any stretching of the fingers.

Now the child of God does not get his religion in this way. He is not at ease at any time of his life, still less in his youth. He does not take his profession up because his father was a good man before him, nor does he pick it up at a Sunday school, nor is he persuaded into it by teachers and tutors. I do not say a word against a Sunday school, for I am much in favor of it; but I am very much against making it a nursery for hypocrites, and blazing forth the pious death of Sunday scholars as if they were almost necessary fruits of a Sunday school, and the almost certain result of a religious education. At any rate it is not God's usual way. Where there is a real work of grace upon the heart, God begins with man, not man with God. The very first movements of the

work of God upon the soul are sovereign. Yes, it is the sole and sovereign work of God upon his heart, the sole and sovereign power of God put forth upon his soul, springing out of the alone good will and pleasure of the Lord God Almighty, and not granted on account of anything that we have done or can do to obtain his favor. And God will teach us to know **this** deeply and effectually, and sometimes by terrible things in righteousness. We may lay it down then for the most part as a certain truth that a religion which saves the soul, a religion of which God is the Author, is for the most part, as regards us, though on God's part freely given, yet got at with great difficulty; and is usually attended with many forebodings, many fears, many convictions, much anxiety, and often great and painful distress of mind as to the result. Now, if your religion began in any easy, smooth, quiet, lukewarm way, so that you can scarcely tell when or how it commenced, and have had no sharp exercises since or at any period of your religious career, you have very good reason to doubt whether you have got hold of that religion which will save your soul. It is a mark against you if you took up religion of yourself, and embarked upon a profession without any conviction, distress, anxiety, supplication, fears, or forebodings. I do not wish to set up any standard, or lay down a hard and fast line, as if I would prescribe to the Lord Almighty himself the exact course he must take. This indeed would be to dictate to Him, and, as Elihu speaks, to "enjoin him his way; for touching the Almighty we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power and in judgment." But taking the Scripture as our guide, and the, experience of the saints in harmony with the Scripture, we may form some sound judgment of God's usual dealings with the children of men, and the effect of his teachings in the heart. But Moab's case is not to be found thus sanctioned by Scripture or experience. It cannot be laid down in harmony for instance with the Psalms, in which we have so much description of soul exercise and trouble; and the general testimony is against those "who are not in trouble as other men, nor plagued like other men, whose eyes stand out with fatness and they have more than heart could wish." Nay, David complains bitterly that "his soul was exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease and with the contempt of the



proud." But Moab was always at ease, and that from his very youth. Nothing troubled him. Easy circumstances, good health, plenty of friends, and abundant prosperity made him as happy as the day was long. Sin never troubled him, the world never opposed or persecuted him, and Satan never thrust sore at him; he had, therefore everything to make him easy. He had no fears of God; no dread of hell, no trembling apprehensions of the wrath to come; no sense of the Majesty of the Almighty, against whom and before whom he had sinned, and no tormenting, chilling conviction, or even anxious thought, but that it was as well with him in grace as it was in providence, and would be so to the end. In a wicked book, for I must call it so, written to show young men how to make the best of both worlds, these Moabites are the very characters represented as proper and usual members of churches. I do not doubt that they are the usual members of the great body of general dissenters, but whether they are proper members of a true gospel church is another matter. At any rate they suit the general ministers of the day, and the general ministers well suit them. Those, whether ministers or members, who resemble Moab, and have bought their religion cheap, do not like those who have bought it dear; who have been pierced with powerful convictions, and brought into gospel liberty as it were over the very belly of hell. They think this may be the case now and then where a man has been a desperate, out of the way sinner, but is not the general type of Christians; that the general type of Christians consists of those who have got their religion they can scarcely tell how, scarcely tell when, scarcely tell where, and scarcely tell why; who have been drawn on by one thing after another till they find themselves in possession of a full blown religion, as a man in business gradually enlarges his connection by carrying it on successfully, and then retires as a prosperous man to enjoy, for the rest of his life, the fruits of his industry and skill.

Now, ease thus obtained and ease thus maintained never was and never will be the character of a child of God. Bunyan says, in his plain, homely language:

A Christian man is never long at ease,  
When one fright's gone another doth him seize.

Sin will never let him rest long, nor Satan let him rest long, nor God let him rest long, nor his own fears let him rest long. He cannot be at ease till his conscience is purged with the blood of sprinkling; till his soul has been blessed with a feeling sense and enjoyment of the love of God; till he has sweet manifestations of pardoning mercy, blessed revelations of Christ to his soul, with the voice and witness of the Spirit in his breast. This is not the ease of Moab, but the ease of which the Psalmist speaks when he says: "his soul shall dwell at ease" (Ps. 25:13). All ease but this is the sleep of the sluggard—carnal ease as opposed to spiritual. If then he drops into carnal ease, and for a time sin does not seem to plague, nor Satan tempt, nor the world persecute, the Christian man feels that he is getting wrong; he has lost a burden, but not in the right way, and would rather have the burden back than be left to have his portion amongst those who are at ease in Zion.

Now contrast your religion—I speak now to those who desire to fear God, with Moab's—Are you at ease? How does your religion sit upon you? Why, you will describe it perhaps somewhat in this way; "It is the most comforting and yet the most trying thing I have ever had to do with. Sometimes I don't know what to do with it, and sometimes I don't know what to do without it. It will never leave me alone nor can I leave it alone."

I am not surprised at your answer, for religion is certainly the most weighty, and yet the most mysterious matter that we ever have had or can have to do with in this world. And I will tell you this, that it will either comfort you, or it will distress you. It will either exercise your mind, trouble your soul, cast down your spirit, and make you truly miserable, or else be the source of your choicest comfort and your greatest happiness. From religion come our deepest sorrows and highest joys, the greatest uneasiness and the sweetest peace. There is this peculiar feature about true religion, that in the greatest prosperity it may be the

cause to us of the chiefest trouble, or in the greatest adversity be to us the cause of the purest joy. What are wealth or health, rank or titles, and every comfort the world can afford, to a wounded spirit? What are poverty, sickness, persecution, contempt, a garret or a prison to a soul basking in the smiles of eternal love? Religion will surely make itself felt wherever it exists, and will testify by its power to its presence. If then you are a partaker of true religion, be you who, where, or what you may, you cannot be at ease in Zion, for there will be ever something working up out of your own heart or arising from some other quarter to make you uneasy. Job was once at ease, but he was not suffered to die in his nest. He therefore says, "I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark." (Job 16:12). And yet with all this unexpected and apparently cruel treatment, he could still say, "Behold, my witness is in heaven and my record is on high."

And though so exercised and distressed that he had to cry out, "My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me" (Job 19:20, 21); yet he could add, in all the confidence of faith, as desirous that his words might stand for ever upon record: "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:23, 27).

ii But I pass on to consider another special feature stamped upon the character of Moab: "And he hath **settled on his lees.**"

The figure is taken from wine, which, in order to thoroughly purify and refine it from all those dregs which would spoil its taste, needs to be often racked off, as I shall have occasion by and by

more clearly to show. But Moab was like an old wine cask which somehow or other had been overlooked in the corner of the cellar, and was thus forgotten, neglected, and covered with cobwebs. Or, to speak more correctly, had been purposely neglected, as being of a vintage which did not promise such improvement by racking off as would pay the expenses or trouble to do so. He had therefore become "settled upon his lees." These lees were the husks of the grape, and other fecal parts of the berry, with the general residuum which in the process of fermenting gradually falls to the bottom of the cask. If wine therefore is left to settle upon these lees, they infect it with a coarse, earthy, unpleasant taste, which spoils the wine and makes it scarcely drinkable. But Moab was left to settle upon these coarse, impure, and fecal dregs, as not having in him sufficient good wine qualities to repay the trouble of racking him off. His religion therefore was not only in its origin and in its vintage coarse and rank, but by being left to settle so long upon the lees of the old cask was worse than it otherwise would have been; for the coarse, decaying, sour lees made the wine worse than it naturally was.

But what made it worse was that he was well satisfied it should be so: he was "settled upon his lees." If you look at the margin of Zeph. 1:12, where God says that "he will punish the men that are settled on their lees," you will find the word translated in the text "settled" rendered in the margin "**curded** or **thickened**." The same word indeed is not used in this passage, but the idea is still the same. Moab was curdled or thickened upon his lees; that is, so settled down upon them and infected with them that the whole body of the wine in the cask has become soured and thickened like curdled milk, and was therefore undrinkable.

But what are we to understand spiritually by these lees, and what is it to be settled on them? By the lees I understand the husks of worldliness, pride, and covetousness, which are, so to speak, dropped and deposited by a carnal profession. And to be settled upon one's lees is to be settled down in a dead confidence of one's state before God, though that rests upon the dregs of a

worldly life and of a hypocritical, arrogant, daring, and presumptuous profession. Now when a man is settled down upon these dregs of a dead profession, he knows as regards religion neither misery nor joy, neither affliction nor consolation. In him, as thus left neglected in a corner of his pew, like the old wine cask in the corner of the cellar, there are no stirrings, or movings, or dealings of God upon his soul, so as to take him off and separate him from his lees. Moab, therefore, as thus settled upon his lees, represents a professor of religion who is neglected of God, in whom, if I may use such an expression, He does not take sufficient interest to rack him off and refine him. God is very jealous over his own people, and very tender about them. He will therefore take peculiar care to fit them for the kingdom for which he has designed them, and refine them as gold is refined, that they may be vessels of honor meet for the Master's use. They are not suffered therefore, as Moab was, to be settled upon their lees like a forgotten wine cask, but are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, by the purifying effect of God's dealings with their soul.

But we will now look at the two negative features of Moab, which I mentioned as stamped upon him in our text.

(i) The first is, that "he hath not been **emptied from vessel to vessel.**"

Moab was never emptied from vessel to vessel, for no art or skill could have made good wine out of him. If wine has, from its peculiar sort of grape, its earliest growth, its soil, situation, and a favorable vintage, certain natural qualities, it may be developed into every perfection of which wine is capable. But if the natural quality of the grape be rank and coarse; if soil, situation, and vintage be also bad, no art or skill of man can manipulate that wine into a first-class article. Thus it is with human nature. It is radically and naturally bad, and grows worse as it gets older; and therefore no art or skill of man can make it good or acceptable to God. In this state most men live and die. But not so with the true family of God. He plants his vineyard "with the choicest vine"

(Isai. 5:2); what another prophet calls "a noble vine, wholly a right seed" (Jer. 2:21). The Lord therefore will by his Spirit and grace bring forth out of this noble vine such wine as shall prove it to be set in a vineyard which his right hand hath planted, and a branch which he has made strong for himself. And we may observe by the way that that species of grape which looks best to the eye and is most pleasing to the palate is not usually that which makes the best wine. Moab was outwardly flourishing and prosperous, like grapes fair to the eye and pleasant to the taste, but the wine of which was for all wine purposes radically coarse and bad.

Now contrast this with the case of the people of God. Though there is much in them rough and distasteful, much from which they need to be cleansed and refined, yet still there is that in them by grace which will, so to speak, work itself fine. They are not therefore left to settle on their lees, like Moab, but are emptied from vessel to vessel. They may sometimes indeed, through absence of trial and temptation, seem as if they would settle down upon the lees of their profession, but this does not last long. Some trial, temptation, exercise, affliction, bereavement, or sorrow is brought upon them. This we may compare to a vessel into which the wine is poured out of the cask, and where it has to stand for a time that it may become refined, lose its new, raw taste, and get the right flavor. Observe, then, the effect of the various trials and afflictions which the Lord brings upon his people to cleanse and refine them. They instrumentally draw off the wine which otherwise would have settled upon its lees and become impregnated with their earthy taste. Every trial which a child of God has to undergo separates from him something rough, austere, raw, carnal, and sensual. We may view these lees as representing pride, or self-righteousness, or worldly-mindedness, or carnality, or covetousness, or anything and everything distinct from and inconsistent with what is holy, heavenly, and spiritual. Still there will be always in a child of God, whatever be his experience or amount of grace, old nature still. He needs therefore to be emptied from vessel to vessel; for corrupt nature soon casts down fresh lees, which, if he were left

to settle down upon them, would spoil his flavor. In order therefore to keep him from this rank and raw flavor, there comes upon him another trial, another temptation, another affliction, or another bereavement. This is a fresh vessel, into which he is again drawn off; and as during the process the cask is stirred and shaken, the wine will sometimes seem thick and muddy and almost worse than before. Have not you felt how a fresh trial stirred up every corruption of your heart? But after a time, when you are made a little still, you are enabled to cast down some of this rebellion and unbelief, and it seems to sink to the bottom of your heart. Thus, as the effect of a fresh trial or temptation, our freewill, self-righteousness, creature holiness, vain confidence, carnality, and worldly-mindedness, and everything which is contrary to the mind of the Spirit, are gradually deposited and dropped, and the wine begins to run more clear, fine and pure. If you cannot see or feel this in yourself, can you not see it in tried and exercised Christians? Do you not see them cleansed and purified, more than those that are at ease, from pride, vain confidence, self-righteousness, carnality and death? But after a time the wine wants another racking off, in order to get the right quality, taste, and scent. There is another vessel to come: another trial, another temptation, another affliction, another bereavement, another sorrow. Here comes the vessel. Don't you tremble as you see it approaching, and to have the auger struck into you to draw the wine off? But there is no use crying out, for it must come. There must be a drawing off again into the fresh vessel. But is this the last? No, no. When the Christian has after a time cast down more lees, and by that means become brighter, clearer, and finer, more dead to the world, more alive unto God, old nature is old nature still. He casts down fresh lees and needs another racking off; and so he goes on until he gets the right quality, the right fineness, the right taste, and then he is fit to be drawn off from earth to heaven and set upon the royal table.

But Moab never was thus emptied from vessel to vessel: in fact, he was, as I before remarked, not worth the trouble. We may easily fancy a French wine-grower saying, "I have I don't know how many casks of a worthless vintage in my cellar: it really

would not pay me to take any trouble with it. Let the casks be where they are; let them stand till I have time to roll them out of the way, break in the staves, and pour off their contents into the ditch." So we may say God looks upon such a professor of religion as Moab represents. It is as if he were not worth the trouble of any special dealings: he has no living conscience to be touched; there is no grace in his heart to work upon, no judgment to be informed, no affections to be wrought upon, no spiritual capability for being benefited by trials and afflictions. Let him therefore sit quietly in the corner of his pew; let him fill up his church membership; let him be half asleep during the sermon. Let no judgment rouse him, no promises melt him, no precepts move him; let him sit there like an old wine cask in the corner of a cellar, covered with cobwebs, nobody scarcely knowing it to be there but the old cellarman.

How many of these wine casks we have in the corners of pews in our churches and chapels who have never been emptied from vessel to vessel. No sermon ever touches them; no admonition ever reaches them; no warnings ever frighten them; no promises ever cheer them. There they are at ease, settled upon their lees, having no fear of death and eternity, but as unconcerned as if there were neither heaven nor hell. It is an awful spot to be in, for there is a woe to them that are at ease in Zion. If such be your case, God will let out your wine some day, broach the cask, and burn the staves. That will be the end of your profession, of your sleeping in your corner and being at ease in Zion.

**ii** The second negative mark against Moab is, "Neither **hath he gone into captivity.**"

We have a generation of preachers and professors who are very much against any experience of captivity or bondage in the living family—at least, after a certain period. They are allowed to be in bondage to the law at first, whilst under its curse and condemnation; but after deliverance from it by some manifestation of mercy, are never to be, according to these men, in bondage any more. They are safely booked for the next world,



and need no more fear being left behind than a person going by train who is seated in a first-class carriage. According, however, to our text, it is a mark against Moab that he had not gone into captivity. But God's people have very often to go into it. Moab, with his fertile lands, broad pastures, flowing brooks, and copious streams, was not treated as the children of Israel were. There were no Philistines to trouble him. He therefore never went into captivity. He dwelt for generations upon his ancestral lands, eating the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the stall, drinking wine in bowls, and anointing himself with the chief ointments, but not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Am. 6:4, 6). But those on the other side of the flood, the Israel of God, in the land of Canaan, were often led into captivity, had to fight hard for their very existence, exposed to the incursions of the Philistines and various other tribes, and were ever holding their life in their hand. So it is with the professor and the child of grace. The professor is not in captivity; he is never in bondage; he never knew anything about the law to put him into real distress of soul at the first; and though under the power of sin, yet he has no feeling of what it is to be a prisoner, crying out under the heavy pressure of bonds and fetters. Contrast with him the living soul. He is continually going into captivity: often taken captive by some lust, entangled in some snare, drawn aside by some excitement; and if he is preserved from sin or doing anything derogatory to his profession, yet there is an inward captivity, a feeling of bondage, a sense of being put into the prison-house, so as to groan as a poor imprisoned captive under the hidings of God's face, the withdrawals of his presence, the fears of his own mind, and the sinkings and foreboding of his own evil conscience. But Moab knew nothing of this: he was always at ease and always at liberty.

III. But time warns me that I must pass on to point out what I proposed to do in the third place, viz., **the effects** of these dealings. They are two. The first affected the taste, the other the scent of the wine to which Moab is compared, viz., "Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed."

**I** Let us consider the first effect first. What was the effect of drawing and racking the wine off from vessel to vessel? It was to **change the taste**. If it had been left to settle upon its lees, there would have been an earthy flavor; it would have tasted of the husks of the grapes and of all the impurities mingled with it in the wine-press. Now Moab as being settled upon his lees, and not being drawn off from vessel to vessel, retained this earthy taste: "His **taste remained** in him." He was earthy at the first and earthy at the last. He had therefore no taste himself for heavenly things. He had never tasted that the Lord was gracious; he had never tasted the sweetness of God's word coming into his soul with divine power; he had never tasted the authority of God in a broken law, nor the love of God in a revealed gospel. Therefore his taste remained in him. You could soon tell this by your intercourse with him—that his taste was an earthy taste; that he had no relish for divine things, no love for the word of God, for the company of God's family, heavenly employments, or spiritual enjoyments. His taste remained in him. He began by being an earthy man, and he ends by being an earthy man. And you can taste it in his conversation and in his conduct. It is not so with God's people. Their taste is altered. When the Lord begins to visit their soul, His very first dealings with them change their taste. It gives them a different apprehension of God from what they had before; it raises up the fear of God in their conscience; it plants the dread of the Almighty deep in their soul; it gives them a taste of the anger of God in a broken law; and all this changes their taste. They tasted once of free will, legality, creature righteousness, self-exaltation, based upon human ability. But now all this is changed. They have different views now of the purity and majesty of God; different views of the authority of his holy law, and different views of the evil of sin; and as this works in them it changes their tastes. They begin to see what a bitter thing sin is and to taste how evil it is to depart from the Lord. They see sin working in a way they never saw before—in the glance of an eye, in the thought of the heart, in the dropping of a foolish word, in the sanctioning of an unbecoming action.

And their taste is changed as regards the **word** of God. They once had no relish for God's word: they could not taste it, nor handle it, nor enter into it. They had no spiritual faculty to which the word of God was adapted. Moab, with all his professions, never had his taste changed. He always loved earthy things, and his religion, such as it was, was an earthly religion. But the dealings of God with the souls of his people in racking them from vessel to vessel, in exercising them with various trials and temptations, in letting down His authority into their breast, and exercising them with spiritual fears, give them a real abiding taste of divine things. The light of God's countenance, the teachings of his Holy Spirit, the manifestations of his favor, and the droppings in of words from his gracious lips, have changed the whole taste of their religion.

**ii** And what else? What is the next effect of Moab being settled on his lees? His "**scent was not changed.**" In all first-class wine there is a peculiarly fragrant and delicious scent, and connoisseurs know and value wine by its scent as much or even more than by its taste. Now there was no scent in Moab's wine. It was earthy both in taste and scent. But God's people are not so. By the various refinings, rackings, and dealings of God upon their souls, there is communicated to them this scent, this fragrant odor which impregnates their conversation and demeanor, and makes them so acceptable to those who can know and recognize it. Of their fragrant conversation we may say, "The scent thereof is as the wine of Lebanon," which was celebrated for its choice scent. There is in the tried, exercised children a savor, a sweetness, a scent, an odor, which commends itself to all who know and love what the grace of God is. And it is by this taste and by this scent that we know God's people, as connoisseurs know good wine from bad. By this taste and by this scent, tried, exercised, savory, and precious souls, whom God exercises and teaches, are distinguished from those who are at ease in Zion.

But it is not everybody who knows this taste or can recognize this scent. The people of God know it. Nothing is more odious to them than a religion without savor: it is like an egg without salt. What

they want to find in themselves and in others is a religion brought into their souls by the power of God, wrought in their heart by the unction of the Holy Ghost. That makes them new creatures, gives them new tastes, invigorates them with new life, and breathes into their conduct and conversation, words and works, a heavenly odor, which is the very breath of heaven, whereby it is manifested they are the people of God, in whose hearts he has wrought by his Spirit and grace. Thus, while the one are of the earth earthy, impure, and only fit to be fermented into vinegar, or poured off into the dust; the others, the children of God, by his gracious dealings with them, have more of heaven in their own conscience, more of the power of God resting upon their souls, and are drawn more into sweet union and heavenly intimacy with God and each other.

Now can you say—and you have reason to bless God for it if you can—that he has not left you as he left Moab to be at ease from your youth, to be settled upon your lees, never to be emptied from vessel to vessel, and never to go into captivity? If so, he wanted to have you for himself, to adorn you as a bride is adorned for her husband, to make you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and to work in your soul that grace whereby you might be in glory a fit companion for the Son of his love.

This, then, is the end of all God's dealings and the object of all the afflictions and trials he sends upon his people—to change their taste, to alter their scent, and make them spiritually minded, which is life and peace, and thus fit, furnish and qualify them for heaven, that they may for ever bask in the beams of his eternal love.

## **THE MOULD OF DIVINE TEACHING**

Preached on Thursday Evening, July 11, 1844, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Romans 6:17

The Holy Ghost foresaw what an abuse the depraved heart of man would make of the doctrines of grace. He foresaw that nature would argue, because a man is saved by grace without the works of the law, there was no obligation to perform good works at all; and that because God accepts us in the Beloved "without money and without price," therefore we are discharged from all obedience to his revealed will and word. And not only did the Holy Ghost foresee the consequences that depraved nature would draw from the pure gospel of Jesus; but there were also characters in the apostolic days base enough to carry out these principles into practice. The Apostle alludes to these when he says, "Shall we do evil that good may come? God forbid." There were some that said, we might do evil that good might come; but he says, "whose damnation is just." If we look at the book of Jude, we shall find these base characters most accurately described a "wandering stars, trees twice dead, spots in their feasts of charity;" in a word, practical antinomians, living in sin under a mask of godliness; professing the truth, and doing every thing contrary to it. The Holy Ghost, then, foreseeing the consequences that corrupt nature would draw from the doctrines of grace, inspired the Apostle to write this chapter, which is almost entirely aimed at these perversions. "What shall we say then?" it begins, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" He had said in the preceding chapter, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The carnal heart might thence naturally argue, "If this be the case that grace superabounds just in proportion as sin abounds, then the more I sin, the more will the grace of God abound; and therefore, the

greater sinners we are, the more will the grace of God be glorified in us." Such would be the reasoning of depraved nature, of man's perverse heart. The Apostle therefore, says, "God forbid" that any who fear the Lord should draw such a conclusion. "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" If, he goes on, we have been buried with Christ in baptism, it is that, according to the power of his resurrection, we should walk in newness of life. If we are delivered from the law, it is that sin should not reign in our mortal body, or that we should obey the lust thereof. And then in a most beautiful and affecting way, which I cannot now enter into, he shows that, so far from being discharged by grace from all obligation to obedience, it only binds us the more closely to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and live with holy conformity to him who died for us. But the main head of what the Apostle sets forth seems summed up in the text, from which I hope, with God's blessing and help, to speak this evening. "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

The Apostle commences by solemnly thanking God. "But God be thanked," he says. Now what was the object of this apostolic thanksgiving? What drew forth that expression of gratitude from his bosom? Not, I believe, that they had been servants of sin. I do not think we can, for a moment, suppose the Apostle to have thanked God because the believers to whom he was writing had been "servants of sin." I am sure my own experience could not bear out that to be the mind of the Holy Ghost. Nor do I believe that your experience, if God the Spirit has touched your consciences with his finger, would bear you out in the interpretation that Paul could thank God because they had been the "servants of sin." Did you ever on your knees bless God that you had gone to great lengths of wickedness? Did you ever thank him for some act of uncleanness, of drunkenness, or other open and base sin? You may have thanked God that he kept you from falling into sin, or for mercifully pardoning you for it, and delivering you out of it.

But I defy a living soul on his knees to thank God, that there was a time when he was a servant of sin. So that we must understand the apostle to mean here: "But God be thanked, that **though** ye were the servants of sin," yet now the case is altered; you are so no longer; a mighty change has taken place; a blessed revolution has been effected in your hearts, lips, and lives. "God be thanked, though ye were the servants of sin," yet now through the grace of God, it is so no longer, "and ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." In looking, then, at these words, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to show,

I. What it is, in our unregenerate state, to be "the servants of sin;"

II. What is the "form of doctrine" delivered us; and,

III. How by "obeying it from the heart" we become servants of God.

I. Let us look, then, at the words, "**Ye were the servants of sin.**" What a picture does this draw of our state, while walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy! The Holy Ghost here sets forth sin as a hard master, exercising tyrannical dominion over slaves; for the word "servants" means literally "slaves;" there being few domestic servants in ancient times, and nearly all being slaves, compelled to obey the master's will. How this sets forth our state and condition in the days of unregeneracy—slaves to sin! Just as a master commands his slave to go here and there, imposes on him a task, and has entire and despotic authority over him; so sin had a complete mastery over us, used us at its arbitrary will and pleasure, and drove us hither and thither on its commands. But in this point we differed from slaves naturally, that we did not murmur under our yoke but gladly and cheerfully obeyed all its commands, and were never wearied of doing the most servile drudgery. It is a most certain truth that all men whose hearts have not been touched by God the Spirit, are the "servants of sin." Sin the lord may in some cases be a more

refined master than in others; and man the servant may wear a smarter livery in some instances than others. But still, however refined the master may be, or however well-dressed the servant, the master is still the master, and the servant is still the servant. Thus some have had sin as a very vulgar and tyrannical master, who drew them into acts of drunkenness, uncleanness, and profligacy; yea, every thing base and vile. Others perhaps were preserved through education, through the watchfulness and example of parents, or other moral restraints, from going into such open lengths of iniquity; but still sin secretly reigned over them. Pride, worldliness, love of the things of time and sense, hatred to God's holy will, selfishness, stubbornness, in all their various forms, had a complete mastery over them, and kept them in a more refined, though not less real or abject servitude. Whatever sin bade them do, that they did, as implicitly as the most abject slave ever obeyed a tyrannical master's command. What a picture does the Holy Ghost here draw of what man is! Nothing but a slave! and sin, as his master, driving him upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, and then giving him eternal death as his wages!

II. But the Apostle shows how the soul is brought out of this servitude—how it is delivered from this hard bondage, and brought to serve a better master, and from better motives, "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; **but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.**" It was by obeying "from the heart the form of doctrine" which was delivered them, that they were rescued from the miserable servitude and bondage under which they lived in sin, and were made to walk in newness of life.

Let us look, then, at the expression here used—"that form of doctrine which was delivered you." It is in the margin and that is more agreeable to the original,—that form of doctrine "whereunto, or into which, ye were delivered." By the word "form," is meant "mould;" and by "doctrine" is meant, not what we understand by the term as the article of a creed, but **teaching**. This is a frequent meaning of the word "doctrine," in



the New Testament. Thus Paul tells Timothy **1Tim 4:13** to give himself unto "doctrine," that is to teaching. Thus we may consider the meaning of the text to be: "God be thanked, though ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that **mould of teaching** into which ye were cast, or delivered." The figure is this—the impression which a coin takes from the die; or the effect produced upon melted metal run into a mould; the doctrine being the die, and the heart the coin; the teaching being the mould, and the soul the cast. Thus, the "form of doctrine" signifies not so much a creed of sound doctrine which the Apostle in a formal, systematic manner laid before his hearers, but rather the mould of heavenly teaching into which the Holy Ghost delivered their souls.

It is evident, then, if this be a correct interpretation, that the Holy Ghost has a certain mould of teaching, into which he casts and delivers the soul, from which it comes out as money from the Mint, bearing the impression of the die upon it in every point, and as a cast from a mould, showing exactly what the shape of the model is. This "form of doctrine," or mould of teaching, into which they were delivered, was that which the Apostle, through divine instrumentality, had set before them.

Let us see, then, with God's blessing, what was "the form of doctrine," or the mould of divine teaching, into which, through grace, their souls had been cast; for it was by being delivered into it that they were freed from being the servants of sin, and made vessels of honour meet for the Master's use, as well as conformed to the Master's image.

What this form of doctrine was we may gather from what the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle, has left on record.

1. He began, then, I believe, by insisting on the **utter ruin and fall of man**, He began from the beginning, and like a "wise master builder," raised up the building by first digging a deep foundation. He knew—as every rightly taught man and minister knows,—that unless a foundation be made by digging deep, the

house will not be built upon the rock; that if a knowledge of our utter ruin by nature be not brought into the heart, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, all our religion will be like a house built upon the sand. Thus he tells the Ephesians **Eph 2:1** "But you hath he quickened, who were **dead in trespasses and sins.**" How he insists there on man's death in sin! Again, **Ro 5:6.** "When we were **without strength,** in due time Christ died for **the ungodly.**" More especially in **Ro 7** does the Apostle describe from his own experience the desperate wickedness of the human heart. "For I know that in me **that is in my flesh** dwelleth no good thing." "I am carnal, sold under sin." He there sets forth from his own experience the complete fall of man, the entire ruin of the creature, the thorough wickedness of "the carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." This being a part of his ministry and of the inspired Scriptures, into this mould of teaching does God the Spirit deliver the soul. And just in the same way as upon the piece of money you may read the exact lineaments of the original die, so when the heart is delivered into this "form of doctrine" by the Holy Ghost, it comes out of the mould bearing the exact impression. It is thus we are made to feel every line of what the Apostle says of our ruined, undone state—that "in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" that "when we would do good, evil is present with us;" that "the law in our members wars against the law of our mind." And under these feelings, we sigh and groan, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is thus that Paul's experience becomes ours; and we find every line of **Rom 7** engraved upon our hearts, and feel every expression to be as much ours as if it were drawn from the workings of our own mind. No coin bears a greater resemblance to the die, no cast is more the counterpart of the mould, than our experience corresponds to that of the Apostle, as the Holy Ghost delivers us into this mould of divine teaching.

2. But we find, that another part of the Apostle's ministry was to set forth the **holy law of God** in all its strictness and spirituality. He says, **Ro 7:14** "the law is spiritual;" "by the law is the

knowledge of sin;" "what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God." And describing his own experience. he says, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And therefore he adds, "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good." He thus sets forth the law in all its purity strictness and spirituality, and shows how when it comes home with power to the conscience, it kills us to all hopes of justification by it. Into this "form of doctrine," or mould of teaching is the soul delivered; and the law being brought into the conscience, as the die at the Mint is brought down upon a piece of gold to produce a coin, its spirituality is then and there revealed, and a deep and lasting impression is made upon the heart to which it is applied.

3. But the apostle Paul, that workman who never needed to be ashamed of his tools or of his work, not merely sets forth man's utter ruin, and the spirituality of God's law, as slaughtering the sinner, and cutting up all his righteousness, root and branch; but his darling subject, his grand theme, was the **mode by which God justifies the ungodly**. What reason have we to bless God that he so instructed his Apostle to set forth how a sinner is justified! For how could we have attained to the knowledge of this mystery without divine revelation? How could we know in what way God could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? How could we see all the perfections of God harmonizing in the Person and work of Jesus? his law maintained in all its rigid purity, and strict justice—and yet mercy, grace, and love have full play in a sinner's salvation? But the Spirit of God led Paul deeply into this blessed subject; and especially in the Epistle to the Romans does he trace out this grand foundation truth with that clearness, weight, and power, that the church of God can never be sufficiently thankful for this portion of divine revelation. His grand object is to show how God justifies the ungodly by the blood and obedience of his dear Son; so that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." He declares that "the righteousness of God is

unto all and upon all them that believe;" and that "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," he pardons the sinner, justifies the ungodly, and views him as righteous in the Son of his love. In opening up this subject the Apostle **Ro 5** traces up this justification to the union of the church with her covenant head; shows us her standing in Christ as well as in Adam; and that all the miseries which she derives from her standing in the latter are overbalanced by the mercies that flow from her standing in the former: winding up all with that heart-reviving truth, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign unto eternal life." This then is a "form of doctrine," or mould of teaching, into which the soul is delivered when it is brought into a heartfelt reception of, and a feeling acquaintance with it; led more or less into the experimental enjoyment of it; and favoured with a solemn acquiescence in, and a filial submission to it, as all its salvation and all its desire. And as the mould impresses its image upon the moist plaster or melted metal poured into it; so the heart, softened and melted by the blessed Spirit's teaching, receives the impress of this glorious truth with holy admiration of it, as the only way in which God can justify an ungodly wretch, not only without sacrificing any one attribute of his holy character, but rather magnifying thereby the purity of his nature and the demands of his unbending justice.

4. But the Apostle not merely sets forth the way in which the sinner is justified, and becomes manifestly righteous, but he also strongly insists upon the **kingdom of God being set up with power in the heart**. He says, **1Co 2:4,5** "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom"—these he discarded—"but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He was afraid their faith might stand in human wisdom, and not "in the power of God." His desire was that it might be a faith rooted in their hearts by the Spirit of God; that it might not be learnt from man, nor stand in the wisdom of man, but stand wholly and solely in "the power of God." How, again, he

holds a rod over the church at Corinth; and says **1Co 4:19** "he will know, not the speech of them that were puffed up"—those gossips and chatterers who could prate loudly about the doctrines, but knew nothing of them as experimentally revealed in the conscience. Against such pretenders he would "come with a rod, and use sharpness." He would bring to bear upon their profession some of those "weapons of warfare, which were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;" and says, "if he came again to Corinth, he would not spare." He was therefore determined to search them, and find their real standing; "to know not the speech, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Thus in setting forth the truth before them, he powerfully contended that there must be a vital experience of divine realities in the heart; that truth could only be known by spiritual revelation; **1Co 2:10-13** that "faith was the gift of God;" **Eph 2:8**; that we are "to turn away from those that have the form of godliness but deny the power thereof," **2Ti 3:5** that "bodily exercise profiteth little;" **1Ti 4:8** and that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." **Ro 14:17** Into this mould of divine teaching is the soul, born of God, cast; and thus learns and enters into the nature and blessedness of the internal kingdom of God.

5. Connected with this, he sets forth also **the way in which believers should walk**. This he specially insists upon in this chapter; and doubtless there was much reason for it then, as there is much reason for it now; for how lamentable are the cases of inconsistency we perpetually hear of, even ministers professing truth falling under the power of besetting sins! The Apostle, therefore, as every rightly taught servant of God must do, insisted upon a life and walk agreeable to the doctrine which is according to godliness. He would give them no warrant for a loose, careless, inconsistent walk; but insisted that grace bound the soul with the cords of love to follow the footsteps of Jesus, and look to him as a pattern and example. In this chapter therefore, he insists strongly upon a godly life; he says, "When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What

fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness; and the end, everlasting life." How strongly he here insists upon their "having their fruit unto holiness!" He shows that if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him; and being by grace delivered from the law, we are under greater obligations to walk as becometh the gospel; adding, as knowing our weakness and helplessness, that promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." So that "the form of doctrine" into which they were delivered was a conformity to Christ, and an obedience to his precepts; a holy desire to please God; a hatred to evil, and a cleaving to that which is good; a longing after more intimate communion with Jesus; and a more earnest wish that his holy example might be made manifest in their lives.

II. But the Apostle says, "**ye have obeyed from the heart** that form of doctrine which was delivered you." A "form of doctrine" was delivered them, or rather they were delivered into it; a mould of divine teaching was set up into which their souls had been cast; and they had come out of this mould new creatures, so that "old things were passed away, and all things had become new." The effect was that they "obeyed **from the heart** that form of doctrine." There was an Obedience wrought into their conscience, which flowed not from legal principles, not from self-righteous motives, not from the precepts of men, but "from the heart." Their hearts had been so melted by divine operations and their conscience go effectually wrought upon by being cast into the mould of teaching which the Holy Ghost had inwardly set up, that they "obeyed from the heart," because the impression had been made there.

But let us see, with God's blessing, how a man "obeys from the heart" the "form of doctrine" delivered unto him. This will comprehend the whole of the Spirit's work upon the conscience—every lineament and feature of that heavenly mould, so far as the

soul has been delivered into it. We will therefore revert to these distinguishing features.

1. I mentioned **first, the utter fall and ruin of man, and the complete helplessness of the creature**, as a branch of divine teaching. A man obeys this form of doctrine when he is completely convinced in his conscience what a poor, helpless creature he is; and, in obedience to it, desists from all self-righteous attempts to please God. He obeys it from his heart when really convinced of his own helplessness and ruin, he falls down before God, and beseeches he would work in him that which is well-pleasing in his sight. And as he is cast into this mould of teaching, he becomes day by day more and more spiritually convinced of his own helplessness and complete ruin, and will daily cry to the Lord to work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Will a knowledge of his sinfulness, a conviction of his helplessness, an acquaintance with his own ruin, lead a man into sin? I say boldly, No. On the contrary, it will lead him from sin. He will no longer run recklessly and heedlessly forward; but he will go softly and tenderly, begging the Lord to keep him. There are two persons, say, in this congregation; one, ignorant of his own sinfulness, unacquainted with his own helplessness; the other, day by day, deeply and spiritually convinced of the one, and groaning under a sense of the other. Take these two men into the world; place them in the market; send them to traffic in the busy marts of commerce. In whom will you find most consistency of conduct, most tenderness of conscience, most abhorrence of evil? Not in the man ignorant of his own depravity and helplessness; but in the man who carries about with him the deepest sense of his own sinfulness and wretchedness; and who, feeling his helplessness, is perpetually crying to the Lord, "Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." As we pass through the streets of this Metropolis, we are continually exposed to temptation; but who is the man most likely to fall into the snares spread for his feet? Not he who feels that he has a roving eye, and a wandering heart, and is crying to the Lord, 'Hold thou me

up; let me not fall,' as fearing he shall fall every moment; but he who goes recklessly on, confident he can keep himself. So that to be spiritually cast into this "form of doctrine," so as to be deeply convinced of our sinfulness and helplessness, so far from leading to sin, leads us from it; so far from encouraging the vile depravity of our nature, makes the conscience tender in God's fear, and leads us to hate that which God abhors. There is no greater libel than to confound a knowledge of our sinfulness with "a gloating," as they call it, "over corruption." We are taught our sinfulness that we may hate it, and our helplessness that we may flee to him on whom God has laid help. 2. Again; A **knowledge of the purity and spirituality of God's law** is another feature of divine teaching—another branch of the mould into which the soul is cast. A man who has never been made to see the purity of God's law, never felt its spirituality, never known its condemnation, never groaned under its bondage, will have very dim and indistinct views of sin. "Blessed is the man," we read, "whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and **teachest him out of thy law.**" In that glass the strict justice of God and all its holy unbending demands are clearly seen.

3. A **spiritual reception of, and what the Apostle calls a submission to the righteousness of God Ro 10:3** is another branch of the form of doctrine which produces obedience from the heart. Let a man see what justification is through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and feel what it cost the Son of God to work out a meritorious obedience to the law for his guilty soul, it will not make him think lightly of sin. When delivered by the Spirit's operation into this mould of teaching, and thus brought into a spiritual acquaintance with it, it will make his conscience tender. He will obey, not from natural convictions or hypocritical motives, but from the heart, as penetrated with a sense of mercy, and will desire to be brought into a spiritual acquaintance with it, that he may walk before God in all blamelessness. But if a man, however sound in the doctrine of justification as a creed, has never been cast into the mould of it, so as to receive the impression upon his conscience, and feel it with power in his heart, he will probably be one of those who disgrace it by their



lives; because, through want of divine teaching, his conscience is unaffected by the power of the truth he professes. Whence is it that men, and, to their shame be it spoken, ministers who profess the doctrines of grace, often walk so inconsistently and unbecomingly? In doctrine none can be sounder than these men; but had they received by divine teaching the glorious truths of justification through the righteousness of the Son of God—had their hearts been impressed by it, and their souls been cast into this mould, they would have adorned the doctrine by their life and conversation. But not being delivered into this heavenly mould, and the Spirit never having brought this truth down upon their conscience and stamped its features upon their heart, as the die is brought down upon the coin, they can "continue in sin, that grace may abound." It is only therefore as we are delivered into the mould of this doctrine of justification by Christ's glorious righteousness, that we obey it from the heart. In proportion as we feel our soul in acquiesce in it, and enjoy it—so far from leading us into sin, it will lead us away from it, and enable us to walk in those things which become the gospel.

4. So when, by divine teaching, the soul is delivered into another branch of "the form of doctrine," or mould of divine teaching, viz., **that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power**, gospel obedience will flow from the heart. Just in proportion as this divine truth is stamped upon the conscience, do we feel and find that religion does not consist in a few notions, doctrines, or names, but in the power of the Holy Ghost setting Christ up in the soul. A kingdom in the heart implies that a king reigns there; and if so; the obedience paid to that king will be in and from the heart. This is true gospel obedience; and in proportion as the soul is cast into this mould, it will become a servant unto God. This so far from leading us to obey sin, will make us servants unto God; and so far from causing us "to yield our members servants to uncleanness unto iniquity, will rather make us yield them servants to righteousness unto holiness." If we know any thing, if we feel any thing of the kingdom of God set up with power in the conscience, that knowledge, that feeling, so far as each is spiritual and experimental, will produce an effect. Vital godliness

will be more or less worked into our consciences, and will leave, more or less, a deep and abiding impression upon our heart. Our religion will not consist in merely embracing a sound creed, in talking about ministers and books, attending a certain chapel, hearing certain ministers, or going through certain ordinances. If we have been delivered into this mould of divine teaching that "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power," there will be something higher and deeper, something more lasting and abiding, something more spiritual and supernatural than sound creeds and external performances. It is the glory and beauty of vital godliness, that the soul possessed of it obeys from heart; that the spring of its obedience is spiritual and inward; that it does what it does from noble principles; that as far as a Christian is rightly taught and guided, what he does, he does from his heart; that what he says, he says from his heart; what he prays, he prays from the heart; and if he be a preacher, what he preaches, he preaches from the heart. His very soul is in the matter; and as his conscience lives under the dew and unction of the Spirit, what he does he does unto God, and not unto men.

Now till a man is thus spiritually taught and wrought upon he will be the servant of sin. He may indeed have a very shining profession; but it may be only a mask for the deepest and blackest hypocrisy. He may contend much for spirituality of mind; and yet hide under that profession the basest sins. He may plead much for the doctrines of grace; and yet use them as a cloak for the vilest licentiousness in practice. A man must, in one form or another, be "the servant of sin," till he "obeys from the heart the form of doctrine"—the mould of divine teaching "into which the soul is spiritually delivered." But when the Holy Ghost takes him in hand, and casts him into the mould of divine teaching, so as to bring into his soul the word of God with power, he stamps the truth upon his conscience, and impresses it upon his heart; so that he comes forth with the truth of God stamped upon him, as the cast comes out of the mould, and the coin from the die. Then, and only then, is he delivered from the service of sin. Sin might indeed not have worn an outward or gross form. The life might have been circumspect, and sin worn in him a very subtle shape.

But there is no real deliverance from wearing the yoke of sin, till the mould of heavenly teaching is obeyed "from the heart." This is the fulfilment of that new covenant promise—"I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their heart." And thus inward, spiritual, and vital obedience can alone be produced.

It is then in this way that "the form of doctrine" which we have received in the Spirit, is made to produce an impression upon our hearts and lives. And the More that "the form of doctrine" is brought into our heart, and the more we are moulded by it, the more shall we obey it; and, as the Apostle says, "grow in grace, and in knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We grow in grace by growing in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and we only grow in the knowledge of Him as we grow in the knowledge of ourselves. Thus to grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of our own weakness, and of Christ's strength; of our own sinfulness, and of Christ's atoning blood; of our own ignorance, and of Christ's teaching in that ignorance. A sense of daily depravity, and yet seeing God's grace superabounding over it all; a constant fear we shall fall every day and hour, unless God keep us, and yet mercifully feeling his fear springing up in our hearts, as "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death,"—to be cast into this mould of heavenly teaching will deliver us from being "the servants of sin."

Let us, with God's blessing, by way of summing up the whole, look a little into our own conscience. There is then a "form of doctrine," a mould of divine teaching. What evidence have we that we have been delivered into it? What have we felt, what have we known, of our own ruin by nature? Have we groaned and sighed because we have been and are so vile? Did sin ever lie as a heavy burden upon our conscience, and did we ever see what wretches we are by nature and practice? Have we ever desired deliverance from the bondage and servitude of sin? Have we become tired of our master, of his ways, and of his wages? and have we longed for a better master and better wages? That is the beginning of the breaking off the chain of servitude. The first link of the servile yoke is snapped, when we begin to be discontented

with our slavery, and cry and sigh for a better master and a better service.

Again. What do we know, or what have we known of the spirituality of God's law? Now this we must know, in order to feel more keenly our servitude. Not that we can break off the chains of sin through the law, because "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" and therefore the law never can deliver us from the power, guilt, and service of sin. But the heavier the yoke, as with the children of Israel in Egypt, the nearer is deliverance from it. And what know we of being cast into the mould of the grand gospel truth of justification by Christ's imputed righteousness? Have our souls ever received this glorious truth with a measure of divine power? This is the first deliverance from sin; the first escape from its servitude, the first striking off of its fetters and chains. And have we felt the kingdom of God set up in the heart? Have we felt a cleaving to the teaching of the Holy Spirit? been convinced in our consciences that the kingdom of God stands only in divine teaching, and that we have no religion but what the Spirit works in us in power? To come to this is to obey the form of doctrine delivered unto us. And then may I not justly ask what effect this has on our lives? What deadness to the world does it produce in our soul? What cleaving to the things of God! What desiring in our conscience to be conformed to the image of Jesus? Sure I am, that the more the blessed Spirit lets down into our conscience the power of truth, in all its branches; and leads us into a heartfelt reception of, and acquiescence in it, the more shall we get delivered from serving sin, and the more be led to obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered unto us; the more we shall walk in the footsteps of the Lord of life and glory, and have the truth stamped with power on the conscience. And then feeling our own ruin, weakness, and helplessness, we shall learn to give glory to whom glory is due; and to ascribe salvation first, and salvation last to the God of grace and glory; and cast the crown before the throne of God and the Lamb, who with the Holy Ghost is alone worthy of praise and blessing, now and ever.

## **The Mountain Made a Plain**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 11, 1844

"Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it." Zechariah 4:7

The children of Israel were, beyond all controversy, a typical people; and therefore God's dealings with Israel after the flesh were typical of his dealings with his elect family, Israel after the Spirit. This typical character of God's dealings with them we may trace throughout the whole of the Old Testament. I need not multiply instances, for they are to be found in almost every page; but I shall confine myself this morning to that portion of their history, which, with God's blessing, may throw some light upon the text.

You know that, as a chastisement for their sins, the children of Israel were carried captive to Babylon, and remained there seventy years. When the seventy years, however, were expired, "the Lord," we read, "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying: Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem." (Ezra 1:1-3.)

In obedience to this edict, many of the children of Israel left Babylon to return to the land of their fathers, and to Jerusalem, their beloved abode. And one of the first things which they did, after "they had set the altar upon his bases," (Ezra 3:3) was, to commence rebuilding the temple of the Lord, which had been laid

in ruins by Nebuchadnezzar. We have an account of the laying of the foundation, which I need not enter into, in the book of Ezra (3:8-13) where we find that Zerubbabel, who was the temporal head, and Jeshua, who was the spiritual head—the one being the Prince, and the other the High Priest, "set forward the work of the house of the Lord." And we gather from Zech. 4:9, that the hands of Zerubbabel in particular laid the foundation-stone, he being the Governor of Judah, and the lineal descendant of David, and thus a type of the Lord Jesus.

But no sooner was the foundation of the temple laid, than difficulties arose as to its completion. "The adversaries of Judah," when their offer to become co-partners and co-workers was refused by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, "hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose" during several reigns; and wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes, complaining that they were "building up the rebellious and the bad city once more;" and if they succeeded in setting up the walls again, there would be no more toll or tribute paid to the kings of Babylon. In consequence of these obstacles, for thirteen or fourteen years was the building of the temple much hindered, and during the latter portion of that period entirely suspended.

But at the end of this period of fourteen years, the Lord raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, in order to stir up the spirits of the people to go on with the building of the temple in spite of all the opposition made to it; as we find Ezra 5:1, 2, "Then the prophets Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubaabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, the Son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them." And we find the Lord prospering the undertaking, and moving the heart of Darius king of Persia, so that he gave command that they should not be interrupted in the building of the temple, but should have money given them from the king's tribute towards the

completion. (Ezra 6:8.)

At the time, then, that this prophecy was delivered—which was just at the end of the fourteen years, but whilst all the difficulties still existed in the way of finishing the temple—the heart of the people was faint and desponding; for they saw no prospect of the temple ever being completed. It was begun, but how it was to be finished they knew not; and their hearts sank within them at seeing the walls of the temple only half-reared, and no probability of the head-stone being ever put on. Under these trying circumstances it was, that the Lord spake these words to Zerubbabel, who had laid the foundation of the temple: "Who art thou, O great mountain?"—thus alluding to the difficulties, opposition, and impediments that lay in the way of completing the temple. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" What are all those adversaries, all this opposition, all these difficulties? "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." All the difficulties shall as much disappear, as though a mountain in a moment were to sink down into a level. "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." (Zech. 1:16.) He who has begun the temple shall also complete it; as we read, "the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, his hands shall also finish it." (Zech. 4:9.) And so it happened; the prophecy was literally and historically fulfilled; the mountain became a plain: and the head-stone was brought forth and put upon the temple with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it;" as we read, "And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy." (Ezra 6:15, 16.)

These, then, are the historical circumstances on which I hope, with God's blessing, this morning to build up a spiritual and experimental interpretation; and to show spiritually, if God enable me, how all the mountains (and many there are) which stand in the way of the completion of the work of grace in the soul, and

the building of the inward temple where the Holy Ghost takes up his abode, (for "your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost") all disappear before the spiritual Zerubbabel, the Lord of life and glory. And how he is sure to bring forth the head-stone, and put it upon the spiritual building with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." As this spiritual interpretation is my object, and this the line of things I mean to pursue, I shall, with God's blessing, take up the words as they lie before me.

I.—The Lord here begins with an inquiry, "*Who art thou, O great mountain?*" There are many, probably, here who have never seen a mountain; and if you have never seen one, you can have a faint conception what a mountain is. I never saw one till I was more than twenty-three years old; and I shall never forget how surprised I was, as I was travelling through North Wales, when I first beheld its steep and rocky sides. My idea of a mountain was, that it was a high grassy hill, an elevated knoll, covered with beautiful trees and herbage up to the very top. But as to those lofty peaks, that thrust themselves into the sky, completely barren of verdure, with their deep and rugged precipices;—of such a mountain as that, I had not the least conception. In carrying, then, into your mind what a mountain is, you must not think of such a hill as Primrose Hill, or such grassy knolls as are in this level, cultivated country; but you must conceive an object that rears up its lofty peaks into the sky, and presents an insuperable and impenetrable barrier, an obstacle not to be clambered over, but which must be entirely removed that a free passage may be afforded. And unless you carry into your mind this idea, that these tall peaks, deep precipices, and unfathomable abysses present an insuperable obstacle, you cannot enter into the mind of the Spirit in the text, and will therefore lose much of the sweetness, beauty, and force of it.

The Lord, then, addresses himself to this mountain, and says, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" As though he had said, "Let us look at thee; let us take thy dimensions; let us see thy heights; let us look at thy depths; let us view thee in all thy magnitude, and examine this insuperable obstacle that stands in



the way. 'Who art thou?' Be thou ever so high; be thou ever so huge; be thy precipices ever so deep; be thy peaks ever so lofty; 'who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel'—let him but speak, let him but appear—'thou shalt become a plain.' It matters not how high; it matters not how deep; 'before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.'"

Now, let us look at this spiritually. Say, that the Lord has begun a work of grace upon your hearts. Zerubbabel (Jesus, set forth by that name), the true Prince of Israel, through the operation of God, the Holy Ghost, has laid the foundation of a spiritual temple in your conscience. But no sooner is the foundation-stone of God's grace laid in the soul, than it is with us spiritually as it was with the Jews naturally; opposition arises, and enemies start up on every hand; and the great mountain which before did not appear rears up its head. The adversaries of the church were quiet enough when she was in Babylon; but when she came forth to build up the temple at Jerusalem, then they started up. So spiritually: all the enemies, obstacles, impediments, and difficulties that the quickened soul meets with, were dead as stones, when there was no work going on in the conscience; but no sooner does Zerubbabel lay the foundation-stone of grace in the heart, than adversaries rise up thick, lofty mountains begin to start up, and, where before there was nothing but a plain, thrust up their lofty peaks into the sky.

1. For instance. There is the mountain of *God's inflexible justice*. Who knows anything of God's justice, righteousness, purity, holiness, and indignation against sin whilst in a state of nature? But when the spiritual Zerubbabel lays the foundation-stone of grace in the heart, this lofty mountain for the first time begins to appear; the high and rugged peaks of God's immutable justice, and the deep abysses and precipices of eternal woe;—this Sinai mountain, hitherto not perceived, rises up betwixt heaven and the soul. Now it cannot be passed over. There are many who are trying to wind their way round this mountain; but they will only fall down its precipices. Some skilful engineers are attempting to lower its peaks, and bridge its ravines; but the rocks will fall upon

them, and the bridges break under them, and let them down into ever-devouring flames. The mountain of God's justice in a broken law is not to be passed over by a fallen creature like man; it ever stands up as an impenetrable barrier betwixt God and the soul till Zerubbabel appears; but "before Zerubbabel," this lofty mountain of God's inflexible justice becomes a plain. He has fulfilled it; therefore he has removed it out of the way. As the apostle speaks, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and *took it out of the way*, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2:14.) By fulfilling the law, he removed the impenetrable barrier of God's inflexible justice. He made no bridge over the precipices; he did not lower a little the peaks, that the sinner might by degrees clamber over them; but by fulfilling the Law, he completely put it out of the way. Thus before the spiritual Zerubbabel this mountain of inflexible justice becomes a plain.

2. But there is also *an unbelieving heart*, which stands up as a great mountain betwixt salvation and the soul. We know nothing of an unbelieving heart till God the Spirit makes the conscience tender in his fear. Deceived by Satan, we mistake presumption for faith, and vain-confidence for a good hope through grace; the unbelief and infidelity of our fallen nature are completely hidden from us; and we know no more about the workings of a fearful, doubting heart, and the utter impossibility of creating spiritual faith in our own souls, than the dead in the grave-yard. But when the spiritual Zerubbabel sets his hand to the work, and lays the foundation-stone of grace in the conscience, then for the first time this mountain begins to appear—the mountain of a doubting, unbelieving, and infidel heart, which questions every thing that God has revealed, and will not and cannot receive the truth as it is in Jesus. And O, what struggles, difficulties, perplexities, and exercises are felt in the soul through this great mountain of unbelief which rears up its huge head so unexpectedly! When God the Spirit convinces us of unbelief, he does not *create* the mountain; for if he did, it would make God the author of sin; but he *shews* us the mountain which before was hidden from our view, and makes us feel what a barrier it is betwixt heaven and

our souls. The mountain was there before, but we did not see it. When this truth is revealed by the Spirit in the conscience, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," we are brought to see, that to live and die in unbelief, is to live and die in our sins. As soon, then, as we get faith, we feel unbelief in our hearts. For we need living faith to believe our own unbelief; spiritual light to see its existence and divine life to feel its power. O this great mountain that stands up as an insuperable obstacle between heaven and our souls! But the Lord says, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" "Art thou so high, art thou so deep, art thou so immense, that thou canst not be removed?" For if it be not removed, not a single soul can get to heaven. But some say, "We must do our best to get over this mountain: we must take God at his word; we must believe his promises, look to Jesus, and rely upon his truth." In other words, we must, with a great deal of pains and skill, lower this mountain, level it, tunnel it, cut through it, or make a road over it. But a living soul finds it no such easy thing to take God at his word, no such simple thing to believe the Lord's promises. He finds that all this "taking God at his word," leaves him still in the mud and mire of doubt and fear, still in the pit wherein is no water, still under the curse and sentence of a broken law. Therefore, all this taking God at his word, looking to the promises, relying on Jesus, without the Spirit's inward work and witness, is found in our experience to be utterly unable to remove the mountain of unbelief.

Now the Lord says, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain." The spiritual Zerubbabel, with one glance of his eye, with one touch of his finger, with one word of his lips, in one moment, can cause faith to spring up in the soul to receive him in all his covenant fulness. And thus, the great mountain of unbelief, which seemed completely irremovable and utterly impassable, sinks down into a plain; and we can no more refuse to believe when the spiritual Zerubbabel gives us faith, than we could believe before he gave it. When faith is given, of all things it is most easy to believe; the mountain before Zerubbabel sinks into a plain.

3. But there is also *the burden of sin*, that lies hard and heavy on

a tender conscience. The iniquities and transgressions of his past life; the base, base backsliding of which he has been and is perpetually guilty; the slips, falls, and inconsistent words and actions; and the horrible workings of a depraved nature;—all these at times lie with great weight and power on the conscience of an awakened sinner, and, like a mountain, press down his soul to the earth. "How is this great mountain of sin and sinfulness," asks the soul, "to be removed? I cannot change my own heart; I cannot take away the burden of sin; I cannot purge my guilty conscience; I cannot bring spiritual, holy, and heavenly thoughts into my mind. How is this great mountain to be removed?" Why, such a mountain as that left upon the soul would be a millstone to sink it into the lowest depths of hell. But when the Lord says, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" this burden of sin, this weight of guilt that makes thy soul cry and groan? What art thou "before Zerubbabel?" let him but speak with power, "it shall become a plain." For Zerubbabel, the spiritual Zerubbabel, has shed atoning blood to wash away all this guilt, has brought in everlasting righteousness to justify the ungodly, and has a heart full of love which he can and does shed abroad in the soul of his beloved ones. Thus, then, this burden of guilt and shame, this great mountain, before Zerubbabel, let him but speak, becomes a plain.

4. *A hard heart.* And O, what a burden a hard heart is to one whose conscience has been made tender in God's fear! A hard, rocky, unfeeling heart,—what a great mountain is this betwixt God and the soul! When we cannot produce one feeling of contrition, when we cannot raise up one pang of godly sorrow, when not a sigh will come out of our steely bosom, not a single tear fall from our iron eye, O, at what a distance does this hard heart keep us from the Lord! What a burden, what a plague, what a source of guilt and trouble is a hard heart to all that fear his name! O this great mountain that thrusts up its lofty peak into the sky, so that heaven is not seen, nor the countenance of God beheld, nor the lovingkindness of Jesus' heart is realized; but nothing seen except this dark and impenetrable barrier between God and our souls! We cannot move it. All the preaching in the world cannot stir it, all the praying in the world cannot move it,

and all the exertions of the creature cannot alter it. You might as well try to remove Snowdon from its base as try to move away the rocky barrier of a hard, unfeeling, impenetrable heart. But, before Zerubbabel, the spiritual Zerubbabel, the mountain becomes a plain. In one moment, the hard, unfeeling heart that seems shut up in chains of adamant ice, in one moment, can he make it flow down and dissolve. Did not the church feel this, when she cried, "O, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, *that the mountains might flow down at thy presence?*" (Isa. 64:1.) This is the way whereby Zerubbabel removes the mountain of a hard heart. He does not remove the mountain (if I may use the expression) *bodily*, but he makes it dissolve, flow down, and melt into a plain. He softens the heart, (as Job says, "God maketh my heart soft:" 23:16) and makes it tender and contrite before him.

5. But a thousand difficulties, a thousand perplexities stand in the way of a soul that fears God. Men devoid of the grace of God, in a fleshly profession of religion, have no difficulties; the constant burden of their song is "What a pleasant thing religion is!" "It never was designed," they quote, "to make our pleasure less." "Cheerful piety, how delightful it is!" is the great song of the day. But if such silken holiday professors knew anything of the difficulties, exercises, temptations, and sorrows that lie in the path of every real Christian, we should not hear so much about cheerful piety, which is often but another name for delusion and hypocrisy. Look at the rebuilding of the temple by the remnant that returned from Babylon; view the obstacles thrown in the way of its completion; see how the enemies start up at every stop; how the great king sends his commands not to go on with it; how the builders are compelled for many years to desist from putting a single stone upon the walls; what despondency seized the breasts of those that loved Zion to see the place of God's abode desolate; and how indeed they found that prophecy fulfilled that "the wall should be built in troublous times!" (Dan. 9:25.) Had they much "cheerful piety," as they surveyed the unfinished pile?

But does not this *delay of the work* set forth one of the great

mountains that the children of God find in their path? The work of grace seems often at a standstill in them. And what a trying path it is to God's people, that, perhaps for thirteen or fourteen years, they cannot trace the hands of the spiritual Zerubbabel to have laid a single stone in their heart, or raised up one clear and striking Ebenezer! This apparently complete suspension of the work makes them often say, "Surely if I were the Lord's, I should feel more than I do! I should have more going on in my soul; I should certainly experience more sorrow, or more joy; more castings down, or more liftings up; more darkness or more light; more striking dealings of the Lord in providence; more manifest testimonies in grace; surely if the Lord were at work on my conscience, I should not be at this standstill for so many years." But look at the temple. Several years elapsed without a single stone being put upon the walls. The foundation had been laid, and the walls raised to a certain height; but for a long time there was a complete suspension of work. This entire cessation from building, producing hopelessness and despondency in the minds of the people as to its completion, was chiefly "the great mountain" that the Lord declared should be removed. The hands of Zerubbabel should complete what his hands had begun. And we know that this great mountain became a plain—that King Darius issued orders that the temple should be completed, and that he who opposed the work should be hanged, and his house made a dung-hill. (Ezra 6:11.) Thus Zerubbabel literally and actually brought forth the head-stone with the shoutings of those exulting in this manifestations of the Lord's grace and favour who had once sunk into distress and despondency.

But what a mountain is this in the way of God's people! To feel so little faith in exercise, so little love, so little joy, their affections so cold, and so little life and power in their hearts, is indeed at times to a tender conscience a great mountain. "O," says such an one, "that I could feel more! How many sermons do I hear, and not a single word comes with power to my heart! How many chapters I read, and not a verse is applied with sweetness to my soul! How I go on sighing and groaning, and yet seem not to advance one step forward in the heavenly road!" "Who art thou, O great

mountain?" the Lord still says by his prophet. "Who art thou?" What! Is this mountain too great to be removed? Are these peaks too lofty to flow down at the Lord's presence? "Who art thou?" "Before Zerubbabel,"—let him but speak, let him but appear, let him but smile, let him but drop one soft word into the conscience, "before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

6. But whatever good thing we try to do—whatever spiritual thing we are engaged in, we are sure to find some mountain or other in the way. When busy in the world, when engaged in business, when occupied with the things of time and sense, there are no difficulties then. You can use your head and hands, and employ your thoughts without interruption; but no sooner does the soul become engaged in spiritual things than a *thousand vain thoughts intrude, a thousand worldly things fill the mind*; and it seems scarcely possible to be spiritual and heavenly-minded for a single half hour together. This apparent (for in the case of the spiritual building of the temple of mercy there is no *real*) suspension of the Lord's dealings with the soul is indeed a great mountain. "O," says the poor groaning soul, "if I could but be spiritual, if I were but heavenly minded, if I had more sweet communion with Jesus, if I could see him agonizing under my sins, if I could but have a solemn sight of the Son of God suffering and dying for me! But whenever I try to take up spiritual things, a host of vain and worldly thoughts rush into my mind, and my gadding, roving, roaming, adulterous, idolatrous heart is running everywhere. I cannot read the word; I cannot fix my attention; I cannot understand nor feel what the Bible says; I cannot lift up my heart to God for five minutes, nor is my soul melted by his love. O, what a mountain, what a barrier, what an obstacle there is in the way betwixt God and my soul!" "Who art thou, O great mountain?" How the Lord challenges the mountain to stand forth in all its stature! How he takes a survey of it in every part; he gauges the depth, and measures the height, and looks at it in all its towering bulk, and all its huge dimensions! "Who art thou?" What! too great to be removed? too hard and rocky to flow down! "Before Zerubbabel!" one touch of his finger, one glance from his eye, one word from his lips; let it be the highest mountain,

although it be a second Andes, it shall at once "become a plain." Do not you find it sometimes to be so? Your hard thoughts of God are removed; your doubts and fears take wing and fly away; your carnality and earthliness are for a time dispersed; heavenly affections, spiritual desires, holy breathings, and ardent longings come into your heart; and you feel some embracement of Jesus in the arms of faith, because "before Zerubbabel" this mountain has become a plain.

But some may ask, "Why has the Lord appointed that these mountains should stand up betwixt himself and our hearts?" I will answer this question by another. Why did the Lord permit the temple to be so interrupted by the adversaries of Judah? Was it not his sovereign pleasure that the temple should be rebuilt? Did he not declare that the glory of the latter house should exceed the glory of the former? Did he not mean it to come to pass? Why did he then suffer these adversaries to rise up on every hand to stop its completion? To shew them these two things, which man cannot learn in any other way. *First*, the utter helplessness, complete weakness, and thorough impotency of the creature to everything good; and *secondly*, the almighty power of the Lord displayed in removing every obstacle in the way of his will. People talk of "Almighty God;" "the Almighty" is in everybody's lips; but how few know that he is the Almighty! And the people of God too, though persuaded that he is almighty, and that the spiritual Zerubbabel has "all power in heaven and earth," yet when they come into the slightest difficulty, their faith staggers and gives way, and they cannot believe that he has power or will to deliver. Have you not been in temptations, out of which you believed the Lord himself could not deliver you; at least, if the words did not come from your lips, the thought passed in your heart. Have you not been in trials, out of which you have been confident no good could come? And have you not been in straits and difficulties when it seemed utterly impossible for the Lord to appear? What was all this? Were you not doubting the very omnipotency of God, which is the foremost article of your creed, and secretly saying, "he is not almighty?" Now, the Lord, to shew that he is almighty, causes or permits these mountains to rise up in our paths, that



he may have the glory of taking them out of the way; that he may convince us that we have not the least power to remove them ourselves; and when he removes them, that he may get glory to himself; for he is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another.

Now I would ask those here who know the Lord, have not you ever found the highest mercy to be shown forth in the deepest misery; your clearest deliverances to come out of your sorest temptations; and the greatest power of God to appear in the greatest weakness of the creature? And why is this? In order to convince you, not as a cut and dried article of a Calvinistic creed, but to shew you in your very heart of hearts, in the very depths of your conscience, what a poor helpless creature you are in the things of God; and thus to make it plain that the hand of the Lord has done it all. If there were no mountains of difficulties, perplexities, and obstacles for the soul to be harassed and exercised with, we should not want a Zerubbabel, an almighty Jesus to appear; we should not need the power of God to be put forth in our hearts. We should be satisfied with a sound Calvinistic creed, with a dead formal profession, with a name to live, and merely seeing the truth in the letter. But having these mountains of difficulties, obstacles, perplexities, and exercises, we are brought to feel our need of the almighty power of God experimentally put forth to remove them. And when the Lord does remove them, the soul can give him all the praise and glory. Then "before Zerubbabel" every mountain "becomes a plain." And if you are a child of God, let these two things be written on your conscience, (God himself in mercy write them there!) you will have a mountain in your way pretty well every step that you take in the divine life. If you ever were to visit a mountainous country, you would see that it was a continued chain of eminences, so that one is only the introduction to another; that mountain rises after mountain, and peak after peak; so that the whole journey is a succession of mountains. So, spiritually, there will be a succession of mountains in the path of every one that fears God. And you will also find this, that "before Zerubbabel," before the almighty power of Jesus, these mountains will become "a plain."

And thus we learn to sink into the depths of self-abasement, and put the crown upon the head of him to whom it alone rightly belongs.

II.—"And he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." What is literally meant by these words? Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple; but it had been at a standstill for several years. The Lord, therefore, promises, by his prophet Zechariah, that the hands of Zerubbabel which had laid the foundation should also put on "the head-stone," or the last stone in the roof; and that the temple should stand forth complete, towering in all its beautiful proportions and all its sublime grandeur. This is the historical meaning of the prophecy. But we have a spiritual and experimental meaning couched under it. The spiritual Zerubbabel, Jesus, the Lord of life and glory, whose hands have laid the foundation-stone of grace in the heart, will accomplish the work, and bring forth the head-stone thereof, with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it."

1. There are two senses in which the spiritual Zerubbabel brings forth the head-stone: one, when Jesus reveals himself with divine power to the soul, and thus completes the spiritual building, making the heart a temple for God to dwell in; for, until Christ is manifested in the conscience, and his love, blood, and grace are sealed with a divine witness upon the heart, the head-stone is not brought forth, nor are there shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." The building is begun, but not finished; the walls are raised up, but the roof is wanted to keep out the wind and weather. The temple is not completed for the Lord of the temple to come in and dwell there till the top-stone is fitted in. How many of God's dear children are in that state! Zerubbabel has laid the foundation in their conscience; there is a work of grace begun in their heart; there are testimonies, signs, tokens, promises, evidences; yet the head-stone is not brought forth, with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." The last stone is not yet laid on; the arch wants the key-stone; so that they cannot say, "My Lord and my God." And because the headstone is not brought forth with shoutings, they

are troubled, distressed, exercised, tossed up and down with fears that they are not "the Lord's building;" for they think that if the work were of the Lord it would have been finished long ago. But look at the temple! Consider the long time it took to finish. Look at what an interval took place between laying the first stone and putting on the roof. What exercises the spiritual Israel must have had in those days, and how often must the souls of those who loved Zion have sunk within them when they looked at the unfinished walls! Many doubtless were the sighs, cries, and groans that went up from the people of Israel, that the Lord would complete the temple; and many anxious enquiries among themselves, "Shall we ever see the head-stone brought forth? Shall we ever behold the Lord's house completed?" So spiritually. How many of God's dear people are troubled in their minds, and go on questioning, doubting, and fearing perhaps for years, because they have no clear testimony in their conscience that their sins are pardoned, are unable to cry, "Abba Father!" or say, "the Lord is their God!" But he that has laid the foundation of the temple will also complete it. Shall the heavenly Architect commence and not complete! Shall his enemies ever mock him, and say, "He began to build, and was not able to finish?" (Luke 14:29, 30.) Shall not grace finish what grace began? The promise is express. "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.) The mountain of doubt, fear, unbelief, questionings, perplexities, shall "before Zerubbabel," in his own time and way, "become a plain;" and he will bring forth the head-stone thereof with such sweet revelations of his blood and love that the soul will shout "Grace, grace unto it."

But why is the repetition? O there is a sweetness in it. Grace begins the work, and grace completes it. Grace applied the Law, and grace reveals the Gospel; grace killed, and grace makes alive; grace wounded, and grace heals. Grace laid the foundation, and grace brings forth the top-stone. Thus grace reigns first, and grace reigns last; yea, every stone in the temple is laid by the hands of almighty grace. One "grace," that would not express half the feeling of the soul—"grace, grace" must be redoubled, as

though the soul were under the necessity of repeating it—"grace, grace!" for nothing but grace could ever have laid the foundation, and nothing short of grace could ever have brought forth the head-stone.

2. But there is another meaning of the word. For the temple shadowed forth not merely the work of grace upon the heart whereby the bodies of God's people become the temple of the Holy Ghost, but also the whole church of God, who are living stones in that temple, which will one day shine forth in all its beauty and glory, and of which Solomon's temple was but a feeble and imperfect type. Zerubbabel has laid the foundation below, and in each successive soul that he takes to glory there is another living stone laid in the glorious temple above. But the head-stone is not yet brought forth. There are many of the stones yet buried in the quarry; others are being hewed out of the rock, and digged from the hole of the pit; others are being chipped and hacked, to bring them into some fitting shape; and others, already squared and fashioned to occupy their destined place above, are lying for a short time amid the parings, chippings, and rubbish. The head-stone is not yet brought forth with shoutings. But when the last vessel of mercy shall be safely gathered in, and the great, the glorious, the living temple shall stand forth in all its beautiful proportions and sublime grandeur; when Zerubbabel, the heavenly Architect, who laid the first and each successive stone, brings forth the head-stone, the key-stone of the arch, which binds in the roof and completely fastens the building, the arches of heaven will ring with shoutings; and there will be one universal burst of joy and exultation from the redeemed throng of "Grace, grace unto it." The sound of good works will not be heard there; creature righteousness will not be extolled there; there will be no discordant clink of man's axe and hammer; there will not be a semi-chorus half round the throne above singing the praises of human piety and creature exertions; but there will be one universal song of harmony, extolling sovereign, superabounding grace. And if the Lord do not teach us the first note of the song of the Lamb here below, depend upon it, we shall never sing it hereafter. But O, what harmony will come in a full body from the

heavenly choir, when there will not be one discordant note, nor one jarring sound, but all will be in sweet melody, and "grace, grace," will still be the song throughout the countless ages of eternity!

But what a deal of exercise and work upon the conscience it takes to make a man feelingly join in that note! What depths of man's depravity must be known as well as heights of redeeming mercy! What an acquaintance is needed with the workings of a fallen nature! What troubles, exercises, perplexities, and temptations has the soul to wade through, and what testimonies and deliverances to experience before it is fit to join in that triumphant song.

Now, if the literal temple had been built up without any trouble whatever; if all had gone on smooth and easy, there would not have been any shouting of "grace, grace," when it was finished. But when they saw how the Lord had brought a few feeble exiles from Babylon; how he had supported them amidst, and carried them through all their troubles; and how he that laid the foundation had brought forth the head-stone, all that stood by could say, "Grace, grace unto it." It was these very perplexities and trials that made them join so cheerily in the shout, and made the heart and soul to leap with the lips when they burst forth with "Grace, grace unto it." And who will shout the loudest hereafter? He that has known and felt the most of the aboundings of sin to sink his soul down into grief and sorrow; and most of the superaboundings of grace over sin to make him triumph and rejoice. Who will have most reason to sing, "Grace, grace?" The lost and ruined wretch, who has feared that he should go to hell a thousand times over, and yet has been delivered thence by sovereign grace, and brought to the glory and joy of heaven. No other person is fit to join in that song; and I am sure no other will join in it but he who has known painfully and experimentally the bitterness of sin, and the evil of a depraved heart; and yet has seen and felt that grace has triumphed over all, in spite of the devil, in spite of the world, and in spite of himself, and brought him to that blessed place where many times he was afraid he

should never come.

## THE NARROW WAY

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 18th, 1847

"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Isaiah 30:21

It is an infinite mercy for the church of God that the religion of Jesus Christ is not a religion of uncertainties. The way to heaven is not built upon peradventures. All has been designed by infinite wisdom, infinite mercy, and infinite love; and what has been thus designed will be executed by infinite power. We indeed are ever fluctuating, as restless as the sea, as fickle as the wind, as changeable as the weather. But God changes not; He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8); "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). O what an inestimable mercy, so far as we are the children of God, that though we change, He changeth not!

And His promises are as unchangeable as Himself. He is a God that cannot lie. "All the promises of God in Him" (Christ Jesus) "are yea and in Him Amen unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). One of these promises—as firm as the everlasting hills, as stable as the throne of the Almighty itself—is in the words before us, a promise blessedly adapted to our changeable and fickle minds: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

Two things seem prominent in the words before us, which we may thus simply characterise: first, *man's weakness and waywardness*; and secondly, *God's heavenly and infallible tuition*. Man's weakness and waywardness we find pointed out by the expression, "When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to

the left;" implying that there is in the people of God a continual proneness to turn aside to the one hand or to the other. And God's heavenly and infallible tuition is pointed out in the words, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it."

I. God knows what is in the heart of man. It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ, He "needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man" (John 2:25). We read too, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:12). Thus, the Lord foresaw and foreknew all our weakness and all our waywardness. He knew, and that perfectly, that left to ourselves, we could do nothing but sin; and short of His divine tuition, we could do nothing but err.

But let us, as the Lord may enable, enter a little more closely and deeply into man's weakness and waywardness as here set forth; for I am sure that a true knowledge and just appreciation of the malady is indispensable to a true knowledge and just appreciation of the remedy. If we are so ignorant of our own hearts as not to know that there is that in us which continually turns us aside "to the right hand" or "to the left," we may prize, or seem to prize, such a promise as this, but it will be only with our lips. There will be no inward value set upon such a promise in our hearts, unless we are acquainted, deeply acquainted with our own waywardness, backslidings, and continual departings in heart, in lip, and in life from the living God.

"When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." What do these words imply? To my mind they imply this: that the way in which God would have us to walk is perfectly straight, without a single crook, or the slightest deviation from a right line. But when we, poor, fallen, feeble, ignorant, guilty, sinful wretches; when we would make some essays and feeble attempts, like a child learning to walk, in the straight and narrow path, we turn aside from the right line. And this turning aside is sometimes "to the right hand," and sometimes "to the left."



I cannot, I shall not attempt to define accurately what the blessed Spirit meant by "the right hand," in contradistinction "to the left." There may be a particular mystical meaning in it which my weak mind cannot enter into. I shall, therefore, merely lay before you what I know and feel on the matter as distinct from any mere fanciful or mystical interpretation.

"The right hand" is opposed "to the left." By the words, therefore, we have two extremes marked out as distinct from a narrow straight line. If you look at professors generally, and if you look at what far more deeply and nearly concerns you, the movements of your own heart, you will find there is a perpetual deviation to the one side or the other; and you will observe that these deviations are, generally speaking, contrary and opposed to each other. Let me instance this in a few examples.

1. Sometimes there is a turning aside to self-righteousness. Pharisaism is bound up in our hearts. It is born with us, grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength. There is, therefore, in our minds an inward propensity to self-righteousness, in some men's minds certainly more so than in others; but the same propensity exists, in a greater or less degree, in every man to self-righteousness, pharisaism, a leaning upon something to be done by the creature in contradistinction to the finished work of Jehovah Jesus. But there is an extreme on "the left hand" into which we are just as prone to run—an antinomian licentiousness. Sometimes we think too highly of works, and lean upon them, as though actually there were some merit in them, on "the right hand"; and then, on "the left hand," we indulge in our minds—I do not say in outward action—but slip away in our thoughts into antinomian licentiousness, as though it did not matter whether there were any works at all; as though the fruits of the Spirit in the outward life were of no consequence; as though so long as we had experience in our souls, it did not signify what works attended it. Now, there is a turning "to the left," just as much as pharisaism and self-righteousness is a turning "to the right."

2. Again. There is in many professors, and to go no farther, within ourselves (for before our eyes let the mirror be held up; we have work enough to look at home), there is a tendency to turn aside after dead assurance, carnal ease, a resting upon the doctrines of God's Word without a vital experience of their life and power. In this snare how many hundreds are caught! O what a blast it is over the church of the living God! I have long marked, and do still mark and grieve over the effects of this dead, empty, notional carnal assurance, sweeping as it were over the land; and I see in it the death of all good. It so hardens the conscience; it makes sin so little cared for and thought of; it is such a bar against everything tender, humble, broken and contrite; that I say again, wherever it comes it seems to be the death of all good. Yet we find it, I doubt not, in our hearts; a leaning to carnal security, a resting upon doctrines, a getting into an easy state, when the Lord is pleased to leave us unchastened, unafflicted. But then there is a "left hand" in the matter, which is to be in that state where there is a resting in doubts and fears; where there are no deliverances, no bright prospects, no cheering words, no heavenly glimpses, no divine testimonies, nor any desires after them. Now this is a turning "to the left hand," as much as dead assurance is a turning "to the right."

3. Again. There is a turning aside "to the right hand" in making too much of God's precepts, as though nothing else were worth attending to. There are ministers who deal them out from the pulpit week after week, as though obeying the precepts and keeping the precepts were the all in all of religion; while the work of the Spirit on the soul, His inward teachings and enlightenings, are thought little or nothing of. Precept! precept! precept! Sunday after Sunday, as though keeping God's precepts were the sure way to glory. But again, there is a turning aside "to the left"; a neglect of the precepts, a despising of them, a saying, "What have we to do with the precepts? It is all legality and self-righteousness. Let us have experience. Away with the precepts! we care nothing for them." Now this is just as much a turning aside "to the left hand" as making too much of the precepts is a

turning aside "to the right."

4. But, further, there is a turning aside "to the right hand" by an undue setting up of ordinances, as though there were something in prayer, baptism, and the Lord's Supper apart from what God makes them to be; and as if the sum and substance of all true religion were "to walk in the ordinances of the Lord's house blameless." But there is also a turning aside "to the left" in despising the ordinances, in pouring contempt upon baptism and the Lord's Supper, neglecting prayer and the preaching of the Word, and counting these divine appointments legal.

5. Again. An observing and reproving of the faults of the children of God and an overlooking of their good qualities, having the eye continually fixed on their defects and infirmities; this is a turning aside on "the right hand." But then, on the other hand, to make light of sin, justify transgression, and consider it immaterial how the child of God acts or walks, is a turning aside "to the left."

Time would scarcely suffice to run through the various extremes into which we thus are from time to time continually driven. Our nature left to itself can never do anything but sin. We may say, perhaps, and think ourselves very sincere in saying it, "I will never turn aside 'to the right' hand; I will never turn aside 'to the left'; I will keep the straight and narrow path." But how this shows our ignorance of self! If left to ourselves, without God's heavenly teaching in our soul, I am well convinced we can do nothing but sin and go astray. It is, therefore, an unspeakable mercy that God has recorded this special promise in the Word of life: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

II. This leads me to enter upon the second part of our subject, to shew *the heavenly and infallible tuition* which preserves the soul, or brings it back when it turns aside "to the right hand" or "to the left."

i. God does all things by His word. It was by His word, in the first instance, that He created all things. He had but to say, "Let there be light," and there was light. It is by His word that God is pleased to beget souls into spiritual life: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). It is by His word He is pleased, from time to time, to speak conviction to the soul; and it is by His word He is pleased to bring peace and consolation to the heart.

Now, referring to this power of God's word, the text declares: "Thine ears shall hear *a word* behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." But God has various ways of speaking to the soul "when we turn to the right hand, and when we turn to the left."

1. Sometimes God speaks by His providence. God's providences have a voice in them where there is an ear to hear; but if there be no ear to hear, they are unmarked. Those to whom the promise is made have ears to hear; for the text declares, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee." God often, then, speaks in His providence. For instance, if we have turned aside "to the right hand," or "to the left," and our conscience begins to reproach us for getting out of the path, when God's providential hand in any measure goes out against us, it has a voice from the Lord reproof, rebuking, and sharply correcting us for having turned aside. When our conscience is made and kept alive and tender in God's fear, and begins to bleed under a sense of imputed guilt, God's providence will speak very loudly; and if we see the hand of God going out against us in providence, it will cut very deep. The voice within will re-echo the voice without, and conscience will so fall beneath the stroke of God in providence, that we shall see His chastening hand in circumstances where otherwise we should not have seen it at all.

2. But especially does God speak by the word of His grace in the court of conscience. It is not what God speaks in the Scriptures; for unless He apply it, what He speaks there is for the most part unnoticed by us. Nor is it what God may speak from the pulpit,

because unless our ears are opened by the blessed Spirit, and our conscience made alive and tender in His fear, the most heart-searching ministry may leave us untouched. But it is what God speaks from the Scripture in the court of conscience; for what He speaks there, that we must hear; that will ever be deeply attended to, because it comes into our conscience as from the mouth of God Himself.

3. Sometimes the Lord speaks in rebukes and reproofs. For instance, we may be fallen into a state of carnal ease; we may be imbued, as I have known children of God to be, with the spirit of dead assurance, and be resting upon doctrines more than upon the manifestations of God's mercy to the soul. When we are in a smooth path, and all things are prosperous and easy, this dead assurance does very well. But when sickness and death begin to stare us in the face, when convictions of our sins begin powerfully to work, and when the Lord is pleased in a more special manner to deal with the conscience, what becomes of all this dead assurance? It fails us at the very moment when we want it most. We feel that it cannot take us safe into eternity, cannot give us peace with God, cannot remove the guilt of sin, cannot bring the smile of divine love into the soul; it is useless, absolutely useless, at the very time we want it most. This is the rebuke of God in our conscience to bring us out of, and bring us off, this dead assurance into which our souls may have been secretly slipping. We begin to fall down as guilty sinners at the footstool of mercy, and beg of God to pardon our sins, and speak a word of peace to our poor guilty conscience. Here is the "word behind" us, when we have turned aside from the right way, to bring us, once more into the straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life.

Or say, we may have got, as I have described, into a dark and gloomy state of despondency and dejection, eaten up with doubts and fears, and well-nigh swallowed up in the depths of despair. All our past experience seems swept out of sight; not a single token remains, and we are full of everything that sinks the mind in gloom and fear. Now when the Lord is pleased to speak a word of promise to the soul, and His voice begins to sound once more

in the heart, "This is the way;" "not your poor, guilty, miserable self, but Jesus is the way, His blood, His righteousness, and His love;" when our hearts begin to receive these glad tidings, and the blessed Spirit seals them home with divine unction, savour and power, there is a turning out of this "left hand" path in which our poor souls have been groping, and coming once more into the King's highway, the way of holiness, the way of atoning blood and justifying righteousness.

4. So again. We may have been drawn aside to see nothing but sin and imperfection in other men, and yet at the same time see nothing wrong in ourselves. But by and by the Lord begins to open up the depths of our wicked nature, or perhaps lets us slip and fall, not into outward sin to bring reproach upon the cause, but to walk upon the very brink of evil, and so withholds His preserving hand, that there is but one step between us and open disgrace. Now we see what we have been doing, finding fault with this man, and finding fault with that man; seeing nothing but infirmities and sins in all the Christians we have known. We begin then to see such horrid evils in ourselves, and feel such living witnesses to our own sinfulness and wickedness, that the stones fall out of our hands, our mouth is put in the dust, and we have not a word to say against the sins and infirmities of our fellow Christians; but fall down before God, with Job's language, "Behold, I am vile!"

5. Or again, as I said before, we may have been thinking too highly of the precepts, setting them up in such a wonderful way, as if nothing else were worth attending to. But, after a time, we find how lean our souls become! how little we are indulged with the manifestations of the Lord's mercy and love! and how barren, how cold, how legal, how dry our frame has become by setting up the precepts as the all in all of religion. Now we begin to long after heavenly visits and divine consolations, and to find there is something that we fall short of; that there is the life, love, and enjoyment of God; and that these are as valuable as the precepts themselves. Or, we may have turned aside "to the left hand," and thought very little of God's precepts; and so long as we had a

good experience it did not matter about anything else. But, perhaps, we have been entangled in some sin, and broken some of God's precepts; then, when conscience begins to lash, and the divine rebukes are felt within, we see what blessed things the precepts are, and desire with all our heart and soul to obey them, and be found in the way of them.

6. Or, we may have been among those who despise the Lord's ordinances, treat baptism and the Lord's Supper with the greatest contempt, and call them poor legal observances. But another time may have come when we have seen such a solemnity and glory in baptism, as opening up the sufferings of the Lord; and seen such beauty in the Lord's Supper; that all our objections were removed in a moment, and the ordinances have risen in the estimation and affection of our souls. Or, on the other hand, we may have thought too highly of God's ordinances, and esteemed them beyond their due position; but we may have come again and again to the ordinances, and felt our heart as hard as adamant, as cold and lifeless as winter's snow. Now we begin to see how we have been putting the ordinances above the Lord of the ordinances, and looking at the sign instead of the thing signified by it.

In all these various ways will the Lord's people "hear a word behind them." As they are walking along the road, their poor, wicked, carnal nature is continually turning them aside. Some darling idol, some besetting sin, some prevailing lust, some acting of pride draws them aside "to the right" hand or "to the left." But they "hear a word behind them;" the word sinks into their souls; the admonition falls into their heart; they are obliged to take heed to it; they cannot neglect it. It is thus by a word behind them they are brought back into the straight and narrow path that leads to glory.

ii. And what does the "word" say? *"This is the way."* The word not merely reproveth and rebukes when we turn aside from it, but it gives a direction, a clear, positive direction: "This is the way!" What "way?" Jesus, who said of Himself, "I am the Way" (John

14:6). There is no other way. Now every turning aside "to the right," and every turning aside "to the left," is a turning aside from Jesus. For instance, if we get into legality and pharisaism, is not that a turning aside from Jesus? If we get into a state of miserable dejection and gloom, and are unable to look to Him, is not that a turning away from Jesus? If we get into a dead assurance, and rest upon the doctrines instead of the sweet manifestations of Christ to our souls, is not that a turning aside from Jesus? If we get into carnal ease and security, is not that a turning aside from Jesus? If we get into the precepts as distinct from a vital experience of God's truth in the soul, is not that a turning aside from Jesus? And if we neglect the precepts He has given, is not that a turning away from Jesus? If we smite and wound the Lord's family, is not that a turning away from Jesus? And if we justify or make light of sin, is not that a turning aside from Jesus? Thus every turning aside "to the right hand," or "to the left," is a turning aside from Jesus, the only "Way" that leads to eternal life.

1. But how is Jesus the Way? In everything that He is to God's people He is the Way. His blood is the way to heaven, "for the whole path," as Hart speaks, "is lined with blood." By His precious blood shed upon Calvary's tree He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and opened up a way of access to God. His righteousness also is part of the way; for only so far as we stand clothed in His glorious righteousness have we any access unto, any acceptance with God the Father. And His love is the way; for if we walk in love, we walk in Him, for He is love. Every part of the way was devised and is executed by the love of His tender heart.

2. But the way also is the way of *tribulation*. Was not Jesus Himself the great Sufferer? And if He be the Way, the only Way, I must be conformed to His likeness in suffering. Not to know afflictions and tribulations is not to know Christ. He was "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And if so, to have no sorrow, to have no acquaintance with grief, and to know nothing of tribulation, is to proclaim to all with a loud voice that we have no



union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. But we are continually turning aside "to the right hand" or "to the left." There is that cowardice in the heart which cannot bear the cross; there is that slipping into carnal ease and fleshly security, so as to get away from under the painful cross of affliction and suffering. But when we thus turn aside "to the right hand," or "to the left," the voice the Lord sends after us is, "This is the way"—the way of affliction, no other; the way of tribulation, the way of trial, the way of exercise. This is the way in which the King walked of old; and this is the way in which all His people have walked before Him and after Him; for this is the only path in which the footsteps of the flock can be found.

3. But again, it is the way of *temptation*. The Lord Jesus Christ was tempted in the wilderness by Satan. He said to His disciples, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations" (Luke 22:28). If we, then, are not acquainted with temptations, we know little of union to a tempted Lord. But we are very glad to get out of the way of temptation. It is a painful path to walk in. To be continually tempted by Satan, by our evil hearts, by "the world lying in wickedness," and have a conscience suffering and groaning under the weight of temptation, is no small burden. But the voice still sounds behind us, "This is the way, walk ye in it." It is indeed a way of temptation; but still the way of temptation is the way of deliverance, and the way of deliverance is the way of glory.

4. Again. It is the way of *faith*, for only by faith can we walk in the way. Nothing but faith can enable us to see the way before us, or to move a single step in the way. By faith we stand, by faith we walk, by faith we fight, and by faith we triumph. So that would we walk in the way, we can only walk in that way by living faith. And here is the distinction. It requires no faith to turn aside "to the right hand," or "to the left." Unbelief can lead us astray, sin can draw us aside; but to walk in the straight and narrow way—in Jesus, in the path of tribulation and affliction, in contradistinction to the general way of man—we can only walk in that way as God is pleased to raise up and keep alive living faith

in our souls.

5. And as we walk in it by faith, so we walk in it by *hope*; hoping to the end for the glory of God, hoping that the Lord will appear in due time and cheer our souls, hoping for the day when all our cares shall be at an end and tears wiped away from our eyes; hoping in God's faithful word of promise, in His expected deliverance, in His promised mercy; hoping for nothing in self, but hoping for all in Him.

6. We walk in this path also in *love*; for only so far as we have some love to the Lord, love to His ways, love to His Word, and love to His people, can we be found walking in Him. He Himself is love; and when we have felt a little of His love in our souls, then we can love Him; and this is the language of our hearts, "Draw me, we will run after Thee" (Sol. Song 1:4). When we feel a little of the soft touches of love in the soul, then there is a running in the way of God's commandments, in that straight and narrow path that leads to eternal glory.

7. We walk in it, again, in the way of *prayer*. The Lord's family are continually sighing, crying, and pouring out their petitions to the Lord. "Lord, guide me, teach me, direct me; hold me up; keep me from error. Lord, visit and bless my soul; look down upon me in Thy infinite mercy." O how these cries, sighs, and petitions are continually going up from broken hearts to the footstool of mercy! We cannot walk in the way except by these continual sighs, groans and cries after the Lord. A prayerless, reckless, hard heart never finds the way, and could not walk in the way, if found. The life we have to live is a life of faith and prayer; and the Lord will take care, I am well convinced, that we shall, as He declares of the elect, "cry unto Him day and night." There shall be those conflicts, exercises, trials and temptations; those desires and those wishes, those pantings and longings; all combining and conspiring to keep up communion with the throne of mercy. Thus, as the Lord's people walk, they are led by supplications. He says, "With weeping and with supplications will I lead them" (Jer. 31:9). "I will pour upon the house of David, and

upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced."

8. And this way also is a way of *self-denial*; grappling with the flesh, putting off the old man, and putting on the new—plucking out right eyes, and cutting off right hands, as the Lord may enable; "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

9. Again. It is the way of *godly fear*. We can only walk in this path aright as godly fear is from time to time springing up in our hearts; a fear to be wrong, a desire to be right, a tenderness of conscience lest we break the bounds, slip into error, or turn aside into evil. So that the Lord's people, in their passage home to glory, are continually fearing and trembling, knowing what fallen creatures they are, lest they make a mistake, be deceived or deluded, and turn aside on "the right hand" into some grievous error, or on "the left" into some awful deception of Satan. Therefore, they walk in self-suspicion, in godly fear, in holy desire, that the Lord would be their guide and keeper, and "lead them in the way everlasting."

Contrast this with the way in which dead professors walk, be they ever so high or ever so low. They have none of these jealous feelings over self; none of these suspicious thoughts over their own hearts; no fears lest they be wrong; no earnest desires to be right; no cries, groans, and sighs after the Spirit's leadings; no fear of error, no dread of evil; no listening with anxious ear to the voice that speaks behind them: "This is the way, walk ye in it." "Turn not aside 'to the right hand,' nor 'to the left'—here is error, there is heresy; here is evil, there is sin; avoid this quicksand, beware of that sandbank; a precipice on one side, a quagmire on the other." Thus the Lord's people go along trembling, fearing, crying, sighing, watching, praying, because they know they carry in their bosom a heart so "deceitful and desperately wicked," that turn aside they will, turn aside they must, except they hear the voice behind them, saying, "This is the way!" "This is the way, poor soul; walk in it; let your eyes look straight on before you; it

is a safe path, it leads to endless glory; it will bring you right at last." You may have many doubts, many fears, many suspicions, many sighs and groans, and think you are altogether wrong because there is a turning aside to "the right hand," and a turning aside "to the left." But the promise still holds good; you "shall hear a voice behind you" sounding in your ears, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

But what a mercy it is to have this word sometimes sounding in our ears, and see that there is a "way" to heaven—a way independent of man, distinct from all the doings of the creature—God's own dear Son, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life!" that there is blood, precious blood, that cleanseth from all sin; a righteousness, a glorious righteousness, to justify a needy, naked soul; love, dying love, as a sweet cord twined round a drooping, desponding spirit; and that the blessed Comforter, from time to time, shows us and gives us power to walk in the way of eternal life! But has it not been, is it not sometimes with you, a matter of earnest consideration whether your feet are in the path? What makes it so? Because you find working in you so many things that seem utterly opposed to this path; so many trials, temptations and exercises, so many anxious questionings, and so much of the working of "a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." All these things combined make you fear that you are not walking in the path. But what is all this but the blessed fruit of the "word behind you?" You expect, perhaps, to see something, but that is not God's way. The word is "behind," not before you; dropped into your conscience, not held up to your eyes. Yet because it does not go before us to warn us beforehand, instead of coming to reprove us afterward, we often think that it is not the word of God at all. But I would say, what is it that has kept you that are the people of God, and desire to fear His name? what has kept you out of that dead assurance in which so many walk? Doubts and fears, the tremblings and suspicions of your anxious mind, have not these instrumentally kept us from this great evil? What has kept you from being altogether swallowed up in despair? Have there not been now and then some glimpses, tokens, testimonies, some shinings in of God's

countenance, some dropping of His word into your heart? What has been all this but the "word behind you?" When sin has been presented to you as a sweet honied drink, and you have almost grasped the bowl, there has been some lash of conscience, some cutting conviction, that dashed the cup away before you drank the deadly draught; has not that been a "word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it?" While you have been working and struggling, and thinking you would do something to please God, and got well-nigh stuck fast in the old pharisaical sandbank, a sweet light has broken in upon you, whereby you have seen Jesus, and turned aside from ruined self, and anchored within the veil; and has not this been "a voice behind you, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it?" When your path has been little else but trouble, sorrow, and affliction, and you are almost ready to give all up, and say, "This religion has brought nothing but trouble with it;" still there has been a soft whisper in your conscience, "'This is the way;' turn aside, and you must perish; you have a soul to be saved or lost." This has been a gentle admonition, and you have still kept on. Has not this been "a voice behind you?" When you have felt your heart prompted to break forth and pour out your petitions at the throne of mercy, and wrestle with God as for life and death, has not this been "a word behind you," sounding in your ears, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you?" When some precious promise has come into your heart, and cheered up your downcast mind, when you were fain to give up all for lost, what has this been but "a word behind you?" But because the word does not always come before us, and we cannot see something with the bodily eye, we get confused and perplexed. But God has not promised we shall see anything with the bodily eye, or hear anything with the bodily ear. The word is to come "behind us," as a reproofing, rebuking, encouraging, or comforting word, as God sees fit. But, however it comes, as a rebuking or comforting word, it still sounds, "This is the way! this is the way!"—Jesus, His blood, His righteousness, His Person. His perfect salvation—"This is the way, walk ye in it." Turn not aside to "the right hand," nor "to the left"; walk in Him, and by walking in Him you will obtain eternal life.

What a mercy it is that God has left such a promise on record! and O, what a greater mercy to have this promise fulfilled in our heart's experience! That is the mercy. This we know, if we know anything, that we are ever turning aside "to the right hand" or "to the left." If we do not know that, what do we know? We are shut up in ignorance, presumption and carnal security, if we do not know that. But then, on the other hand, what a mercy if God does not leave us to turn aside to be engulfed as thousands are in destruction and ruin; but deals with our conscience in mercy, and gives us a lash now and then; or a refreshing admonition, promise, or encouragement; or turn our eyes, as Jonah did, to look once more "toward His holy temple." Thus the Lord, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, still encourages our poor, fainting souls to look to Him, and hope in His mercy; and still mercifully says to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it!"

## The New Covenant and the Blood of Sprinkling

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, March 31, 1861

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."  
Hebrews 12:24

In the two verses immediately preceding our text, the apostle holds up to our view a rich cluster of gospel blessings as the happy and enduring portion of the redeemed and regenerated family of God. But in order to bring them more vividly and impressively before our eyes, he draws a contrast between the two dispensations—that of the law and that of the gospel; his intention being thereby to show more clearly and effectually that the believer in Christ is delivered from the curse and condemnation of the former, that he may enjoy all the blessings and mercies of the latter.

I. I shall, therefore, by way of introduction, briefly touch upon what he has here said upon these two dispensations, that we may, with God's help and blessing, see more clearly the meaning and force of the words of our text. In order, then, to make the contrast between the two dispensations plainer and stronger, he tells us *first* what we are *not* come unto: "For ye are not come unto *the mount that might be touched.*" This "mount that might be touched" was mount Sinai, from which the law was given by Moses; and it is called "a mount that might be touched" as being an earthly object, an actual, literal mountain, and as such capable of being seen by the eye, touched by the hand, and trodden by the foot, as by the foot of Moses, or even (though it was against the prohibition) by that of man or beast. This literal, tangible mount well represented the earthly, visible character of the Law as contrasted with the Gospel, of which the emblem is "mount Sion," not the literal height of Zion, but that heavenly Jerusalem, which is free and the mother of us all, (Gal. 4:26,) and as such is

essentially invisible, spiritual, and heavenly, not to be seen by the natural eye, nor trodden by the actual foot. But, in allusion to the accompaniments of the law on that solemn day when God revealed it from mount Sinai, he speaks of the mountain as "*burning with fire.*" God, when he gave the law, came down upon mount Sinai in terrible majesty, that it might ever stand before the church of God as a representation of his holiness, justice, and ever-burning wrath against all transgression and all transgressors. Thus we find it recorded in the book of Exodus, (19:16-18,) "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Thus the law was revealed in flaming fire of a character so awful and of an extent so wide that it seemed as if the whole mount burned with it like a furious volcano, and the smoke of this burning mountain ascended as the smoke of a mighty furnace, to make it manifest far and wide, as it cast its lurid flame over the desert and lighted up the surrounding rocks and peaks, that it was a fiery law; that the God who revealed it was a consuming fire, and as such would burn up the transgressor as the flame rolled down the mountain side into the vale below. It was also surrounded with "*blackness,*" to show that as before a storm the heavens gather blackness, till out of the bosom of the dark cloud issues the forked lightning and bursts the rolling thunder; so blackness covered the mount, as an intimation that behind that black cloud was hidden the wrath of God which one day would burst forth in thunder and lightning against a guilty world. Besides this blackness there was also "*darkness,*" to show the nature of that dispensation—that it was a dark dispensation. There was a veil over the face of Moses, its typical mediator. God did not make himself known therein as the God of all grace. It was not illuminated by any beams of love and mercy, and therefore darkness surrounded the mount as a



representation that in that dispensation there shone through it no life-giving rays and beams of his gracious countenance. There was "*tempest*" also, indicative of that coming storm when "God shall come and shall not keep silence; when a fire shall devour before him and it shall be very tempestuous round about him" (Psalm 50:3); when he shall come to judge a guilty world; when all nations shall be assembled before his bar, and his wrath burst forth so that none can quench it against the impenitent and unbelieving.

ii. We need not, however, enter further into these accompaniments of the law given at mount Sinai. It is our mercy that if indeed we believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God we are delivered from standing at the foot of that fiery mount; and that to us the fire and blackness and darkness, the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words, are no longer indications of God's anger against our sins, but, like a departing thunder storm, have rolled away into the far distance, whilst the light of the sun is shining upon our heads. Having then shown what they, as believers in Christ, were delivered from; that they were not come unto that terrible mount Sinai, but were brought by faith in the Lord the Lamb to a better spot and to a happier mount, the apostle goes on to say, "*But ye are come unto mount Sion.*" This, therefore, as connected with our text, will demand a few moments' consideration.

1. Mount Sinai stands in contrast with "*mount Sion*" as mount Ebal stood in contrast with mount Gerizim (Deut. 27:12, 13): the one the mount of cursing, the other the mount of blessing. Thus as all the wrath of God is on mount Sinai, so all the mercy of God is on mount Sion. And as all the curses of God fell in blackness and darkness, fire and tempest, upon Sinai's burning top; so all the mercy, love, goodness, and grace of God fall upon mount Sion, and surround it as with a heavenly cloud of most glorious and ever enduring lustre. But why should "mount Sion" be thus selected? For this reason: David, after having taken mount Zion from the Jebusites, made it the place of his residence; it thus became "the city of the great king;" there he reigned and ruled; thence he issued his laws; and thence he extended the sway of

his peaceful sceptre over the whole of the holy land. From that circumstance mount Zion became the great type and figure of the gospel of Jesus Christ, or rather of that kingdom of God of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the head and sovereign. For as David sitting upon mount Zion, in the palace built there as his royal seat, issued his commands which were obeyed all over the land; so our blessed Jesus has been exalted, according to God's promise, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion;" and thus sitting as King in Zion, issues his mandates and sways his peaceful sceptre over the hearts of his obedient people. It is a common idea that mount Zion is a type of the gospel because the temple was built upon it. That, however, is not true: the temple was not built on mount Zion but upon mount Moriah; but Zion was the site of David's palace, and for that reason became a type of the kingdom of our blessed Lord in grace and glory.

2. But he adds, "And unto *the city of the living God.*" This is the church of Christ, in which the living God has fixed his abode, according to his own words, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." (2 Cor. 6:16.) But this church of Christ may be viewed under two aspects—its militant and its glorified condition. In each it is the city of the living God; for in its present militant and suffering state, the church may still say, "We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Yes, even in this time state, she may say, "There is a river"—the river of life and love—"the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (Psl. 45:4.) But more especially in its future glorified state will the church of Christ be the "city of God," for as such holy John saw her in vision. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2.) And that this is the apostle's meaning seems evident from the expression, "*the heavenly Jerusalem,*" which immediately follows. This "heavenly Jerusalem," then, is spoken of in contrast with the earthly Jerusalem; for as the earthly Jerusalem was "the city of the great king," so the Church of God, "the heavenly Jerusalem," is the city of our glorious King Jesus. That this heavenly Jerusalem signifies the church of God in

both its suffering and glorified state is evident from comparing the words of Paul, where he speaks of "Jerusalem which is above is free and the mother of us all," which she is in our time state, with the words of John which I have just quoted, when he saw the new Jerusalem or the church in glory, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

3. The apostle also speaks of their being come to an "*innumerable company of angels,*" who surround the throne, and who, though not redeemed by the atoning blood of the Lamb, yet are confirmed in their standing by the incarnation of the Son of God; God being pleased to gather up into him as one head elect angels and elect men, that he might be "the head of all principality and power," and that "at his name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Col. 2:10; Phil. 2:10.)

4. He also speaks of their having come to the "general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven." He looked up, or rather looked round, and saw a vast assembly, a multitude that no man could number, exceeding the stars of the sky and the sands upon the sea shore. This is "the church of the first-born," who were redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb, as the first-born in Egypt were redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb, and whose names are written in heaven, as being inscribed in the Lamb's book of life.

5. He then takes a view of "God *the Judge of all,*" the reader of all hearts, the searcher of all reins, who holds the scales of justice with unerring hand, to whom they are come as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

6. He then speaks of their being come also to the "*spirits of just men made perfect;*" the enfranchised souls of those justified men who were delivered from all the sins and infirmities of their mortal body, and who, in the presence of Christ, were waiting in expectation of that glorious day when the Son of God should raise

up their sleeping dust that they might be for ever, soul and body, with the Lord.

What glorious objects does he thus set before our eyes, and how he speaks of the saint of God as having come far, far away from the fiery mount where all was blackness and darkness and tempest, and being brought by the Holy Ghost, in the actings of living faith, unto this blessed mount Sion, where he enjoys the blessings of the gospel in the manifestations of the love and mercy and grace of God!

7. He then adds the words of our text: "*And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*"

In opening up the meaning of these words, we may

I.—*First*, with God's blessing, show what is spiritually and experimentally intended by having "*come unto Jesus.*"

II.—*Secondly*, the character which he bears as being "*the Mediator of the new covenant.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, "*the blood of sprinkling,*" to which the believer is said also to have come.

IV.—And *Fourthly*, the blessing ascribed to this blood of sprinkling, that it "*speaketh better things than that of Abel.*"

I.—Look then first at the *character* of the believer as here drawn by an inspired pen, as here described by an unerring hand. He is said to have "*come,*" implying that there has been a sacred power put forth in his soul whereby he has been brought away from mount Sinai and come unto mount Sion. And not only so, but especially and above all things he is said to have "*come to Jesus;*" for that is the grand, distinguishing mark of a true believer.

I. But let us, with God's help and blessing, look a little more closely at what it is to come to Jesus. The Scripture is full of it. Thus our blessed Lord said in the days of his flesh, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28); and again, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37); and again, "If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink." (John 7:37.) Peter also describes the experience of a Christian as "a coming unto Jesus as a living stone." (1 Pet. 2:4.) But I need not quote passages so familiar to you; let me rather show you *what* it is to come. And first, what work upon the heart and conscience is necessary before we really do or can come unto Jesus? Before, then, we can come rightly to him we must be taught by the Holy Spirit to feel our need of him. This may seem very simple, and indeed is so in doctrine and theory, but not so in experience, for to come to Jesus is the hardest thing in the world; and no one really comes to him until he has tried every other refuge, every other hope of salvation; until he has been driven out of house and home, made an outcast and ready to perish. Newton justly says,

"Few, if any, come to Jesus  
Till reduced to self-despair."

The work of the Holy Spirit, then, in his first divine work upon the soul, in his convincing operations upon the conscience, is chiefly to make us feel our need of Jesus. If he bring us to the law, it is not to rest in it, or to obtain salvation and righteousness by it. If he take us to the fiery mount there to show unto us the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and cause us to hear the voice of words, until, with Moses, we say, "I exceedingly fear and quake," it is not to leave us there under that burning mountain; but it is that he may lead us from mount Sinai to mount Sion; that he may bring us to Jesus. But this can only be by divine teaching and by heavenly drawing. As the Lord himself said, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" and again, "Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:44, 40.)

Our convictions, our distressing sensations of guilt, shame, and sorrow: our doubts and fears, our trials and temptations, our varied afflictions, from whatever source they come or of whatever nature they be, are all so many means in the hand of the Spirit to bring us near unto Jesus; so that if they do not operate in that way or produce that result, they bear no evidence of being of God, or that we have heard and learned of the Father. But many poor souls are a long time before they come to Jesus, at least with any faith in living exercise. This is the case of some from ignorance, their lot being cast in dark places where the gospel is not preached, where Jesus is not held up as the only hope and help, as the only way of salvation from the wrath of God; and others, though they may sit under a clearer sound of truth, yet from unbelief, infidelity, darkness of mind, hardness of heart, pressure of guilt, doubt and fear, and other powerful temptations, though they may feel their deep and daily need of Jesus, yet are kept back by these hindrances from coming to him, so as to receive out of his fulness grace for grace. But the same Holy Spirit who makes us feel our want of Jesus sooner or later discovers him to our soul. The Scripture is full of Jesus: he is the light of the Bible, from the opening page to the closing verse. As God hath set the sun in the firmament of heaven to give light to the earth, so has he set Jesus in the holy word as the Sun of Righteousness to shine through every page. But whilst there is a veil of unbelief over our heart, it is with us as it is in nature when the sun is behind a dark cloud; though he is there, yet we see him not. The promise, however, given to Israel is, that "when it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away." (2 Cor. 3:16.) Thus when the soul is enabled to turn to the Lord with weeping and supplication, in the fulfilment of that promise he becomes in more or less measure discovered to the eye of faith as a suitable Saviour; a divine light is cast upon the understanding, or some ray or beam of his unspeakable mercy and grace shine athwart the dark cloud into the believer's mind, and by this guiding ray he is led unto Jesus. And thus he is drawn to Jesus by a divine power, according to those words, "None can come to me except my Father that hath sent me draw him." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn

thee." (Jer. 31:3.) None can really come to Jesus by faith except this drawing power is put forth, and this our blessed Lord himself assures us comes directly from the Father. He, indeed, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, works by the Holy Spirit; for that gracious and blessed Teacher acts upon the soul by his secret power and influence, puts cords of love and bands of mercy round the heart, and by the attractive influence that he puts forth in the name and Person of Jesus, draws the soul to his feet, brings it near unto the Lord as he sits upon his throne of grace, communicates strength and power to plead with him as a man pleadeth with his friend, and in due time reveals him as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

But we must ever bear in mind that it is to those who feel their deep and daily need of Jesus that the invitations of Scripture are addressed: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Ho! every one that thirsteth come to the waters." The blessed Lord dropped these invitations to those who were weary and heavy laden that they might come unto him and find rest and peace by faith in him; and thus he spoke to those who were thirsting for salvation, to come unto him that they might drink at the fountain head, and receive the blessedness of his full and finished salvation into their heart. As then the blessed Spirit is pleased to send those and similar invitations home with warmth and power into the heart, he kindles faith to receive them as from the mouth of God, and thus draws it forth into living exercise upon Jesus; for the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ according to our Lord's most gracious promise, and makes them known to the soul. Sometimes, for instance, he takes of his glorious *Person*, Immanuel, God with us, shows to us his glorious Deity and suffering humanity, and discovers him as sitting at the right hand of the Father, and thus "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Sometimes he is pleased to show us the efficacy of his *atoning blood*, that it cleanseth from all sin; at others he graciously discovers the fulness and completeness of his *obedience* to the law of God while here below, and that it is a perfect righteousness in which we near stand before God without

spot or wrinkle. As, then, he reveals and manifests these precious things of Christ to the soul he raises up a living faith whereby Jesus is sought unto, looked unto, laid hold of, and as he is pleased more or less to manifest himself, he is brought into the heart with a divine power there to be enshrined in its warmest and tenderest affections.

ii. But in coming unto Jesus, the soul comes not merely for present help and comfort, but to *enjoy all the blessings and benefits of his death and resurrection*. Thus it comes to him as a living stone to be built up in him as the foundation which God has laid in Zion, that it may grow up in him as a living stone of the temple of mercy. It comes to him not only with a burden of guilt upon the back which he alone can take away, but that he may always continue to be its Sin-bearer; it comes to him not only with a wound in the conscience which he alone can cure, but with an infinity of leprous sores which will ever want the healing touch of his gracious hand; it comes to him at first without help or strength, and ever continues through life looking to him to make his strength perfect in its weakness. It comes to him helpless in the beginning, that through him help may come; and never ceases to feel its helplessness, that day by day it may learn that God hath laid help upon one that is mighty. And as it comes to him hopeless, that through him hope may be communicated; and as perishing, that in him it may find life and salvation; so all through its Christian pilgrimage it hangs upon him for fresh communications whereby its hope may be maintained and the power of his salvation enjoyed. Thus as this blessed Spirit goes on to deepen his work, and to discover more and more of the suitability, beauty, blessedness, blood, and obedience of the Lord Jesus, he draws the soul more and more unto him, and the more it closes in with him for life and acceptance, the more it finds pardon, peace, and salvation, through his blood and love. This coming, therefore, unto Jesus is not an act once only done which needs never to be repeated. We must be always coming unto him, for he is our "life," and we only get life as we do come unto him. He is the way, the only way unto God. As then we are always backsliding, we need our backslidings to be continually



healed, that we may be ever walking in him as the living way; and as we are continually wandering out of the way through the power of sin and the temptations of Satan, we need to be restored to the path of peace. So that to come unto Jesus is not an act once done in our spiritual life which needs never to be done again; as if having once come unto him and found acceptance in him we may lie upon our oars, for the tide is sure to carry us into harbour; as if having gained one victory we need never fight again, but may go into winter quarters for the rest of our days. So far from that, we shall find that fighting is only then just begun. As then we are continually sinking, we want continually to rise; as we are continually slipping, we want to be continually held up; as we are continually sinning, we want to be continually forgiven. Thus to come unto Jesus is more or less a daily act; nor is there any maintenance of the light, life, and power of God in our souls, except as we are daily coming unto him as the living stone, and continually living upon him as the bread of life.

II.—But to come to our second point, our blessed Lord is here represented to us under a most suitable and heavenly character: he is called the "*Mediator of the new covenant.*"

I. God in several instances has made a covenant with man. He made a covenant with Adam in Paradise; he made a covenant after the fall with Noah; he made a covenant with Abraham; and he made a covenant with the people of Israel by the mediation of Moses at mount Sinai. But though some of these covenants, as those with Noah and Abraham, were intimations of the everlasting covenant, what is usually called the covenant of grace, yet others, as being made with man, were essentially and necessarily fragile; for man, in his own strength, was unable to keep their terms and conditions. Foreseeing, therefore, what man would be, and foreviewing the fall and its miserable consequences, God made before all time what Scripture calls an "everlasting covenant" ("through the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. 13:20); what David calls a covenant "ordered in all things, and sure." (2 Sam. 23:5.) This covenant was made not with man, but on behalf of man; for it was made between Father,

Son, and Holy Ghost. It is called, therefore, "an everlasting covenant," as having its origin in eternity. This covenant is often called the "new covenant," in opposition to the old covenant which was given at mount Sinai; and it is called "new," not that it was a new thought in the mind of God, a new idea that sprang up in his heart, that because the children of Israel could not keep the old covenant he would give a new one of which he had not thought before, which he deemed, perhaps, they might be able to keep; but it is called "new" because it was revealed later in time. The old covenant was revealed through Moses at mount Sinai; but the new covenant, though there were intimations of it in the very early dawn of Scripture, though every type and figure of the Levitical law pointed to it, yet is called new as being revealed subsequently in point of date, and only brought clearly to light in the Person and work of Jesus.

ii. But the apostle has an especial reference here to the prophecy given by Jeremiah, and the tenor of which he had already quoted: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." (Jer. 31:31.) The Lord here promises he would make a new covenant; and the apostle, quoting this prophecy of Jeremiah in the 8th chapter of this epistle, says, "Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." This new covenant then is "the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," revealed and brought to light in the Person and work of the Son of God. Of this new covenant, this better covenant, this everlasting covenant, sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son of God, Jesus is "the Mediator;" so that in coming to him in the actings of living faith, we come to him as the Mediator of the covenant of

life and peace.

Now this new covenant had four promises attached to it, and by coming unto Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant, we come into the present enjoyment of these four promises. They are these: I shall go through them in order that I may show you from them the blessedness of this new covenant of which Jesus is the Mediator.

1. The first promise of the new covenant is, *"I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts."* The law of mount Sinai was written upon tables of stone; and as an index that they could not keep that covenant, though written by the finger of God upon those tables, Moses threw them down in indignation when he saw the people dancing round the golden calf. Their being thus broken indicated that though written by the finger of God, man could not keep them nor hold them without breaking them. When, then, God would make a new and better covenant, he would not write the terms of that covenant upon tables of stone any more; nor should they be written upon parchment or paper; but he would take a new way: he would write them upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. But how does God fulfil this promise? He plants his fear deep in the soul, according to his own words: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." As, then, the believer comes to Jesus in the actings of living faith, God puts forth, so to speak, his finger and traces upon the tablets of his heart the fear of his great name, whereby his conscience is made alive and tender. Upon this soft and tender table, this new heart, this new spirit, this heart of flesh, which he gives when he takes away the heart of stone, he writes also his promises; for the promises of God are given to be helps and encouragements to the saints as they travel through this vale of tears; and as the blessed Spirit applies the sweet promises of the new covenant to the believer's heart, it is as though God himself wrote them with his own finger upon his soul. In the same way God also with his own finger writes his truth upon the heart of his believing people; for he makes the truth known to them by a divine power; and this truth he inscribes, not upon tables of

stone, but upon the heart of flesh, the tender spirit which he himself raises up; so that his truth is received into the believing heart and becomes the joy and consolation of the soul. Upon this new heart which he gives as a part of the new covenant, he writes also his precepts that we may obey them, walk before God in all holy obedience, live to his praise, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. Is not this, then, one of the sweetest promises of the new covenant, that God himself has promised to put forth a secret power in the consciences of his people whereby he writes the terms of it upon their heart, in letters never to be blotted out? Jesus, as the Mediator, takes this promise, so to speak, out of God's hand, and makes it good by writing his laws and his precepts upon the hearts of his loving and obedient people.

2. But there is another promise equally sweet, which is, *"I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people."* Here God the Father, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has promised to be a God to all his believing people. Enlisting upon their behalf all his perfections, he gives himself over to them in all his divine characters and all his blessed relationships; his power, his greatness, his mercy, his love, his compassion, his tender kindness; in a word, what he is as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. What heart can conceive or tongue express what he is in that most blessed character; that most gracious and eternal relationship to his dear people? Every mercy and blessing are freely and unalterably theirs on this ground, that he is their God. But why their God—their God by covenant, their God by promise, and their God by power? Because he is the God of Christ, their covenant Head. As the Lord himself said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John 20:17.) "All things are yours," says Paul. Why? Because "ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:22, 23.). And as in Christ he has become their God, so are they become to him his people. In every way he has made them his. He has redeemed them by the blood of his dear Son; justified them by the free imputation of his perfect obedience; sanctifies them by the communication of his grace; and will eternally glorify them in the

day of Christ's appearing. In this present time-state he is their kind God in providence to supply all their temporal wants; in all their straits and difficulties he watches over them with the unerring eye of infinite wisdom, and upholds them by the mighty hand of infinite power. Whatever be their foes or fears; yea, though he bring them, as the third part, "through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried," yet when they call on his name he will hear them and will say, "It is my people," enabling them to answer, "The Lord is my God." (Zech. 13:9.)

3. The third promise of this "new covenant" is, "*They shall not teach every man his neighbour* and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." To this promise the Lord seems to have special reference when he said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." As being, therefore, taught of God himself, they shall not want human instruction to enable them to know the Lord, for he shall so reveal and manifest himself to them that they shall not need earthly teachers, for he himself by his Spirit will guide them into all truth. It does not mean that they shall not need a preached gospel or not require spiritual teachers, for the gospel is ever to be preached to the end of the world, and amongst the good gifts of God are "pastors and teachers." (Eph. 4:11.) But they shall not be dependent upon them, for they shall have a better Teacher, as well as a clearer, sweeter, and more powerful Instructor. This promise, therefore, is in blessed harmony with John's declaration, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things;" and again, "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." (1 John 2:20, 27.) This unction from the Holy One teaches all the saints of God, from the least to the greatest. Thus, in this promise of the new covenant, God himself has undertaken to teach all his redeemed and regenerated people. It is as though he said in it, "Under the law they had instructors and teachers; but they did not profit them. They did not come through them to any true knowledge of myself. Now, therefore, I myself will take them in hand. They shall all know

me, from the least to the greatest; for I will reveal myself to them. I will give them my Spirit to lead them into all truth. There shall not be anything good for them to know which shall be kept back; for I myself will give them such manifestations of my grace and glory that they shall all know me as their God, their Father, and their Friend: yes, from the very least to the very greatest of them, all shall enjoy for themselves that eternal life wherein consists in the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

4. And then, not to detain you longer on this point, comes that sweetest and most blessed of all the four promises of the new covenant: "*I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*" This promise embraces in its blessed arms the pardon of all their sins, the forgiveness of all their iniquities, and declares that these shall be so completely blotted out that their very remembrance, so to speak, shall be removed from the mind and memory of God.

Look, then, at these four promises: they are all yours, if believers in the Son of God; they are all your happy and enduring portion if you have been brought by the Holy Ghost to mount Sion—to the city of the living God; they are all addressed to you who are come or who are coming to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.

iii. But let us now look how Jesus is "*the Mediator of the new covenant.*" I have already shown you that the new covenant was that which God made with the Son of his love before time had birth or being. In order, then, that this new covenant might not fall to the ground in the same way as that made with the children of Israel at mount Sinai, God made Jesus the Mediator of it: he put it into the hands of his dear Son to execute. We being fallen sinners, it was necessary that there should be a Mediator between God and us, for "there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5.) This Mediator is the "Daysman," for whose appearance Job longed as one who "could lay his hand upon us both;" that is, lay one hand upon God as the Son of God, and the other upon man as the Son

of Man. Thus our blessed Lord as this Daysman holds the new covenant in his hand, having pledged himself to execute all its provisions. When he came upon earth, he came as the Mediator of this new covenant, that by his perfect obedience to the holy law of God he might bring in a righteousness for the justification of his people; when he died upon the cross, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, he shed his blood as "the blood of the everlasting covenant:" and when God raised him up on the third day, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, he placed him there as the Mediator of the new covenant, that he might ever hold it, so to speak, in his hands, righteously administer it, fully execute it, fulfil all its provisions, and make valid all its promises. Here, then, is an object for your faith—Jesus as a living Mediator of the new covenant at the right hand of God. We are often pressed down with doubt and fear; darkness, guilt, and bondage again and again take hold of us through the strength of sin, the power of temptation, and the assaults of Satan. We desire to approach unto God; but how can such vile sinners as we are draw near to the pure Majesty of heaven? Here then is an Object for our faith if it be in any measure drawn out into living exercise. God has given us a Mediator between himself and us. In and through him he has laid aside his frowns and has arrayed his face in smiles. He says, "Look not to me as an angry Judge, a consuming fire. Look at my dear Son: he is the Mediator of the new covenant. He ever mediates between me and you. I am too holy, too just, for you to deal with; but here is the Son of my love whom I have set upon my holy hill of Zion, as a Mediator between God and man." To him, then, you may look; upon him you may cast all the weight of your weary soul. And to assure those who, in their feelings, are often at the greatest distance from God through guilt and fear, the Lord himself speaks as if from the courts of heaven, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22.) We often fail here, and the reason is, because we do not fix our eyes upon the true, the only Object of faith. But when faith is drawn forth into living exercise, how blessed it is to look unto Jesus as Mediator of the new covenant; to see what the new covenant is, how ordered in

all things and sure; what blood it holds forth to cleanse us from all sin; what a glorious righteousness to justify our needy, naked souls; what promises it contains of pardon and peace. When, then, we can look at Jesus with the eye of faith as the Mediator between God and man, and see how he lives at God's right hand to make this covenant effectual, how every glimpse of his glorious Person, every view of his beauty and blessedness, with every sweet promise applied, every answer to prayer given, every intimation of mercy vouchsafed, strengthen and nurture the new man of grace. As, then, faith looks to and hangs upon Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, it rests upon him to execute it, apply it, and make it good. A sweet confidence thus springs up in the heart that he will not suffer any one part of it to fall to the ground, but will thoroughly accomplish it to the glory of his great name. Now what I want to impress upon your mind is that being such a Mediator, as such we must be ever coming unto him; as such we must be ever pleading these promises with him. We have sins to be forgiven which he only can forgive; iniquity to be pardoned which he alone can pardon; backslidings to be healed which he alone can heal; lessons to learn which he alone can teach; mercy to be obtained which he alone can bestow. As, then, we live under the warm impression of these divine realities, it will be our daily mercy and wisdom, under the teaching of the Spirit, to be ever coming unto Jesus as the ever living Mediator of the new covenant; and as we are enabled more and more to do this, we shall find that in it are stored up all our happiness and all our holiness, all our hope in time and all our salvation for eternity.

III.—But we now come to a very important and blessed part of our text, for in it the child of grace is spoken of as having come by faith to the "*blood of sprinkling.*"

I. But what is *the blood of sprinkling*, and *how* do we *come* unto it? There is an allusion here to the sacrifices offered under the law and to what was done with the blood. When the victim was killed, it was not sufficient for the blood merely to be poured out at the foot of the altar, but it was "sprinkled upon the altar round



about." (Lev. 3:2.) This sprinkling of blood was therefore a necessary and integral part of the sacrifice. It was so, you will remember, on that ever memorable night in the land of Egypt when the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled upon the lintel and side posts of the houses of the children of Israel. It was so when Moses consecrated the people: for, as the apostle says, "Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people." (Heb. 9:18, 19.) In the same way he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. It was so in a more solemn manner on the great day of atonement, when the high priest took the blood of the bullock and the goat within the veil and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy seat. It was so in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, for we read, "And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron and upon his garments and upon his sons." (Exod. 29:21.) It was so in the cleansing of the leper, for he was to be sprinkled with the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water seven times; and it was so also in the cleansing of the leprous house. (Lev. 14: 7, 51.) In fact, without the sprinkling of blood there was no cleansing, and therefore the apostle says; "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) Now all this speaks to us in type and figure, and points to the blood of the everlasting covenant, the blood of Jesus—here called the blood of sprinkling. But in three different points of view may the blood of Jesus be called "*the blood of sprinkling.*"

1. First, when our blessed Lord was nailed to the cross, when the nails were driven through his sacred hands and feet, and the spear pierced his side, blood was sprinkled: it sprinkled his holy body as well as the cross on which it was fastened according to the determinate counsel and purpose of God. Not a bone of his holy body was to be broken, but there was an absolute necessity that his blood should be shed; for "the life of the flesh is in the

blood, and it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. 17:11.) Unless, then, the blood of our blessed Lord had been actually shed, there could have been no atonement made for sin: the sacrifice would not have been a perfect sacrifice. As, then, when the typical sacrifice was offered, the blood of the victim was sprinkled upon the altar, so the cross, which we may view, in a sense, as the altar on which the Lamb of God was sacrificed, was sprinkled with the blood which Jesus shed as an atonement for the sins of his people. In a higher sense, his Deity was the altar, for it was that which gave virtue and validity to the blood of his humanity; but in a lower sense we may view the cross as the altar also, for on that the sacrifice was offered at Calvary. As then the blood of the burnt offering was to be sprinkled round about upon the altar (Lev. 1:5), that it might be looked upon and unto as actually shed as a propitiation for sin, so the blood of Jesus was sprinkled all about his sacred body that the eyes of God and man might look unto it and upon it as a fountain opened in his holy humanity for all sin and uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1.)

2. When the high priest went within the veil on the day of atonement, it was "not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." (Heb. 9:7.) But as we read that the high priest previously made an atonement for himself and his house as a sin offering, in which the blood was put upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense, as well as poured out at the bottom of the brazen altar (Lev. 16:11; 4:7), it is evident that the blood was twice sprinkled, for we read that it was "to be sprinkled seven times before the Lord before the veil of the sanctuary," as well as put upon the horns of the altar. Thus it was sprinkled first as a sin offering before the veil, and then taken by the high priest within the veil and sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat. It was not sufficient for the bullock and goat to be slaughtered outside the veil, and the blood sprinkled before the eyes of the people and of the priests, but it must be taken within the veil and sprinkled in the holy of holies, in the immediate presence of God sitting between the cherubim and filling it with his manifested glory. So our blessed high priest not

only shed his blood upon the cross and sprinkled it there before the eyes of men and angels, but taking it in his risen body up into the holy of holies within the veil, in a sense sprinkled that blood upon the pavement of heaven—in the very courts of bliss, on and before the mercy seat, the throne of grace; for he is still our High Priest, ever presenting before the eyes of his Father the merits of that blood as our Advocate and Intercessor.

3. But there is a third sense in which it may be called "*the blood of sprinkling*." As Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people when he consecrated them unto God and thus made them "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6); and as when he consecrated Aaron and his sons to be priests he sprinkled the blood upon them also; so the Holy Ghost takes of the atoning blood of the Lamb and sprinkles it upon the consciences of God's regenerated people. It is by the application of this blood to the conscience that guilt is removed. Therefore the apostle says, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." (Heb. 10:22.) And again, "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.)

ii. Now it is to this blood of sprinkling to which we are said to *have come*. But we come to it only in the actings of a living faith. When, then, we first come to the foot of the cross as poor, guilty sinners; when there we see the agonising, suffering Lamb of God, then we first come to the blood of sprinkling, for there was shed his precious blood; there it ran down from his feet and hands and side. But when looking beyond the cross and the sepulchre we get a view of a risen, ascended, and glorified Jesus as the great High Priest over the house of God interceding within the veil, as our advocate with the Father, and see the efficacy of his precious blood as pleading for it in the very courts of heaven, then in a second sense we come to the blood of sprinkling. And when the Holy Ghost is pleased to purge our conscience by the application of this atoning blood, then again we come unto the blood of

sprinkling, or rather, it then comes to us. This indeed is the only true way to know for ourselves that that blood was shed for us, and that we have an interest in it, so that all our sins are cast behind God's back. In this way only "have we boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." (Heb. 10:19, 20.) O may we know what it is ever to be coming to the blood of sprinkling, for in that alone is all our hope and help, our only title to heaven, our only salvation from the wrath to come!

IV.—But this blood, to come to our last point, is said to "*speaks better things than that of Abel.*" The apostle here refers to what we read in the book of Genesis, after Cain had risen up against Abel his brother and slain him. Cain thought that Abel's blood would be hid; but it had a voice and cried out to God from the ground for vengeance against him. The blood of Abel could not be hidden. It had been shed and the dust had covered it; but the dust could not hide it from the searching eye of God. "And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." (Gen. 4:10.) Thus this blood kept crying to God for vengeance upon Cain; wherever he went it still pursued, crying "Blood for blood." Cain therefore went out from the presence of God a condemned man; and though the Lord set a mark upon him that none might kill him, yet he lived and died under the wrath of God as Abel's murderer. But the blood of Jesus speaks *better* things than that of Abel. The blood of Christ cried unto God from the ground as the blood of Abel cried. Murderers rose up against Jesus. Wicked Cains surrounded the cross, and in a sense shed the blood of the Son of God. This crime Peter charged upon their consciences: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23.) But our blessed Lord prayed for his murderers, and we have reason to believe the prayer was answered, and that many of those who imbrued their hands in his precious blood by crying aloud to Pilate, "Crucify him! crucify him!" were saved by the very blood which they virtually shed. In a sense we are all murderers

of Jesus. It was not the nails nor the spear that killed the Son of God. Our sins—these were the nails; our iniquity—this was the Roman spear. But this blood, instead of crying out against us condemnation and wrath, cries mercy, pardon, peace, acceptance, salvation, and deliverance from the wrath of God. And it is ever crying aloud for mercy. As the blood of Abel kept crying out for vengeance against Cain until Cain sank under its accusations into hell; so the blood of Christ will keep crying for mercy until every soul interested therein is saved up into heaven. As then we come unto the blood of sprinkling it is ever crying "Mercy, Father, upon the transgressor; pardon, Father, for the rebel; salvation, Father, for the lost." Thus its voice is ever crying to God for blessings to fall upon all who come to it to receive salvation by its being sprinkled on their conscience.

Here, then, is a simple description of the believer in Christ drawn by an unerring pen—that he has come and is ever coming unto "Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." And shall he come in vain? Will he and all his petitions be rejected? Does not the Lord himself say, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?" If you, then, as a poor, guilty sinner, are coming unto Jesus, to the Mediator of the new covenant, will he spurn you from his feet? If you are coming to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, will it cry out against your sins or cry for pardon for them? Will your sins prove your ruin? Must you sink under the wrath of God, so justly your due? No; the very fact that the holy Spirit is leading you to Jesus as the Mediator of that new covenant, all the promises of which are pardon and peace, and to look to the blood of sprinkling, are certain testimonies that God himself is drawing you by his Spirit and grace—not to kill you as a Cain, but to bless you as an Abel by putting you into living possession of the blessings which flow through that blood.

But this atoning blood is not for the Cains, the persecutors, who in heart slay the people of God because they can no longer slay them by hand. It is not for the despisers of Christ—those who

say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But it is for the poor, humble penitent; the tried and timid believer; the sighing child of God, who is yearning for a sense of manifested mercy. For him it was shed and on him it will be sprinkled. As washed in that blood he now stands accepted in the Beloved, and as sprinkled upon his conscience he will be able to say, even in nature's last sinking hour, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

## The New and Living Way into the Holiest

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Oct. 4, 1857

"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19, 20, 21, 22

In the tabernacle erected by Moses in the wilderness, and subsequently in the temple built by Solomon on mount Moriah, at Jerusalem, there was a veil of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen," which ran right across the internal structure, dividing it into two distinct portions, of which the first, viz., that before the veil, was called "the sanctuary," or "the holy place." Into this sanctuary, or, as it is called by the Apostle, "the first tabernacle," (Heb. 9:6,) "the priests," that is, those of ordinary rank, daily entered, "accomplishing the service of God;" for as it contained the altar of incense, the golden candlestick, and the table of shewbread; and as they burnt incense upon the altar night and morning, trimmed the candlestick daily, and weekly changed the loaves of shew-bread, it was necessary for them to enter it to perform these services. But behind the veil there was a portion so peculiarly sacred, so eminently holy, that it was called "the most holy place," or "the holy of holies." This contained "the ark of the covenant, overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat." (Heb. 9:4, 5.) Into this "holy of holies" no one was allowed to enter except the high priest, and he only once a year, on the great day of atonement, as the Apostle speaks—"But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." By these types and figures spiritual instruction was intended to be conveyed; and the veil of which we have spoken was especially meant to set this great truth before the eyes of ancient Israel—that sin had separated man from God; that the Lord dwelt "in the high and holy place" which no man can

approach unto; and that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." (Heb. 9:8.) Nor was the instruction intended only for them. It communicates similar lessons of instruction to us. Thus we are instructed thereby that by nature and practice we are separated from God; that there is a veil between him and us; he dwelling in the glory of his own eternal perfections, in his own unapproachable holiness, and we naturally grovelling in sin, carnality, and death. We are also instructed thereby that Jesus Christ, as the great high priest over the house of God, "not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood," which he shed upon the cross, "entered in once into the holy place," that is, the immediate presence of God, "having obtained eternal redemption for us." For in him are all these types and figures accomplished. His human nature is, "a greater and more perfect tabernacle" than that of Moses, for it was "not made with hands." The figurative mercy-seat on and before which the blood on the great day of atonement was sprinkled, is become a throne of grace on which he sits, and where he rules and reigns until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The high priest, under the law, had to leave the holy of holies and to return to his own place; but Jesus having once ascended up into the heavenly glory, there continues at the right hand of God, until he comes a second time, "without sin unto salvation," when all his saints shall see him as he is and be changed into his image.

In endeavouring to open up the words of the text, I shall—

I—*First*, show what it is to have "*boldness to enter into the holiest.*"

II—*Secondly*, what are the grounds of this boldness, which we shall find to be three:—1, "*the blood of Jesus;*" 2, the "*new and living way* which he hath consecrated for us;" and 3, because he himself is "*a high priest over the house of God.*"

III—*Thirdly*, I shall open up the encouraging exhortation which the apostle founds upon this threefold firm and blessed basis. "*Let us draw near,*" to do which aright needs these four spiritual qualifications, all of which are the fruit of grace and of grace alone:—1, with a *true heart*; 2, in *full assurance of faith*; 3, having *our hearts sprinkled* from an evil conscience; and 4, our bodies *washed with pure water.*



And may the Lord enable me so to speak that he may grant his blessing to what may fall from my lips this morning!

I.—The "holiest" does not mean here "the holy of holies" of the tabernacle or temple, or any place on earth, but the immediate presence of God in the courts of his heavenly glory. It is called "the holiest," not only in allusion to the holy of holies, but because there a holy God dwells, in the light of his own sacred perfections, in his own eternal majesty, purity, power, greatness, and glory. Now how can any one, born, as we are, in sin, by nature and practice corrupt to the very core as the prophet describes us, "with the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint," full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, how can we, being what we are as sinners, and having any sight or feeling of our lost, ruined condition, venture into the holiest, where angels veil their faces, much less how can we enter therein with *boldness*? How can boldness become a sinful creature? When Abraham stood up before God pleading for Sodom, he had to take the language of the lowest abasement into his lips, and call himself "dust and ashes;" he had almost to wonder at his presumption in addressing the Majesty of heaven and offering up petitions for that wicked city:—"behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord;" as though it were so great a thing to presume even to draw near to the divine Majesty and address a word to his sacred clemency. Men generally have no idea of this shrinking with awe and dread from the great God of heaven and earth; and the reason is because they never have had any discovery to their soul of the majesty of God. His holiness has never been revealed to their conscience; his purity, justice, and righteousness have never been seen in the light of his tremendous displeasure and fearful indignation against sin and sinners. They therefore think that any one and every one may draw near unto God without any fear or dread; they think that anybody may come into his presence without any view of the blood of Christ, without any feeling even of their need of that blood; without any faith in the Mediator between God and man. They rush into God's presence as though they rather did him a favour than received one, and as if he were necessarily pleased with the words of their mouth, because they are so themselves. How little they think that instead of pleasing God by the works of their own hands and their babbling words, they only offend him;

that they only add sin to sin; that they not only live a life altogether displeasing unto him, but that their very worship, so called, is displeasing in his eyes, and that, he says to such worshippers—"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." If there be no faith in the worshipper, God will not accept the worship, for "without faith" it is impossible to please him," and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Now the Lord has to teach us lessons which shall cure us of this presumptuous intrusion into his presence, and before he gives us any spiritual and holy boldness, to convince us in the depth of our conscience of his great and terrible majesty, that we may draw near unto him with reverence and godly fear. He therefore convinces us by his Spirit and grace that in his righteous law he is a "consuming fire;" that he is infinitely just and holy; that we cannot see his face and live; that the first gleam of his tremendous justice would banish into eternal perdition any who came nigh to his throne in the confidence of their own righteousness. Thus, by imparting light to see and life to feel who and what he is; by applying his holy law in its spirituality and curse, and by giving us to know something inwardly and experimentally of the sin that dwelleth in us, the Lord effectually cuts up and breaks utterly to pieces that presumptuous vain confidence, that false, self-righteous 'religion' in which we by nature are so cradled up. By his own divine and special teaching he gives us to see and feel that we have not only no natural and inherent right to draw near to the throne of his majesty, but that if we do so in presumptuous ignorance or self-righteous confidence, we only incur his displeasure. "I will be sanctified, saith the Lord, in them that come nigh me." He still is what he was at Mount Sinai, when he said, "Let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them."

And yet the apostle in the text speaks of "having boldness to enter into the holiest." How is this to be reconciled with what I have been just saying? Thus. All boldness that rests upon any goodness of ours—upon any wisdom, strength, or righteousness of the creature, is stamped with presumption, and is the offspring of

ignorance and pride. But a boldness that springs out of a living faith in the blood of the Lamb, and from the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart, is not a vain confidence which God abhors, but a fruit of the Spirit which he approves of and loves. And this leads us to our second point, which was—

II.—To show the *grounds* on which we may draw near with holy boldness; and these, as laid down by the apostle, are three.

1. The first is the *blood of Jesus*. The sacrifices under the law, such as that of a lamb without blemish, which was offered morning and evening, and especially the sin offering of which the blood was sprinkled on and before the mercy seat on the great day of atonement, represented the atoning blood of the Son of God. This blood of his pure, spotless humanity was shed for sinners; and, as being the blood of him who is God's co-equal and co-eternal Son, is of infinite value, for all the merit of Godhead is in it. Its meritorious efficacy can never, therefore, be adequately conceived or expressed, for upon it are stamped all the validity, virtue, and infinite merit of God. When the dear Redeemer was crowned with thorns by the Roman soldiers; when he sweat drops of blood in the garden; when he was scourged before being crucified; and more especially when his hands and feet were torn upon the cross, he shed his precious blood. That blood came from his pure human body; but Godhead, so to speak, was in every drop. And who can describe, as who can measure, the infinite value of Godhead? To do this, you must be able first to measure God, to fathom infinity, to weigh as in a balance, him who fills all time and all space. When you can accomplish this, then you may find what is the value of the blood of Christ. I wish to dwell specially upon this point, because it is so little seen by the eye of faith that the Godhead of Christ stamped such infinite worth, merit, and validity upon the blood of the manhood. It is this that causes it to be "precious blood," and makes it avail for the cancelling, the blotting out, and the complete putting away of all sin. Until we can see this by the eye of faith, and feel its cleansing power, we can neither see nor feel pardon and salvation through the blood of the Lamb as reaching us: it is to us but common blood, which can neither save nor sanctify. But if you see by the eye of faith Godhead stamped upon the blood of Jesus' pure and spotless humanity, then you see what that blood is as viewed by the eyes of the great and glorious God himself. But let

none mistake my meaning: we cannot say it was literally and truly the blood of God, because God has no blood to shed. God has neither parts nor passions, neither sufferings nor sorrows, neither death nor resurrection. But the Son of God has taken into union with his own divine person a nature that could shed blood; that could be sorrowful; that could hunger and thirst; that could suffer and die; and Godhead being united in close and intimate union with that human nature, stamped its own infinite value upon it. This is the reason why his blood gives a poor, needy, naked, guilty sinner such boldness to enter into the holiest. He looks to the blood, and not to himself. It is with him in a sense as with the angel that passed by in Egypt: he looked to the blood and to nothing else; he saw it sprinkled upon the lintel and door posts; and seeing it sprinkled there, he passed by. There was nothing, so to speak, in the blood itself: it was merely the blood of a lamb. But because God had appointed that there should be value in that blood so sprinkled, the angel passed over that house without executing his commission of death. Had the people sprinkled their own blood on the lintel, the angel would not have passed it by; but being the blood of the Pascal lamb—a lamb of God's providing—and that blood being sprinkled according to God's own appointment, the angel looked upon it, and passed away from the house without smiting the first-born. As the angel, then, viewed the blood sprinkled upon the lintel, and owning God's appointment, recognised the sign; so we, if we have eyes of faith to look to the atoning blood, as the appointed way of access unto God, may have holy boldness to come into the holiest.

Nor will anything satisfy a living soul but coming "into the holiest." He wants to have communion with God, the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. He is not dealing with a God distant and afar off—an idol—a God in whom he has neither faith, nor hope, nor love; who can neither see, nor hear, nor save; a God of his own conception or of some indistinct traditional opinion; but he feels in his very conscience that he is carrying on a sacred and holy intercourse with the God of heaven and earth—the God who has made himself in some measure known to his soul as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. With him he has to do; to him he must come; and with him he must hold holy communion. Before his heart-searching eyes he feels he stands; into his ever-open ears he pours his petitions; to his mercy and pity he appeals; his compassion he craves; his love he seeks; his salvation he longs

for; and his presence above all things he earnestly desires. So he must come into the holiest, for there God dwells; and to come unto God is to come there. The man who thus feels and acts is an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile; one of the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh. Others are satisfied with the courts of the house, or with admiring the external building, the painted windows, carved pews, and long-drawn aisles—with the mere worship of God as so much lip service. But the living soul goes beyond all that into the very heart of the sanctuary itself. As the high priest on the day of atonement did not tarry amongst the people in the court, nor with the priests in the holy place, but pressed on, ever pressed on through the thick veil until he got into the holy of holies: so with the saint of God—he does not tarry in the outer court with the profane, nor, in the sanctuary with the professor, so as to be satisfied with seeing God with a veil between. But he must come into that immediate presence of God, where he may see something of his grace, behold something of his glory, feel something of his mercy, and taste something of his power. And this makes him press forward into the holiest.

But he is a sinner. How can he venture nigh? Can God accept a sinner like him? Can he bless him with his presence? shed his love abroad in his heart? manifest his compassion and mercy to his soul? Yes, he can through the blood that has been shed to bring him nigh; blood to wash away his sins, blood to reconcile him to God. For blood having been shed which has eternal validity and infinite value, it ever avails. It has availed for thousands of saints in times past; it avails for thousands of saints now; it will avail for every saint who has yet to come into existence. As the blood of Abel cried from the ground, and ever cried until justice had found against Cain what that blood demanded—vengeance; so the blood of Christ keeps ever crying for mercy, mercy, mercy upon the family of God. When, then, they get a view of this atoning blood, they find such holy boldness communicated, that they can, upon the strength of that, venture nigh. Though they cannot approach in themselves, they can approach under the cover of the atoning blood of Christ. As a man must not go by himself into the presence of the Queen uninvited, unIntroduced, but may go when properly ushered in, after the expression of her willingness to receive him; so the soul cannot come nigh to God

of itself, but through the Mediator and through atoning blood it may find boldness to come. This is the first ground of our entrance with boldness into the holiest.

2. The second ground is, that Jesus has consecrated *"a new and living way through the veil"*—that is to say, his flesh." The veil of the temple represented the flesh of Jesus Christ: it was "of cunning work," which represents how the human nature of Christ was "curiously wrought"—that is, begotten by Divine power in the Virgin's womb; not as we are generated by natural conception, but generated by supernatural conception, by the immediate influence and spiritual operation of the Holy Ghost upon the flesh of the Virgin Mary. Thus it was "curiously wrought," as the Psalmist speaks, "in the lowest parts of the earth." And as the veil consisted of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen with cherubims worked into its substance, which made it beautiful and glorious; so the flesh of Jesus has beauty and glory in it, because it is pure flesh—not like ours, tainted with sin, mortality, and disease. Daring men have impiously speculated whether Christ could sin. They might as well ask whether God could sin. The body of Christ knew no sin;—it was impossible that it could sin, from its very constitution, and its union with Godhead. And it was equally impossible that it could suffer sickness. There was no disease in the human body of Christ. He was weary, but never sick. Neither was it mortal: that is, there were no seeds of death inherent in it. It was made able to die; but dying only by the voluntary act of the Lord himself, whose own words are—"I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." When the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross, the veil was rent in twain, which showed two things: first the rending of the human nature of the Son of God—that as the veil was rent in the temple, so by his sufferings the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ was torn and rent, and his soul by death severed from his body. Secondly, that heaven was now open; that the holiest was now laid bare for poor sinners to draw near; that God was no longer separated from man; that the holy beams of his gracious countenance were no longer intercepted; but that power and privilege were given to those who believed to enter into the most holy place. The apostle therefore tells us that Jesus has made and consecrated *"a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."* It is a new way; the other was the old way—the way of the old covenant, which had endured for nearly fifteen hundred

years, and was now vanishing away. The new way is the way of the new covenant—a way of God's own eternal devising, but then newly revealed—a way suitable to the new creature—a way ever new in opening grace, and ever new in budding glory; ever new in encouraging poor sinners to come; ever new morning after morning and evening after evening. Thus Jesus, having opened a new way to heaven, and giving us new eyes to see it, new ears to hear of it, and new feet to walk in it, is day by day again and again opening a new way that we may enter through his own rent flesh into the immediate presence of God. You may feel very often cold, stupid, and lifeless. Were you then to make your own state the ground of drawing near, you must ever keep away from the mercy-seat. But Christ having opened the way, it is still ever open; and being ever new, it is adapted to all our ever-recurring wants. Because I am cold, stupid, unfeeling, this does not close the road. My inability does not make the veil close again that has once been rent asunder; nor do my doubtings block up the way. It is ever new and it is ever open. Therefore the apostle adds a *"living way;"* the other was but a dead way. The priest took the blood of a dead animal; he himself was a dying mortal; the blood was sprinkled upon and before a mercy-seat made by dying hands, where it chilled as it fell and soon dried up into dust. There was therefore no life in it; and it could not communicate what it had not. So it proved with the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas: the blood they took in their hands and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat could not save their souls; because it was dead blood. The way in which they went was a dead way, because there was no spiritual life in it, nor any spiritual faith, hope, or love in their souls. Nor was life demanded of the high priests. All that was required was that they should slay the animal, take the blood, and sprinkle it as they were bid. No spiritual service was required. They were indeed types and figures of spiritual things; but as long as the sacrifices were properly offered according to the Mosaic ritual, the law was satisfied. But we have now a living way—not only a way ever new and ever opening up with new beauty and new race, new mercy and new suitability, but a way both living in itself and communicating life. Being a living way, it is adapted to a living soul. But it requires a living faith to tread it; it inspires a living hope as it is trodden; it communicates a living love to him who first opened it, and to all who walk in his footsteps. Nor is there a living grace of the Spirit which is not engaged, as this new and living way is walked in. We may say,

therefore, that as faith embraces it, hope enjoys it, and love delights in it, so godly fear reveres it; patience endures the trials that are found in it; prayer and watchfulness are kept alive in it; every internal and external fruit of godliness are found in it; and last and best, the end of it is the salvation of the soul.

3. But the apostle gives us also a third ground of holy boldness: *"having a high priest over the house of God."* The high priest under the law had two chief offices to perform: 1, he had first to offer sacrifice; and 2, to intercede for the people. We see this last in the case of Aaron, who, when wrath had gone out from the Lord against the children of Israel, took a censer and put on incense and thus stood between the dead and the living. Both these parts of the priestly office Jesus fulfils. He offered sacrifice when he offered himself—his holy body, and soul, and blood—as an offering for sin. But he ascended up to the most holy place, and took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Heaven welcomed his presence; the gates lifted up their heads, and the everlasting doors were lifted up, and the King of glory entered in with a shout of jubilee. There he sits, and there not only reigns and rules as King in Zion, but, as the high priest over the house of God, is ever presenting, not vocal powers, but the merits of his sacrifice and death. As the high priest under the law, on the great day of atonement, entered into the holiest, with both his hands full of sweet incense, which he put on the fire in a censer until the cloud of the smoke covered the ark and the mercy seat; so Jesus, the high priest over the house of God, is filling heaven itself, the courts of eternal bliss, with the merits of his sacrifice and death, which is in fact his intercession. He shed his blood upon earth, but the virtue of that blood he took into heaven. He cried, and groaned, and sweat blood here below; but he took the merit of that crying and groaning and bloody sweat into the immediate presence of God; and there he sits as our great representative. He has taken into the immediate presence of God the very body he wore below, the same human bones, the same human flesh; glorified indeed beyond all conception, but still the same identical substance which he took in the womb of the Virgin, and which hung upon the cross in agony. This is proved beyond all doubt by his words to Thomas after his resurrection:—"Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side." This is a fundamental article of our most holy faith—that the man Christ Jesus is now at God's right hand, a



very man—not a shadowy, aerial substance. "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." God looks at him as such with eyes of intense delight, with ever new approbation and love; and views him as the representative of all that are interested in him: he being the head, the church the members; he the bridegroom, the church the bride; he the great high priest, and the church the house of God. As living for her at the right hand of the Father, he is ever presenting on her behalf the validity of his intercession. The fact, the reality that he is there, is the church's joy, as it is all her hope and all her boast. "Because I live, ye shall live also." To him, then, do we direct our prayers; on his glorious person we fix our believing eyes; upon his blood we hang our hope; under his righteousness we ever desire to shelter; to feel his presence, taste his grace, experience his love, and know his power, is what our soul, under divine teaching, is ever longing for. See, then, the grounds of holy boldness for a poor sinner to enter into the holiest. Blood has been shed, which blood has the validity of Godhead stamped upon it. A new and living way has been consecrated, in which a living soul may walk. A great high priest is set over the house of God, who is ever presenting the merits of his intercession. Thus, those who feel their need of him, who cannot live and dare not die without him, whose eyes are upon him and hearts towards him, are encouraged to enter with all holy boldness into the holiest, that they may have communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

III.—And now comes, in our third and last place, the divine exhortation which is grounded upon these blessed realities:—*"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."*

1. "Let us draw near:" as though he should say—"Let us not keep away. What holds thee back? Is it guilt, fear, bondage, darkness, and death? Why should these things keep thee back? Art thou looking to thine own righteousness to bring thee near?—to thine own goodness, holiness, strength, and power?" What do you believe to be the ground of any poor sinner entering into the holiest? Is self in any shape or form the ground that God has revealed, or faith embraces? Certainly not; for were it so, how could any draw near? And yet all are influenced more or less by

these feelings. We cannot indeed well get rid of them. They are part and parcel of ourselves. When we are in darkness, under distress of conscience, or when guilt lies hard and heavy upon the soul, these things do, and must until removed, keep us back. But are we ever to give heed to these enemies of our soul's peace? Are we never to press through the crowd? How was it with the man who was paralyzed for so many years? He might for ever have lain helpless upon his bed, had he not been brought into the presence of Jesus. How with the woman with the issue of blood? She might for ever have tarried on the skirts of the crowd, a poor, polluted, self-condemned wretch. But she pressed through the crowd, and got to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. So with us. Shall we ever dwell in the outskirts in the outer court of the temple? Shall we merely walk round Zion's bulwarks and tarry at her doors, or shall we venture into the holiest itself? Shall we, driven out by fear, act like Cain and go out from the presence of the Lord? Or shall we, with all our sins and discouragements, still draw near? The apostle encourages us to come with holy boldness to the throne of grace, and to venture into the presence of the King of kings. Esther would have ruined herself and all her nation had she given way to the weakness of the flesh; but she said—"I will go in to the king, and if I perish I perish." She went in with that resolution. The king held forth the sceptre; Esther touched it, and she and the people were saved. So in grace. Shall we ever keep away through guilt, and sin, and shame? Now the Holy Ghost not only in the word of truth encourages, but he himself from time to time enables us to draw near. And when we draw near under his divine operations, we feel the blessedness of so doing. Liberty is given, access, holy freedom, a spirit of prayer, power to take hold of God, to wrestle for the blessing, and sometimes to agonize with earnest sighs and groans and the energy of one of old:—"I will not let thee go except thou bless me." This is "drawing near."

But the apostle speaks of four things, which are either necessary qualifications, or blessed accompaniments.

1. The first is, I may say, indispensable: "*a true heart.*" If a man has not a true heart, he has not a new heart. If he is not sincere, he is nothing. To be a hypocrite in religion is indeed a fearful thing. Better make no profession than one which does not spring out of some divine operation on the heart, some measure of

godly fear in the soul. It is of no use your drawing near to God except with a true heart. He neither accepts you nor your offering. He searches every secret recess of the soul; no hidden corner escapes his omniscient eye. No idle excuses avail with him, and no hypocritical pretence can deceive him, however it may deceive you. All real religion begins with a true heart, with sincerity and uprightness of spirit before God. A true heart will always bring a sinner before God, with confession of his sinfulness; will always show a man the inward deceitfulness of his fallen nature, and make him long more and more for sincerity and godly simplicity as a gift from God. There are those in the living family who cannot speak of a great and marked experience—who have not many depths to tell of in which they have sunk, or many glorious heights to which they have been raised, who yet have "a true heart," and sometimes show more sincerity and uprightness before God and man than those of deeper experience—It is not always those who have been most favoured who show most sincerity either in heart or conduct, either in lip or life. Not but that a good experience is very desirable; not but that it is sweet to enjoy the gracious manifestations of the love and mercy of God to the soul. But there are saints of God whom he keeps very low as to any sensible enjoyment of his presence and love, whose conscience he makes and keeps very tender; in whose hearts he works much sincerity; and whose lives he blessedly adorns with the fruits of righteousness. There are those in the professing church who adorn the doctrine and those who disgrace it; those who will live upon a crust sooner than get into debt, and those who will try to make a show amongst men at any risk or cost; there are those who live and walk in the fear of God, and those whom you would not think to be Christians at all unless they told you in so many words they were so.

2. The second necessary qualification, or at least sweet accompaniment, of drawing near is, the "*full assurance of faith*"—not necessarily as to personal interest, though that is sweet and blessed. The apostle is not speaking here so much of the full assurance of faith as regards personal interest, as of the full assurance of faith upon these divine realities. Faith and assurance are the same thing; only assurance is faith blessedly strengthened. We may compare faith to a sapling—an oak, say, taken out of the nursery ground and planted in the park. Assurance we may compare to the same oak grown and

strengthened, and has stood many a storm, and enjoyed many a sun, endured a hundred summers and winters. But the assurance of faith spoken of here is rather the strength of faith in and upon these blessed realities—a strong faith in the blood, in the new and living way, and in the great high priest over the house of God; a firm confidence in the blood as able to cleanse, in the new and living way as a suitable way to walk in, and in the high priest over the house of God as in every way acceptable to the soul and adapted to all its wants and woes. Now a man may have flying doubts and fears as to his own personal interest, and yet have a strong assurance of faith in and upon the efficacy of the blood to cleanse, the blessedness of the way to walk in, and the suitability of the Saviour to save; and he may have such a full assurance upon all these as shall encourage him to venture his soul upon that blood, to be daily walking in that new and living way, and to be looking up with a believing eye to that great high priest, and trust body, soul, life, and death into his blessed hand. Nor can I call that man weak in faith who can do this in spite of every doubt and fear.

3. The next thing—as I must not tarry longer upon this point—is to have *"our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."* An evil conscience is a guilty conscience—a conscience that testifies evil against the soul; and a guilty conscience is one of the saddest companions a man can carry about with him. It is a companion he would gladly be rid of, but one that is not so easily dismissed. It ever testifies against the poor sinner whose steps it attends: it is ever reminding him of sin committed—of death and judgment—ever telling him that he has transgressed beyond all reach of hope; that his crimes are too great to be forgiven; that he has sinned against light, conviction, and knowledge; and that such a sinner as he is not to be found amongst the saints of God. Now, his heart is to be sprinkled from this evil conscience. And how? By the application of atoning blood. As the high priest sprinkled blood on and before the mercy-seat, so blood has to be sprinkled upon the heart. And when the blood is revealed and applied, the heart is delivered from the evil conscience; it is put to flight, and speaks evil no more. This application of atoning blood removes bondage, fear, guilt, and trouble. Nor until his heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience can a guilty sinner with any degree of confidence draw near unto God. God seems to repel him. His holiness glistens before his eyes, and all he sees of God is a

consuming fire. But if he see and feel the efficacy of atoning blood, and that be sprinkled upon his conscience, and then the evil conscience departs; it is cast out of him; and then he is enabled to draw near unto the holiest.

4. The fourth and last thing necessary is, *"the body washed with pure water."* This does not refer to the water of baptism, but to the priests, and especially the high priest, who washed himself, on the day of atonement, with pure water before he put on the holy garments or entered the sanctuary. It, therefore, signifies being sanctified by the Spirit of God, and walking in all holiness and godliness of life. We know it is naturally unbecoming to go into the earthly courts of the Most High in dirty clothes and with unwashed body. It is not becoming the majesty of God, the reverence due to his name, or the day on which we meet, to come here with soiled clothes and unclean hands and faces. Persons may be poor, but they need not be dirty; clothes may be threadbare, but they may be clean. So in a spiritual sense: the body is to be washed with pure water, that is, the life, the conversation, the walk must be in some measure what the body is when washed and cleaned. How uncomely it is to see a professor of religion, as one may say, in all the dirt and filth of his old nature clinging to him; to see him living as the ungodly live, and disgracing his profession by acts of meanness, and those dirty actions which bring with them universal contempt. Therefore, the body is to be washed with pure water, and, as well as the soul, is to be sanctified to the honor, service, and glory of God.

These are the things that we are to know something of in our soul's happy experience. Without them, we seem very far from being what the apostle would have us to be—manifested saints of the most high God. But I must leave the issue in the hands of the Lord. I have this morning laid these things before you: it remains with him to apply and bless them, and make them instructive and edifying, encouraging and comforting. In his hands I leave it; and may he who has the blessing in his own hands be pleased to communicate it to our hearts.

## No Condemnation

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, March 30, 1862

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."  
Romans 8:1

I cannot read your thoughts or tell your feelings, but as far as regards my own, I almost daily find that my faith, if indeed it is to be the faith of God's elect; if it is to work by love and purify my heart; and if the end of it is to be the salvation of my soul, needs three things: First, *a foundation* on which to stand; secondly, *an object* to embrace; and thirdly, *a power* to give it birth and maintain it in being. But as this is a very important point, for on it depends our state for eternity, let me, with God's help and blessing, explain my meaning a little more fully and clearly. The Scripture, you must be well aware, lays a very great stress upon the possession of a living faith. I will just quote a few passages—they are indeed innumerable—but I will quote a few just to show you the importance which the Scripture attaches to the possession of a living faith: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.) Without faith, then, there is no justification, and without justification there is no peace with God. But if no justification, what awaits us? Eternal condemnation. If no peace with God, in what state are we for time or eternity? Enemies and aliens now, and enemies and aliens for ever. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) If, then, I believe, I am saved; if I believe not, I am damned. Salvation, therefore, or damnation depends on this narrow point, whether I possess faith or whether I possess it not. Take another passage: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24.) If, then, I believe not in the Son of God and that he is the promised Messiah, I shall die in my sins; and if I die in my sins, my soul must sink into eternal perdition. One more passage: "Receiving the end of your

faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. 1:9.) If, then, I am blessed with faith, there is an end of that faith which I am to receive, and that end is a most blessed end, for it will be the salvation of my soul. If faith, then, be such an important grace—and who can deny it in the very face of such passages?—how needful it is that we should look and examine whether the faith we profess is indeed such a faith as that to which the Scripture attaches such amazing importance. To recur, then, to what I first started with, that a living faith needs three things, let me now open them up. 1. *First*, then, faith must have a *foundation* on which to stand; for otherwise it can not only have no stability, but even no existence. Did you ever see a building without a foundation? And does not the strength of the building, as in the Lord's parable of the wise man's house, depend upon the strength of the foundation? Now, Jude tells us that we are "to build up ourselves on our most holy faith" (Jude 20); and Paul assures us that "faith is the *substance* of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1), implying that there is a solid reality in faith; that it is not a castle in the air, but a substantial possession. He, therefore, speaks of the "stedfastness of faith," and of being "established in the faith." (Col. 2:5, 7.) What, then, is this foundation? *The sure word of God*. Look at the case of Abraham, who in Scripture is called "the father of all them that believe," because as the features of a father are stamped upon the child, so our faith to be genuine must have the features of Abraham's faith stamped upon it; and as the child walks in the footsteps of his father, so all true believers walk "in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had, being yet uncircumcised." (Rom. 4:11, 12.) Now what was the foundation of Abraham's faith? Was it some ancient tradition as an echo of the past, some opinion of men of learning or repute, some fancy of his own mind, or some argument of his own reasoning faculties? No; none of these or anything like them, but *the word of the Lord*; for we read, "After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." But the word of the Lord on which his faith rested and by which he was justified was that which the Lord spake to him, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and

he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." These were the memorable words which the Lord himself spake to him; and this was the foundation of his faith, for we read that "he believed in the Lord, and it was imputed to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:1, 5, 6.) Now if you and I are to be possessed of Abraham's faith, and it is to be imputed to us for righteousness, we must believe as Abraham believed, and the foundation of his faith must be the foundation of ours, which was the word of God, and that word a word of power to his soul. This, then, is the *foundation* of our faith—not fancies, not notions, not opinions, not airy dreams, nor vain speculations; not the traditions of past ages, or the reasoning of learned men; but the infallible word of truth, spoken by the mouth of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost as revealed in the Bible which we hold in our hands, and made experimentally known by a divine power to our heart.

2. But secondly, our faith, if it be the faith of God's elect, must have an *object* to *embrace*. Faith as a grace of the Spirit, may be compared to an eye, an ear, and a hand. But the eye must have something to see, the hand something to grasp, and the ear something to hear. If there be nothing to see, what is the use of looking; if nothing to grasp, what is the use of stretching forth the hand; if there be nothing to hear, what use is there in listening? Eye, ear, and hand would have been bestowed in vain, without a suitable object for each organ. So faith has an object. That object is the *Person* of Christ. Thus, my faith, as an eye, must look to the Person of Christ; as a hand, must embrace the work of Christ; as an ear, must hear the voice of Christ. As, then, my faith looks to the Person, takes hold of the work, and listens to the voice of the blessed Lord, there is in every way an object which that faith embraces.

3. But again, *thirdly*, my faith, if it is to be the faith of God's elect, must "*stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;*" for I have no faith by nature which can save my soul. I have an unbelieving mind, nor can I by any exertion of my own, overcome this natural deep-seated unbelief, or raise up such a faith as works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world,



triumphs over death and hell, and lands the soul safe in eternity. The Scripture declares what all experience confirms, that faith is "the gift of God," and a fruit of the Spirit; that it springs out of a divine operation upon the heart, and is raised up by the mighty power of God in spite of unbelief, and, so to speak, upon its very ruins. This is the reason, then, why I feel daily to want these three things. I repeat them again, to impress them more clearly on your mind and memory; a *foundation* on which my faith can rest; an *object* which it can embrace; and a *power* which can maintain it in living exercise.

Now apply this to our text. What do we see in it? We may see, I think, in it three things standing forward in clear and gracious prominence, as laid hold of by faith.

I.—*First, the state and standing of the saints of God; for of them the text speaks; they are "in Christ Jesus."*

II.—*Secondly, the blessedness of their being in that state; that there is for them now "no condemnation."*

III.—*Thirdly, their spiritual character and description; that they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

I.—We will then, *first*, with the help and blessing of the Lord, direct our attention to the firm state and standing of the saints of the Most High. Brief is the word, but deep and inexhaustible the subject. They are said to be "*in Christ Jesus.*" By the expression "*in Christ Jesus,*" we are to understand the *union* which the saints of God have with Christ Jesus. I need scarcely tell you that "*in Christ*" is an expression which occurs very often in the pages of the New Testament. As an instance of its frequent occurrence, you will find it repeated, if I mistake not, eleven times in the first thirteen verses of the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians. But take a few scattered passages which I just name as instances out of innumerable others. "I knew a man *in Christ* above fourteen years ago." (2 Cor. 12:2.) "Of him are ye *in Christ Jesus,* who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness."

(1 Cor. 1:30.) "To the saints and faithful brethren *in Christ* who are at Colosse." (Col. 1:2.) "To all the saints *in Christ Jesus* which are at Philippi." By the expression "in Christ," is meant then the union which the saints of God have with the Lord Jesus, which is viewed as so close and intimate, that they have, as it were, no existence out of him.

i. But in order to open up this union more clearly and distinctly to our view, the Scripture uses figures. And there are four figures especially, which the Holy Ghost has used in the word of truth to illustrate and open up the nature of this union.

1. One is used by our Lord himself—*the stem of a tree and its branches*. "I am the vine, ye are *the branches*." Look at that figure; see how pregnant it is with heavenly truth. Observe a vine in the spring; see how all the branches come out of the stem. They have no existence but in the stem; they come out of it at first as tender buds, gradually opening and elongating themselves, but having their very being in it. Cut off from the stem, they wither and die; abiding in the stem, they bear leaf and flower, and fruit. So close and intimate is this union that we can scarcely form a conception of a bud or branch of a tree, as distinct from the stem in which it dwells, and out of which it issues. So with the union that the Church of God has with her living head. She comes out of him mystically and spiritually, as the bud comes out of the stem of the vine; expands under the showers of heaven and the smiles of the warm sun into leaf, into flower, into fruit, having no life or being, growth or maturity, except by virtue of her personal union with the Son of God.

2. Look at another scriptural figure, equally pregnant with blessed truth: *the head and the members of the body*. "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.) Again, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. 5:30.) How close, how intimate is that union! Did the members of our natural body ever exist by themselves, or out of union with the head and with each

other? Of what use would they be if they existed separately and had no union with the body? Without union with the body my arm would be of no more use or value than the arm of a corpse; my eye would be a lump of lifeless flesh; my tongue as cold and as silent as that which lies mouldering in the grave. How close, then, how intimate must the union of Christ's members be with him as their mystical head, if they are as much in him as my arm is in my body, or as my eye is in my head!

3. But take another figure, equally clear and equally scriptural; that of a *building*, of which Christ is the foundation and corner stone, and his people the living stones, standing upon and united with the foundation: "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:20, 21.) In a building does not every stone virtually rest upon the foundation? for they are all cemented and banded together so as to make one compact harmonious building, having union with it and each other. What is a loose brick or stone, just ready to fall upon the head of the passing traveller? Can it be called a real part of the building any more than a stone lying on the high road? Only, then, as it is cemented into union with the other stones, and rests upon the foundation, can any stone be called a part of the building.

4. Take another figure of the Spirit's own giving; *the union of man and wife*, which is so close that the Scripture speaks of them as "one flesh." How close must that union be which gives them one name, one interest, one heart! A union it is the most intimate of all possible unions, because devised by the Lord in Paradise, and created by his taking Eve out of Adam, so that she actually was in Adam before she was formed of him and for him; a part of his body before she had a separate existence of her own. What a sweet type of the union which the Church has with Christ as her husband! Thus, the Church is called the Lamb's wife (Rev. 19:7), and her Maker is said to be her husband (Isai. 54:5), so that he says to her, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me

in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." (Hosea 2:19, 20.)

Just look at these four figures, and see how clearly and how beautifully they set forth the intimate, the indissoluble union between the members of Christ and him their glorious Head.

ii. But the question may arise in our mind, *When* did this union first take place? Of course it must have had some birth or beginning, and the Scripture may afford us some clear intimation not only of its existence but of its origin. Now as it is to endure through and beyond all time it could not well commence in time. But we are not left to conjectures when it began. The Scripture assures us its date is from eternity—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love"—there is eternity; "therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"—there is time. (Jer. 31:3.) If this stagger our mind, let us ask ourselves what is time with him who is one eternal Now? Time is much with us; but nothing with God. With God it is all eternity; for he is the great and glorious "I AM that I am," the one eternal Now; and Jesus, the Son of his love, is "the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." We must not then take the mere, the passing, fleeting, perishing days of time to limit to them and fix in them transactions of such importance as the gift of a people to the Son of God, that in them he might be eternally glorified. Surely such a solemn transaction as the incarnation of the Son of God with all its consequences was worthy of eternal thoughts and eternal counsels. And if known beforehand to the all-seeing eye of God were the people who would be saved by the incarnation and death of Jesus, we cannot think it unbecoming his wisdom that he should give them beforehand a standing in his dear Son. It is true that this conclusion seems opposed to sense and nature, and one might almost burst out, as many doubtless have already done, "Why, what nonsense you talk! How can a man have union with Christ before he had birth or being?" Let us look at this objection. I will give what answer I can to it: not indeed to silence the cavils of reason, but to satisfy such as are willing to bow to the authority of the word of truth. I allow that it may seem nonsense; as many have called it in their scoffing language, to give man an existence

in eternity before brought into being on the stage of time. But scripture stands when reason fails, and objections perish with the objectors. Do we not read, "According as he hath *chosen us in him* before the foundation of the world?" (Eph. 1:1.) If, then, God chose his people then, had they not a being in the mind of God before he chose them? If I choose this or that object, it must have a being before my eyes can rest upon it, before I can want to possess it. So if God chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, they must have had a previous being in the mind of Him who sees the end from the beginning, or how could he have chosen them? What did our Lord say to his heavenly Father in his intercessory prayer? "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine." (John 17:6, 10.) Thus we have it on the Lord's own testimony, that all his people were God's before they were his, and were made his by gift; and if by gift, surely by eternal gift. We, thus, come at once to the date and circumstances of this union, and on the testimony of the words of truth, believe and preach that the saints of the Most High were God's by eternal foreview and by eternal choice; and that before all worlds the Father gave them to his dear Son to be members of his mystical body, to be branches in him as the only true vine, to be living stones in him as the living temple, and to be his spouse and bride, for ever to enjoy his company and his love. Having, then, Scripture on our side, and taking our stand upon the firm basis of the word of truth, we may well pay little heed to the murmurs and objections of those who would arraign the only wise God at a bar of unsanctified reason.

iii. But now arises a question of much more deep and vital importance, "All this is very true; I neither doubt nor dispute it; but how am *I*—for this is a personal matter—how am *I* to know that *I* have a union with the Son of God? I admit," you say, "that what you bring forward is very precious truth: it is so plainly written in the word of God that no sunbeam can make it more plain than it shines forth there. But ah! The question comes home to me, to my heart and conscience; have I an interest in this precious truth? What is it to me if there be this heavenly union if

I have no part nor lot in the matter?" Let us see if we can answer this question too. Observe, then, that there is a time union as well as an eternal union, and that only by realising our interest in the one, can we realise our interest in the other; for if we have no part or share in the time union, we have no right to believe we have a part in the eternal union. But how shall we know our interest in the time union? I will give you three marks by which you may know if you now are truly and vitally united to Jesus as a member of his mystical body.

1. First, *do you believe in the Son of God?* This is a very vital point, the question of questions. You will remember that Philip would not baptise the eunuch before he could say, "I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God." (Acts 8:37.) Can you say the same, and that not merely in the letter but in the spirit, as believing with your heart unto righteousness? Now if you believe in the Son of God with a living faith, you certainly have a union with the Son of God; for it is by embracing him, receiving him, hanging upon him, and cleaving to him by faith that this time union is both obtained and maintained. But let me open this up a little more clearly. View where and what we are before faith comes. Shut up in unbelief, condemned by the law and by a guilty conscience, having no peace with God, and no comfortable prospect of eternity. Who, that knows and feels this miserable state can say that he has any union, that is, any sensible, manifest union with the Son of God? But the Lord the Spirit is pleased, in his own time and way, to manifest Christ to your soul; a ray of divine light shines into your heart, revealing the Son of God with power. Under the light, life, and power of this revelation of Christ to your soul, faith is raised up to believe in his name, and to receive him into the heart's warmest, tenderest affections. This is beautifully described by the beloved disciple who wrote as one who had seen with his eyes, and his hands had handled the Word of life,—*"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Here power [or privilege, margin] to

become the sons of God is connected with a heavenly birth and a receiving Jesus. But why did they receive him? What did they see in him to receive and embrace? The Holy Ghost shall tell us: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:11, 14.) Don't you see that it was a sight by faith of the glorious Person of Christ as the only begotten of the Father which raised up faith in their soul; that by this faith they embraced him as the Son of God; and that this receiving of him into their heart by faith brought about a union with him, that is, a union of love, for faith worketh by love? But as this is a matter of vital importance, let me explain it a little further still from the word of truth and the experience of the saints. I have already brought before you the Lord's own figure of the vine and the branches, as illustrative of the union between Christ and his people. But the Scripture gives us another figure descriptive of their union with Jesus, that of a shoot, or, as it is sometimes called, a scion grafted into a stock. It is a figure which Paul uses to describe the blessedness of union with Christ: "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." (Rom. 11:17.) Now apply this figure to a Christian. You by nature are of a wild stock; you grew upon the old olive tree in which, as of Adam's fallen race, you had your earthly being. But a strong yet merciful hand, by the ministration of the law and the condemnation of a guilty conscience, as a sharp knife wielded by the Spirit, cut you out and off from the old stock. There, for a time perhaps, you lay bleeding upon the ground, clean separated from the old stock, but not united to the new. But the same hand that cut you off from the old stock put you into the new—the good olive tree which is Christ Jesus the Lord, that as grafted into him you might partake of his root and fatness. In grafting, there is a bringing together of stock and scion. The stock is cleft, and as if wounded for the scion, and the scion cut to fit closely into the stock. So a wounded Christ and a bleeding soul, bleeding like a shoot cut from its native tree, are well suited to each other; and, when brought together by the blessed Spirit, unite and become one.

This union may, at first, as in the literal graft, be very weak, very tender, needing much care and protection. But the stock and the scion take to each other; there is a union, a coalescing together; sap flows out of the stock into the scion; it becomes one with it, and by and by it grows, expands, and bears leaves and flowers and fruit. So it is with the believer and Jesus. There is a being grafted into Christ as the scion into the stock, a flowing of the sap and virtue out of Christ's fulness into the soul, and a growing up into him in all things (Eph. 4:15), whereby the branch bears the green leaf of a consistent profession, the blooming flower of hope and love, and the rich, ripe fruit of a holy, godly life.

2. But I will give you another mark of this time union with Christ, which is, being made a *partaker of Christ's Spirit*. This mark cuts as it were both ways, for and against, according to these two texts: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9); and again, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) If, then, we are joined to the Lord, in other words, have a union with him, this is the closest of all unions. A man and his wife are one flesh, but Jesus and the saint are one spirit. If possessed of this we are one spirit with him; we understand what he says; we have the mind of Christ; we love what he loves, and hate what he hates. But out of this spiritual union flows communion with him, intercourse with him, communications from him, and the whole of that divine work upon the heart whereby the two spirits become one. The Spirit of Christ in his glorious Person and the Spirit of Christ in a believing heart meet together, and meeting together as two drops of rain running down a pane of glass or two drops of oil, kiss into each other, and are no longer two but one. Now if you have been ever blest with a manifestation of Christ, your spirit has melted into his, and you have felt that sweet union and communion with him that you saw as with his eyes, heard as with his ears, felt as with his heart, and spoke as with his tongue.

3. I will give you another mark of this time union with Christ, which is *love*. This, too, like the last cuts both ways. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema, Maranatha."



This puts all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ under a solemn curse, sealed with the declaration that "the Lord cometh," as the word, "Maranatha," means, to execute it. But take it the other way, as a sealing evidence: "And 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.) Surely then to love the Lord with all your heart is an evidence that you have a union with him, and that he dwelleth in you; for "love is of God, and he that loveth knoweth God." Have you never, never, never loved the Lord Jesus Christ? Has he never at any time been the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely in your soul's esteem? Has he never revealed his glorious Person, never shed abroad his love, never come to you in the lonely hours of the night with a comforting promise, or a sweet word, or a gracious smile, or a heavenly touch? Or if not so highly favoured and blest, still in reading the word, in hearing him set forth in a preached gospel, in meditation and contemplation, has your soul never or ever you were aware been made like the chariots of Amminadib, caught up as it were into some sweet views of the King in his beauty, which made you one of his "willing people," as the word Amminadib means, in the day of his power. Look, then, and see if you have these three marks—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, a union with him through one Spirit, and a love to him as the altogether lovely; and if you can find yourself in possession of them you have a most undoubted testimony that you are one with the Lord the Lamb, that you are "in Christ Jesus," and that not only by eternal union, but by present spiritual oneness, as a member of his body, the Church.

II.—But let us now pass on to consider *the blessedness* of being in Christ Jesus, of having an eternal and spiritual union with the Son of God. This blessedness, as unfolded in our text, runs thus: "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus."

There is not a more blessed declaration than this in the whole word of truth. It is the sweetest note sounded by the gospel trumpet, for it is the very crown of the whole Jubilee. Is not

condemnation the bitterest drop in the cup of trembling? the most thrilling, piercing note of that terrible trumpet which sounded so long and so loud from Sinai's blazing top that all the people that were in the camp trembled? (Exod. 19:13, 16.) Condemnation is the final execution of God's righteous Law, and therefore carries with it all that arms death with its sting and the grave with its terror. The apprehension of this; the dread and fear of being banished for ever from the presence of God; of being lost, and that without remedy; of sinking under the blazing indignation of him who is a consuming fire, has filled thousands of hearts with horror. And it must be so as long as the Law speaks in its thunders, as long as conscience re-echoes its verdict, and as long as the wrath of God burns to the lowest hell. O the blessedness, then, of that word of grace and truth, worthy to be sounded through heaven and earth by the voice of cherubim and seraphim, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Let me then open this subject experimentally, and, in so doing, let me show you, first, what the apostle *does not* mean, and, secondly, what he *does* mean.

i. He does not mean that there is nothing *condemnable* in us. As long as we carry about with us a body of sin and death, a nature corrupt to the very core, sin will lurk and work in our breast, and if we have a conscience made tender in God's fear, it will condemn us for the evils which thus daily and hourly manifest themselves; which may indeed be resisted and subdued, but are never eradicated. The apostle does not, therefore, mean that there is nothing condemnable in us by the *eye of God*, or nothing condemnable *by our own conscience*, for this would imply that we were perfectly free from the very being and indwelling of sin. He himself, though a saint and an apostle, could confess, "That which I do I allow not;" and so great was the pressure of the law of sin in his members that he cried out as if in agony, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:15, 24.) Nor does he mean that we are not condemnable even in many things by the judgment of *our*

*Christian brethren*; for no man can so walk that there shall not be seen in him many infirmities and blemishes, even when preserved from more grievous slips, which may bring upon him condemnation, and just condemnation too, from those who hold the scales of the sanctuary with even hand. Peter, though the prince of the apostles, fell under condemnation from his brother Paul, because "he was to be blamed," and Barnabas, though "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost," was "carried away with dissimulation." (Gal. 2:11, 13.)

ii. But what the apostle means is, that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus of such a nature that *God shall ratify it against them* so as to be an availing sentence of their eternal destruction. Whatever the saint of God may feel or fear, whatever thunders the law may peal in his ears, whatever be the condemnation of his own guilty conscience, however in some things justly censured even by his own brethren; or, to take wider ground, whatever hard speeches of friends or cruel arrows of foes may be hurled against him, there is no sentence of condemnation against him from the mouth of God which shall be ratified at the great day. But why and how is this? "Because he is in Christ Jesus." And if he be in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation from the mouth of God to fall upon him, so as to banish him for ever from the presence of the Almighty. The law, it is true, condemns every soul found under it. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Look of the law to do them," will stand in all its unmitigated sentence when the world is in a blaze.

1. But why, you may justly ask, should not the saint of God fall under the condemnation of that fiery law? He is a sinner by nature; *that* he cannot deny when he has such daily proof of it in his own bosom. He is or has been a sinner by practice; and if he is, by the restraining grace of God, prevented from being immoral or ungodly, he still has the seed of every sin within. Why, then, should not the law take him by the throat and say, "Pay what thou owest?" Why? Because he is in Christ Jesus. But why should that be available? Because Christ Jesus endured the curse of the

law in his own body on the tree; for he was made a curse for us. If Jesus, therefore, endured that curse, that curse never can reach the members of his mystical body, for he endured it for them. If it were otherwise, God, so to speak, would be unjust to demand the penalty of the Law from his dear Son, and when he had paid it to the last mite, then re-demand payment from those for whom he had rendered full satisfaction. Upon that ground, therefore, that the blessed Lord was made a curse for them, the curse shall not touch those who are in him.

2. But again, does not the law require a *perfect obedience*? Does it not say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself?" Love is the fulfilling of the law, and therefore not to love is to disobey it. Now have you rendered to the law that pure and perfect obedience? Have you loved God and your neighbour as the law commands? "I have not," you say; "I cannot. My obedience, to be agreeable to the law, must be not only a perfect but a spiritual obedience. I have not rendered that obedience; I cannot render it." Where then am I, where are you, to look to escape the penalty of disobedience? To the obedience rendered by Jesus the Son of God, which was an obedience without spot or infirmity, and spiritual, for he had the Spirit without measure, and was "a lamb without blemish and without spot." This, then, is the reason why, if I am in Christ Jesus, the law cannot curse me, nor exact an obedience which, if I fulfil not, the wrath of God will fall upon me; because my Surety, my Representative has endured the curse, paid the debt, and rendered the obedience.

3. But again, there is my *conscience* which needs to be pacified. Does my conscience never condemn me? I should speak falsely if I said "No." My conscience sometimes condemns me almost all the day long. I cannot live an hour without hearing its accusing voice. "What!" say some, "are you then living in sin?" God forbid! But though not living *in* sin, I cannot live *without* sin. I have sinful thoughts, sinful imaginations, sinful desires, sinful passions, and very sinful feelings. I cannot look without sin, nor speak without sin, nor hear without sin,—no, nor can I preach without

sin. I have been sinning all the time I have been preaching this morning, and my conscience tells me so this very moment; nay, there is even sin mingled with my very confession. You will think me, perhaps, a very bad man not to be able to preach without sinning. But what if I go a step further and tell you what some of your consciences will ratify, that you too have been sinning all the time you have been hearing? In the face, then, of even our present experience, to go no further, can you, can I, say our conscience never condemns us? But if so, how can it be true that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus?" Why, because if I am in Christ Jesus, I am loved in Christ Jesus; I am chosen in Christ Jesus; I am justified in Christ Jesus; I am pardoned in Christ Jesus; and I am saved in Christ Jesus. If, therefore, my conscience condemn me, God is greater than my heart and knoweth all things. So that though I have the daily condemnation of a guilty conscience, yet if all my sins are washed away by the blood of the Lamb and my conscience is purified from guilt and filth by the blood of sprinkling, I shall not at the great day be condemned; and even now, so far as the power of that blood is felt, I am free from all condemnation.

4. But again, look further. There is the consummation of all things in *the judgment of the great day*, when we shall all stand before the bar of the Almighty Judge, and receive the things done in the body whether good or bad. Then there will be the open, the final, the everlasting condemnation of all not in Christ Jesus, and the wrath of God will fall upon them to the utmost. But who shall stand when the Lord appeareth? Who shall endure the scrutiny of that awful eye that reads every heart? Who can escape the vengeance of that God who is a consuming fire? Will the rocks and mountains shield the trembling, guilty children of men from the outstretched hand of the Almighty? No; all who in that day are found out of Christ the Lord must sink to rise no more. But if we are in Christ Jesus, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, united to him in eternity by the hand of God and brought near in time by a living faith, so as to realise the heavenly blessing, we shall not be condemned in that great day; for "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You will not be condemned before your great Judge in that

terrible day if found one with the Lord the Lamb.

To show this, let us take a glance at the representation of the day of judgment in the gospel of Matthew. (Matt. 25.) Are not the sheep represented there as set on the right hand of the throne of the Son of man, and the goats on the left? But was there any condemnation of the sheep? What was the language addressed to them by the Judge on his throne? "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Was there any voice of anger, or word of condemnation uttered against them there to stay the invitation to inherit the kingdom? Did the Law interpose its curse? Did conscience whisper its guilt? Did the justice of God bar the entrance? No; every condemning tongue was hushed; mercy alone reigned there; grace alone superabounded there. But what was the sentence pronounced by the mouth of the terrible Judge upon all who were set on his left hand? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." These were found out of Christ; they had neither substitute nor surety; therefore, they had all their sins upon their own head. Such being their miserable state and case, the law condemns them with a thousand thunders; their awakened conscience, loaded with the guilt of a thousand crimes, ratifies the verdict; no place of escape is afforded them, no refuge, no shelter; for who can interpose between justice and them? And thus, they sink for ever under the wrath of the Almighty. But there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, for that has been borne for them; and now washed in the blood, clothed in the righteousness, and sanctified by the Spirit and grace of the Son of God made flesh for them, they enter into the enjoyment of their eternal inheritance.

iii. "These," you will be perhaps ready to say, "are blessed things; I do not doubt their reality and truth, for I see them so plainly revealed in the word of God; but I want to get into them." So do I, or rather I want them to get into me. But do you never get into them, or rather, do they never get into you? Is it all wrath, bondage, guilt, and misery with your soul? Is there no sweet

union with Jesus ever felt, no embracing of his glorious Person, no sprinkling of his blood, no lifting up the light of his countenance, no gracious touch of his heavenly hand? Or, if you cannot rise so high, is there in your heart no faith to believe in his name, no hope to anchor in his mercy, no love to flow forth to him who is altogether lovely? I cannot think this. Matters surely are not always so desperately bad with you who fear the name of God that there never is any breaking in of divine light, never any communication of divine life, never any testimony of divine love? Or if now, perhaps, you are walking in darkness and the shadow of death, look back. Has there never been a time when Christ was revealed to your soul? Was there never a sweet moment when faith embraced him, hope anchored in him, and love flowed forth towards him? Surely, there was once a day or hour when Christ was made precious to you, and though that never to be forgotten visit may be long past, and many changes have since taken place, though waves of trouble have rolled over your breast, and seas of temptation have almost flooded your little bark, and though neither "sun nor stars for many days have appeared," as in the no small tempest that fell upon Paul in the Adriatic, yet he that loves, loves to the end; and true, most true are the words,

"Did Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is for ever mine."

Let us not belie our own consciences. I can say, you can say, that Jesus has been made precious to our souls, and that we have seen the King in his beauty. Does not this prove that you are a believer? And if so, surely he will never remove you out of his own body; for even if you be but a foot, ever grovelling in the dust, "the Head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you." (1 Cor. 12:21.) May you believe this and take comfort from it; to see and feel that for those who are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation, will strengthen your faith and encourage you, whatever be your present state of darkness and gloom, to anchor in the sure word of promise, and to believe in spite of unbelief.

III.—But we have yet to consider our third point, which *describes*,

as with a ray of light, *the present spiritual state* of those to whom there is no condemnation: "*Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" This description consists of two points, which I shall have to lay open as far as time admits. First, what the saint of God *does not walk after*, and, secondly, what he *does*.

i. *He walks not after the flesh.* Two things here demand our earnest inquiry. 1, What is meant by *the flesh*. 2, *By walking after it*.

1. What are we to understand by the expression "*the flesh?*" This word takes in the whole of that fallen nature, both in body and soul, which we have inherited from our first parent. It does not, therefore, mean merely those gross, sensual lusts, which are so sad a part of our original inheritance, but embraces every faculty of body and mind which we possess as children of Adam. 2. To *walk* after the flesh, carries with it the idea of the flesh going before us, as our leader, guide, and example, and our following close in its footsteps, so that wherever it drags or draws we move after it, as the needle after the magnet. To walk, then, after the flesh, is to move step by step in implicit obedience to the commands of the flesh, the lusts of the flesh, the inclinations of the flesh, and the desires of the flesh, assume they whatever shape, wear they whatever garb, bear they whatever name they may. See how wide a net these words cast forth; how thick the crop, how wide the sweep, how sharp the edge of this scythe! Can any of the fallen children of Adam escape being taken by this net? Who is there, from peer to peasant, who must not fall before this keen scythe? All will admit that those who walk after the lusts of the flesh, who are abandoned to the grosser sins of our nature, have no manifested mark of being in Christ Jesus. The common moral sense of men, the voice of natural conscience, the outspoken verdict of society at large, all proclaim, as with one voice, that sin and religion cannot be yoke-fellows. But are the grosser and more manifest sinners the only persons who may be said to walk after the flesh? Does not natural religion, in all its varied forms and shapes, come under the sweep of this all-devouring sword? Yes; every one who is entangled in and led by



a fleshly religion, walks as much after the flesh as those who are abandoned to its grosser indulgences. Sad it is, yet not more sad than true, that false religion has slain its thousands, if sin has slain its ten thousands. This, perhaps, you would all here assent to if I were to confine myself to the lower ground of that common religion which does not even clothe itself in a gospel dress; which has not learnt so much as the voice of Jacob, but wears alike the garments and speaks in the tones of Esau. But what will you say, if I bring you on higher ground, and take you as you sit under the sound of the gospel? There is a fleshly faith and a fleshly hope and a fleshly love amongst those of a sounder creed and purer language than the common religionists of the day; and a man that walks after this carnal faith and hope and love in the very courts of the Lord's house, is as much walking after the flesh as though he lived and died a drunkard on the ale-house bench. Our earthly Zion is overrun with a fleshly confidence which is but presumption; a fleshly knowledge which is but ignorance; and a fleshly talk which is but boasting. But to walk after the flesh, whether it be in the grosser or more refined sense of the term, is the same in the sight of God. To walk, then, after the flesh is to be ever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please the flesh, whatever aspect that flesh may wear or whatever dress it may assume, whether moulded and fashioned after the grosser and more flagrant ways of the profane world, or the more refined and deceptive religion of the professing church.

ii. But not to detain you longer on this part of the subject, let me now endeavour to unfold what it is to *walk after the Spirit*. I have already shown that to walk after a thing, in the language of Scripture, means to pursue it with desire, and to do so habitually. Thus we read of "mockers walking after their ungodly lusts" (Jude 18) as a mark of the wicked, and a "walking after the commandments" of the Lord (2 John 6) as a mark of the righteous. To walk, then, after the Spirit is to walk as the Spirit leads, guides, directs, and teaches. The flesh is the motive power to those who are in the flesh; the Spirit is the moving influence to those who are in Christ Jesus.

But let me open this point a little more fully.

1. To walk, then, after the Spirit is to walk after and in a *revealed Christ*—not a Christ in the letter, but a Christ in the Spirit; not a Christ in the word only, but a Christ in the heart, formed there the hope of glory. The work of the Spirit is to reveal Christ, to glorify him, and make him precious to believing hearts; to apply his blood to the conscience, to discover his righteousness, and to shed abroad his love. To walk, then, after the Spirit is to follow his gracious discoveries of the Lord Jesus to the heart, and to realise them by a living experience of their sweetness and blessedness.

2. But again, the Spirit *leads into all truth*. This was the promise given by Christ to his disciples: "Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13.) It is impossible for us to know the truth savingly and experimentally, except the blessed Spirit guide us, as it were, into the very bosom of it. Till then its beauty and blessedness, its liberating, sanctifying influence are hidden from our sight. But if I am guided by the Spirit into all truth, if he himself condescend to lead me into the truth as it is in Jesus, and enable me to walk in the truth as he leads me into it, then I may be said to walk after the Spirit.

3. But again, the Spirit is spoken of in the word of truth as an *Intercessor*, teaching us how to pray and what to pray for; nay, he himself is represented as "interceding for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." If, then, I pray in the Spirit, I walk after the Spirit, for I walk in that path of prayer and supplication in which he is pleased to lead me. He has promised to help my infirmities; and therefore if I find my many infirmities helped by his grace and overcome by his power, then too I may be said to walk after the Spirit.

4. But the Spirit is also the author of *faith, hope, and love*, for these are fruits and graces which spring from his work upon the heart. If, then, I believe in Jesus with a spiritual faith, if I hope in him with a spiritual hope, and love him with a spiritual love, I

walk after the Spirit; for the Spirit moves me both to will and to do those things; and as he leads I follow.

5. But the Spirit is also a Spirit of *contrition*, of *brokenness*, of humility, of godly sorrow for sin and honest confession of it. If, then, I am ever blessed with humility, contrition, repentance, and godly sorrow for sin, I walk after the Spirit.

6. But the Spirit is also the *Comforter* of God's people, for that is the name which our blessed Lord himself gave him. So that if he ever comfort your heart with his choice consolations, and you walk after his comfort, desiring to drink into it, and following after everything which may promote it, you follow in the steps in which the Comforter leads you.

7. But if we walk after the Spirit, we shall also be *spiritually minded*, which is life and peace; our affections will be fixed upon heavenly realities where Jesus sits at the right hand of God; for all this is his special work, and nothing short of his power and influence can produce it. If then we are favoured at any time with this spirituality of mind and these heavenly affections, it is a proof that we are walking after the Spirit.

8. But again, through the weakness of the flesh and the power of temptation, we often fall into a state of coldness, darkness, hardness, and even miserable carelessness in the things of God. Then the Spirit has to *revive our drooping graces*, bring us out of this miserable state of carnality and death, to lead us to the fountain once opened for all sin and uncleanness in the blood of the Lamb, to renew our hope, strengthen our faith, and impart to us fresh confidence. As we then walk in the light, life, and power of these gracious revivals, we walk after the Spirit.

9. But the Spirit also *brings the children of God out of the world*, separates them from its maxims, pleasures, and pursuits, draws their heart into union with the Son of God, tramples earth under their feet, and gives them grace to mortify the whole body of sin and death. As then they are enabled by his power to do these

things, they walk after the Spirit.

In this walking after the Spirit lies much, if not all, of the power of godliness. Nor indeed is there any real happiness or comfort without it. For immediately that we cease to walk after the Spirit and walk after the flesh, we lose our evidences, we can no longer see our signs, and all the sweet promises of the gospel and our interest in them are hidden from view. Thus we find by soul experience that if we walk after the flesh we shall die, not indeed eternally, but as to any enjoyment of heavenly blessings; but if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body we shall live.

Now see the necessity of this, as I may call it, gracious caveat, this holy proviso. A man might be so deluded by sin and Satan as to say, without any divine warrant, "I am in Christ Jesus; there is no condemnation to me." My friend, let me put in the Spirit's caveat, let me look at thy walk, for that must be the ruling test. How art thou walking? Art thou walking after the flesh? Is that thy ruling influence and directing guide? Art thou buried in the world; art thou sunk in covetousness; is thy heart uplifted with pride; art thou doing, daily doing the things that are contrary to godliness? My friend, yours is a vain religion, an empty confidence which may prove your eternal destruction. You may talk of being in Christ and one with Christ; but your walk contradicts it. You are still in the flesh, and therefore you cannot please God. Or take even a saint of God entangled for a time in almost a similar snare: even he may be for a time so blinded and hardened by a snare of Satan as to say, "Well, though I do slip and stumble about, and give way a good deal to the movements and influences of my carnal mind, it does not at all diminish my confidence. Once in Christ, always in Christ, is my motto." O, my friend, you have got into a vain confidence. If your conscience were tender, you would see you were standing on very dangerous ground. The Lord send a chastising scourge to bring thee back, for at present thou art sadly out of the way. You may despise the doubts and fears of those whom you call weaklings; but the very doubts and fears and misgivings of God's saints, are often employed as so many gracious whips in the hand of God, to bring

back wanderers into the path of truth and righteousness; for the Holy Ghost has given us this description of a Christian walk, not only to comfort the saints of God, but as a mark to show the way in which all true believers must tread to maintain their evidences alive and warm in their breast.

But time admonishes me to draw to a close. Blessed are they who are in Christ Jesus, and more blessed still are they who have the sweet confidence of it. But depend upon it, if we are to enjoy this sweet confidence, it must be by walking after the Spirit. Directly we lose sight of the leadings and teachings of that blessed Guide and Comforter, get into self, and begin to walk after the flesh, we lose our confidence, our hope sinks, and our faith is sadly dashed. See, therefore, the mercy and blessedness of being enabled to walk after the Spirit, that you may be enabled to enjoy the presence of God, to have your signs and evidences clear, and to be favoured with that holy assurance, of which John speaks, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." (1 John 3:21.) But I will add one word for those who have not this confidence, and yet have a living faith in the Son of God. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

## THE NORTHERN IRON AND THE STEEL

Preached at Trinity Chapel, Trinity Street, Borough, on Thursday Evening, August 22, 1846

"Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?" Jeremiah 15:12

Some persons object very much to the use of figures in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. They say that the truths of the gospel need no such illustration; that the use of natural figures tends rather to carnalize and debase such glorious subjects than to cast any light upon them; and that they are sufficiently clear in themselves not to need any such borrowed illumination. I admit that when figures are strained, or inappropriate, or too frequently employed, they may have this tendency. But that is their abuse, not their use. We are not allowed to argue against a thing because men abuse it. Thus I consider that the temperate use of appropriate figures tends much to explain and open up the word of God and the experience of the saints.

Two things, at any rate, to my mind, are clear. **First**, that figures cast a great light upon truths which otherwise would not be so clearly set forth; that they make an impression upon the mind, and are for the most part very retentively remembered. **Secondly**, it is, to my mind, perfectly clear that the blessed Spirit has made great use of figures in the word of truth. The language of the prophets is highly figurative. And need I mention the example of the blessed Lord Himself, who spake much in figures, and without a parable **which is but another figure** scarcely opened His lips?

We have a figure before us, and that figure in the mouth of Jehovah Himself, addressed to His servant Jeremiah under peculiar circumstances.

**In considering the words of the text I shall, with God's**

**blessing,**

I.—Endeavour, **first** to show **their literal meaning, and their applicability to the case to which they were addressed;** and,

II.—**Secondly, their spiritual and experimental signification in a wider point of view, as comprehending the whole family of God.** The Lord give the blessing!

I.—Jeremiah, we must bear in mind, was at this time in a state of peculiar distress. The Lord had called him to the prophetic office, had put words into his mouth, and had endued him with great faithfulness to deliver a message that He Himself had given him. The discharge, the faithful discharge, of his prophetic office brought upon him great persecution. He cries out, in the very bitterness and anguish of his soul, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me." His tender feelings sank beneath the weight of this universal enmity.

But there was more than this. The Lord delayed to appear, and hid His gracious countenance from him; and thus the corruption of his heart being stirred up, the passion and rebellion of his carnal mind burst forth into that unbecoming language, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt Thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as the waters that fail?" His whole bosom was one troubled sea of sorrow, and here we see the heavings and boilings of its restless waves. But how does the Lord meet this case? What are the words that He makes use of in order to pour oil upon these troubled waters? He says, "Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?" As though He argued thus with him: 'Though thy persecutions, troubles, afflictions and all the heavings of thy tempest-tossed bosom are to thee as strong, as hard, and as invincible as iron, yet shall they break that which is stronger? Is not My almighty power, My eternal love, and My delivering hand

as much stronger than the iron hand of persecution which is gone out against thee, and the iron sorrows which thou hast to endure, as the northern iron and the steel are stronger than the common metal?' And that this is the spiritual meaning of the words is evident from what we read in the 20th verse **Jer 15:20**—"I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord." As though the Lord had said—"Yes, thou shalt have an iron yoke to bear; thou shalt have iron persecutions to suffer; they shall fight against thee as iron fights against iron; but they shall not prevail against thee. I will make thee a fenced brazen wall. I am with thee, to save thee and deliver thee, saith the Lord." And could a more sweet and suitable promise be found? The Lord did not diminish the reality of Jeremiah's trouble. The Lord told him plainly that the trials and exercises which he had to pass through would be to him as strong, as hard, and as invincible as iron. But at the same time, he assured him that there was a stronger power, which should be put forth in living exercise to deliver him out of these things, to conquer them in him, and conquer for him.

II.—And this leads me to the **second** branch of my subject, on which I shall, with God's blessing, more particularly dwell; and I shall therefore enlarge the words by endeavouring to show, as far as the Lord shall enable me, how suitable they are not merely to Jeremiah's case, but to the Lord's people generally, and to those cases and states in which God's family continually find themselves.

This, then, will be the leading feature, if God enable, of our discourse—to show, **first**, how the trials and exercises of the Lord's family are to them as "iron;" and **secondly**, how the Lord's power, and strength, and help, are as "the northern iron and the steel," that effectually and invincibly overcome them.

I. The Lord's people are an afflicted people. This is God's own testimony concerning them: "Chosen," says He, "in the furnace of affliction." **Isa 48:10** A "third part" are to "pass through the fire."



**Zec 13:9** He leaves in the midst of them "an afflicted and poor people" **Zep 3:12**; and it is they, and they only, who shall "trust in the name of the Lord." The afflictions that the Lord's people have to pass through are not meant to be light ones. The Lord lays no light burdens on His people's shoulders. His purpose is to bring them to a certain point, to work a certain work in their souls—to reduce them to that helplessness, weakness and powerlessness in which His strength is made manifest.

Thus, when the Lord would select a figure aptly to describe the afflictions of His people, He fixes on the metal **iron**; and thus compares them with the hardest, the strongest, the firmest, the most unyielding and the most tenacious of all metals.

1. Some of the Lord's people have to pass through **deep and severe trials in providence**; and these to them are often of an "iron" nature. Those trials in providence which do not weigh heavily, which do not press deeply, which are not felt to be of a nature that we cannot of ourselves overcome, are not iron trials. But those afflictions that the Lord brings upon His people, against which they find their own exertions cannot prevail, which baffle all human wisdom, laugh at creature strength, and defeat every power in man to remove or overcome, may well be compared to that hard, unbending, unyielding, tenacious metal—"iron."

2. Others of the Lord's people have **deep and severe trials in grace**. All the chosen family do not pass through the same degree of cutting afflictions in providence; but in grace none of them are exempt from trials. Are we not to suffer with Christ that we may reign with Him? to die with Him that we may live with Him? Are we not predestinated to be conformed to His likeness? And is not that likeness a suffering likeness? Are we not to be crucified with Christ here, that we may see Him as He is hereafter? Who, then, is to escape the cross? Who is to pass through life without heavy spiritual trials? Bastards—not sons.

Bastards may escape the rod,  
Sunk in earthly vain delight;

But the true—born child of God  
Cannot, would not, if he might.

Thus the Lord's people **though there are degrees, doubtless, of spiritual as there are gradations of temporal suffering** have to pass through an appointed measure of spiritual griefs, exercises and sorrows. And these to them are to be as "iron." If they are but wood, which I can snap asunder with my hands, they are not such trials as the Lord Himself sends. If I have burdens, which I can myself remove; if I have trials, from which I can deliver myself; if I have temptations, out of which I can rescue my own soul, I have clear evidence that I am not walking in that path of tribulation in which the Lord's people walk. If I can exercise faith upon Christ; if I can take God at His word; if I can believe every promise; and thus shift every burden when I please and how I please, I may be sure of this, that God has never tied that burden round my shoulders—has never laid that affliction upon my heart—and that His hand is not in that trouble. But when our trials are of such a nature that to us they are as "iron;" as unable for us to bend or break as the iron pillar that supports that gallery—**then** we have some evidence that these trials are of the Lord's appointment, and that the blessed Spirit has traced out **our** case here when He compares the trials we have to pass through to this firm, yielding, and unbending metal.

Child of God, has not this been the heaviest part of your trial, the keenest edge of the cutting affliction, that you could not, by any creature exertions, remove it from you? But this very thing that so often tries your mind is the very proof that it comes from God: for when the Lord binds, none can loose; when the Lord shuts, none can open. When the Lord puts a man into a trial, none but the Lord's hand can deliver. So that the keen edge of the trial that has so often pierced your heart; the heavy burden that has so often weighed down your shoulders—that you could not deliver yourself—this very circumstance that has caused so many sighs and cries to go up out of your heart, and filled you at times with sorrow, is a proof that the affliction is from God.

3. Some of the Lord's people have to suffer under **great burdens of guilt**. The law is applied to their conscience in its spirituality, breadth, condemnation, and curse; and this is to them indeed an "iron" yoke, which they cannot bend or break. Convictions that we can remove, and burdens of guilt that **we** can throw aside as a porter deposits his load upon a bulk—**that** is not the application of God's law to the conscience, that is not the opening up of the spirituality of the commandment to the soul. It is not of God if we can remove it, or any man remove it for us. But is not this one of the most keen and cutting things in the spirituality of God's law applied to the conscience, that we cannot remove the guilt, cannot take away the curse, cannot ease ourselves of the burden, though it sinks into the heart and presses the soul down? Yet this very mark proves that it is of God, because it is of the nature of "iron."

4. Some of the Lord's people have to pass through **keen and cutting temptations**. Satan is allowed to harass them from time to time with his fiery darts; he is permitted to work upon the evils of their fallen nature, and suffered to stir up the corruption of that depraved heart which they carry in their bosom. And these temptations they feel utterly unable to remove. When fiery darts are shot into your mind, can you remove them? When blasphemous imaginations are stirred up in your carnal heart, can you get away from them? When Satan presents to your mind everything hateful and everything horrible, can you bid him depart, or drive these thoughts away? If we could, how happy should we be. But we cannot break or bend these temptations; they are to us as "iron."

5. Again. How many of the Lord's family are **entangled in secret snares** known only to themselves! And how they cry, sigh and groan under these snares that Satan is laying perpetually for their feet! How often they are entangled with besetting lusts! How often cast down by the pride of their hearts! How often overcome by the covetousness of their depraved nature! How continually entangled in one snare or another that they meet with in their path! But can they deliver themselves? It would not be an "iron"

snare if they could break it. It would be such green withs as Samson told Delilah would bind him fast—mere tow, that bursts asunder when it sees the flame. If you and I are entangled in any snare, and we can break it, and escape out of it, would that be a snare to us? No: the very nature of a snare is to have a firm hold round the neck of the unhappy animal that is caught in it. It is the "iron" of the snare, the wire, that destroys the hapless animal that runs into it. And have not you and I found sometimes our snares to be as inextricable by creature power as the poor hare that is caught in the wire of the poacher? Yes, as unable to deliver ourselves, and requiring the hands of another to loose that snare from our necks.

6. Others of the Lord's people are held in bondage because **they have not clear manifestations of the Lord's love to them.** They are not able to cry, "Abba Father:" they cannot see their names in the book of life; they have not felt the testimony of the Spirit of God; they have not received the sweet sheddings abroad of dying love; they have not had the pardon of their sins clearly made manifest to their conscience. And they have a feeling sense in their own consciences that these things are indispensable to salvation; that they must have them brought into their hearts by the power of God, or die in their sins. Are not these "iron" trials to some of the Lord's living family? Do not these things often bow their minds, burden their hearts, and distress their conscience, because they cannot come out into the liberty of the gospel, because they cannot rejoice in the Lord as their salvation, because they cannot call God with an unwavering confidence, "Father." But if they had no trials in this matter; if there were no sharp and keen exercises connected with these feelings in their heart; if they caused no burden, brought no distress, were not some times round their necks like a yoke, it would be no trial to them at all. But it is because these convictions of their shortcomings, of their unbelief and helplessness are so keen, and so weighty, that they have in them the nature of the rigid, unyielding, unbending metal—"iron."

7. Others of the Lord's family have **to endure sharp persecutions**; the enmity of relations, the scorn of professors, the hatred of the world lying in the Wicked One. Was not this Jeremiah's portion? Did he not say, that "every one hated" him? And every one will hate you and me, if we are as faithful as Jeremiah. A minister to escape enmity, scorn and slander! Show me the man that does; and I will show you an unfaithful man, a coward in Christ's camp, and one who dares not open his mouth boldly in the Redeemer's name. But show me a faithful man, one who preaches the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—one who fears no man's frown and courts no man's smile—who seeks only the approbation of the blessed Spirit in his own conscience—and I will show you a man hated, despised, persecuted, opposed and slandered; a man who, in proportion to his faithfulness, knows something of Jeremiah's outward path, and something also of his inward suffering.

We have a large assembly here this evening; and many professors of truth beneath this roof. How have you found religion? Some of you have professed it many years. What has your path been? You have come here from various parts of the town?' you can tell the streets through which you came, whether clean or dirty, whether wide or narrow, whether thronged with people or comparatively free. You can describe exactly the road you have come. Well; you have travelled so many years in the path of religion, and how have you found **that?** Has it been a very rough path? a very rugged way? an up and down road? many trials and persecutions, many temptations, many sorrows, many afflictions, and many keen and cutting convictions, that have been to you as unbending and unyielding as the metal "iron?" If so, you have some evidence that the Lord has been leading you; that you are amongst His afflicted and poor people; that you have been in the furnace, where the Lord chooses His Zion. Thus you have some testimony that the Lord is leading you by a right way, though it be a rough and rugged way, to bring you to a city of habitation. And never expect any other path but an iron one; never anticipate any trials but iron trials; never look

for any temptations but iron temptations; any snares but iron snares, any foes but iron foes, nor any sorrows but iron sorrows.

Well; and how are we to break them? As well might the condemned criminal in Newgate's cell break through those walls of stone, and gates of iron, as one of the Lord's tempted and tried people himself break to pieces the sorrows and trials that the Lord brings upon him. No: they would not be of the Lord's appointment, of His own bringing, if he could get himself free, if he could snap them asunder like a rotten stick; if he could by his own unassisted strength break through all, and proclaim light, life and liberty to his own soul.

II. But did the Lord leave Jeremiah here? What are the words of the text? Oh how suitable and expressive to his fainting spirit! **"Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?"**

It would appear, that the Jews made use of "northern iron" to form their cutting instruments from; and it is a singular coincidence, that this country in which we live is supplied with Swedish or "northern iron" to make all her cutting instruments from. The knives you have in your pockets, the scissors you have been using this day, are of "northern iron." The iron, which comes from Sweden is of such a pure, strong and tenacious nature, that it is selected for the purpose of making cutting instruments. You see that the Lord, when He is pointing out the trials His people are passing through, compares them to "iron." He does not diminish their weight; He does not at all lower their oppressive tendency. But then, in order to administer a suitable remedy to Jeremiah's soul, He brings forward something much stronger. "Shall iron," He says, "break the northern iron and the steel?" No, surely; the "northern iron and the steel" shall break through that. The common iron never can break through the northern iron, which is a metal of such a far superior nature; still less prevail against that keen well-tempered steel which can cut through everything it touches.

But how is this to be explained spiritually? In the same way as we have seen that the trials, sorrows, exercises and temptations of the Lord's people are compared to "iron;" so we must look out for something that is more than a match for these trials, temptations, exercises and sorrows, if we would spiritually open up and interpret the figure.

"The northern iron and the steel" signify the power of God—the power of God put forth in the weakness of the creature. And, in several instances, we may compare what God is and does for His people's help to this "northern iron and the steel." For instance,

1. There is **the eternal covenant**, "ordered in all things and sure." Can this eternal covenant be broken? Can this eternal covenant pass away, and become a thing of nought? Say that you are interested in this covenant, can your trials, your temptations, your sorrows—I will add another word, your sins—break to pieces this eternal covenant which was entered into with the Three Persons of the glorious Godhead on your behalf? As well might the common iron break the "northern iron and the steel," as your trials, sorrows, griefs, exercises and temptations, break to pieces that eternal covenant which God the Father has made on your behalf with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. **God's decrees, absolute purposes and eternal appointments**, that flow out of His eternal covenant, are another branch of this "northern iron and the steel," that breaks to pieces everything before it, but which these cannot touch. I remember to have read that in our large manufactories, huge steel shears are made use of to cut to pieces plates of iron, as easily as you who have this day been employed at your needle have cut through a piece of linen, and much more easily than a child cuts through a common card. Thus, God's purposes and eternal appointments, which are here compared to steel made from "northern iron," can cut to pieces all your afflictions, trials and exercises, with the same facility as the steel shear, moved by steam, can cut through iron plates. But what else can touch them? Nothing but steel can cut through iron plates; and so

nothing but the mighty power of God can cut through the trials, temptations, afflictions and sorrows that you are from time to time exercised with.

3. **God's promises** recorded by the blessed Spirit in the unerring word of truth—are not these also part of "the northern iron and the steel?" What so firm as they? Are not these the words of Jesus Himself? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." **Matthew 24:35** Will not God's promises stand forever and ever? Are they not all "yea and amen unto the glory of God by us?" **2Co 1:20** Now the Lord has promised to bring the righteous out of trouble. He has promised to hear the sigh and cry of the mourners; to put their tears into His bottle; to remember them for good; to bow down His ear, and hear them when they call upon Him. He says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." **Ps 50:15** Is not this "the northern iron?" How strong! how firm! how unable to break! how impossible to bend! How it will cut through afflictions, and rend them asunder, as the steel shears cut asunder plates of iron!

4. **The blood shed for a chosen people—the propitiation and sacrifice that the Son of God once offered for sin upon Calvary's tree**—is not this, too, a part of that power of God which He here compares to "the northern iron and the steel?" Say your conscience is bowed down with guilt; your sins rise up like mountains before your view; you are distressed at the evils, which are manifested to your sight. But shall these sink you to hell? Shall these iron sins and iron guilt be left round your neck to drown you in eternal perdition? Not if you are one of the chosen seed; not if the blood of Jesus was shed for you upon the cross. **That** is able, when applied, to remove the strongest chains that may surround you—**that** is able, when made known to the conscience, to purge it, however guilty you feel, or however defiled by sin and filth.

5. The glorious righteousness of the God-Man; His spotless obedience to God's holy law; His perfect fulfilment of it by doing



and suffering, which He wrought out and brought in in the days of His flesh—is not this also a part of God's power, and what God manifests in the hearts of His people as a justifying robe, shielding them from deserved wrath?

6. **The love of Jesus**, "which passeth knowledge," which is "strong as death," and can never fail—is not this a part too of the "northern iron and the steel?" And if you are interested personally in the blood and love of Jesus; though you may have from time to time iron sorrows, iron sins, iron temptations; yet, if you are personally interested in the glorious work of the God-Man, it shall cut them all to pieces; it shall break to shivers "the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder;" and bring your soul out of every trouble, every temptation and every sorrow.

But is it sufficient that the "iron and the steel" should be side by side? Must there not be some **application** of the steel to the iron before it can cut it in pieces, before it can rend it asunder? Say that you have many trials, many temptations, many sorrows, and that there is the love of God on your behalf—the eternal covenant—Christ's atoning blood, justifying righteousness and dying love—the God-Man Mediator between inflexible justice and your soul. But are you still at a distance? Have you not yet been brought near to God, and has He not been brought near to you? What can the steel shears do unless there be an **application** of them to the iron? Is it not so spiritually and experimentally in a sinner's conscience? Will the **doctrine** be sufficient? It would not do in a manufactory. The **doctrine** of steel shears cutting through iron plates would not do the work. When the master looked to see what work had been done, the workman might discuss very clearly and very learnedly what wonderful shears there were in the factory; but the employer would want to know how many iron plates they had cut asunder through the day. He would not be satisfied with the doctrine; he would want to know what had been the **experience** of the effect of the steel shears. Is it not so spiritually? Will doctrines do us any good unless there be an application of those doctrines with power to our soul? I know they cannot. They can do us no more good than speculating

upon the nature of steel compared with iron, without bringing the theory into experience and practice. And here the Lord's people are distinguished from those dead in profanity, and those dead in profession, with clear heads and unhumbled hearts. These can sit by their firesides, or sometimes over the tea table, and discourse very fluently and eloquently what virtue there is in "steel;" can enter into all the branches of it, and describe most admirably what the eternal covenant is, what the decrees of God are, what the blood of Jesus is, what His glorious righteousness. But has there ever been an **application** to their conscience of these doctrines that they can discourse so fluently and talk so scripturally about? It will do them no good to talk about them, unless there be some application of them to their heart and conscience. This is what the Lord's people want; and this is what He gives them all.

This, then, is one of the chief reasons why the Lord brings His people into such "iron" difficulties—that He may have the glorious privilege of cutting them asunder. If you have no iron trials, no iron temptations, no iron griefs, no iron sorrows, what do you want the "northern iron and the steel" for? To look at, to play with, and to admire? as you may pass by a cutler's shop window, and admire the rows of knives and scissors you see hanging therefrom? No: if your hearts are exercised with iron sorrows, temptations, trials and perplexities, I am sure you will want the almighty power of God in your souls to cut them asunder. And God can do it. Are you a poor persecuted believer? God can cut down in a moment that enemy who is persecuting you. Are you tempted of Satan? He in a moment can cut his fiery darts asunder. Are you passing through a severe trial? By the application of some precious promise the Lord can in a moment cut the trial asunder. Are you entangled in some grievous snare that you feel and cry out under night and day, and yet are unable to extricate yourself? The Lord can in a moment, by the application of His precious word to your soul, cut that snare asunder. He has but to bring against it "the northern iron and the steel," and it is done in a moment. And how we see here the glory of God! How the Lord brings His people into those states

and cases in which He will be glorified! If I feel no sin, I want no pardon. If I have no guilt, I want no application of atoning blood. If I have no burdens, I want no sweet relief. If I have no temptations, I want no precious deliverances. If I have no trials, I want no powerful application of God's word to my soul. How was it with Jeremiah? Did not he say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart?" Why? Because keen persecutions, sharp trials, severe temptations, had given him an **appetite**—that was the reason why the "word was found." He fell upon it as a hungry man upon a crust. It was sweet to his soul, because it brought with it a precious deliverance from the temptations and the sorrows his soul was groaning under.

Is there not then a **needs be** for your being tried, tempted and distressed? Does not the apostle say "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations?" **1Pe 1:6** Was not that Christ's way? And of the early Christians too? They followed Him in this path. And does not the Lord bid the Laodicean church buy of Him "gold tried in the fire?" **Re 3:18** Does not James say, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation?" **Jas 1:12** And again; "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations?" **Jas 1:2** Why? Any joy in trials? any pleasure in sorrow? No, none. But in the deliverances from the Lord; in the power of God put forth to bring the soul out; there is joy **there**. And therefore, we have to walk in a dark path to make the light dear to our eyes; we have to pass through trials, to taste the sweetness of the promises when applied with power; we have to endure temptations, that we may enjoy the sweetness of deliverance. And this is the way, be sure of it, that God deals with His people. Is your conscience made honest? Does that monitor in your bosom speak the truth? Tell me what it says? Does it not say, 'Few trials, few consolations; few sorrows, few joys; few difficulties, few testimonies from God; few sufferings, few discoveries of love and blood? Does not the Apostle say, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ?" **2Co 1:5** And does he not say, "Our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the

sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation?" **2Co 1:7** And does not the Apostle Paul tell us to be mindful not to forget what the Lord says, when He speaks to his people that the lot of a child is to endure chastisement? He says, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement," **O solemn word! O how applicable to thousands!** "whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." **Heb 12:5-8**

The Lord leads us, by His own blessed Spirit, into right paths! They may be, they must be, paths of trial. We must be baptized into His sufferings and death, if we are to be partakers of His glorious resurrection. We must take up the cross, and deny ourselves, and follow Him in the regeneration, if we are to see Him in glory. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." **Lu 22:28-30**

Thus, we see, that in proportion as we feel the iron nature of trials and sorrows, shall we experience "the northern iron and the steel" of God's almighty power and grace to deliver. Happy are the people that are in such a case! Happy the people that have this Lord for their manifested God!

## **Not Our Own, for We are Bought with a Price**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, June 28, 1868

"Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

I will assume that you are utterly ignorant of the Gospel—of its doctrines, of its promises, of its precepts, of its motives, and of its general influence and power upon believing hearts. And I will assume also that you were called upon to lay down some plan whereby men might be restrained from the commission of crime, and influenced to the practice of every moral and social virtue. Now what plan should you adopt? You would, most probably, make crime the subject of severe punishment, and proportion the penalty to the offence; and you would also propose certain rewards to virtue and to good actions, graduated according to a rising scale. And you would do this, that on the one hand you might by punishment deter men from the commission of crime, and on the other by suitable rewards induce them to the practice of such actions as society at large generally approves of. Well, after you had done all this, had drawn up your scheme, laid down your punishments, and proposed your rewards, you would only do what has been done or attempted to be done in all ages by the law of the land, though, for the most part, the various legislators have adopted punishment and omitted reward.

Take another case. I will still assume you are ignorant of the gospel, and of God's way of preventing evil and of bringing about good, and were called upon to point out some plan whereby a man might be most effectually restrained from the commission of sin, and made obedient to the law of God. Now, what plan would you adopt? Most probably you would lay down strict rules of life; you would appoint certain seasons of prayer and meditation; you would call upon a man to withdraw himself from all worldly society, and prescribe to him a certain path of religious exercise

in which he is to walk all the days of his life, that by fasting, self-denial, and continual mortification of the flesh he may tame and subdue his rebellious lusts and attain unto perfection and holiness. Well, in laying down all these plans and schemes, you would be doing what Popery has ever done, and what is the main foundation of all the monasteries and nunneries that are now everywhere springing up in this country.

So you see, that you have been already anticipated in your plans and projects; and that hundreds of years before you were born, the wisdom of man, such as it is, had laboured hard to restrain men from evil, and to bring forth in them that which is good. And how have all these attempts succeeded? Is there less crime in the country? Do severe laws deter men from the commission of theft, violence, and even murder? Has not sin always proved too strong for every restraint which human laws have put upon it? And the very law of God itself, which threatens a solemn curse against all who are found guilty under it, revealing the wrath of God against all transgression and all transgressors, has it ever restrained men from evil? Has it ever subdued and tamed the carnal mind? Has it ever produced obedience acceptable to God, or brought forth any one good word or work? Nay, on the contrary, has it not rather, as the Apostle speaks, put fresh life into sin, "for without the law sin was dead," and thus sin, taking occasion by the commandment, works in us all manner of concupiscence? We thus find that no law, whether the law of the land, or the law of Moses, can restrain or subdue sin, or bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

But now, I will assume that you know something, spiritually and experimentally, of the gospel; that you have been led to see, that what is called the moral law never has been able to subdue sin, for the carnal mind is not subject to it, neither indeed can be; that though holy in itself, for the law is "holy, just, and good," it has never produced any inward sanctification of soul and spirit; that all its works are dead works, and that though the soul is naturally wedded to it, it has never yielded thereby a living offspring, or brought forth fruit acceptable to God. You may have tried to keep it—have set it daily before your eyes as your guiding

rule—have endeavoured to obey it and conform your life to it; and yet after all your labours you have never been able to satisfy the breadth of its demands, or render to it an obedience which could pacify your own guilty conscience. All that you reaped from it was hard bondage, guilt, doubt and fear. You never obtained by it one gleam of mercy, one answer to prayer, one breaking in of the light of God's countenance, one visitation of the presence of Jesus, one testimony that you were in the right way, or one evidence that the Lord was at work upon your soul. If ever, amidst all your hard bondage, any beam of light and life, any ray of hope, any prospect of mercy, any intimation that you should not perish, came into your soul, it was from a different quarter; it was through some beams of the gospel which broke in through the mist and fog of your legal bondage.

I will assume, then, that you have tasted, felt, and handled something of the sweetness and power of the gospel. Now you set another way to work, and you are able to show, from your own experience of its power, the effect which it has had both upon your heart and upon your life; and this has wrought a change not only in your views of what the gospel is as the power of God unto salvation, and what the Gospel can do, as influencing both heart and life, but has also put a new speech into your lips and turned you to speak the pure language of Canaan. You do not now urge the law as a binding rule upon those who have believed through grace, and make Moses their husband instead of Christ. You know from your own experience that the law never made you fruitful in any one good word or work, and that nothing ever attended it but darkness, bondage, guilt, barrenness, and death. You cannot, therefore, urge that as a guiding rule upon others, which in your own case you found so ineffectual either to guide or rule you; and therefore when you would endeavour to persuade those who fear God to live to his glory, you would set before them not the law with its curses, but the gospel with its blessings. You would set before them the exceeding love of God in the gift of his dear Son, the surpassing grace, mercy, and condescension of Jesus in dying for a guilty race. You would point to his sufferings in the garden, and to his agonies on the cross,

and show that there is no other sacrifice for sin but his precious bloodshedding and death; and that every poor, guilty, self-condemned wretch who comes unto him, casts himself upon his free mercy and grace, and looks to him and to him alone as his all-sufficient Saviour and complete salvation, will not be cast out, but sooner or later will obtain pardon and peace. You would further tell him, that when he feels the bleeding, dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ in his soul, it will constrain him by every sweet constraint henceforth not to live unto himself, but unto him who died for him and rose again. And as you set these things before his eyes and speak of the influence which they have produced upon your own heart and life, you bind him, as it were, by every gospel motive to live to God's praise and to walk in his fear.

Now such a mode of persuading to obedience would be right, would be consistent with the promises and precepts of the gospel, would be in harmony with the preaching and teaching of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, would be more or less accompanied with the testimony of the blessed Spirit and the approbation of God, and so far as owned and blessed of him, would make itself manifest in the hearts and lives of those among whom it was preached.

But why have I sought in this way to introduce my subject? It is because this is the line of truth which is firmly established in my own conscience, which I see shining as with a ray of heavenly light all through the pages of the New Testament, which thoroughly harmonises with the language of my text, and which I must therefore preach both now and at all times as long as I am enable to preach at all.

If then, this evening, in opening the words of our text, I should seem from infirmity, either of speech or knowledge, to deviate from the strict line of gospel truth which I have laid down—if I should seem to any, in my earnest contending for the fruits of the gospel, to step aside into what is called legality, for the line between liberty and legality is so narrow that it is easy to overstep it, you must excuse it as being an act of infirmity, not of



intention. I may have to cut very close, to pull you up, it may be, somewhat sharply upon points where you have already taken considerable license, and might like a little more liberty, or rather licentiousness, than I can consistently grant you. But though I may seem to do this, especially to those who would gladly shelter themselves under my real or fancied infirmity, that they might take a larger field for the indulgence of the flesh than truth or a conscience made tender in God's fear would rightly allow them, yet I wish to stand wholly and solely upon gospel ground; to bring before you no other than gospel motives; and if I urge gospel precepts, it is only in their connection with gospel promises and gospel liberty.

Now look at our text in this mind and spirit. Bear in mind these observations, and then look at it with firm, steady eye. What do we see in it? If you and I look at it with the same eyes, we shall see in it these three things:—

I.—*First, a declaration* from the mouth of God: "Ye are not your own."

II.—*Secondly, a reason* why we are not our own: "Ye are bought with a price."

III.—*Thirdly, an exhortation*: "Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

I.—To whom does God speak here? To his people—not merely his redeemed people, but his regenerated people; those who know the truth by its application to their hearts with a divine power. It was to such that the epistles were written. It is a great mistake to think that these blessed epistles were addressed to men generally, or even to those who made an ordinary profession of Christianity. They were written to churches, and therefore, to persons called both out of the world and out of the congregation, to be the manifested body of Christ. Thus this epistle, and with it the words of our text, were addressed, "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." (1 Cor. 1:2.) We must also bear in mind that the church of God at Corinth, though it had many grievous defects, was upon the whole a highly favoured church. It was "enriched in every thing by Christ Jesus in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that it came behind in no gift." (1 Cor. 1:5, 7.) To such a church, therefore, the words of the text apply with a power and force which would be lost and, so to speak, thrown away upon such a congregation as now collects together even to hear the truth, in which so many are to be found to whom the word of God has never come with life-giving power. And as these epistles, with the truths which they contain, the doctrines which they set forth, the promises which they hold out, and the precepts which they enforce are become our inheritance, so far as we have succeeded to the faith and experience of the New Testament churches, we should consider that the Holy Ghost speaks in and by them to us as much as he did to them.

With these observations, which I desire you to ponder well in your mind and to lay closely to heart, I will now attempt to bring before you the *declaration* of God in our text, "Ye are not your own."

i. The idea is this, that once we were our own, or at least thought we were; for we never really were our own. We dreamed of liberty when we really were in the hardest, closest bondage. We thought we had no master when we were serving the hardest of all masters. We boasted of our freedom, that we could do what we liked, and say what we liked, without being called to account for it by any one, could roam at will, like a bee, from flower to flower, sucking up the sweets of sin, and promising to ourselves as rich a feast on the morrow as we were enjoying to-day; and little dreamt that all the time sin held us fast in fetters which, though they seemed made of silk, yet really were of iron. Now during all this time of fancied freedom, but real servitude, it seemed as if we were our own lord and master. If our body were not our own, our soul was; if the hand were bound to work for a master to earn a living, thought was free; if the day claimed us

for its servant, night was ours; and with the setting sun came the rising of pleasure and amusement. The idea of independence was sweet to us, and to be dependent upon any one, even upon the God that made us, was a slavery too galling for our proud heart to bear.

But now assume that grace has made us free from this fancied independence, but real slavery; that the gospel has been made the word of salvation to our souls; that we have been brought under new obligations; live under fresh constraints; are influenced by different motives, are led by another spirit, and are brought into a child-like dependence upon God, both in providence and in grace. We can now feel the force of the apostle's words, "Ye are not your own." There was a time with you when you thought you were your own, and would have highly resented any idea of being in bondage to any man. This was exactly the feeling of the Jews of old when our Lord said to them, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." What was their proud reply? "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8:33.) They saw not, they felt not, that they were in bondage to any man, though at the very time they were in bondage to Caesar, as regarded their bodies, and to sin as regarded their souls. Our Lord, therefore, said to them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." (John 8:31-34.) It is a rule in grace as well as in nature, in things spiritual as in things temporal, that he is our master whom we serve, as the apostle speaks: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16.) It is then the veriest delusion to think and call ourselves free when we are slaves to pride and lust; and it is a positive act of rebellion against God to claim freedom from him, and to say with those wicked men of old, "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" (Psa. 12:4.)

Now can you not look back upon a time when you served hard

masters, and yet loved their service? The world had possession of your affections; sin domineered, rioted, and raged in your carnal heart; self was uppermost in all your thoughts and desires, and whatever line of conduct it prompted, I had better say, commanded, you willingly obeyed. Now when you were under these hard masters, though their servitude was sweet to you as long as you thought you were your own, you could do, to a certain extent, as you pleased with yourself. Your jailer, though he watched you narrowly as being able to pounce upon you at any moment, like a cat on a wounded mouse, yet gave you a certain latitude, as knowing thereby you would do more effectually his work and bind his chains more strongly round your neck. In this way, therefore, your time, your talents, your money, the members of your body, the faculties of your mind were your own; you could spend your time as you pleased, use your abilities as you thought most conducive to your worldly interests, do with your money as inclination best prompted, and use the members of your body to minister to your natural desires. And in all this there was no one to check you at the time, no one to call you to account for what you had said or done. You did not, indeed, see that all this time sin was your master, and the love of the world deeply rooted in your heart ruled and governed you. Nor did you see what ignorance and blindness held your eyes in the grossest darkness. Thus you fancied you were free, when you were the veriest bond slave of sin and Satan.

But now assume that you have been brought out of all this miserable bondage, and having been convinced of sin by the law, and been brought in guilty, have found peace and pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ. Now what is the effect of this blessing from on high? Has it not liberated you from that miserable bondage to sin, Satan, the world, and self which I have described? Has it not set your feet, as it were, into a new track, opened before you a new field, laid upon you new obligations, and to crown all, in one word, brought you under the easy yoke of a new Master?

Now, it is to such as these the text speaks: "Ye are not your

own."

ii. Let me, then, endeavour to show this a little more in detail, for it is by thus entering into particulars, that truth becomes, not only more plain and clear, but more personal and practical.

1. If this be true, then, your *time* is not your own. It is not for you to say, "I can do what I like with my time; it is all my own, and I can spend my days and nights just as I choose." But this is not true even actually and literally. If, for instance, you are a servant, whether domestic or under an employer, your time is not your own. It is your master's who pays you wages, and to whom you have sold your time when you sold your labour. Again, if you are a tradesman, your time is not your own, for unless you gave it to your customers, your business would soon all be gone, your capital all spent, and your family ruined. Or if you are in a profession, your time is not your own, for if you are not found in your office, or do not go when you are sent for, you will soon have neither client nor patient. Or even if you possess an independent income, you have still duties to perform, and sometimes very laborious ones; so that even in that case, a singular and a favoured one, your time is not your own.

But now view it spiritually. If you are a partaker of grace, and the Lord has laid his gentle yoke upon your neck, your time is not your own. You cannot say, "I can spend this hour in carnality and worldly-mindedness, in amusement and company." You may say so, and even try to do so, but in saying so, and much more in doing so, you are stepping aside from gospel paths, and may soon manifest that you are out of the way altogether. Your time is not your own: it is God's. And yet, though our time is God's, and we are bound by truth and conscience to consider and spend it as his, he does not bind us to strict hours, as if he would tie us down to a rigid popish rule, which would not be gospel liberty but legal bondage. He leaves us at liberty upon this point, knowing how various the circumstances of his people are, and that when he says to one of his dear children, "My son, give me thy heart," he virtually says, "If thou give me thy heart, thou wilt also with it

give me a portion of thy time." One day he has especially given us, his own day, the Lord's day, and that he expects we shall give wholly to him, both in resorting to his courts, and spending what other time we have in reading his word, or some such employment as shall be for our profit and his glory; but he does not tie us to fixed hours or certain seasons of prayer.

2. The Lord may have given you mental or spiritual *abilities*. Now, those abilities of yours, be they great or small, are not your own. You cannot say of the faculties which God has given you, be they of nature or grace, that you can use them just as you please. If you could do so, you might use them in the service of sin, of self, of Satan, of the world, just as if grace had laid no obligations upon you, and as if you were free to use or abuse God's good gifts. God may have given you an insight into his truth, a spiritual and experimental knowledge of the meaning of his word, an acceptable gift in prayer, an ability to speak, with power and savour, of the things he has done for your soul, or a boldness of spirit and readiness of speech to contend for the faith and to conduce the gainsayers. Now, these gifts are not your own. They are to be devoted to the use and service of him from whom they came. They were not given you to feed your pride, gratify your vanity, and foster your natural love of human applause, but to profit and edify his people; and, if used in any other way, he who has given them, may withdraw them, or leave you in the exercise of them to barrenness and death.

3. Again, your *money* is not your own. You may not spend it just as you please, without check of conscience, without restraint of godly fear, without putting to yourself any inquiry how far you are spending it aright. You should be like a miser who looks at every shilling before he parts with it. So should every shilling be looked at, carefully and narrowly, by a Christian, whether it is spent for the honour and glory of God or not. I grant that this may seem to tie us up very closely, and that is one reason, perhaps, why the people of God are kept, for the most part, so tight in hand, that they have very little loose money to spend as they like. But even if we have a competency, or perhaps more than a competency, if

we are under divine influences and gospel obligations, although we may have the money, we cannot throw it here and throw it there to please and gratify the flesh; adorning the body with dress, either for ourselves or our children, and decorating the house with new and unnecessary furniture. We might do such things, according to the present lax system, without outward reproof, when we can scarcely tell, by external appearance, who are, and who are not, the people of God; but this is not the gospel. This is not the obligation of gospel grace. Your money is not your own if you are a Christian. You are but a steward. If you have much, the more responsible you are for the right use of it; if you have little, still you are a steward for that little.

4. The *faculties* of your body are not more your own than the faculties of your mind. Your *eyes* are not your own, that you may feed your lusts, that you may go about gaping, and gazing, and looking into every shop window to see the fashions of the day, learn the prevailing pride of life, and thus lay up food for your vain mind, either in coveting what must be unbecoming to your profession, or applying your money to an improper use, or disappointed because you cannot afford to buy it. Your *ears* are not your own, that you may listen to every foolish tale, drink in every political, worldly, or carnal report which may fall upon them, and thus feed that natural desire for news, gossip, and even slander, which is the very element of the carnal mind. Your *tongue* is not your own, that you may speak what you please, and blurt out what passes in the chambers of your heart, without check or fear. James warns us against allowing this little member to get the better of us. "Behold," he says, "how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body." (James 3:5, 6.) Your *hand* is not your own, that you may use it as an implement of evil, or employ it in any other way than to earn with it an honest livelihood. Our hands were not given us for sin, but for godly uses. Your *feet* are not your own, that you may walk in the ways of the world, or that they should carry you to resorts where you will not find the company or countenance of the children of God, and where all around you are engaged upon

errands of vanity and sin.

Thus, if you look at the whole matter with a gospel eye, you will see that there is not a single thing belonging to us as a gift of God, whether of body or soul, of time or circumstances, of station or employment, which we can properly and truly call our own. All must be held according to the disposal of God, and under a sense of our obligations to him. Even as being creatures of his hand, he claims for himself all that he has given us. And when we look at it on higher grounds and see the obligations laid upon us by his grace, we shall see and feel more clearly and thoroughly, that he has taken them all under his own keeping, and only entrusts us with the stewardship of them, that we may render him an account.

But perhaps you will say, in the rebellion of your carnal mind, "What restraint all this lays upon us. Cannot we look with our eyes as we like, hear with our ears as we please, and speak with our tongues as we choose? Will you so narrow our path that we are to have nothing of our own, not even our time or money, our body or soul? Surely we may have a little enjoyment now and then, a little recreation, a little holiday sometimes, a little relaxation from being always so strict and so religious, a little feeding of our carnal mind which cannot bear all this restraint?" Well, but what will you bring upon yourself by the roving eye, the foolish tongue, the loose hand, the straying foot? Darkness, bondage, guilt, misery, and death. "But," you say, "we are not to be tied up so closely as all this. We have gospel liberty, but you will not allow us even that." Yes, blessed be God, there is gospel liberty, for there is no real happiness in religion without it, but not liberty to sin; not liberty to gratify the lusts of the flesh; not liberty to act contrary to the gospel we profess, and the precepts of God's word, for this is not liberty but licentiousness.

But I will bring matters into a narrower compass. What pleasure have you felt—assuming you are under gospel motives, know the power of gospel truth, and feel the sweetness of the gospel in your heart, for to such only do I now speak—what real pleasure



have you found when you have broken away from what you call restraint, and been for a short while your own master? Why you have been like the cage-bird which has escaped out of the window. Sometimes foreign birds, in London, escape from their cage and fly away. And what often becomes of them? They become the sport of some cruel boy, are hunted down by a prowling cat, or caught up and devoured by a roving dog. Or, if they escape this death, and are caught at last on some housetop, it will be with, perhaps, a broken wing, and their beautiful plumage all soiled with dust and smoke. This is the end of the liberty of this cage-bird, and what he gets for forsaking his kind mistress. So if you could leave your gospel cage, and fly about as other birds fly, where would your present golden plumage be? Where would be your bright wings? They would not be like those of the dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. They would soon be soiled and tarnished like those of a London sparrow. As a saint, you would escape with life but is it not better and safer for you to be a cage-bird, than to have the liberty of flying about with street sparrows, to roost with them at night under a smoky chimney pot, and pick up your food by day at a dirty cab-stand?

But now let me put the matter in another light. This is the Lord's day. You are come here to hear God's word, and to assemble yourselves with his saints. Assume, what I fear is the case with many of you, that this evening you are sitting under the word cold and dead; that though the words enter your ears, and in some degree, may enter also your mind, yet they touch no secret spring of inward grace; move no tender feeling; bring no life nor power into your heart. Are you happy with all this coldness and insensibility? Do you feel in the right place, that you are now so much your own, and are not bound to give me either your ears or your heart, but are taking a little holiday, a little relaxation from being tied up so tight to listen for yourself? Is it a matter of indifference whether the word should reach your heart, comfort you in your trouble, be a word of encouragement, or whether it be a mere sound that enters into your ear and approves itself to your judgment; and then you may go home as if there had been

no Lord's day, no sermon heard, no people of God met together, and all your religion and everybody else's religion a perfect blank? Should you go to bed happy if you spent the day in this cold, lifeless way, and this, not only to-day, but repeatedly? Am I then too hard upon you when I say, "Ye are not your own?" Your eyes should be looking up to God for his blessing to come down into your soul; your ears should be hearing God's truth, as if you were listening for eternity; your lips moving in secret prayer that the Lord would speak a word to your heart; and every avenue barred, as it were, against the entrance of unbelief, vanity, and sin.

Thus, there is a blessed sense in the words, "Ye are not your own." Remember you must be some one's. If God be not your master, the devil will be; if grace do not rule, sin will reign; if Christ is not your all in all, the world will be. It is not as though we could roam abroad in perfect liberty. Some one will have us. We must have a master of one kind, or another; and which is best, a bounteous, benevolent Benefactor such as God has ever shown himself to be; a merciful, loving, and tender Parent; a kind, forgiving Father and Friend; and a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer, able to save us to the uttermost; or a cruel devil, a miserable world, and a wicked, vile, abominable heart? Which is better, to live under the sweet constraints of the dying love of a dear Redeemer; under gospel influences, gospel principles, gospel promises, and gospel encouragements; or to walk in fancied liberty, with sin in our heart, exercising dominion and mastery there; and binding us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day? Even taking the present life, there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and happiness in half an hour with God, in sweet union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, in reading his word with a believing heart, in finding access to his sacred presence, in knowing something of the droppings in of his favour and mercy,—there is more solid happiness in half an hour thus spent in the real service of God, than in all the delights of sin, all the lusts of the flesh, all the pride of life, and all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self, thinking, by a death-bed repentance, at last to cheat

the devil.

II.—But now for the *reason*. Why are we not our own? "Ye are bought with a price."

The Lord would not let us be our own, for he knew what the consequence would be. Should you like for a favourite child, before he arrives at years of discretion, to be his own? You who are parents, have you ever suffered your children to be their own masters? If you have, you have rued the day, and they have rued it too. Now shall God suffer us to be our own masters when we are not fitted to rule and govern ourselves? Shall he suffer us to have our own way, when we are not fit to have our own way? And shall he leave us at liberty to walk in paths which he knows will bring misery and wretchedness upon us in the end? "No," he says "these are my people: they shall not be like other people. They are bought with a price. I gave my dear Son to die for them. He has shed his precious blood to redeem them from death and hell, and bought them with no less a price than his own sufferings, his own most precious death upon the cross."

But now look at the value of this price. Who can estimate it? Not all the intellect of angels. Let there be assembled a council of angels; let them all consult together, and attempt to value the price which was paid to redeem the church of God. Angelic intellects would all fail to determine its real value. Can what is finite understand and appreciate what is infinite? Believe, for a moment, in your heart that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true and proper Son of God; believe he is one with the Father in essence, glory, and power; in a word, believe he is God as well as man; and believe that the blood which he shed upon the cross is invested with all the value, validity, and merit of Godhead. Now, what value can be set upon a price like this? We could set a value, an imaginary value, upon what a man might do. We might go a step further, and set an imaginary value on what an angel might do. But when we come to put our intellect into the scale with what God is; and when we attempt to value that precious blood, which was the blood of the Son of God; then you might as

well attempt to grasp the stars with your hand; you might as well attempt to gather up the Atlantic ocean in a bucket; you might as well attempt to count the sand upon the sea-shore, as to estimate it at its right worth. We are lost in a blessed confusion, lost in a holy admiration, lost in wondering gratitude, lost in a sense of what that blood must be in worth and value, when it was no less than the blood of him who was the Son of God.

It is thus we seem to get a glimpse of the meaning of the words, "Ye are bought with a price." How deep, how dreadful, then, of what awful magnitude, of how black a die, of how engrained a stamp must sin be, to need such atoning blood as this to put it away. What a slave to sin and Satan, what a captive to the power of lust, how deeply sunk, how awfully degraded, how utterly lost and undone must guilty man be to need a sacrifice like this. "Ye are bought with a price." Have you ever felt your bondage to sin, Satan, and the world? Have you ever groaned, cried, grieved, sorrowed, and lamented under your miserable captivity to the power of sin? Has the iron ever entered into your soul? Have you ever clanked your fetters, and as you did so, and tried to burst them, they seemed to bind round about you with a weight scarcely endurable? But have you ever found any liberty from them, any enlargement of heart, any sweet going forth from the prison-house, any dropping of the manacles from your hands, and the fetters from your feet, so as to walk in some measure of gospel liberty? "Ye are bought with a price." Ye were slaves of sin and Satan; ye were shut up in a dark cell, where all was gloom and despondency; there was little hope in your soul of ever being saved. But there was an entrance of gospel light into your dungeon; there was a coming out of the house of bondage; there was a being brought into the light of God's countenance, shining forth in his dear Son. Now, this is not only being bought with a price, but experiencing also the blessed effects of it.

Being, then, bought with a price, what were we bought from? The service of sin. Shall we then serve sin again? The service of the world. Shall we serve the world again? The service of self. Shall we serve self again? Forbid it, heaven; forbid it, love; forbid it,

gospel; forbid it, every constraint of free, sovereign, superabounding grace upon a believing heart! You say "Ah! I wish it were so with me. But alas! I am so entangled; sin is so strong, I am so weak. I would use my eyes aright; I would employ my ears aright; I would guide my tongue, my hands, my feet, every member of my body aright, but I cannot." Does not all this teach you what a miserable wretch you would be unless you were bought with a price? This misery, this bondage, this darkness, and death,—have these no lessons laid up in them? Do they convey no instruction to your heart? Will you never learn anything from them? Will you go on still adding to your darkness, getting further from God, walking more and more in the ways of carnality and death? Forbid it, God; forbid it, heaven; forbid it, grace; forbid it, every sweet constraint of gospel mercy and gospel love! Then you are bought with a price that you may not walk in ways that must bring with them bondage and misery.

But there is hope in Israel even in this; for here is the blessedness of being bought with a price. If we fall into bondage, leave for a time the service of our kind Master, listen foolishly to Satan's temptations, get unwarily entangled in his snares, then does our Master say, "Away with you! Away with you! I will have no more to do with you. You have listened to Satan; you have gratified self; in this instance you walked wrong; in the other you spoke what was amiss. I will have no more to do with you. Away with you! Go and serve your master, and let your master pay you his wages. I turn you off as a master turns off an unfaithful servant." If the Lord should say so to us, well we might answer, "I have deserved it all. If thou never shouldst appear for me again; if thou shouldst give me up to the service of sin, Satan, and the world, and banish me for ever from thy presence, I have deserved it. I could not lift up my hand in hell and say, 'Thou hast done unjustly;' I have deserved it all." Now when the soul is brought here, mourns and sighs over its base entanglements, looks again to the Lord, seeks mercy at his hands, then comes, "Return, ye children of men; I will heal your backslidings." And the Lord once more takes us into his service, and shows us we are bought with a price. He won't let us go; Satan shall not have

us; the world shall not reign and rule as before. He has cast his blessed cord of love round our heart, and though we wander to the utmost, he brings us up, and we can look to him again and again, as our Lord and our God. "Ye are bought with a price."

III.—Then what follows? The *exhortation*: "Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." The Lord does not deal with us in his precious gospel as the law does; bidding us do, and giving us no power to do. But what he bids us do he gives power to do, and to do it willingly, cheerfully, and with the obedience of a son, not the fears of a slave.

i. Now when do we glorify God in our *body*? When we use the faculties of our body in the service of God, and glorify him by their employment.

1. When, for instance, we use our eyes—not to feed our carnal mind, not to pamper the flesh, and entertain every roving imagination or base and wicked desire, but to read the word of God with reverence, earnestness, diligence, and a desire to know and do God's will, we glorify God with our eyes. When we look up, as we do sometimes, as though our eyes would pierce the very heavens, to see Jesus at God's right hand, though we expect not to see him by the eye of sense, we use our eyes aright, because we are looking up to him who has bid us look unto him and be saved. When we turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and keep them fixed simply upon gospel truths and gospel ways, then we glorify God with our eyes; for we use them as God would have us use them. When we can drop a silent tear over our sins, we use our eyes aright; for then the tear drops down the cheek under a sense of real penitence and godly sorrow for our great and grievous sins. When we can look at the dear people of God with eyes of affection; when we view not their infirmities, nor their sins nor short-comings, but see only the mind and image of Christ in them, then we glorify God with our eyes. When we can sympathise with those under affliction, look upon them with eyes of pity and tenderness, instead of staring upon them with cold, lack-lustre eye, then we glorify God with our eyes.

2. When we hear God's truth; when his word enters through the ear into our very heart; when every thing falls down before it opposed to God and godliness, and Jesus comes in the power of his word into the soul to make himself precious, then we glorify God with our *ears*. When we listen to the experience of God's people, and what they say touches our heart and reaches our affections, then also we glorify God with our ears. And when we turn our ears away from lying tales and slander and detraction, to prejudice us against any of his dear family, we glorify God with our ears; because we stop them against ungodly lies and anything which detracts from the love and affection we should bear to God's saints.

3. We use our *lips* aright when we employ them in prayer and supplication, when the heart and lip both go together, and as we seek the Lord upon our bended knee, our mouth utters the earnest desires of our soul. We glorify God also with our lips when we speak well of his name, praise and bless him for his manifested mercy, thank him for all his goodness in providence, and ascribe to him all that we are in grace. We glorify him with our lips when we speak a word in season to his people, to encourage the fainting, comfort the cast down, and strengthen the exercised. And we glorify God also with our lips when we speak words of condemnation to the ungodly, and, if a minister, searching words to hypocrites, faithful words to loose professors, and warning, rebuking, reproof, or encouraging words to all who desire to fear God, which shall be in harmony with his truth and our own experience, and be spoken in a right spirit.

4. We glorify God with our *hands* when we give to the poor and needy according to our ability, and administer to their wants as circumstances may require. When we keep our hands from cheating, or pilfering in any secret way, from practising fraud in business or other matters, and set a strict watch over our fingers, to employ them only in the service of God, then we glorify God with our hands.

5. When our *feet* bring us to the house of prayer, to assemble

ourselves with God's saints, and take us away from places of error and where God is not, then we glorify God with our feet. When we walk also in gospel paths, in obedience to gospel precepts, are found attending to gospel ordinances, and live in a way becoming our profession, then we glorify God with our feet, for we then run the way of his commandments.

ii. But we are to glorify him in our "spirit" as well as our body; for both body and spirit are his.

1. We glorify him, then, with our spirit, when we have the spirit of *faith* in our breast, when we are not always doubting nor unbelieving; but believe God's word, receive God's truth into a tender, feeling, broken spirit, and feel the effect of faith as purifying the heart from the love of sin and the world. We glorify God with our spirit when our faith embraces the Son of God as revealed in the word in his beauty and blessedness, in his grace and glory, in his blood and righteousness, in what he is as the Son, and Christ, and the Lamb of God. We glorify God in our spirit when our faith embraces every truth of the gospel, lays hold of gospel promises, and gives heed to gospel precepts.

2. When we have a *good hope* through grace, cast anchor within the veil, and by the power of this good hope press on through hosts of evils, we glorify God in our spirit, because a good hope through grace, anchoring within the veil, draws us onward to him, who is where the anchor is firmly fixed.

3. We glorify him in our spirit when we *love* his name, his Person, his work, his word, his truth, his people, and all he has sanctified and consecrated by his Spirit and grace. A spirit of love is especially that whereby we glorify God in our spirit; for what is a Christian without love? He is a nonentity, a monster; he is not a Christian man. He is only a mannikin, an imitation of a man, one born out of due time, and not a man in Christ. To be called a Christian, and not love God's truth, nor God's word, nor God himself, and his dear Son, this is not being a Christian, this is not Christianity, this is not the spirit of the gospel; this is not



glorifying God in our spirit. If you have no love in your breast, you are no Christian. And if you have love in your breast, you will glorify God in and by that spirit of love.

4. A spirit of *meekness, humility, gentleness, and peacefulness* made manifest in us is to glorify God in our spirit. Will quarrelling glorify God? Will strife and contention in a church glorify him? Will bitter words, angry speeches, reviling accusations, cold looks, not speaking even to members of the same church, will that spirit of the world and of the flesh glorify God? Is that adorning the doctrine? Is that bringing forth the fruits of righteousness? Is that manifesting you are under gospel influence, and walking in the love and spirit of the gospel? If you are to glorify God in your spirit, it must be by a spirit of humility, meekness, gentleness, quietness, peace. Does God sanction war, strife, contention? It is what God hateth.

5. You glorify God also in your spirit when you *submissively bear* the weight of your afflictions; when you endure your daily cross with a humble mind. It is for your good to submit to it as the will of God. Then you glorify God by a spirit of submission. Does rebellion glorify God? Does fighting against God's word glorify him? Do peevishness, fretfulness, murmuring glorify God? No! meekness, submission to the will of God; embracing the cross, whatever it be, with thankfulness, seeing the rod and him who appointed it, feeling he lays upon us much less than we deserve,—this is glorifying God in our spirit.

6. A spirit of *separation* from the world; a sweet spirituality of mind; delighting in the things of God for the pleasure found in them; feeling the truth of God to be a feast in itself, and desiring ever to walk in the enjoyment of gospel mercies and gospel blessings;—this is glorifying God in our spirit. And so I might enlarge, running through the various ways in which we glorify God in our spirit, if I did not fear to weary you and take up too much time and attention.

I have laid these things before you, but I have not laid, at least

designedly, a burden upon you. I have sought to keep myself from urging these things in a legal way, or speaking of them in any but a gospel spirit. I feel at this present time in a gospel spirit; I feel to be in a good spirit; and what I say to you I speak in the spirit of the gospel, in the love and affection of the gospel, for your souls' good. If I came with a thundering law, laying these things upon you as something to be done in the flesh, you might rebel, and say, "I came this evening to hear the gospel, to hear a precious Christ exalted, and his truth set before me. I did not come to be flogged." Have I flogged you? Has not rather conscience flogged you? If the word I have spoken has been a word of reproof, has that reproof not been needed? Does conscience back that reproof? I have administered it in a spirit of affection: how have you received it? Do you see that you are not your own? Do you wish to be your own? If God gave you your liberty, would you take it? If he said, "Do what you like: I give you full liberty;" would you take it? "No," you would say; "I should dread to be left to myself. I know what a fool I have been in times past; I know what wrong things I have said and done, left to myself. I should do the like again. Keep me, Lord, as the apple of thine eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wing; leave me not a single moment. Keep my eyes, keep my ears, keep my hands, keep my feet, keep my lips, keep every member of my body. And O that I may glorify thee in my body and spirit, which are thine; live to thy praise, walk in thy fear, and do the things which are pleasing in thy sight. Is this gospel or is it law? Is it truth or is it error? Is it the word of God, the experience of the saints, and what good men have always contended for, or is it the word of man, the spawn of a legal spirit, and without any sanction, testimony, or approbation of believing hearts? I leave the verdict to your own conscience.

## **Obedience from the Heart**

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 18, 1844

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Rom. 6:17

The Holy Ghost foresaw the abuse which the depraved heart of man would make of the doctrines of grace. He foresaw that nature would argue, because the elect are saved by grace without the works of the law, there was no obligation for them to perform good works at all; and that because they are accepted freely in the Beloved, "without money and without price," therefore they are discharged from all obedience to the revealed will and word of God. And not only did the Holy Ghost foresee the consequences that depraved nature would draw from the pure gospel of Jesus; but there were also characters in the apostolic days who were base enough to carry out these principles into practice. The apostle alludes to these when he says, "Shall we do evil that good may come? God forbid." There were some then that said, we might do evil that good might come; but he adds of them, "whose damnation is just." If we look at the book of Jude, we shall find these base characters most accurately described as "wandering stars," "trees twice dead," "clouds without water," "spots in their feasts of charity;" in a word, practical Antinomians, living in sin under a mask of godliness; professing the truth, and disgracing it by their lives. The Holy Ghost, then, foreseeing the consequences that corrupt nature would draw from the doctrines of grace inspired the apostle to write this chapter, Rom. 6, which is almost entirely aimed at these perversions. He as it were bursts out, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" He had said in the preceding chapter, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The carnal heart might thence naturally argue, "If this be the case that grace superabounds, just in proportion as sin abounds, then the more

we sin, the more will the grace of God abound; and, therefore, the more sin we commit, the more will the grace of God be glorified." Such would be the reasonings of depraved nature, the arguments of man's perverse heart. The apostle, therefore, meets these horrid consequences with "God forbid" that any who fear the Lord should draw such a conclusion. "How shall we," he adds, "who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" If "we have been buried with Christ in baptism," it is that, according to the power of his resurrection, we should "walk in newness of life." If we are delivered from the law, and brought under grace, it is that sin should not reign in our mortal body, or that we should obey it in the lust thereof. And then in a most beautiful, experimental, and convincing way, which I cannot now enter into, he goes through the whole argument, and shows that, so far from being discharged by grace from all obligations to obedience, or so far from grace setting us free to do the works of the flesh, it only binds us the more closely to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and to live in conformity to his holy image who died for us.

The main head of what the apostle sets forth on this point seems to be summed up in the verse before us, from which I hope, with God's blessing and help, to speak this evening. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

The apostle commences by ascribing a solemn thanksgiving to God. "But God be thanked," he says. Now what was the object of this apostolic thanksgiving? What drew forth this expression of gratitude from his bosom? Not I believe, that they had been servants of sin. I do not think we can, for a moment, admit that the Apostle thanked God because the believers to whom he was writing had been the "servants of sin." I am sure my own experience could never bear that out to be the mind of the Holy Ghost. Nor do I believe that your experience, if God the Spirit has touched your conscience with his finger, would bear you out in such an interpretation, that Paul could thank God because they had been the "servants of sin." Did you ever on your knees bless God that you had gone to great lengths of wickedness before you

were called by grace? Did you ever thank him because you once lived in uncleanness, drunkenness, or other open and base sins? You may have thanked God for having kept you from open sin in the days of unregeneracy, or for having mercifully pardoned and delivered you. But I defy a living soul on his knees to thank God, because he had formerly been a servant of sin. So that we must understand the Apostle to mean here: "But God be thanked, that *though ye were the servants of sin,*" yet now the case is altered; you are so no longer; a mighty change has taken place; a blessed revolution has been effected in your hearts, lips, and lives. "God be thanked *though ye were the servants of sin,*" yet "now, through the grace of God, it is so no longer;" "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

In looking, then, at these words, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to show,

I.—What it is, in our fallen and unregenerate state, to be "*the servants of sin.*"

II.—What is the "*form of doctrine*" delivered to us; and

III.—How by "*obeying it from the heart,*" we are no longer the servants of sin, but become the servants of God.

I.—Let us look, then, at the words, "*Ye were the servants of sin.*" What a picture does this draw of our sad state, while walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy! The Holy Ghost here sets forth Sin as a hard master, exercising tyrannical dominion over his slaves; for the word "servants" means literally "slaves;" there being few domestic servants in ancient times, nearly all being slaves, and compelled implicitly to obey their masters' will. How this sets forth our state and condition in a state of unregeneracy—slave to sin! Just as a master commands his slave to go hither and thither, imposes on him a certain task, and has entire and despotic authority over him; so sin had a complete mastery over us, used us at its arbitrary will and pleasure, and drove us here and there on its commands. But in this point we

differed from slaves naturally—that we did not murmur under our yoke, but gladly and cheerfully obeyed all sin's commands, and were never tired of doing the most servile drudgery. Now it is a most certain truth, that all men whose hearts have not been touched by God the Spirit, are the "servants of sin." Sin, the lord, may be a more refined master; and man, the servant, may wear a smarter livery in some cases than others. But still, however refined the master may be, or however well-dressed the servant, the master is still the master, and the servant is still the servant. Thus some have had sin as a very vulgar and tyrannical master, who drove them into open acts of drunkenness, uncleanness, and profligacy; yea, everything base, vile, and evil. Others have been preserved through education, through the watchfulness and example of parents, or other moral restraints, from going into such open lengths of iniquity, and outward breakings forth of evil; but still sin secretly reigned in their hearts. Pride, worldliness, love of the things of time and sense, hatred to God and aversion to his holy will, selfishness and stubbornness, in all their various forms, had a complete mastery over them; and though sin ruled over them more as a gentleman, he kept them in a more refined, though not less real or abject servitude. Whatever sin bade them do, that they did, as implicitly as the most abject slave ever obeyed a tyrannical master's command. What a picture does the Holy Ghost here draw of what a man is! Nothing but a slave! and sin, as his master, first driving him upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, and then giving him eternal death as his wages!

II.—But the Apostle shows how the soul is brought out of this servitude—how it is delivered from this hard bondage, and brought to serve a better master, and that from better motives—*"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."* It was by obeying "from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered them," that they were rescued from the miserable servitude and hard bondage under which they lived in sin, and made to walk in newness of life.

Let us look, then, at the expression here used—*"that form of*

*doctrine which was delivered you.*" It is in the margin—and that is more agreeable to the original—that form of doctrine "whereto," or "into which, ye were delivered." By the word "form," is meant "mould;" and by "doctrine" is meant, not what we understand by the term as the article of a creed, but *teaching*. This is a frequent meaning of the word "doctrine," in the New Testament. Thus Paul tells Timothy (1 Tim. 4:13) to give himself unto "doctrine," that is to teaching. And Titus 2:7, "in doctrine," that is, teaching, "showing uncorruptness." Thus we may consider the meaning of the text to be this: "God be thanked, that though ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that mould of teaching into which ye were cast, or delivered." The figure is this—the impression which a coin takes from a die; or the effect produced upon melted metal run into a mould; the doctrine being the die, and the heart the coin; the teaching being the mould and the soul the cast. Thus, the "form of doctrine" signifies not so much a creed of sound doctrine, which the Apostle in a formal, systematic manner laid before his hearers, as the mould of heavenly teaching into which the Holy Ghost delivered their souls.

It is thus evident, that the Holy Ghost has a certain mould of teaching, into which he casts and delivers the soul, from which it comes out as a coin from the Mint, bearing the impression of the die upon it in every form and feature; or, which is perhaps the more exact interpretation of the figure, as a cast from a mould, bearing a perfect likeness to the original model. This "form" then, "of doctrine," or mould of teaching, into which they were delivered, was that which the Apostle, through divine instrumentality, had set before them.

Let us see, then, with God's blessing, what was this "form of doctrine," or mould of divine teaching, into which, through grace, their souls had been cast; for it was by being delivered into this mould that they were delivered from being the "servants of sin," to be made "vessels of honour meet for the Master's use," as well as conformed to the Master's image.

What this "form of doctrine" was, we may gather from what the

Holy Ghost, by the Apostle Paul, has left on record.

1. He insisted, I believe, first, on the *utter ruin and fall of man*. He began from the beginning, and like a "wise master builder," raised up the structure by first digging a deep foundation. He knew as every rightly-taught man and minister knows, that unless a foundation be made by digging deep, the house will not be built upon the rock; that if a knowledge of our utter ruin by nature be not brought into the heart by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, all our religion will be like a house founded upon the sand. This therefore we find to run through all his Epistles. Thus, he tells the Ephesians, (2:1) But "you hath he quickened, who were *dead in trespasses and sins*." How he insists there on man's death in sin! Again, Rom. 5:6, he shows our helplessness, "When we were *without strength*, in due time Christ died for *the ungodly*." And more especially in Rom. 7 does the Apostle exhibit at large what we are by nature and practice, and describe from his own experience the desperate wickedness of the human heart. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." "I am carnal, sold under sin." He there sets forth, from his own experience, the complete fall of man, the entire ruin of the creature, the thorough wickedness of "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." This being a part of his ministry and of the inspired Scriptures, into this mould of teaching does God the Spirit deliver the soul. And just in the same way as upon the piece of money you may read the exact lineaments of the original die, so when the heart is rightly taught by the Holy Ghost, and we are delivered into this "form of doctrine," it comes out of the mould bearing the exact impression. It is thus we are made to feel every line of what the Apostle says of our ruined, undone state, and to know by painful experience, that "in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" that "when we would do good, evil is present with us;" that "the law in our members wars against the law of our mind." And under these feelings, we sigh and groan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is thus that Paul's experience becomes ours; and we find every line of Rom. 7 engraved upon



our hearts, and feel every expression to be as much ours as if it were drawn from the workings of our own mind. No coin bears a greater resemblance to the die, no cast is more the counterpart of the mould, than our experience corresponds to that of the Apostle, as the Holy Ghost delivers us into this mould of divine teaching.

2. But we find, that another part of the Apostle's ministry was to set forth the *holy law of God* in all its strictness and spirituality. He says (Rom. 7:14), "the law is spiritual;" "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" "what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God." And describing his own experience, he says, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And therefore he adds, "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good." He thus sets forth the law in all its purity, strictness, and spirituality, and shows how when it comes home with power to the conscience, it kills us to all hopes of justification by it. Into this "form of doctrine," or mould of heavenly teaching, is the soul delivered; and the law being brought into the conscience, as the die at the Mint is brought down upon a piece of gold to produce a coin, its spirituality is then and there revealed, stamped with all its lineaments and features, and thus a deep and lasting impression is made upon the heart to which it is supplied.

3. But the Apostle Paul, that workman who never needed to be ashamed of the tools or of his work, not merely sets forth man's utter ruin, and the spirituality of God's law, as slaughtering the sinner, and cutting up all his righteousness, root and branch; but his darling subject, his grand theme, was the *mode by which God justifies the ungodly*. What reason have we to bless God that he so instructed his Apostle to set forth how a sinner is justified! For how could we have attained to the knowledge of this mystery without divine revelation? How could we know in what way God could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? How could we see all the perfections of God harmonizing in the Person and work

of Jesus? His law maintained in all its rigid purity and strictest justice—and yet mercy, grace, and love to have full play in a sinner's salvation? But the Spirit of God led Paul deeply into this blessed subject; and especially in the Epistle to the Romans does he trace out this grand foundation truth with such clearness, weight, and power, that the church of God can never be sufficiently thankful for this portion of divine revelation. His grand object is, to show how God justifies the ungodly by the blood and obedience of his dear Son; so that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." He declares that "the righteousness of God is unto and upon all them that believe;" and that "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," he pardons the sinner, justifies the ungodly, and views him as righteous in the Son of his love. In opening up this subject, the Apostle (Rom. 5) traces up this justification to the union of the church with her covenant head; shows us her standing in Christ as well as in Adam; and that all the miseries which she derives from her standing in the latter are overbalanced by the mercies that flow from her standing in the former: winding up with that heart-reviving truth, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign unto eternal life." This then is a "form of doctrine," or mould of teaching, into which the soul is delivered when it is brought into a heart-felt reception of, and a feeling acquaintance with it; and by being led more or less into the experimental enjoyment of it, is favoured with a solemn acquiescence in, and a filial submission to it, as all its salvation and all its desire. And as the mould impresses its image upon the moist plaster or melted metal poured into it: so the heart, softened and melted by the blessed Spirit's teaching, receives the impress of this glorious truth with filial confidence, feels its sweetness and power, and is filled with a holy admiration of it as the only way in which God can justify an ungodly wretch, not only without sacrificing any one attribute of his holy character, but rather magnifying thereby the purity of his nature, and the demands of his unbending justice.

4. But again. The Apostle not merely sets forth the way in which the sinner is justified, and becomes manifestly righteous, but he also strongly insists upon the *kingdom of God being set up with power in the heart*. He says (1 Cor. 2:4, 5), "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom"—these he discarded—"but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but *in the power of God*." He was afraid their faith might stand in human wisdom, and not in divine power. His anxious desire was that it might be a faith wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God; that it might not be learnt from man, nor stand in the wisdom of man, but stand wholly and solely "in the power of God." And again, when he holds a rod over the rebellious church at Corinth, he says (1 Cor. 4:9) he was determined "to know not the speech of them that were puffed up"—those gossips and chatterers who could prate loudly about the doctrines, but knew nothing of them as experimentally revealed in the conscience; against such pretenders he would "come with a rod, and use sharpness." He would bring to bear upon their profession some of those "weapons of warfare, which were mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;" and says, "if he came to Corinth, he would not spare." He was therefore determined to search them out, and find their real standing; "to know not the speech, but *the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*." Thus in setting forth the truth before them he powerfully contended that there must be a vital experience of divine realities in the heart; that truth could only be known by a spiritual revelation (1 Cor. 2:10-13); that "faith was the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8); that we are "to turn away from those that have the form of godliness but deny the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5); that "bodily exercise profiteth little" (1 Tim. 4:8); and that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) Into this mould of divine teaching is the soul, born of God, cast; and thus learns and enters into the nature and blessedness of the internal kingdom of God.

5. But connected with this, he sets forth also *the way in which*

*believers should walk.* This he specially insists upon in this chapter; and doubtless there was much reason for it then, as there is much reason for it now; for how lamentable are the cases of inconsistency which we sometimes hear of, even ministers professing truth falling under the power of besetting sins! The Apostle, therefore, as every rightly taught servant of God must do, insisted upon a life and walk agreeable to the doctrine which is according to godliness. He would give them no warrant for a loose, careless, inconsistent walk but insisted that grace bound the soul with the cords of love to the blessed precepts which God has set forth, to follow the footsteps of Jesus, and look to him as a pattern and example. In this chapter, therefore, he insists strongly upon a godly life; he says, "When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those days whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end, everlasting life." How strongly he here insists upon their "having their fruit unto holiness!" He shows that if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him; and being by grace delivered from the law, we are under greater obligations to walk as becometh the gospel; adding, as knowing our weakness and helplessness, that promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." So that "the form of doctrine" into which they were delivered was a conformity to Christ, and an obedience to his will; a holy desire to please God; a hatred to evil, and a cleaving to that which is good; a longing after more intimate communion with Jesus; and a more earnest wish that his holy example might be made manifest in their lives. For the more we are brought into communion with him, the more manifestly shall we walk as he walked, and abstain from those things which he hated.

III.—But the Apostle says, "*ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*" A "form of doctrine" was delivered them, or rather they were delivered into it; a mould of divine teaching was set up, into which their souls had been cast and they had come out of this mould new creatures, so

that "old things were passed away, and all things had become new." The effect was, that they "obeyed *from the heart* that form of doctrine." There was an obedience wrought into their conscience, which flowed not from legal principles, not from self-righteous motives, not from the precepts of men, but "from the heart:" the root of this obedience, as flowing from the heart, was being delivered into this form of doctrine. Their hearts had been so moulded by divine operation, and their conscience so effectually wrought upon by their being delivered and cast into the mould of teaching which the Holy Ghost had inwardly set up, that they "obeyed from the heart," because the impression had been made there.

Let us see then, with God's blessing, how a man "obeys from the heart" the "form of doctrine" delivered unto him. This will comprehend the whole of the Spirit's work upon the conscience—every lineament and feature of that heavenly mould, so far as the soul has been delivered into it. We will therefore revert to the distinguishing features I have already pointed out.

1. I mentioned *first, the utter fall and ruin of man, and the complete helplessness of the creature*, as a branch of divine teaching. A man obeys this form of doctrine when he is completely convinced in his conscience what a poor, helpless creature he is; and in obedience to it, desists from all self-righteous attempts to please God. He obeys it from his heart when really convinced of his own helplessness and ruin, he falls down before God, and beseeches he would work in him that which is well-pleasing in his sight. And as he is cast into this mould of teaching, he becomes day by day more and more spiritually convinced of his own helplessness and complete ruin, and will daily cry to the Lord to work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Now, will a knowledge of his sinfulness, a conviction of his helplessness, an acquaintance with his own ruin, lead a man into sin? I say boldly, No. On the contrary, it will lead him from sin. He will no longer run recklessly and heedlessly forward; but he

will go softly and tenderly, continually begging the Lord to keep him. There are two professors, say, in this congregation: one, ignorant of his own sinfulness, unacquainted with his own helplessness; the other day by day, deeply and spiritually convinced of the one, and groaning under a sense of the other. Take these two men into the world; place them in the market; send them to traffic in the busy marts of commerce. In whom will you find most consistency of conduct, most tenderness of conscience, most abhorrence of evil? In the man ignorant of his own depravity and helplessness? Or in the man who carries about with him the deepest sense of his own sinfulness and wretchedness; and who feeling his helplessness, is perpetually crying to the Lord, "Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me?" As we pass through the streets of this metropolis, we are continually exposed to temptation; but who is the man most likely to fall into the snares spread for his feet? Not he who feels that he has a roving eye, and a wandering heart, and is crying to the Lord, "Hold thou me up: let me not fall," as fearing he shall fall every moment; but he who goes recklessly on, confident he can keep himself. So that to be spiritually cast into this "form of doctrine," so as to be deeply convinced of our sinfulness and helplessness, so far from leading to sin, leads us from it; so far from encouraging the vile depravity of our nature, makes the conscience tender in God's fear, and leads us to hate that which God abhors. There is no greater libel than to confound a knowledge of our sinfulness with "a gloating," as they call it, "over corruption." We are taught our sinfulness that we may hate it, and our helplessness that we may flee to him on whom God has laid help.

2. So again. *A knowledge of the purity and spirituality of God's law*, is another feature of divine teaching—another branch of the mould into which the soul is cast. A man who has never been made to see the purity of God's law, never felt its spirituality, never known its condemnation, never groaned under its bondage, will have very dim and indistinct views of sin. "Blessed is the man," we read, "whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." In that glass the strict justice of God, and all

its holy unbending demands are clearly seen.

3. *A spiritual reception of, and what the Apostle calls a submission to, the righteousness of God, (Rom. 10:3)* is another branch of that form of doctrine which produces obedience from the heart. Let a man know what justification is through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and feel what it cost the Son of God to work out a meritorious obedience to the law for his guilty soul; it will not make him think lightly of sin. When delivered by the Spirit's operation into this mould of teaching, and thus brought into a spiritual acquaintance with it, it will make his conscience tender. He will then obey, not from natural convictions or hypocritical motives, but from the heart, as penetrated with a sense of mercy, and will desire to be brought into a spiritual acquaintance with it, that he may walk before God in all blamelessness. But if a man, however sound in the doctrine of justification as a creed, has never been cast into the mould of it, so as to receive the impression upon his conscience, and feel it with power in his heart, he will probably be one of those who disgrace it by their lives; because, through want of divine teaching, his conscience is unaffected by the power of the truth he professes. Whence is it that men, and, to their shame be it spoken, ministers who profess the doctrines of grace, often walk so inconsistently and unbecomingly? In doctrine none can be sounder than these men; but had they received by divine teaching the glorious truth of justification through the righteousness of the Son of God—and had their hearts been impressed by it, and their souls been cast into this mould, they would have adorned the doctrine by their life and conversation. But not being delivered into this heavenly mould, and the Spirit never having brought this truth down upon their conscience and stamped its features upon their heart, as the die is brought down upon the coin, they can "continue in sin, that grace may abound." It is only, therefore, as we are delivered into the mould of this blessed doctrine of justification by Christ's glorious righteousness, that we obey it from the heart. In proportion as we feel our soul to acquiesce in it and enjoy it—so far from leading us into sin, it will lead us away from it, and enable us to walk in those things

which become the gospel.

4. So when, by divine teaching, the soul is delivered into another branch of "the form of doctrine," or mould of divine teaching, viz., *that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*, gospel obedience will flow from the heart. Just in proportion as this divine truth is stamped upon the conscience, do we find and feel that religion does not consist in a few notions, doctrines, or names, but in the power of the Holy Ghost setting Christ up in the soul. A kingdom in the heart implies that a king reigns there; and if so, the obedience paid to that king will be in and from the heart. This is true gospel obedience; and in proportion as the soul is cast into this mould, it will become a servant unto God. This so far from leading us to obey sin, will make us obey God; and so far from causing us "to yield our members servants to uncleanness unto iniquity, will rather make us yield them servants to righteousness unto holiness." If we know anything, if we feel anything of the kingdom of God set up with power in the conscience, that knowledge, that feeling, so far as each is spiritual and experimental will produce an effect. Vital godliness will be divinely worked into our conscience, and will leave, more or less, a deep and abiding impression upon our heart. Our religion will not consist in merely embracing a sound creed, in talking about ministers and books, attending a certain chapel, hearing certain ministers, or going through certain ordinances. If we have been delivered into this mould of divine teaching, that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," there will be something higher and deeper, something more lasting and abiding, something more spiritual and supernatural than creeds and external performances. It is the glory and beauty of vital godliness, that the soul possessed of it obeys from the heart; that the spring of its obedience is spiritual and inward; that a Christian does what he does from noble principles; that as far as he is rightly taught and guided, what he does, he does from his heart; what he says, he says from his heart; what he prays, he prays from the heart; and if he be a preacher, what he preaches, he preaches from the heart. His very soul is in the matter; and as his conscience lives under the dew and unction of the Spirit, what



he does he does unto God, and not unto men. As the form of doctrine is more deeply impressed upon him, he day by day more obeys it from the heart: and is led more clearly into this truth, that what God looks to, and what he works in us, is an obedience that springs from the heart. So that, the more the soul is delivered into this mould of heavenly teaching, to believe with the heart unto righteousness, confession is more made with the mouth unto salvation.

Now, till a man is thus spiritually taught and wrought upon he will be the servant of sin. He may indeed have a very shining profession; but it may only be a mask for the deepest and blackest hypocrisy. He may contend much for spirituality of mind; and yet hide under that profession the basest sins. He may plead much for the doctrines of grace; and yet use them as a cloak for the vilest licentiousness in practice. A man must, in one form or other, be "the servant of sin," till he "obeys from the heart the form of doctrine"—the mould of divine teaching, into which the soul is spiritually delivered. But when the Holy Ghost takes him in hand, and casts him into the mould of divine teaching, so as to bring into his soul the word of God with power, he fixes the truth upon his conscience, and impresses it upon his heart; so that he comes forth with the truth of God stamped upon him, as the cast comes out of the mould, and the coin from the die. Then, and only then, is he delivered from the service of sin. Sin might indeed not have worn an outward or gross form. The life might have been circumspect, and sin worn in him a very subtle shape. But there is no real deliverance from bearing the yoke of sin till the mould of heavenly teaching is obeyed "from the heart." This is the fulfilment of that new covenant promise—"I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their heart." Thus inward, spiritual, and vital obedience can alone be produced; and one truth written by the Spirit in the heart will bring forth more fruit in the life than a hundred doctrines floating in the head.

It is, then, in this way that "the form of doctrine" which we have received in the Spirit, is made to produce an impression upon our hearts and lives. And the more that "the form of doctrine" is

brought into our heart, and the more we are moulded by it, the more shall we obey it; and, as the Apostle says, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We grow in grace by growing in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and we only grow in the knowledge of him as we grow in the knowledge of ourselves. Thus to grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of our own weakness and of Christ's strength; of our own sinfulness, and of Christ's atoning blood; of our own ignorance, and of Christ's teaching in that ignorance. A sense of daily depravity, and yet seeing God's grace superabounding over it all; a constant fear we shall fall every day and hour unless God keeps us, and yet mercifully feeling his fear springing up in our hearts, as "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death;"—to be cast into this mould of heavenly teaching will deliver us from being "the servants of sin."

Let us with God's blessing, by way of summing up the whole, look a little into our own conscience. There is, then, a "form of doctrine," a mould of divine teaching. What evidence have we that we have been delivered into it? What have we felt, what have we known, of our own ruin by nature? Have we groaned and sighed because we have been and are so vile? Did sin ever lie as a heavy burden upon our conscience, and did we ever see what wretches we are by nature and practice? Have we ever desired deliverance from the bondage of servitude and sin? Have we become tired of our old master, of his ways, and of his wages? and have we longed for a better master and better wages? That is the beginning of the breaking off of the chain of servitude. The first link of the servile yoke is snapped, when we begin to be discontented with our slavery, and cry and sigh for a better master and a better service.

Again. What do we know, or what have we known of the spirituality of God's law? Now this we must know, in order to feel more keenly our servitude. Not that we can break off the chains of sin through the law, because "by the law is the knowledge of sin," and therefore the law never can deliver us from the power, guilt, and service of sin. But the heavier the yoke, as with the

children of Israel in Egypt, the nearer is deliverance from it. And what know we of being cast into the mould of the grand gospel truth of justification by Christ's imputed righteousness? Have our souls ever received this glorious truth with a measure of divine power? This is the first evidence of a deliverance from sin, the first striking off of its fetters and chains; this is the first raising up of liberty in the conscience, and of experiencing a measure of the sweetness and power of the way of salvation. And have we felt the kingdom of God set up in the heart? Have we felt a cleaving to the teaching of the Holy Spirit? and been convinced in our consciences that the kingdom of God stands only in power? To come to this is to obey and cleave to the form of doctrine delivered unto us. And then may I not justly ask, what effect this has on our lives? What deadness to the world does it produce in our soul? What cleaving to the things of God? What desiring in our conscience to be conformed to the image of Jesus? Sure I am, that the more the blessed Spirit lets down into our conscience the power of truth, in all its branches; and leads us into an heartfelt reception of, and acquiescence in it, the more shall we get delivered from serving sin, and the more be led to obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered unto us; the more we shall walk in the footsteps of the Lord of life and glory, and have the truth stamped with power on our conscience. And then, feeling our own ruin, weakness, and helplessness, we shall learn to give glory to whom glory is due; and to ascribe salvation first and salvation last to the God of all grace and glory; and cast the crown before the throne of God and the Lamb, who, with the Holy Ghost, is alone worthy of praise and blessing, now and ever.

## **The Old Man Put Off, and the New Man Put On**

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day morning, July 14, 1867

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."  
Ephesians 4:22, 23, 24

The precepts of the gospel are as much a substantial, integral part of divine revelation as the doctrines of the gospel or the promises of the gospel. We cry out loudly and not unjustly against men who slight, neglect, or ignore the doctrines of the gospel; but do not we, or at least some of us who profess and preach the doctrines of grace, err nearly as much in another direction, in slighting, neglecting, or ignoring the precepts of the gospel? There is, however, I willingly admit, this distinction between them and us, at least such of us as do neglect inculcating the precepts of the gospel, that they slight, neglect, and ignore the doctrines of the gospel from ignorance of them or enmity towards them; if we, or any of us, slight, neglect, or ignore the precepts of the gospel, it is either from a misconception of their nature, or from want of ability to handle them aright. I feel bound to offer this explanation, for I cannot bring myself to think that any true minister of Jesus Christ would willingly and wilfully set himself against the precepts of the gospel, or pass them wholly by in the ministry of the word, as if they were inconsistent with the grand doctrines of the gospel, or not necessary or proper to be preached; for to do so, would seem to imply that the veil of ignorance and unbelief was still upon his heart, or that he was not called to the work of the ministry. But a man may practically ignore what he would not positively deny, and be guilty of neglect through misconception or human frailty, where he is not guilty of decided enmity or thorough ignorance.

Thus, some ministers seem to think that it is *legal* to bring

forward the precepts of the New Testament; that the very nature of a precept, as requiring something to be done, savours of the covenant of works, and is connected with a "Do and live" system; and that, therefore, to enforce obedience to the precepts of the gospel, is, virtually, to enforce the demands of the law. They, therefore, declaim against all such preaching as obscuring, if not marring gospel doctrines, by adding to them the obligation of legal precepts. But may you not make doctrines legal and promises legal, as well as precepts? Are there not hundreds of ministers who legalise gospel doctrines, by twining around them man's ability to believe in him of whom they testify; or pervert gospel promises by handling them as if they were conditional and dependent for their fulfilment upon our obedience? There is, no doubt, a way in which you may so handle the precepts of the gospel, as to give them a legal sound, and so turn gospel into law. But if a man so handle gospel precepts and legalise them, the fault is not in the precepts themselves as revealed in the word, which are not legal, but pure gospel, aye, as pure as the doctrines on which they are based, and the promises by which they are accompanied, but in the men of a legal spirit who legalise them. If we do not know the sweet and blessed connection which the precepts of the New Testament have with the glorious truths of the everlasting gospel; if we have never seen or felt their inward sweetness; if we have never entered into the holy wisdom which shines through them and the kind, gracious directions conveyed by them; if they have never been "a lamp to our feet or a light to our path;" if by them we have never been held back from evil, or never strengthened and encouraged to do that which is good; if we have never desired to be found walking in them for the glory of God and the comfort of our own souls, we need not wonder that we have found them what men call legal.

But there is another objection made to them, viz., that they are inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel, and therefore are what is termed *bondaging*. But perhaps what you call "bondaging" may be the lashings of a guilty conscience, and what you call the liberty of the gospel may really be a spirit of licentiousness. There

must be liberty in the precept as well as liberty in the promise; for you cannot take a part of the gospel and say: "here is liberty;" and then take another part of it and say: "here is bondage." If once you admit that there are precepts in the gospel—and this you cannot well deny, when some of the epistles are well nigh half filled with them—and that the gospel is throughout a gospel of liberty, you must surely allow that there is as much liberty in gospel precepts as in gospel doctrines. David at least, did not think that there was any bondage in the precepts, for his words are: "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts." Do you not see how he connects together liberty and obedience? In fact, there is no walking in liberty if we neither seek the precepts nor do them; for what is the chief cause of that bondage of spirit which we often feel? Is it not generally because we have in some way or other acted contrary to the precepts of the gospel? This disobedience makes God hide his face from us; and that brings on doubt, fear, and bondage.

But let me bring forward a little illustration to show how the precepts of the gospel are compatible with the sweetest liberty. If you were going abroad, say to Paris at the present time\*; and suppose that a kind father, when he put into your hand a sum of money to pay your expenses, were at the same time to give you some directions as to the journey, and mingle with them some warnings and admonitions to take care of yourself in that abandoned city, should you think that these kind cautions and admonitions came from a different heart or hand than that which supplied you with the means of going, or interfered with your liberty of locomotion when you arrived there? Would you not see in them the same love and kindness which gave you the money, and would you not view them as meant to keep you from being entangled in snares into which you might otherwise fall? You would not think that they were meant to bring you into bondage, but to keep you from being entangled in such things as might bring bondage upon you. It is in this way, then, we are to view the precepts of the gospel as a part of the liberty of the gospel—a liberty from sin, not a liberty to sin.

\* It was the time of the Paris Exhibition when a great number of persons were going to see it.

But there is a class of men who slight, ignore, and neglect the precepts of the gospel from other motives and under other influences. The men whom I have been speaking of do it unwittingly: the men I am now to speak of do it wittingly. Perhaps they are living in sin: how, then, can they preach the precepts? The sly drunkard, how can he say: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit?" A man up to his neck in the world, can he say: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world?" The man scheming and speculating, full of business, with no thought but for mammon; can he consistently urge any precept that bids him "Come out of the world, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing?"

Again, in a congregation, there will often be influential members, such as rich deacons, and other persons of wealth and property, on whose support the cause very much rests, and who largely contribute, directly or indirectly, to the minister's maintenance. He, perhaps, is very poor, is burdened with a large family, has few popular gifts or acceptance out of the circle of his own people; and he knows that his very living, humanly speaking, depends upon the way in which he stands with these influential members. Now, what is the consequence if a man is not endowed with a spiritual knowledge of the truth, and is not delivered from the fear of man? Why, simply this: that he does not feel himself able to bring forward and urge the precepts of the gospel, lest they cut too close, lest his insisting upon practical godliness and the fruits of the Spirit, as manifested in the life and conversation, should offend the rich Mr. So-and-So, who likes well enough gospel doctrine on the Sunday, but never practices gospel precepts on the Monday or any other day; or the influential Mr. So-and-So, who is very fond of hearing the doctrine of election preached, but does not wish to hear enforced the precept of liberality, separation from the world, a life of faith and prayer, walking in the fear of God all the day long, and renouncing every practice, open or secret, inconsistent with the doctrine that is

according to godliness. But how sad, O how worse than sad is it for a minister to be afraid of his congregation or of any one in it. How unfaithful to his trust, how unfit for his office, how unworthy to be a servant of God and to speak in the name of the King of kings! I am well satisfied, from what I have known and felt in this matter, that to preach the gospel faithfully, a man must have the fear of God only, in his heart, and know no other fear, if he is in any way to stand before the people with a single eye to his glory. What shall we say, then, of either the conscience or the ministry of any man who keeps back the precept for fear of offence, and dares not urge practical godliness, because it would touch the conscience of this rich deacon, or drive away this influential member of the congregation? Let such a one know that he is keeping back a part of the price; and let him be aware of the sin and end of Ananias.

But I shall not occupy your thoughts and attention this morning any longer with laying before you the necessity and blessedness of the precept, for that is too plain to be denied by any who know the truth of God for themselves; but come at once to the text, which runs in a preceptive form, which I may add, has been the chief reason why I have thus dwelt upon the precept; and in handling the subject before us, I shall cast my thoughts upon it mainly under two leading divisions.

I.—*First*, I shall attempt to describe *the old man*, his character and condition, and show you how he is to be *put off*.

II.—*Secondly*, I shall in a similar manner paint *the new man*, with his character and condition, and how he is to be *put on*.

I.—You will find, if you look at the context, that the apostle is speaking of the Gentiles among whom the Ephesians had their conversation in times past, and speaks of them as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart;" adding, as a description of their habitual practice; "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto



lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Having in these forcible words described the character and conduct of the Gentile world, he contrasts with it the character and conduct of those to whom he writes, namely, the saints of God at Ephesus: "But ye have not so learned Christ." He has not been to you a cause of unrighteousness as their heathen gods have been to them, nor has the religion which you have learnt of him encouraged or suffered you to abandon yourselves to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness, as theirs has done. "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." You will observe the holy caution and wise reservation with which the apostle speaks; and how with all his love to the Ephesian saints and his belief of their general Christian character, he still puts in an "if so be." It is as if he would thus speak: "If so be that ye are what I hope you are and what you profess to be,—saints and faithful in Christ Jesus; if so be that you have heard his blessed voice, and he has spoken with power to your soul; if so be that (O miracle of grace) ye have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus;" that is the truth as connected with him and flowing out of him, the truth of which he is the vivifying power, the beginning and end, the sum and substance, the subject and object, the centre and circumference; now, what follows? "If ye have so learned Christ, if ye have so heard his voice, if ye have been so taught of Him, it is that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."

i. Now, this is "the old man" whose character and condition I have undertaken to describe. Let us see, then, what is this old man, and why he bears that name? We will consider his name first, for that will serve to give us some idea of its character. Why is he called so? He is called "the old man" for various reasons.

1. The first is on account of his *great antiquity*, for sin is as old as the Adam-fall, and therefore in that sense older than our soul and older than our body. It is true that we were not possessed of the old man till we first had being, when, according to David's confession, we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin; but

the old man existed in the world ages before we were born, and was propagated to us by our parents, who themselves had received it in lineal succession from Adam. We may thus illustrate it. Here is the sewage of a large town, according to modern agricultural improvements, directing its course to a certain field; when it enters the field, then for the first time the field and it become acquainted. But the sewage came a long way before it reached the field; and yet is the same in the field as it was before it reached it. So the old man only reached us in our conception, only made itself manifest at our birth and grew with our growth and strengthened itself with our strength; but it existed in the loins of our ancestors many, many years before it personally reached us, just as the sewage comes down a long course before it reaches the individual field. Thus, in this sense, he is the oldest man in the world; and yet strange to say, never manifests the weakness of old age, or will ever die whilst a man lives beneath the sun.

2. But he is called the old man for another reason. Our old nature is of course *older than our new*. At whatever age God might have been pleased to quicken our soul, whether in boyhood, youth, or manhood, in every instance the old man must have been older than the new. In that sense, therefore, he is the old man, as having priority of birth in our heart. He is the Esau, whereas the new man is the Jacob; he is the Ishmael, whereas the new man is the Isaac; he is the Saul, whereas the new man is the David; he is the first who shall be the last, the elder who shall serve the younger.

3. But I think there is another reason why he may be justly called the old man. Is human nature ever so depraved as is manifested in a *depraved old man*? There is a wicked French proverb which I will not quote in the original, out of which the meaning may be freely rendered: "O if youth did but know; O if old age could but do;" in other words, "O that youth had all the knowledge of sin that old age possesses; and O that old age possessed all the vigour of youth to carry this knowledge into practice." Woe to woman if such a being existed—a man uniting in himself all the

attractiveness of youth with all the knowledge possessed by age of the avenues to the female heart. Excuse the illustration, which I have almost shrunk from giving, and yet it has often struck my mind as one of the most forcible descriptions in a few words of human depravity; though as a sentiment or as a wish it is almost more worthy of a demon than a man. But is not a depraved old man one of the most loathsome objects of our disgust and one of the vilest of all vile beings? How deeply rooted must sin be in his heart who is ever feeding his imagination with base lusts and living as it were upon the recollections of the past, painting to himself sins which he never will be likely or able to accomplish. How hardened, impenitent, obstinate, and unyielding, for the most part, is old age. Take a depraved old man: what argument, what appeal can influence a man hardened through a long succession of sin until he has reached old age, and in reaching old age has reached with it its almost proverbial obstinate adherence to old ways and old habits? We must not, we cannot limit the sovereignty of God, but to speak after the manner of men, our hope of success in reaching the consciences of those who are grown old seems well nigh desperate. Our hopes of a crop, our expectations of the blessing of God upon our ministry rest chiefly in the young; and sometimes the Lord is pleased to call by his grace those who are advancing into middle life; but I should say from what I have observed in my own ministry and that of others that it is a rare thing for the word to lay hold for the first time of the conscience of any one far advanced in life. This is a needful distinction to make, for old age is in itself no bar to the blessing of God upon the word. One may, having been called in early days, have sunk into great lethargy and deadness of soul; and God may revive his work in old age, for he has promised that his people "shall still bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright." This is one thing, but a distinct call by grace is another. Revivals and renewings are not quickenings. The bringing forth of the top stone with shoutings of "grace, grace unto it," is not the laying of the foundation stone. Excuse this digression. Taking, therefore, the old man in our text as descriptive of our corrupt nature, we may view it as inheriting everything which we see in a vile, lewd, covetous, fretful, wicked,

and depraved old man.

Some of you will, perhaps, call me a corruption preacher because I speak in such strong language of what we are by nature; but do I go beyond either the language of Scripture or the observation of daily experience? Does not the Holy Ghost, describing the old man in our text, declare that he is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts?" Am I wrong then if I express my conviction that he is rotten to the very core, and that there is not in him, as in some vile, sensual, depraved old man, one right feeling, one right principle, one single speck or spot of soundness? For what does "corrupt" mean? Rotten; and if rotten, rotten throughout, for it is "according to the deceitful lusts."

ii. Let us examine the meaning of these words. The corruption, then, of the old man is according to the measure of the deceitful lusts. This is the test whereby his corruption is to be weighed and measured. Take as an illustration two men, or rather two old men. Let both be thoroughly bad, but let one be more crafty, more designing, more deceitful, more false, and more lying than the other. Which is the worse of the two? Which is more to be guarded against, shunned, and abhorred? You will say at once "the falser, the one who is more crafty and deceitful than the other, for his deceit not only adds to his sins, but makes him more dangerous." Now, apply this illustration to our subject. Your old man, my old man, is corrupt according to the measure of the deceitful lusts which it harbours, and which work in it and manifest themselves through it. Nor is there any worse character in our lusts than their deceitfulness. O how deceitful is lust in every shape and form! Whether it be of the flesh, or of the eyes, or a lusting after money, worldly advantage, prosperous circumstances, rising in life, doing well for ourselves or our families—whatever shape it takes, for indeed it wears a thousand forms, how deceitful it is! How gradually, if indulged, will it lead us into everything which is vile. How it blinds the eyes, hardens the conscience, perverts the judgment, entangles the affections, draws the feet aside from the strait and narrow path, buries and all but suffocates the life of God in the soul, till one scarcely

knows what he is or where he is, and only knows that he is full of confusion, and burdened with guilt and fear and bondage. How deceitful, too, it is in ever promising what it never can perform. How it promises happiness and pleasure if we will but indulge and gratify it, and paints all sorts of pleasant pictures and charming prospects to entangle the thoughts and allure the affections. But if listened to and obeyed, what does it give us in the end? Alas! we find that as we sow so we reap, and that if we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption. Well, then, may the apostle describe lusts as "deceitful," and measure by them the corruption of the old man. Nor are these lusts few or small, for this old man of ours is full of them. There is not a passion, nor an inclination, nor a desire, nor a craving after any one earthly or sensual enjoyment; there is not a sin that ever has broken out in word or action in man or woman that is not deeply seated in our old man; for he is according to, in the measure of, and in proportion to our deceitful lusts. You need not wonder, then, that whether old or young, male or female, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, morally trained or running in childhood about the streets, lectured to and watched over by tender and gracious parents, or suffered to grow up without any restraint put upon you, deceitful lusts are ever moving in your breast. They were born with you, your family inheritance, and all that you can strictly call your own. You need not wonder, then, if the vilest thoughts, the basest ideas find a harbour, a resting place, and a nest in your corrupt bosom. I say this not to encourage you to cherish what should be your plague and torment, but as a word that may be suitable to some who are deeply exercised at finding in themselves such monstrous sins, and think that theirs is an unusual or exceptional case. If the old man is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; if he is incurably depraved, and never can be anything else, do what you will with him, try your very best, but a desperately wicked old man, need you wonder if he is continually manifesting his real character, showing his ugly face, and, if you are a vessel of mercy, is to you a continual grief, a plague and a torment? For I only say what I feel, that I do believe this old man is the greatest plague a child of God has or can have. I do believe that all our trials, afflictions, bereavements,

and sorrows are not worthy to be compared with the trouble and exercise, sorrow and anguish, which have been caused by the plotting, the contriving and the working of this wicked old man in the various deceitful lusts by means of which he has at various times more or less, drawn us off the path of holiness and obedience into some of his crooked ways. You may fancy, though I fear it is too often a fact, and thus more than a fancy, in the ward of a London workhouse some vile old man hardened in sin and crime, glorying in iniquity, and taking an infernal pleasure in pouring his filthy conversation into any youthful ear which will listen to it. Now, is there not enough sin and depravity in that vile wretch to pollute the mind, inflame the passions, and harden the conscience of every poor, miserable youth of whom he may get hold? But what a dreadful thing it would be, if that wicked old man were shut up in the ward of your heart, and were continually pouring his depraved thoughts into your mind. Have you never seen this old man's face? Have you never heard his foul whispers? Has he never suggested any schemes or plots of wickedness and crime? Has he never recounted any of his former villainies until you have felt shocked and distressed beyond measure, that you should have such a wretch about you and within you? I know that all this strong language will seem very shocking and dreadful to some of you; and if you have had little or no experience of what human nature is—I mean, of course, as to its workings, not its works; its inward dealings, not its outward doings; you will scarcely think it credible, that any one with a grain of godliness in his heart, should have such a corrupt, depraved inmate in his breast. And yet I am saying no more than some of the holiest, chastest, most circumspect, conscientious, and tender of the family of God have inwardly felt by painful and long experience. It is your mercy if this depraved old man's presence is your grief; his temptations your trial; and his movements and workings your sorrow and your burden. He will never do you any real harm so long as he is your plague and torment. As long as you sigh and cry under him and against him, and resist him even unto blood, striving against sin, he may tempt, but he will not prevail; he may fight against you, but he will not overcome you.

But this leads me to my next point, the *putting off* of this old man.

iii. You will observe that the apostle, though he recognises the presence and describes with wonderful force the character of the old man, bids us "put him off;" and you will observe also, that this exhortation is addressed to saints, not to sinners; to those who have been made nigh by the blood of Christ and who are being builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Does not this clearly show that the saints of God still possess the old man; for if he had been destroyed at regeneration, as some talk, they would not be called upon to be ever putting him off? And you will observe also, the expression, "concerning the former conversation." Let us see, then, what instruction we may gather up from this precept of the apostle. I seem myself to gather from it two leading thoughts.

1. First, that the old man is to be put off much in the same way as we put off a *dirty garment*. How glad the workman is, say the mason or the bricklayer, at the end of a long, dusty, laborious week to get a thorough good wash on the Sunday morning, and put a clean shirt upon his back. How nice and fresh he feels with his clean skin and his clean shirt. Excuse the figure, for though homely it may not be the less true or less impressive. Our old man is like a shirt which has gone through all the dust and sweat and toils of the week. And he is put off when he is not allowed to stick any longer close to the skin, but is pulled off and thrown away with disgust as a dirty garment; worn unwillingly and put off gladly. The apostle, after speaking in another place, of some of the worst sins which have debased and disgraced human nature, adds: "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.) "Ye are washed:" there is the washing of the person in the bath, or rather in the fountain open for all sin and uncleanness; "ye are justified:" there is the white raiment all bright and clean put upon the washed person; "ye are sanctified:" there is the presence and

power of God's grace, the comfort of being thus washed and dressed; and all this "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God;" for it is only by believing in his name, and by the power of the Spirit that there is any washing, any justification, or any sanctification. But remember this, you can only put him off for a time. He is put off from time to time in his workings, in his defilement, in his filth, but alas! he soon makes his appearance again, and you will never put him off altogether till he is put off in death.

2. The other leading thought which strikes my mind as an interpretation of the exhortation to put off the old man is, to put him off *his seat of authority and power*. He is put off, then, when he is not suffered to have dominion. Put him, then, off the throne; don't let him reign and rule. Thrust him from sitting at the head of the table and occupying the arm chair; let him not be the master of the house. Get him into the place where Bishop Bonner thrust the martyrs—into the coal cellar. Mortify him, fast him, set your foot upon him, keep him down, and gag his mouth when he would vent his blasphemies and try to stir up deceitful lusts. He is to be put off; he is not to be cuddled and indulged, put in the best chair, fed upon the best meat, kept close and warm by the fireside, handsomely dressed, and made the pet of the whole house. He is to be treated with great rigour. The word of God bids us crucify him, and pronounces a sweeping sentence, which, if we take as a description of all who truly belong to Christ, cuts off thousands of splendid professors: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Not they are going to do it, think about doing it, mean to do it some day or other, hope they shall do it before they die, but "*have crucified* the flesh;" that is, have already nailed it to Christ's cross. This is indeed a putting off the old man, for it is taking it and fixing it to the cross of Jesus. Now, crucifixion was a painful and lingering death. We cannot expect, therefore, to crucify the old man without his crying out against his crucifier. And yet the pleasure to the new man is greater than the pain to the old man, for we may rest well satisfied that the more we are enabled to mortify, crucify, and put off the corrupt old man, with his



deceitful lusts, the more happy we shall be, the less cause there will be for compunction and sorrow, and the more we shall walk at liberty as seeking God's precepts. Let me here appeal to your personal experience on this point. What has caused you thousands of sighs and cries and groans? What has darkened your evidences and obscured your hopes of heaven? What has put stumbling blocks in your way, and strewed thorns and briers in your path? Has it not been this old man, and because you have not crucified him, but instead of doing so have been secretly indulging him and letting him have his own way? And have you not found how deceitful all his lusts have been, how fair they have promised and how foully they have performed? What vexation, what sorrow, what bondage, what grief, what a burden has been often brought upon your back by giving way to deceitful lusts. O, if I could read the heart of some here, or listen to their words when they are secretly confessing their sins before God, how many a heart should I see lacerated and bleeding through the guilt and shame of having given way to deceitful lusts. What confessions I should hear if I listened sometimes at your bedroom door; and I might see, if I looked in, tears running down your cheek, and hear sobs and sighs vented from your loaded bosom. And why? Because these vile, deceitful, and damnable lusts have often entangled and drawn you aside, got hold of you, promised much and performed nothing, and left behind them nothing but bitter, bitter reflections, and sad, sad remembrances of how you have fallen by their secret power. O for grace to be ever putting off this old man, to have no more to do with him than we would have to do with a depraved wretch whose character for profligacy is generally known, and whom we would not let darken the door of our house. O that we could say to our old man as we could say to him if he had gained admission into our house,—“There is the door; get out of it, and never show your face here again.” But this, alas, we cannot do with our old man, for he is a tenant for life, has a claim upon the house, was once its master, and will never leave it till it falls to pieces. If, then, we must have him in our house, we must say to him, “You shall not be master here; you have had your own way too long, have corrupted the household, and turned what should have been the house of God

into a den of thieves. As, therefore, I have his warrant and authority for so doing, I shall degrade you to the lowest place. No head seat at the table for you; no arm-chair, no chimney corner, no best cut of the meat, no finest of the wine. You are here, I know, in fixed and firm possession, and happy should I be if I never saw your face or heard your voice again. But as you are tied to me, as I cannot get rid of you, I hope I may starve you, not feed you; be your enemy, not your friend; your master, not your servant; and, therefore, never suffer you to exercise power over me, for I know what you would do if you could. It is not once, nor twice, nor ten times that you have imposed upon me by your deceitful ways and your oily lips. God grant I may never listen to your wily tongue again, but may hate you and be enabled to view you as God's enemy and my enemy—as well knowing that if I were overcome by you I should sin against the best of friends and the dearest of masters." Now, if you could meet the old man with this language, and encounter him with this holy boldness, he would hang his head down. It is your giving him an inch that makes him take an ell; it is your listening to him that makes him talk so flatteringly—like a weak woman who gives way when she ought to resist, and falls by giving way. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Put off the old man with his deeds and you will not fall into condemnation.

iv. But you will observe that the apostle's words are "*concerning the former conversation;*" implying that we put off the old man when our life, conduct, and conversation are so changed that our former conversation—that is, the way in which we formerly lived and acted—is fully renounced. A change of heart will always produce a change of life. If sin is repented of, it will be forsaken; if the old man is crucified inwardly, he will show but little strength outwardly. Nail him to the cross and he will have no feet to walk with, no hands to work with. His strength is ended when his crucifixion begins. He loses heart at the sight of the cross; and that which gives to the soul its life, gives him his death blow. And as he dies, and the soul lives, what follows? Godliness of life as well as godliness of heart. Make the tree good and you make its fruit good; let there be a good treasure in the heart and good

things will come out of it. It is useless, and worse than useless, to talk about religion unless it be manifested by our lives.

Now, as we are enabled—and I am sure nothing but the grace of God, and a very powerful measure of his grace, can enable us, to put off the old man—we are in a posture of soul to listen to the other part of the precept, which brings us to the second leading division of my discourse, in which I proposed to show the character of the new man and how he must be put on. But you will observe, that the apostle previously says: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind," which I must, therefore, notice.

v. We see from his words that as the old man goes down the new man begins to rise, and as he lifts up his head there springs up at the same time a renewing in the spirit of our mind. As long as we are under the power and dominion of the old man there are no sweet renewals, blessed revivals, or comforting visitations of God's presence. There is either a giving way to the old man or else the consequence of giving way to him—either sin indulged or sin mourned over; sin practised or sin confessed; pleasing lusts or painful remorse. But when we are enabled to put off this old man, then there is a being renewed in the spirit of our mind. There are droppings in of the forgiving mercy of God; and this produces a renewal of faith and hope, with love and every grace. This, therefore, leads us on to our next point;

II.—The *putting on of the new man*, in handling which, we shall, as in the case of the old man, first describe his character, and then show how he is to be put on. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

We see from this exhortation that as there is a putting off, so there is a putting on; and as there is an old man, so there is a new. And see how different is their character as described by the Holy Ghost. The old man, is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" the new man "is after God created in righteousness and true holiness." What a contrast, what an antithesis, what an

antipodes between them. Are heaven and hell further from each other, light or darkness, Christ or Belial?

i. But why is he called "the new man?" You will observe that both are called men, and doubtless for this reason, that they have, both of them, the parts, members and qualities of a man. But every part and quality of the two men are totally different, or, if they have similar members, they use them for different purposes. The old man has eyes, but eyes full of adultery. The old man has ears, but ears to drink in every lie and every foolish word which can feed his lusts. He has lips which he calls his own, but the poison of asps is under them. He has a tongue, but with it he uses deceit. He has hands, but these hands are always on the stretch to grasp what is evil. And he has feet, but these feet are swift to shed blood. Every member and every faculty of the old man is for sin, to serve and indulge it. Now, the new man has the members also, and the faculties of a man as the old man has. He has eyes, and by these eyes he sees Jesus; he has ears, and with those ears he hears the gospel of salvation and drinks in the precious sound; he has lips, and with these lips he blesses God; he has a tongue, and with his tongue he praises the name of the Lord, speaks of the glory of his kingdom, and talks of his power; or if a minister, instructs, comforts, admonishes, or warns the church of God; he has hands which are open to bestow liberally on the poor and needy; and he has feet which are swift to walk, yea, to run at times, in the way of God's commandments when he has enlarged his heart. Thus the old man employs every member in the service of sin, and the new man employs every member in the service of God. Now, as when we are under the influence of the old man, we do, or at least we are tempted to do, what he may suggest, so when we are under the influence of the new man, then we gladly do what he inclines us to do according to the will and word of God.

ii. But we have in our text a blessed *description* of what the new man is. Of course you know it is the spirit which is born of the Spirit, the new man of grace, that is meant by the term, and that he is called new as being of a newer birth than the old man, and

as coming also from him who said: "Behold, I make all things new." The possession of this new nature is the chief evidence of our interest in Christ; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," and "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

1. But he is *young* as well as new; for as the old man is always old, so the new man is always young. He has, therefore, all the vigour of youth, the feelings of youth, the tenderness, the susceptibility, the impressibility of youth, and all that is lovely in youth. As the old man is a picture of depraved old age, so the new man has every feature that we admire in the young; everything that is tender and teachable, impressible and affectionate, warm, active, and vigorous. All we admire in youth is seen in the new man; all we loathe in depraved old age we see in the old man. And, indeed, he must be a beautiful man, not only from his youth and freshness, tenderness and vigour, his strong arm, his manly bearing, his modest, yet firm look; but he is supernaturally beautiful as being God's own creation, for you will observe that he is not born, but created. God himself created him by the power of his Spirit in the day of regeneration.

2. There is, therefore, another reason why he is so beautiful. He is created *after the image of God*. We find the apostle speaking in almost similar language (Col. 3:10):—"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image [of him] that created him." When God first created man, he created him in his own image, after his own likeness. That image was lost by sin; but that it might not be wholly lost, lost for ever, God creates in his people a new man, after his own image and his own likeness. So that man is restored and placed upon a higher pinnacle than that from which he fell; for he is put into possession of a new man which is created by the power of God, after the very image and likeness of God, in righteousness and true holiness. Let us examine this point a little more closely, and notice a few features of this divinely impressed image. Is God a Spirit? The new man is spiritual, so as in this respect to be like the image of God. Is God holy? So is the new man, for he is

"created in righteousness and true holiness." Is God heavenly, as dwelling in the highest heavens? So the new man is heavenly, as having heavenly feelings, heavenly desires, and heavenly aspirations. Is God in name and nature, love? So the new man dwelleth in love, and thus dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16.) Is God merciful? So those in whom the new man dwells are bidden to be merciful as their Father also is merciful. He is therefore said in our text to be "created after God," which as explained by the almost similar passage (Col. 3:10), means after the image of God. Thus, when God looks down from heaven his dwelling place into the breasts of his people, he sees there with one glance both what he hates and what he loves. He sees the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and he loathes and despises his image. He sees also in the same breast a copy of himself, his own image, his own likeness, in the new man that he has created by his grace. And his all-seeing eye can discern between the old and the other, which we often cannot. The old man is so deceitful, often creates such a hubbub, there is so much dust attending his movements, and he is so noisy, that the calm, still, quiet face of the new man seems almost lost out of sight. It is like a family in which there is a quarrelsome, loud-tongue, contentious master, and a quiet, peaceable, amiable, submissive mistress. The master rants and raves, tears and swears, and would turn, if he could, the very house out of the windows. None can please him. His patient wife, obedient children, attentive servants, try their best, but try in vain. Do what they will, they cannot satisfy him. He is a plague to the whole family. The wife goes about the house calm, peaceful, submissive, trying to alleviate her husband's temper, but generally unsuccessfully; every now and then she drops a tear, gets away to her room and weeps, but still bears all with uncomplaining patience. Such is a picture of the old man; such of the new. The old man we see and feel to be tearing about, raving and ranting, making a hubbub in us, creating nothing but confusion. The new man we see and feel to be quiet, humble, submissive, and retiring, now and then venting a sigh and a cry; now and then putting up a secret groan or inward prayer; now and then looking out for the Lord's appearing, and getting away

as far as he can from this noisy depraved old man. Now need you wonder what a house you have in your bosom, when you have two such different inmates in it? I may almost compare it to a lodging-house where there is a noisy lodger and a quiet one. Need you wonder then that your house sometimes is such a scene of confusion that you can scarcely hear the quiet accents of the mild lodger, or even believe that he is in his room when the house resounds with the rant and roar, noise and strife of the unruly lodger? But this is your happiness, that you detest the confusion, hate the hubbub; are not like a drunkard in a tap-room—the more the noise, the merrier the company. You want quiet; solitude suits you, the companionship of your own thoughts, and the pouring out of your heart before the Lord, the dropping in of his presence and the blessed visitation of his smile. So you see with all the confusion, the hubbub, and noise, which often makes you feel like poor Job, full of confusion, yet that there is some good thing in you which God has wrought by his Spirit and grace. This, then, is the new man, which has been created by the breath of God in your soul, and that "in righteousness," which means here uprightness, "and true holiness," not mock, not legal, not fleshly, nor self-imposed, but such holiness as is wrought by the power of the blessed Spirit.

iii. Now this new man is to be "*put on*" in a somewhat similar way as we put off the old. I showed you that the old man was put off mainly in two ways. 1. As we put off a dirty garment. 2. As we put off from his seat the former master of the house. Now carry this analogy into putting on the new man. We put him on as our clean and comely dress, or when we wear him—to use a Scripture figure, "as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." We read of "the beauties of holiness;" and the promise given to the Lord, was, that "his people should be willing in the day of his power, in the beauties of holiness." What a beautiful description is given in the Canticles of the Church; when, "like Jerusalem the holy city," in the prophet (Isai. 52:1;) she has "put on her beautiful garments;" and how, as if struck with surprise, the beloved says to her: "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,—comely as

Jerusalem;" and asks as it were the question, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" In Ezekiel 16, we have a description of the church as washed, clothed and decked with ornaments; and then the Lord explains why she was so beautiful: "Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."

1. The new man, then, is put on when we *put on the graces* that belong to him. I observed, that the new man is called so, as having the members of a man. These members are the various graces which he is enabled to exercise; and the new man may be said to be put on when these graces act under a divine influence and power. When, for instance, we are enabled by the grace of God to believe in his dear Son, to receive the truth in the love of it, to feel the power of his word upon our heart—this is putting on the new man, for it is putting on a very essential member of the new man, which is *faith*. Again, when in the exercise of a good hope through grace, we can look up and look out, and thus expect and wait for better days, if not now in the enjoyment of them, we may be said to put on the new man, for *hope* is a very conspicuous and active member of him. So when we can feel a little going forth of love and affection towards the Lord, to his word, to his people, his ways, and all that is connected with him; this may be also said to be putting on of the new man; for *love* is one of his most distinguishing features and most marked characteristics. So with patience, humility, repentance, and godly sorrow for sin, spirituality of mind, a spirit of prayer and of supplication, resignation to the will of God, liberality to God's people, earnest desires to walk in godly fear, to live to the praise and glory of God, to do the things that are pleasing in his sight, and live under his approving smile,—to be blessed with all this is to put on the new man.

2. But I observed, that we put on the new man when we put him *into his right place*—when he is made the head and master of the house, and rules the soul with his sweet and prevailing influence. It is just the contrary to what we saw was the power and



influence of the old man. And O how softening, humbling, and spiritualizing is the influence of the new. Do you not feel yourself at times subject to two very distinct kinds of influence? Does not something at various times come over your soul which carries with it a certain efficacious power—what I call an influence for want of a better word? You know, painfully know, what it is to be influenced by pride, covetousness, worldly mindedness, fretfulness, peevishness, and many other evils. You know the influence of a bad temper, of a hasty disposition, of a quarrelsome spirit, of a contentious mind, of covetousness, or any other evil that seems to press itself upon you as a power that exercises dominion over you. Now see if you cannot find also in your bosom some other kind of influence. Does nothing ever break in upon your soul like a sunbeam to communicate light to your understanding, life to your soul, feeling to your heart, love to your affections? In reading the word, in hearing the gospel, in conversation with the dear family of God, upon your knees in secret prayer, or as you are engaged it may be through the day, does not a sweet, soft, secret influence steal at times gently over your breast, like the wind over a bank of violets, which seems as if to influence your mind to what is heavenly, holy, spiritual, and divine? In the night season, or at various times during the day, does there not come a secret, indescribable power, which softens, melts, and humbles your heart, raising up prayer and supplication, making you confess your sins, drawing up a thousand longing desires after the Lord and making you, for the time at least, spiritually and heavenly minded? Here is the new man put on. You take the new man thus, as it were, into your arms, as a mother takes her babe, and bring him near to your breast, and you put him on as yours, as you thus put on his graces, his influences, his operations, and what he has created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.

iv. Now, as you thus put on the new man, he spreads his influence also over your life, walk, conduct, and conversation; for these secret influences will manifest themselves openly, and the tree being made inwardly good, will bring forth outwardly good fruit. True religion will be always manifested by a man's life and

conduct. In your families, in your business, in your daily conversation, it will be manifested under what influence you are. If you put off the old man, you put off with him peevishness, rebellion, evil temper, pride, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, harshness, fretfulness, obstinacy, and self-righteousness. If you put on the new man, you put on bowels of mercy towards God's people, kindness and compassion to those who are in difficulty and sorrow, tenderness of conscience, godly fear, strictness of life, circumspection of walk, and uprightness of conduct; and thus you make manifest who you are and whom you serve.

But the more you know of these two men, the more you will hate the one and the more you will love the other; at least, I am very sure that the more you know of the new man, the more you will love him. Do you not sometimes feel as if you never would part with him, for he is so like Christ? Is not Christ the image of God? And if the new man is created after the image of God, it is Christ in you the hope of glory. The new man, therefore, as being created after the image of God, is a copy of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He, therefore, speaks for Jesus, testifies for Jesus, and is, so to speak, a representation of the mind and image of Jesus. O what a mercy would it be for us, as we go about and go into the world, to be ever putting on the new man, and no more leave the house without him than we should without our coat or gown. How he would guard your conduct; keep you from lightness and frivolity, and make you watchful over every word and almost every look. You would not, then, drop into every idle conversation, in the omnibus, in the railway, in the shop, in the street; it would not be to every one "hail, fellow, well met." There would be a sobriety, a consistency, a godliness, a separation of spirit—a something to mark you as distinct from the profane and the professing.

Many persons, I well know, would think this a very gloomy religion, and rebel against being tied up as it were to such restraints. But it is because they know not the sweetness and blessedness of putting on the new man. In copy-books, boys write sometimes, "Virtue is its own reward." I will give you a copy

to write upon your heart; "Godliness is its own reward;" or I will set you a copy out of David's book and in his best hand, "In keeping of them there is great reward." As to bondage and constraint, and all that idle talk, you would find it just the contrary; and that, in proportion as you were enabled to put off the old man, you would enjoy more liberty of soul, more access to God, more sweetness in religion, more blessedness in the Bible, more access to the throne of grace, and clearer and brighter prospects of heaven. And you would find also no bondage in this. I will tell you where the bondage is: *Sin*. The bondage is in sin, and the law which is the strength of sin. There is no bondage in the gospel. It is pure liberty. "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made you free." There is no bondage in the new man. He is all liberty; he is free as Christ is, as holy as God is. There is no wrath, no enmity, no bondage, no guilt, no shame, no fear in the new man. He walks at liberty, and therefore for men to say, "we must not look at the precepts; we shall get into bondage;" or for a minister to say: "I am not going to be legal this morning; I shan't take the precepts and give you a lecture out of them, to bring your soul into bondage;"—why the man does not know what he is talking about. He has never felt the beauty and preciousness of these kind admonitions and gracious cautions, the blessedness of keeping God's word, of walking in God's ways, and knowing his will and doing it. It is sin that brings the bondage. There is no bondage in obedience, no bondage in walking in the ways of the Lord, no bondage in serving God and doing his will. The glorious gospel of the grace of God is free in its doctrines, free in its promises, free in its precepts; and this is its marked characteristic, that it makes free as well as is free. For this is the promise. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." But when men want to be made free *from* the precept, and not *in* the precept; when they want to be indulged with liberty to walk in forbidden ways, and hug the doctrines of the gospel while they despise and trample upon the precepts of the gospel; let them know that their hearts are not right before God, and that as they sow so will they reap; for he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap

corruption, and he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.