

FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS, AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford. on Lord's Day afternoon, December 13, 1857

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."
Ephesians 2:19, 20

I admire and love the grace of God; and the longer I live, the more do I love and admire it. My sins, my corruptions, my infirmities make me feel my deep and daily need of it; and as its freeness, fulness, suitability, and inexpressible blessedness are more and more opened up to my heart and conscience, so do I more and more cleave to and delight in it. What, in fact, is there which you can substitute for it? I assume that you have some concern about religion; that the solemn realities of eternity press with more or less weight on your conscience, and that you are awakened to see the evil of sin and your own evil case as sinners.

I speak not to stocks and stones; I speak to you who desire to fear God and to have your hearts right before Him. If you have no concern about the salvation of your soul, you will love many things far beyond free grace. Money, dress, amusements, the pleasures that present themselves on every side, though hollow as the tomb, and vain. as a drunkard's mirth, will so charm your mind and occupy your thoughts that Christ and His gospel will have no place in your conscience. But if you have any anxiety about your eternal condition, and are brought to cry "**What shall I do to be saved?**" then I ask you, what can you put in the place of

free grace? Surely, you cannot be so foolish as to put your own words in its stead. Surely, you cannot be so ignorant of your ruined condition before God, and of what is revealed in the Scriptures of the way of salvation, by the atoning blood of Jesus, as to substitute the words and works of man for the words and works of the God-man?

You may doubt your own interest in His atoning blood; but you do not doubt that salvation is all of grace, and that if saved, your soul can be saved by it alone. And why not **you** be saved? What countless trophies has grace already laid at the Redeemer's feet! What hosts of ruined wretches, of souls sunk beyond all other help or hope, has free grace sought out, rescued from their destructions, plucked from the jaws of hell, and ransomed from the hand of him that was stronger than they, so that they have come and sung in the height of Zion, and flowed together to the goodness of the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:11,12)

Look at Paul. Where can we find among the sons of men a parallel to the great Apostle of the Gentiles? What a large capacity! What a powerful intellect he naturally possessed, but how subdued and subjugated it became by grace, and how devoted to the glory of God and the advancement of the kingdom of His dear Son. How grace arrested him at Damascus' gate, cast him down body and soul at the Redeemer's feet, translated him from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and changed a bloodthirsty persecutor of the Church of Christ into a minister and an apostle, the greatest ever seen. As such, what deep humility, thorough disinterestedness, noble simplicity, godly zeal, unwearied labours distinguished him from first to last—a course of more than thirty years. How in his inspired writings he pours, as it were, from his pen the richest streams of heavenly truth! With what clearness, power, and

savour he describes and enforces the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and obedience of the Son of God, the blessings of free grace, the glorious privileges of the saints, and the things that make for their happiness and holiness! How in every epistle it seems as if his pen could hardly drop a line without in some way setting forth the infinite grace, the boundless mercy, and unfathomable love of God, as displayed in the gift of His dear Son, and the blessings that flow to the Church through His blood and love.

But look not at Paul only. View the jewels on every side that grace has set in the Redeemer's crown out of the most depraved and abject materials! Who, for instance, were these Ephesians to whom Paul wrote this wonderful epistle? The most foolish and besotted of idolators, so infatuated with their image which fell down from Jupiter—most probably some huge meteoric stone, that had fallen from the sky—that they spent two hours until they wearied out their throats with crying "**Great is Diana of the Ephesians!**"—men debased with every lust, ripe and ready for every crime, and to whom perhaps we can only find a parallel amongst those wretched Hindoos whose atrocities have recently filled every heart with horror. How rich, how marvellous the grace that changed worshippers of Diana into worshippers of Jehovah, brutal howlers into singers who made melody in their heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19), and magicians, full of "curious arts" and Satanic witchcraft, into saints built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Now cannot the same grace, that did so much for them, do the same or similar things for us? Is the nature of man now less vile, or is the grace of Christ now less full and free? Has the lapse of 1800 years raised man out of the depths of the fall, eradicated sin from his constitution, cleansed the foul leprosy of his nature, and purified it into holiness? Let the

thin sheet of decent morality and civilisation be taken off the corpse, and there it lies in all its hideous ghastliness.

Human nature is still what it ever was—dead in trespasses and sins. Or has time, which changes so many things on earth, changed things in heaven? Is not God the same gracious Father, Jesus the same compassionate Saviour, the Holy Spirit the same heavenly Teacher? Is not the Gospel the same glad tidings of salvation, and the power of the Gospel the same to every one that believeth? Then why should not we be blessed with the same spiritual blessings as the saints at Ephesus? Why may not the same Jesus be to us what He was to them, the same Spirit to do for us and in us what He did for and in them—and the same grace save and sanctify us which saved and sanctified them? Here and here alone is our strength, our help, our hope, our all.

In opening up the words of our text, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to show—

I.—First, what it is to be a **stranger and a foreigner**; whence I shall take occasion to show how the saints of God are brought to be "**no more strangers and foreigners.**"

II.—Secondly, what it is by grace divine to be made "**a fellow citizen of the saints,**" and brought into manifested membership "**of the household of God.**"

III.—Thirdly, what it is to "**be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.**"

IV.—And lastly, how "**the Lord Jesus Christ**" Himself is "**the chief corner stone**" of this glorious and immortal building.

There are three lessons of heavenly instruction which the Holy Spirit must and will write with His own divine finger upon every gracious heart, and which the same blessed Spirit must ever keep in constant remembrance there. First, **our base original**; in other words, the Holy Spirit must show us what we are by nature as sunk into sin and guilt, death and destruction, enmity and alienation from God, by the Adam fall. **Secondly**, what **Jesus Christ has done and suffered** that He might redeem us from the lowest hell, that we might bear about with us a constant remembrance of His finished work, of His blood and righteousness and dying love. And **thirdly**, what are **the fruits and effects of a work of grace**, and especially as making us experimentally acquainted with what we are as fallen sinners, and what we are as saved by the blood of the Lamb.

I: The Apostle in the text assures the saints of the Most High that they are "**no more strangers and foreigners.**"

1. Such, then, they were before quickening grace brought them out of that miserable condition. Let us examine the meaning of these expressions separately; and **first**—

(i). What is it to be a **stranger**? We see some morning a person walking in the streets of this town. Knowing by sight most of the inhabitants, and noticing how he looks about him, as if every object that meets his eye is new to him, we instinctively perceive that he is a stranger. He knows no one; no one knows him. His very appearance and manners tells us at once that he is a stranger, and that he himself feels and knows it. But if in our time and country the state of a stranger is so different from an inhabitant, how much more so in those ancient days when to be a stranger was to be an enemy and an alien, with whom there was no friendly intercourse by land or sea. How expressive the figure as

descriptive of our state by nature!

A stranger, then, in a spiritual sense, is one who knows not God, and one whom God docs not manifestly own or recognise. He has no acquaintance with the throne of grace: he is, therefore, a stranger to spiritual prayer and supplication. He has no knowledge of his need of mercy: he is a stranger, therefore, to any sense of his lost, ruined condition. He knows nothing of the way of salvation: he is, therefore, a stranger to Jesus, as the new and living way unto God. he never walks in a way lined with blood; he never traverses a road spread with the robe of righteousness, as the multitude spread their garments in the way of Jesus (Matthew 21:8).

As in our town a stranger does not know the streets nor where to find places which are quite familiar to us; so in the things of God, a stranger knows not the streets of Zion or the courts of the sanctuary; he cannot find his way to the garden of Gethsemane, to the cross of Calvary, to the sepulchre where Jesus was laid, to the Mount of Olives whence He ascended on high. He is a stranger to the dealings of God with the soul, so that he knows nothing of repentance for sin, of faith in the Lord Jesus, of hope as an anchor within the veil, or of love as shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. He is a stranger to the evil of sin as charged home upon a guilty conscience, and a stranger to the way whereby guilt is removed by the application of atoning blood, he is a stranger to "the covenants of promise," for the covenant is shown to those only who fear God (Psalm 25:14), and the promises were never applied to his heart with a divine power. He is a stranger to the exercises and distresses of the family of God, for, not fearing God, he knows no changes (Psalm 55:19); and is a stranger also to their joys, for theirs is a joy that the stranger intermeddleth not with. He is a stranger to

their hopes and a stranger to their fears; to their castings down and liftings up, to their temptations and deliverances. He is a stranger to God the Father, for he neither worships Him in spirit and in truth, nor has he received the Spirit of adoption to call him Abba, Father; he is a stranger to God the Son, and to any holy intimacy, sacred intercourse, or heavenly communion with His gracious Majesty; a stranger to the word of His lips, to the smile of His face, to the touch of His hand, to the love of His heart. He is a stranger to God the Holy Ghost as a divine Teacher, a heavenly Comforter, an inward Intercessor—to His influences and operations, to His anointing, sealing and indwelling. In a word, he is a stranger to true religion, to vital godliness, to present grace, to future glory.

Are you this stranger? When you hear the things of God described and enforced as matters of vital experience, without which there is no evidence of being a partaker of everlasting life, is this the secret language of your heart, "We do not know what you mean? You bring certain strange things to our ears; but we do not understand what you are talking about nor what you are aiming at. Your arrows reach us not, the things you speak of we are utter strangers to, and, what is more, we neither want nor care to know them, as they seem to us unintelligible mysteries." If this be the secret language of your heart, does it not clearly prove that you are a stranger to the covenants of promise, and, if so, are most certainly from God's own testimony "having no hope and without God in the world?" (Ephesians 2:12)

(ii). But the Apostle speaks of their being no more "**foreigners.**" A foreigner seems, if I may use the expression, a more lost being than a stranger. A stranger comes into the town: he can speak English; he can ask questions of the persons whom he meets; he can obtain for

himself the necessaries of life; he need not be without food or lodging, from not knowing how to make himself understood. But a foreigner is one who, in most cases cannot speak our tongue, is ignorant of our laws, habits, manners, and customs, has no right to any of our privileges as Englishmen, and is an alien in blood, lineage, allegiance, and language.

So in a spiritual sense: a foreigner is one "alienated from the life of God," and as such, an alien in blood, for he is not of the royal priesthood; in lineage, for he is of the seed of the bondwoman; in allegiance, for he serves the prince of this world; in language, for he is unable to speak the language of Canaan to God or man; or if he endeavour to use the tongue of the holy city, he talks it as a foreigner speaks English, with a barbarous accent, and with so many mistakes and errors, that it is at once evident that he did not learn it by divine tuition, as the utterance of a feeling, believing heart. But a citizen of Jerusalem which is above, that is free, and the mother of all the saints of God (Galatians 4:26), knows the language of the heavenly city. When God speaks to him, he knows what God means; when he speaks to God, he knows what he utters before Him. He understands the Scripture in its spiritual, experimental meaning, for he is taught by the same Spirit who inspired it. He understands the dealings of God with the citizens of that heavenly country, for he is at home in that holy land, and, like Abraham, may, as led, walk through the length and the breadth of it. (Genesis 13:17)

2. But this view of a foreigner leads me to the point that I chiefly wish to dwell upon—for upon that the apostle lays the chief emphasis—that the saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus "were no more strangers and foreigners;" in other words, by a work of grace upon their hearts, they had been brought out of this state that I have been describing

into another condition which is its exact opposite, and which I shall now open up.

(i.) What, then, is it to "be **no more** a stranger?"

[a] **First**, it is to be no more a stranger to a **sense of your lost condition**. There was a time in your experience when you knew nothing of your ruin and misery, as a sinner condemned by the holy law of God; or if now and then a thought about heaven and hell crossed your mind, or a conviction of sin gave a momentary pang, it was soon relieved by some self-righteous resolution of future amendment. But a time came—a time never to be forgotten—when you could not thus putaway your convictions; when they laid hold of you too fast and too firm to be removed. Before, you were like a person with a slight cold, which could very soon be got rid of; a warm bed or a brisk walk would take it away, or it would go off of itself. But now you are like a person upon whom disease has fastened itself with so firm a hold that it cannot be shaken off. It is a consumption in your lungs, a cancer in your breast, an abscess in your liver. Such is the difference between a few flashing convictions that but graze the skin, and a real work of grace that lays hold of a man's conscience with killing power, and, like the surgeon's knife, cuts deep and true into the very substance of the quivering flesh. You are no longer then a stranger to your state as a sinner, to a deep and daily sense of your lost condition, as condemned by the law and your own guilty conscience. You feel that unless saved by sovereign grace, saved you never can be at all, and that the same hand which wounded alone can heal.

[b] Nor are you a stranger **to the throne of grace: you** are found frequently there; you know the way unto God—that Jesus is "the way," and that "no man cometh unto the Father

but by Him." This truth is too deeply lodged in your conscience for unbelief to deny or infidelity effectually to assail, for you cannot live without drawing near unto God, and out of Christ, you know, He is a consuming fire. It is true that often, though you know the way to God, you feel condemned because your poor cold, dead heart, or your unbelieving frame, seems for a time to keep you from the throne of grace. Yet you know the way there, and are no more a stranger to pleading the merits of atoning blood and venturing nigh through Jesus' righteousness and intercession.

[c] Nor are you a stranger **to the way of salvation** by sovereign, distinguishing, superabounding grace. It is a way very clearly opened up to your understanding; it is a way very much commended to your conscience; you see at times great beauty and blessedness in salvation by grace, as worthy of God and suitable to man, as harmonising all the attributes of Jehovah, reconciling mercy and justice, satisfying the law and glorifying the gospel, communicating happiness and ensuring holiness, guiding the feet on earth and ensuring heaven at the end of the race.

[d] Nor are you a **stranger to Jesus**, nor is He a stranger to you. You see in Him at times a beauty, a grace, a glory, a sweetness, a suitability which, in a very special manner, attract your heart to Him; and His blood and righteousness spangle and glisten before your eyes as having something blessed and beautiful in them that you cannot describe and yet see and feel. You feel that you love Him, that He is precious to your soul, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. You can use at times a holy familiarity with Him, can tell Him all your trials and troubles, and seek relief by lying at His feet or leaning on His bosom. A word from Him is enough. By it you can live and die, fight and conquer,

endure afflictions, face a frowning world, resist Satan, and come off more than conqueror over every foe.

[e] Nor are you a stranger to **testimonies from God**—They have been times when He has dropped a promise into your soul, applied a word with power to your heart, made an invitation sweet, or melted it down into contrition and love by some unexpected discovery of His goodness and mercy.

[f] Nor are you a stranger **to the fruits of the Spirit**—to the workings of a living faith, for it has purified your heart from the love and practice of sin, united you to Christ as a living branch in the only true vine, and overcome the world by separating you in heart and affection from it. Nor are you a stranger to **a good hope through grace**—for you find at times that it is raised up in your soul, and you can cast it forth as an anchor into that which is within the veil. Nor are you a stranger to **a feeling of love** to the name of the Lord and to His saints: for there are times when your heart is melted down in love and affection towards them, because you see the image of Christ in them. Nor are you a stranger to the **chastisements** that God inflicts upon disobedient children; nor to the **afflictions** strewn in the path of those that fear God; nor to the **temptations** and snares that beset the road; nor to the **assaults of Satan** nor to the evils of your heart that make you daily sigh and groan; or to sweet visitations upon your knees, to blessed meditations upon the Lord, and to openings up at times of His blood to your heart and conscience as cleansing from all sin.

[ii.] Nor, again, if taught of God, are you any more a **foreigner**. The Lord Himself has taken you into His own school to teach you the language of Canaan, to instruct you how to pronounce the words of that heavenly tongue correctly, and to get rid of that barbarous accent which you

had as a foreigner; for "the heart of the wise teacheth his mouth" (Prov 6:23), and "the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." (Isaiah 32:4) He has taught you, it may be, to say "Abba, Father"—a word that none can pronounce properly except citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; and He has enabled you to speak a language that His saints can receive. They can soon tell whether you are a foreigner or a native; whether you talk the language of Canaan as a citizen or as a barbarian; in other words, whether you speak out of your heart from a living experience, from gracious, tender feelings, and a conscience wrought upon by the power of God; or whether as a foreigner speaks English, so you speak what you have merely learnt in your judgment, by dint of natural intellect, without any divine teaching or gracious influence on your soul. O the unspeakable privilege of being no more a stranger and a foreigner, but to be introduced, as only love and blood and grace can introduce us, into the state of which the apostle speaks, and to which I now come, namely—

II—To be "**fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.**"

1. The very word "**saint**" has become, through man's perverseness and wickedness, a word of reproach and contempt. But God will honour it, let men dishonour it as they please. God has put a crown of glory upon it, let men despise it as they may. There is no privilege or blessing that God can confer, so great and glorious as to crown you with the crown of saint. He might have given you titles without number; he might have showered riches upon your head in the greatest profusion; rank, fame, talent, beauty, health, all might have been poured at your feet; but what would all these be compared to making you a saint of God? All earthly titles end with the grave; grim death, that relentless

executioner, spares no rank or age; beauty, wealth, youth, and fashion, where are they, what are they, when earth claims its own and the clods fall heavily upon the coffin? But to be a saint gives you a title to heaven, to an immortal crown, and a throne of unfading glory. Then be not ashamed of your badge; only prove that you are worthy of it. When men tauntingly call you a saint, say to yourself, "O that I may be one indeed! I want no other title; it is better than a peerage." Take then the reproach upon your shoulders, and bind it as a crown round your brow. (Job 31:36) Only take care you prove yourself worthy of the name.

But what is it to be a saint? It is to be sanctified by God the Father (Jude 1:1), set apart for Himself to show forth His praise. It is to be washed in the atoning blood and clothed in the justifying righteousness of the Son, and to be regenerated by the Spirit of God. It is to be introduced into the new world by being delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. What heart can conceive or tongue express, the state of blessedness to which the despised saints of God are advanced even in this time state! They are sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; jewels in Jesus' mediatorial crown; members of His mystical body, and as such united to Him by indissoluble ties; pillars in the temple of God which shall go no more out; sheep redeemed by precious blood; virgin souls espoused to the Lord the Lamb (2Cor. 11:2; Revelation 19:7) They are heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, and mansions of glory are prepared for them beyond the skies. There they shall sit as overcomers with Christ on His throne (Revelation 3:21), and there they shall sing upon harps of gold the praises of a three-one God to all eternity. (Revelation 5:8; Rev. 15:2)

The blessedness of the Ephesian believers was that they had become "**fellow citizens with the saints.**" They became thus invested with certain rights, and advanced to the enjoyment of certain privileges. What are these? Assume, then, that this stranger of whom I have been speaking wished to come and live in this town; or assume that a foreigner was willing to renounce his foreign allegiance in order to give up all the claims that his former country and sovereign had upon him and wished to become a fellow citizen with the natives of this isle. When he was once legally and properly naturalised, would he not have all the privileges enjoyed by those born in the land? Not a single thing would be withheld which longed to them, for he would have a similar right to everything which they had a right to. Is not this the exact position of our Queen's husband—the Prince Consort? Born a German, he has become an English citizen; but although advanced to almost regal dignity, by his union with the Sovereign, it is only his being legally naturalised that has made him a fellow citizen with us.

Now grace does this in a spiritual sense for a child of God. You were by birth and descent a stranger and a foreigner. You were born in sin, therefore were by nature an alien and an enemy; but grace has quickened your soul—grace has planted the fear of God in your heart—grace has made you a partaker of spiritual and therefore of eternal life. By doing this, it has made you a fellow citizen with the saints. Nor is there a saint named in the Bible with whom grace has not made you a fellow citizen. Righteous Abel, the first martyr; Enoch, who walked with God; Noah, saved in the ark; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David, Samuel and the prophets; all the glorious army of martyrs, with all the blessed company of saints that have lived and died under the Old Testament and New; all the glorified spirits in heaven, and all the suffering family of God

on earth: you, even you, who were once a stranger to the things of God; you, even you, who were once a foreigner that could not lisp one of the songs of Zion nor speak even a word to God or to His people, are now a fellow citizen with them all, if grace has reached your soul and put a new song into your mouth and a pure language into your lips. (Psa. 40:3; Zeph. 3:9) O the mighty wonders, the glorious miracles of sovereign grace! What a miracle of mercy has it done for your soul, by bringing you, even you, out of that barbarous condition, that state of alienation from God, that estrangement from all good, that foreign allegiance and idolatrous service in which you were living, a foe to God and godliness, and, by a mighty hand and a stretched arm, plucked you from your destructions, adopted you into the family, and given you the privilege of citizenship with the excellent of the earth; yea, more, with the glorified spirits in heaven, with those now before the throne, singing anthems of eternal praise. I hope there are such here; that I am not speaking flattering words to buoy up the graceless and the godless, but addressing some of the living family of God. if, then, grace has but touched your heart; if the love of God has but come into your soul, it has placed you among the saints of the Most High, and given you every privilege which God ever did or could give to them.

And what are their privileges? To be washed in the atoning blood of the suffering Son of God—to be clothed in the justifying righteousness of His perfect and meritorious obedience—to be consecrated by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter—to have the love of God as their enduring portion, peace in believing, supplies of grace as needed, support and strength as they pass through this vale of tears, comforts abounding in proportion to the abundance of afflictions, everlasting arms beneath in death, a mansion of eternal bliss for the soul when the body drops into the

grave, and a glorious resurrection of the body at the appearance of Christ in glory. All that the love of God can give; all that the blood of Christ has been a channel for communicating; and all that the Spirit of God can reveal to any heart, or has ever brought with power into the soul of any saint,—all these things become ours when we become fellow citizens with the saints of God; not indeed always or often by vital enjoyment, though we get sips and tastes, drops and crumbs, but as Abraham was given possession of Canaan, when he had not so much as to set his foot on it (Acts 7:5), yet his as much by promise as it became his children's by strength of hand. Does not the apostle declare this, in the broadest and clearest language, where he says— "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours?" And why all yours? for "ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1Cor 3:21-23)

Now, my friends, the great thing that you should seek to realize in your own souls is this: what has God done for you by His Spirit and grace? Has He planted His fear in your heart? Has He made you a partaker of divine life by heavenly regeneration? Has He given you true repentance for sin? Has He blessed you with a living faith in Jesus? Has He ever favoured you with any manifestation of His love and blood? Has He revealed Him in you (Galatians 1:16) and formed Him in you, the hope of glory? (Galatians 4:19; Col, 1:27) What has He done for you and in you? What has He wrought with His own hand in your conscience? If He has bestowed anything upon you by His grace and done anything in and for your soul by His Spirit; in doing that, He has done everything He could do; in giving you that He has given you everything He could give; not indeed in present enjoyment, but He has given you the earnest—He has put you into possession of the first fruits—He has blessed you with a foretaste—He has laid

His honour and faithfulness in pledge; so that all that is to come, has already virtually come, in what He has already given.

We see a mighty oak growing in a nobleman's park; we stand at a little distance and admire its beauty. How lofty it extends itself from the ground; how widely it spreads its leafy honours on every side; what a breadth of shade; how flocks and herds may congregate beneath its branches, and birds innumerable build and sing in its boughs. What was once that mighty oak? Why, once it hung an acorn upon the bough; all that now mighty mass could once have been held in the paw of a squirrel: but every root, bough, twig, and leaf were alike held in that tiny cup. So it is with a saint of God: all the grace that he can have on earth and all the glory that he can have in heaven, all the comfort here and all the bliss hereafter, are contained in the first implantation of grace in his soul, as the whole of the oak is contained in the acorn.

Or look at that man yonder exulting in the full possession of vigorous youth and strength: what a breadth of shoulder, what a brawny arm, what muscle, what power in every limb! But what was he once? A babe on his mother's knee, who could hardly lift a finger or utter a cry; but now he is a model for a sculptor—a man who can work from morn to night, and lift a load with ease that would almost break my back to push an inch. But all that he has now he had as a babe, not only every limb and joint, but every muscle and sinew, artery, vein, and nerve. So with the man in Christ: all the strength God may give him in affliction, to bear the weighty cross; all the love He may shed abroad in his heart on the bed of sickness or death; all the grace He may bestow upon him in time, or all the glory he will partake of in eternity, all were given him when the Blessed Spirit raised up the new man of

grace in his heart, and gave him to know something of holy fear and of heavenly love.

2. But the once strangers and foreigners are also said to be **"of the household of God."** The word literally means inmates or members of a house, that is, a family viewed as living under one roof. God has a family, as the hymn says "There is a family on earth, Whose Father fills a throne."

And what a family must that be of which we can say "This is the family of God?"—that, as we can point to this or that house and say, "Here lives a happy, a united family," so we can point to the church of the living God and say, "Here lives the happy, united family of the Lord Almighty."

Now, must not and should not the head of the family rule and guide the whole of the household? Wife, children, and servants, do they not all need a ruling head and a guiding hand? for "the husband is the head of the wife," and if of her, of the rest of the house. As the head, so the members. Look at a family literally. If the head of the family has no authority in his own house, what are the children? Disorderly and disobedient. What is the wife? Out of her place, commanding where she ought to obey. What are the servants? Despising their master and jangling with their mistress. But let the head of the family maintain his rightful place, given him by the laws of God and man—his natural birthright, as the master of his own house—let him exert his authority, not with harshness and severity, but with firmness and gentleness; let him be looked up to by his wife, children, and servants as their head by right and yet ruling by kindness and love, and then he will have an orderly household. Take the matter higher. View the God of heaven and earth; more especially regard Him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a family has He! Scattered indeed far and

wide, not collected locally under one roof save the roof of heaven, whence He looks down upon them in love. What influence, then, and authority does He exert as the Father of His family! This child He restrains by wholesome checks and fatherly frowns; that He draws towards Him by the cords of love; this disobedient son He chastises with His uplifted rod; and that coy and distant daughter, whose eyes are overflowing with tears of godly sorrow for sin, He reconciles with a kiss of forgiveness.

In God's family, according to His own inspired testimony, (1Pet. 2:2; 1John 2:12-14), there are children of different ages: babes, children, young men, and fathers. We will begin with babes. Such may some of you be now—a babe in grace. You cannot yet run, and can only just cry, but still you have some feeling desire towards the Lord God of Israel: you are desiring the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. There may be others able to run about—who just feel their legs—who can climb upon their mother's knee and make their wants known. You cannot yet speak plainly the language of Canaan; still, what you do say is good English—it is your mother tongue—it is your native accent; there is no foreign intermixture. It is but a lisp, it is true, but still it is the true language. There are others, again, who are further grown—who have to endure the rude buffets of school and their rough playmates—who are not coddled at home, ever tied to their mother's apron string, but put out into the cold breath of winter and the chilling eastern winds of spring, to harden them into strength and ripen them into maturity. Then there are young men who are able to carry arms for their sovereign, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to lie at night in the tented field, "each man with his sword on his thigh," men "expert in war" (Song 3:8), instructed by the Captain of their salvation to fight the good fight of faith and overcome the wicked one. And there are fathers and mothers

in Israel whose hoary head is a crown of glory, as being found in the way of righteousness, and who, as they bend lower and lower to the grave, are ripening more and more manifestly for home.

O what a mercy if any here present are of the family of God! None in that family, no, not one individual member, should be despised. Who despises the babe in the mother's lap because it can only wail and cry? Does the father, does the mother, do any of the children, be they young or old? All hail the new comer, the little stranger, and load it with kisses. And do not all the children of the same family, old and young, stand on the same level? So it is in that higher, nobler, and more endearing as well as more enduring relationship the family of God. They are all sons and daughters of the same Lord Almighty, all heirs together of the grace of life, and will be all put into possession of an equal, exceeding, and eternal weight of glory in the day of Christ's appearing. Is it your gracious portion to belong to this household of God, with whom He Himself dwells and walks (2Corinthians 6:16); to be amongst the members of this spiritual, holy, and happy family? Surely, if any of us belong to the family of God, we shall have family feelings, family affections, family interests, family hopes, and family prospects. We shall strive together for the honour of our Father, for the glory of our elder Brother, and for the benefit of each other. We shall be jealous of the honour of the family. We shall not expose family failings or family bickerings, if such unhappily there be, to the rude eye of a scorning world; we shall not quarrel and fall out with each other, for that is most unseemly in members of the same family; but we shall bear with each other, and sympathise with each other in sorrow and in joy; and so fulfil the precept, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Have you any of the feelings that were in Ruth's bosom, when her mother-in-law would fain have bidden her return to her own people and her gods? Her language was—"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, if aught but death part thee and me." Are there any such feelings in your bosom as glowed so warmly in her tender heart? When you hear the word of truth preached—the character of the saints of God described in their high privileges opened up—their varied experience traced out—is there ever raised up in your heart a sweet persuasion that you are one of this blessed family, or even a desire stirred up within you—"O that I were plainly and clearly one of that happy number?" Do you inwardly say, "Let my lot be amongst the dear saints of God? Whatever I may suffer in this life, whatever affliction, or trouble, persecution, contempt, or enmity I may be called upon to pass through, O may my portion, both living and dying, be amongst the despised people of Christ!" These are family feelings. You cannot be altogether a stranger or a foreigner if you have any spiritual love or affection towards the saints of the Most High, for this is the Lord's own mark of "having passed from death unto life." (1John 3:14) But if you despise and scorn them, and nothing pleases you so much as for any of them to slip and go astray, that you may make it a matter of reproach against all the rest, surely that does not mark one of the family. It marks the enemy; it stamps the alien, and shows that you are still a stranger and a foreigner, and not a fellow citizen with the saints or of the household of God; for "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (1John 3:14)

III.—But I pass on to show how the saints of God are **"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."**

1. The apostles and prophets laid one and the same foundation. They had but one work in hand—to lay the foundation for the Church of God to stand upon. When I speak of their laying the foundation, of course I mean only so ministerially and **instrumentally**, as Paul declares of himself, "As a wise master builder I have laid the foundation." (1Cor. 3:10) Christ is the foundation, laid by the hand of God Himself, as He Himself declares, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isaiah 28:16) None but the hands of God Himself could lay the foundation on which the Church could stand for eternity. But ministerially, as setting it forth in the inspired Scriptures and by their mouth and pen, the apostles and the prophets all joined hand in hand to lay the foundation by declaring what it was. They all wrought by the same Spirit; they all spoke under the same influence; and they took, so to speak, in their united hands the foundation, and laid it before the eyes of the Church of God. As the apostle declares, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

So the apostles and prophets, by their preaching and writing, laid the foundation on which the Church is to rest. This is Jesus Christ the Son of God, the God-man—His blood, His righteousness, His finished work, what He is as the Son of the Father in truth and love, able to bear the whole weight of the Church of God as her all-sufficient Surety and Representative. There is no other foundation but this. And I hope when I am dead and gone, you young people who have heard me here, will always bear testimony that I laid no other foundation in this place, but the blood and righteousness of the Son of God. The words I have at various

times spoken in your ears may spring up by and by in your hearts; you may remember in years to come the things I have laid before you; and then should my published sermons be lost or forgotten, you will bear witness that during the whole of my ministry no other foundation was laid in this place but Jesus and His blood—Jesus and His righteousness—Jesus and His finished work.

2. But we are to be **built** upon that foundation. We are, so to speak, to get our souls laid upon that foundation, which will stand with it for ever and ever. God has laid it in Zion that it may stand and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it; and you and I, if we are to withstand the storms of time and be saved from the awful breaking forth of the flood of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, that will one day consume a guilty world, must stand upon the foundation that God has laid in Zion.

But what is to be built upon that foundation? It is this. Grace takes us from our original state by nature, from the old Adam quarry, in which we lay sunk by the fall as low as the gates of hell, and, by working upon our hearts with divine power, lifts us up and out, and, in due time, by revealing Jesus, builds us by faith upon the finished work of the Son of God. We are thus built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We are not built upon them as the Romish church is built upon the Pope, but upon the foundation ministerially laid by them, on which they themselves stood. Here stood Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the prophets of the Old Testament, and here stood the apostles of the New—Peter, John, Paul, James, and the rest. They all stood upon this foundation, deep enough and wide enough to sustain them all, and not only them but the whole church of God; and not a single saint has ever been saved but he has built upon the same foundation with them, for it is the rock

upon which from generation to generation the Church is built and stands. See to it, then; look narrowly; examine your own conscience whether you are standing upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, or whether you are standing on the tottering, miserable foundation of a broken law and a covenant of works.

IV.—But lastly, view with me the Lord Jesus as here declared to be "**the chief corner stone.**" In fact, He is all: He is the foundation, and He is the corner stone that unites the whole building together. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, Greek and Scythian, male and female, all are united together in this glorious building, as all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28) They all stand upon the same foundation, which is the glorious Person and the finished work, the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Son of God. And they are all brought together to be one building by virtue of their union with the chief corner stone which unites the walls together from the base to the top, from the foundation to the headstone. If we have union then with one another, it is because we have union with Christ; if we have communion with one another, it is because we have communion with Christ; if we love one another, it is because we first loved Christ; if we have any spiritual sympathy, any tender affection, or any going forth of sincere desire for each other's Christian welfare, it is because we are knit together in Christ and are spiritually united to His people because first spiritually united to Him, for "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" with Him and His people. (1Cor. 6:17) Thus He is the chief corner stone, and the whole building is kept firm in its place because He binds it all together by His blood, obedience, and love. My friends and hearers, what say you to these things? Are they the truth of God? Will they bear investigation in the light of Scripture?

Will they stand scrutiny closely and thoroughly examined by the test of divine teaching in the heart of the Lord's people? I am confident they will; and as such I commend them to your conscience. Examine the matter for yourselves. Search and see whether this be the truth or not; and then search and see whether you personally, individually, have a saving acquaintance with it. Look to yourselves, and see whether the Lord the Spirit has so wrought upon your hearts, as to bring you out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, and to give you a manifested union and communion with the Son of His love. Then you will know for yourselves whether I speak the truth of God; and if so, "who will make me a liar and make my speech nothing worth?" (Job 24:25)