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SERMONS BY

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The Purging of the Conscience from Dead Works to Serve the Living God

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 8, 1866

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 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." Hebrews 9:13, 14

The rites and ceremonies of the Levitical dispensation were exceedingly numerous, minute, complicated, and burdensome. Not to mention the sacrifices which were perpetually being offered, such as that of a lamb every morning and evening, and of the bullock and the goat on the great day of atonement, there were very many rites and ceremonies continually taking place for acts of ceremonial uncleanness. If you were to carefully examine what we read in Leviticus 15 and other parts of that book, and thus gather up the numerous circumstances by which ceremonial defilement was contracted, you would be surprised if you went on to calculate from those elements the number of persons who in the camp of Israel must have been at any one given time under a state of ceremonial pollution. Take, for instance, the single case of childbearing. A woman that bore a male child was unclean for thirty-three days; and if it were a female child for sixty-six days. Now what a vast number of women must have been in a state of ceremonial uncleanness at the same time in that amazing multitude, where there were more than half-a-million of grown up men, and probably most of them married, in the camp. Take another case: if a man died, all within his tent was defiled. A friend could not close his eyes without defilement; the widow could not imprint a last kiss upon the pallid lips of her departed partner without defilement; a child could not touch the coffin or take the last farewell touch of the hand that it had so often grasped without defilement; and the same uncleanness attached itself to every one who bore him to the grave. Now, of that vast

multitude, how many would be continually dying. A man could not take the bone of a dead animal in the street and throw it away or touch with his foot an unclean animal without defilement. All lepers were thrust out of the camp as unclean, and all suspected of the symptoms of that terrible disease were carefully shut up.

But I need not enter any further into these and similar circumstances of ceremonial defilement, which would but take up my time and draw away your attention from more important matter. What I have already said will be sufficient to show how exceedingly minute, laborious, and burdensome that dispensation must have been to those who were under it, and bound by strict injunctions to attend to all its directions, constituting it with all its requirements, as Peter said, a burden which neither they nor their fathers could bear.

And yet with all this, infinite wisdom and mercy were mixed. These Levitical rites and ceremonies were intended by God to produce certain special and permanent effects.

1. First, they *separated* the people effectually from their heathen neighbours; for the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Levitical law being restricted solely to the children of Israel, they were necessarily precluded from associating with all but those who were interested in them. Take, for instance, the great standing festival of the Passover. There was an express prohibition: "A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof." And as the sacred rites and ceremonies of the law were restricted to the children of Israel, so were they prohibited in the most absolute manner from polluting themselves with the idolatrous rites of the surrounding nations.

2. But again, these rites and ceremonies taught them also the *holiness of God*, imprinting in visible characters upon their mind the purity and perfection of that great God with whom they had to do; for, besides the blood of the sacrifices, the numerous washings of the body and of the clothes which were requisite for

the removal of ceremonial defilement would teach them the abhorrence which God had of all sin and uncleanness, and that nothing impure could live in his sight.

3. The ever-recurring sacrifices, the continual shedding of blood, and the sprinkling of it would also convince spiritual worshippers that there was a need of a *sacrifice of God's own providing* which should one day be offered, and of which the offerings of bulls and of goats were merely typical representations; and thus they instrumentally led the believing Israelite to look to the promised seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head—the Lamb of God who should in due time be revealed, the Messiah who should make atonement for sin by the offering of himself.

4. They taught also those who were spiritually enlightened the necessity of that *inward holiness*, without which no man can see the Lord, and that they needed to be cleansed by the Spirit's regeneration as well as washed in the atoning blood of the Lord the Lamb, to which these sacrifices pointed.

But I shall not this morning take up your time with entering at any further length into an explanation of the rites and sacrifices of the Levitical dispensation, but come at once to our text, in which I think we may find these four leading features especially worthy of our attention and consideration.

I.—*First, the work which could be effected by the Levitical sacrifices and ceremonies.* They could confer upon the flesh a ceremonial sanctity; but that was all they could do: "the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh."

II.—*Secondly, the value and blessedness of the blood of Christ,* who is here declared to have "offered himself, through the eternal Spirit, without spot unto God."

III.—*Thirdly, the power and efficacy of that blood when applied.* It *purges the conscience from dead works.*

IV.—And, *lastly*, the *fruit* and *effect* of the conscience being thus purged from dead works, *it is enabled "to serve the living God."*

I.—There is no doubt that the carnal worshippers under the Law rested in the outward sacrifice. Like our Pharisees and legalists, they were satisfied with the external form. When the sacrifice was completed their conscience found rest; when the ceremony had been gone through whereby they were restored to a state of ceremonial cleanness from their condition of ceremonial defilement, in that they rested as the chief, the only requisite to please and serve God. They did not look beyond the mere blood of the bull or the goat as shed and sprinkled, nor did they consider anything necessary or desirable beyond the application of the water in which the ashes of the red heifer were contained to remove their ceremonial defilement.

i. But as I have touched upon these points before I do not wish now to dwell upon them more than is absolutely needful for the full explanation of our subject. The apostle, then, here seems to class under two general heads the rites and ceremonies of the Levitical law. By the blood of bulls and of goats he seems to point our attention to those solemn transactions which took place on the great day of atonement, when the high priest offered a bullock for his sins and the sins of his house, and took the blood within the veil and sprinkled it seven times on and before the mercy seat, carrying at the same time incense beaten small, with coals from off the burning altar, and thus filled the holy of holies with the sweet smell of incense. When he had offered the bullock as a sacrifice for the sins of himself and his own house, he killed the goat, and he did with that blood as he had done with the blood of the bullock—took it within the veil and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy seat. He took also the blood and purified the brazen altar, and by that blood the sins of the people were typically put away and atonement was made. But it was accepted, not because there was anything in the blood of the bull or of the goat which could take away sin, for, as the apostle well and wisely argues, "the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin," but God had respect to the blood thus shed because it

pointed to that great sacrifice which was to be offered in due time upon Calvary.

ii. But we also find mention made in our text of "the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean." In order to explain this, I shall have to call your attention to a peculiar ceremony of which we have a full account in Numbers 19, where we find the Lord thus speaking: "This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke; and ye shall give her unto Eleazer the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face." (Numb. 19:2, 3.) I need not take up your time by dwelling at any great length upon this peculiar rite; but I must touch for a few moments upon some of its leading features, as they have such a strong typical meaning. Observe then:—

1. It was to be a "*red* heifer, and that *without spot* or blemish, whereon never came yoke." Red is the colour of guilt. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. 1:18.) And yet though the heifer was red, yet was she without spot or blemish. So the guilt of our sin was laid upon Christ, and yet he was without spot, absolutely pure and holy. Yoke had never come upon her; so was there no constraint on Christ to suffer, bleed, and die; but he offered himself willingly through the eternal Spirit as a sacrifice for us.

2. Secondly, she was *taken without the camp* and there slain. So the blessed Lord was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem, for "he suffered without the gate," and we are bidden to "go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

3. Thirdly, it was *not the priest* who slew her, but someone for him before his face. So was it with the Lord. He did not put himself to death, though he freely laid down his precious life. As Peter charged the men of Israel: "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.)

4. The blood of the heifer was *sprinkled* by the priest seven times, a perfect number, before the tabernacle of the congregation. So is the whole church perfectly purified by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

5. The whole heifer was to be *burnt* in sight of the priest. So did our blessed Lord offer up his whole body and soul in the fire of love kindled in him by the eternal Spirit.

6. *Cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet* were to be cast into the midst of the burning of the heifer, all which were used, under the law, to purify the unclean and to sanctify and dedicate men and things to sacred uses. So in the one offering of Christ there is contained everything which can cleanse, consecrate, and sanctify.

Now, the ashes of the heifer were to be carefully gathered up and laid up without the camp in a clean place, that they might be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel as a water of separation, a purification for sin. I have observed before that whoever touched a dead body was ceremonially unclean. Now so stringent was the law, that unless the man thus defiled was sprinkled with the water of separation, that is, with running water into which the ashes of the burnt heifer were put, he was to be cut off from Israel.

But now let us see what, according to the apostle's testimony, the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean could do: "They sanctified to the purifying of the flesh." This is all they could do, and this only by virtue of God's institution. There was nothing in the blood of the goat or of the bull which could in itself put away sin; nor would such sacrifices have been accepted in the sight of God had they not been according to his own institution. The blood shed in sacrifice was designed to be a typical representation of the blood of the Lamb; and as such it had its value both in the sight of God and in the

sight of the spiritual worshipper. In a similar manner, the water of purification was a standing type of the sanctifying influences and operations of the Spirit of God upon the heart. Besides which, as permanent institutions, they kept before the eyes of the people the two grand gospel doctrines of atonement by blood and purification by water. But as regards themselves, they could only ceremonially sanctify and purify the flesh from ceremonial defilement, without pardoning sin or sanctifying the sinner. Strong as types, they were utter weakness in communicating spiritual blessings.

II.—But let us now pass on to our next point, where the apostle contrasts with these weak and beggarly elements, the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean, that *precious blood of Christ* who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.

i. Observe the force and strength of his language: "How much more." It is usual with the apostle, in drawing his comparisons between the law and the gospel, between the sign and the thing signified, to use some such expression, in order to show the superiority of the one over the other. Thus he says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (2:3.) "This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses" (3:3); "Of how much more sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy" (10:29); "If they escaped not who refused that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape." (12:25.) This mode of speech is intended to magnify the gospel above the law, and to show how great is the strength of the one as compared with the weakness of the other.

But now observe the peculiar point in which the law was so weak. It is, as he speaks just above, of the gifts and sacrifices offered therein. They could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the *conscience*. Now this is a point demanding our utmost attention. The blood of bulls and of goats only typically and representatively made atonement for sin. It could not actually put it away, and therefore could not take the weight and

guilt of it off a burdened conscience. So with the water of purification. If a man had become ceremonially unclean by touching a dead body, the sprinkling upon him of the water in which the ashes were put could restore him to his ceremonial cleanness; but it could never cleanse his conscience or purify his heart. The apostle names, in another place, two striking circumstances attending the sacrifices which manifested their inherent imperfection. One was their *constant repetition*. "They were offered year by year continually; and therefore could not make the comers thereunto perfect;" that is, they could not relieve their consciences. He therefore adds: "For then would they not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." (Heb. 10:2, 3.) Now contrast this imperfection with the sacrifice of Christ according to the will of God: "By the which will we are sacrificed through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. 10:10.) The offering of the body of Jesus Christ was once for all. It was full, final, and complete. It therefore needed no repetition; for to do a thing twice implies a failure in the doing of it once, which needs to be amended by a second effort. The other mark of imperfection was that the priest stood when he offered the sacrifice; and his retaining year after year the same standing posture, proved that there was an inherent inefficacy in the sacrifice thus offered. Now contrasting with this standing posture of the Levitical priest the sitting down of Jesus at the right hand of God, he says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Heb. 10:12, 13, 14.)

I wish to draw your attention to these points, to show the fulness of the one perfect sacrifice of Christ, that your conscience may find peace and rest; for this is the point in which everything fails but the atoning blood of the Lord the Lamb. This therefore was the main point in which the blood of bulls and of goats, with the whole train of Levitical rites and ceremonies, failed of old. Where

there was life in the worshipper's heart, there was a guilty conscience which they could not purge. Carnal, ceremonial worshippers could rest in the sacrifice, but the spiritual worshipper felt in his own bosom its inherent deficiency. Now the apostle, contrasting with the inefficacy of these legal ceremonies and these external sacrifices the value, efficacy, and blessedness of the blood of Christ, says, "How much more." It is as if he would say, "Blood and water of old could do the work appointed for them. They could sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, but could do no more. But look, O, look at the mightier work which has been effected by the atoning blood of the Lamb. If they had a certain value, and that value was given them by God; if they had their place in the old legal dispensation, and were not only types and figures of better things to come, but could also remove ceremonial filth, and defilement, and restore the worshipper to the camp of Israel and to the privileges of the sanctuary, how much more under the gospel dispensation, in the day in which we now live, shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge and cleanse your consciences to whom it is revealed and upon which it is sprinkled, to serve the living God."

ii. There is something to my mind exceedingly blessed and beautiful in the way in which the apostle here speaks of Christ "offering himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to God. Let me therefore seek as far as I can to open it up in its spiritual meaning.

1. First, observe how it seems to bring before our eyes the *sacred humanity* of our gracious Lord in conjunction with his eternal Deity, and to represent him as through the eternal Spirit offering himself without spot unto God. "He offered *himself*;" all that he had, all that he had taken, and all that he possessed in his pure humanity—his holy body, his holy soul, his holy affections, his holy desires, his holy prayers, his holy obedience, all that he was as pure and without spot. His body was without spot, his soul without spot, his obedience without spot, his affections, his prayers, his desires, himself in a word as the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. "He offered himself;" if I may use the

expression, the whole Christ offered himself, Christ as God and Christ as man, for we cannot separate one from the other. It is true that the offering was of his pure humanity only—of his body and soul; but as it was the act of his whole Person both natures concurred in it, this made it effective. He therefore offered his humanity in conjunction with his Deity, the latter giving it infinite efficacy and value. He did not offer himself as God, for Deity cannot be sacrificed or offered—that implying blood-shedding and death—nor simply as man, for that in itself would have been ineffectual; but he offered himself as the God Man, the Immanuel, God with us.

And he offered himself *to God*. To understand this, let us bear in mind a few circumstances which may throw light on the expression of the apostle. 1. God is here viewed as the Law Giver, the supreme Governor and righteous Judge of all, sitting on his throne of judgment; and as such, two things are ascribed and belong to him: 1, the denunciation of his holy Law: "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Cursed be every one who continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." 2. An absolute refusal of every way of satisfaction that could be made by the creature or by the blood of bulls and of goats.

Now unto God as such, this holy, righteous Judge, this God of purity and holiness, the Son of God, his own eternal, well beloved Son, offers himself in sacrifice that he might put away sin by his own blood, having taken upon him the sins of all the elect, that he might make atonement for them. His holy humanity was the offering; but the way of its being offered was by the shedding of his blood. It was so with the type—the legal sacrifice; the animal slain was the sacrifice, but the shedding of the blood was that by which atonement was made, for "the life of the flesh is in the blood, and it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." (Levit. 17:11.)

iii. But the apostle tells us that it was "through the eternal Spirit" that he so offered himself. This we may understand in two senses.

1. It may, first, represent the hand, so to speak, which the eternal Spirit had in this solemn transaction. We must always bear in mind that the Holy Ghost is a Person in the sacred Godhead; and that he was present at all transactions which were connected with the mysteries of redeeming love. Thus he was one of the parties to the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; it was under his sacred power and overshadowing that the human nature of our Lord was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary; he rested upon him and baptised him with his own divine power and influence when he descended in bodily shape as a dove; and as our Lord came up out of Jordan he filled him with every grace and every gift that was needful for his mission as Prophet, Priest, and King. In the last great act, therefore, of our Redeemer when he was upon the cross, the Holy Ghost was there. As the Father in heaven was looking down with eyes of infinite complacency upon his dear Son as doing his will, as putting away sin, and yet was pleased there to bruise him and hide his face from him, so the Holy Ghost was present at that solemn scene, upholding the gracious Redeemer in his obedience unto death, in his sufferings and agonies, in his cries and sighs. He was also present there to sanctify the offering, to consecrate it and fill it with all holy fragrance, and so to perfume it with his influence and grace as to make it especially acceptable to God. I do not like to make use of figures on this subject, lest I should tarnish and mar its solemn sacredness and holy beauty, yet a figure may convey in some measure how additional fragrance was imparted to our Lord's sufferings and sacrifice through the eternal Spirit. Here is a rose upon its stem, beautiful in shape and bright in colour; but does not its exquisite fragrance add much to its beauty, sweetness, and acceptability? So our gracious Lord when he was upon the cross offered himself without spot to God, his pure humanity upon the altar of his eternal Deity; and there being no spot nor blemish in him, and it being the voluntary offering of his only begotten Son, the sacrifice was acceptable to God. But as he was filled with every grace and gift of the Holy Ghost; as that blessed Comforter wrought in him that patience, resignation, submission, and obedience even unto death which

were so conspicuous in our suffering Lord, there was a raising up of an additional perfume from this offering and sacrifice, which rendered it unspeakably acceptable in the eyes of our heavenly Father and righteous Judge. Thus God was well pleased with his obedience; and it was "a sacrifice unto him of a sweet smelling savour." It satisfied all the demands of his justice, and fulfilled every claim of his righteous law. It judged and destroyed Satan and his power, overthrew his kingdom, defeated his unjust and usurped dominion, spoiled him of his armour, and led captivity captive; and, as the blessed fruit and result of the whole, it put away sin, and reconciled and saved the Church of God.

Now these are very deep and mysterious subjects. I seem sometimes to shrink from speaking of them, lest I darken counsel by words without knowledge. And yet I have seen such blessedness in them that though I speak with stammering lips I would not keep back from the family of God anything that may seem more to recommend to them the Lord Jesus Christ, more blessedly to exalt his worthy name, and hold him up to the conscience of all who fear God with greater acceptance, power, and suitability.

2. But the expression, "through the eternal Spirit," may admit of another meaning. It may signify the divine nature of our blessed Lord. "God is a Spirit," and therefore the divine nature of Jesus as being eternal may be called his own eternal Spirit. Whether this be the meaning of the words or not, it is equally true that the Deity of Christ was the altar on which he offered his pure humanity, and in that sense he may well be said to have "offered himself through the eternal Spirit." I much prefer, however, myself the explanation which I have given as referring the words to the Holy Spirit, who, though the expression I believe is not elsewhere found, may well be called "the eternal Spirit," as a Person subsisting from all eternity in the Godhead.

III.—Now it is the blood of this precious Christ, this holy Lamb of God who offered himself without spot unto God, which is "*to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*"

i. You will observe that it is the *conscience* which is to be purged and purified by atoning blood. I must therefore direct your attention to the meaning of the expression. The word "conscience" is used in the Scriptures of the New Testament seemingly in different, and at first sight what may seem almost contradictory senses. Thus we read sometimes of a "good conscience." "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." "The answer of a good conscience toward God." But again, we read of an "evil conscience:" "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." So we read sometimes of a "pure conscience:" "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Then we read of a "defiled conscience:" "Their conscience being weak is defiled." And sometimes, as in the passage thus quoted, of "a weak conscience." Thus at first sight there would seem to be some inconsistency in all these various meanings; and yet rightly explained there will be found no inconsistency or contradiction in them. The word conscience seems to mean that part of the soul, if I may use the expression, which apprehends sin and especially has to deal with it as a burden, as something producing guilt, defiling and polluting it in the sight of a holy God. When, then, the conscience is lying under the guilt and burden of sin it is an "evil," or, as it is usually called, a guilty conscience; not because in itself it is evil, but it is termed so as polluted and defiled with evil, and as feeling and testifying against it. But when the conscience is purged or purified by the application of atoning blood; when it is washed, so to speak, from its defilements in that precious fountain which is opened for all sin and uncleanness; and when the Holy Ghost bears his testimony to it and in it as thus effectually cleansed, it is then a pure conscience, a clean conscience, a good conscience. The conscience in itself is the same principle of the soul, the same witness for God in the breast; but it is spoken of as evil when defiled with the guilt of sin, and spoken of as pure and clean, when by the removal of guilt it is washed and cleansed, and, I may add, brought into

harmony with the word and will of God as revealed in the gospel of his dear Son. For an evil conscience is not only evil as loaded with the guilt and filth of sin, but it is evil also as usually too much inclined to self-justification, or else rebellious, refractory, self-willed, and indisposed to submit to the judgment of God, or acquiesce with the voice of his word either as condemning or absolving. It cannot fully accept either punishment or pardon; writhes under the Law and yet rises up in rebellion against it; hears the gospel but cannot believe it; longs for mercy but cannot find it. For being cleansed and purged by atoning blood, it has not in it the Spirit's healing voice or comforting witness, and is therefore restless, discontented, unsubmitive, and ever casting up, like a troubled sea, mire and dirt. Like an instrument out of tune, it ever gives forth a jarring note; or like one with a sickly constitution, every thing disagrees with it, troubles it, burdens and disorders it. It is the heaviest of all burdens to bear, the greatest of all trials to feel, the gloomiest of all companions to live with, and the bitterest of all recollections to reflect upon. If it look backward, it sees misery there in the remembrance of the past, and if it look forward, it sees misery there in the dread of the future. It mars every earthly comfort, spreads a gloom over the face of all nature, darkens the very sun at noon day, and increases with tenfold density the shades of night. It is the source of thousands of the bitterest complaints which the mouth of man has ever uttered, and its language, for the most part, like that of Ezekiel's roll, is "lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

Now the Holy Spirit by the apostle speaks to such as are suffering under the bitter pangs of this evil, this guilty, this defiled conscience, and tells them if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, could sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, how much more should the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge their conscience from dead works; implying that the conscience needed purging or purifying, and that the blood of Christ as sprinkled and applied could and would do it for them. But what is the force of his argument here? It is this. According to the will of God and by his express institution and appointment,

the legal sacrifices and rites carried with them an available and effectual sanctification of the flesh. When the blood of the sacrifice was shed, when the water of purification was sprinkled, the worshipper was ceremonially clean. He could now come into the camp; he could now present himself before the tabernacle. He was no longer unclean; what God had instituted for his cleansing had removed all his defilement. Ceremonially God and man had now pronounced him clean. Once more he could go into his tabernacles and worship at his footstool: once more behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in his temple. So Christ having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself according to the will of God, and by his express institution and appointment, and by that same will we being sanctified through the offering of his body once for all, are reconciled and brought near unto God. Sin being put away there is no longer any bar between God and us; for "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." As then this is revealed and made known to the conscience by the power of God, and it becomes thus sprinkled by the application of atoning blood, it is cleansed from its defilement, its burden of sin and guilt, and what the apostle here calls "dead works," or all those works and all those workings which, as sins, are as if polluted by the touch of death.

Now do we not know, do we not feel that besides being purged, as Peter speaks, from our old sins, (2 Pet. 1:9), our conscience wants continual purging? The word "purge," I need scarcely explain, is the old English term now obsolete or used in one sense only, meaning to purify or cleanse. It is not so much then the sins we committed in the days of ignorance, sins of youth and unregeneracy, which were mercifully pardoned and blotted out when we first believed in the Son of God; but the sins committed since we knew the Lord, the sins of backsliding, of daily contracting, the sins that every one who has a living conscience sensibly feels he is guilty of well nigh every hour,—in the wandering eye, the roving mind, the foolish heart, the indifference, coldness, and deadness in the service of God; the rebellion, ingratitude, worldliness, carnality, unbelief, infidelity,

pride, and self-seeking, with all the slips and falls which each mourning heart recollects and each guilty conscience testifies against. This is the evil conscience, the guilty conscience which needs to be continually purged by the blood of sprinkling, appeased by that voice which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, that the load of sin being taken from it and its guilt removed, and we may stand before God with a good conscience, and having a sweet assurance of our interest in Christ, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

But how many of the dear family of God are troubled nearly all their days with a guilty conscience; and generally speaking, the more tender their conscience the more they feel the burden of guilt. There is such a thing as a hardened conscience, what the Scripture calls seared with a hot iron. This is a conscience which, as if lying under the thick hard crust of an impenetrable scab, is proof against every touch. But where the conscience is tender and alive in the fear of God, guilt is very soon contracted; and when contracted it lies as a load which cannot be thrown off, for there it remains till taken away. It is this continually fresh contracted guilt which causes so much dejection on the part of the family of God, tries their mind and casts them down. Let them walk with the uttermost tenderness and circumspection, yet through the entanglements produced by the snares of sin and Satan, the workings of corruption in their carnal mind, the constant oozings up of a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, they feel their conscience to be an evil conscience, under which they mourn and sigh, being burdened. They confess their sins and seek forgiveness of them; but until they get an application of the atoning blood, a manifestation of the pardoning love of God, and a sweet sense of reconciliation through the finished work of the Son of God experimentally enjoyed within, their conscience gets no real ease nor peace. Now the apostle regards the peculiar state and case of those who are thus tried and exercised, and says to them, "Look to those who were ceremonially unclean under the law. Was there not power in the blood of bulls and goats as far as it went, and was there not power in the ashes of the heifer as far as it went to sprinkle the

unclean and to sanctify and purify their flesh? Now," he says, "if these ordinances had a certain value as instituted and appointed of God, how much more shall the blood of Christ, of which these were mere shadowy, though visible representations, do a much greater work. They could only purify the flesh, but this purifies the conscience; they only took away ceremonial uncleanness, but this puts for ever away all that sin, filth, and guilt which defile you in the sight of God; this can bring you into his immediate presence, with a conscience clean in his sight. This can cleanse you from all your dead works to serve a living God with all holy obedience, as well as worship him in spirit and in truth."

ii. But the course of our subject now brings us to show what the conscience is *purged from*: "*dead works*."

What are we to understand by this expression? It occurs also in a previous chapter of this epistle: "Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works." (Heb. 6:1.) By comparing, then, the two passages we may perhaps arrive at its proper meaning. Repentance is repentance of sin, and therefore dead works would mean those sins of which we repent and from which we turn away. But in the passage now before us there seems some reference to the purification of the flesh by the water of separation. You will recollect that this water was specially used in the case of those who had been defiled by the dead. There is an allusion therefore, here to the dead bodies under the law and the ceremonial uncleanness produced by contact with them. Now as those who were thus defiled by these works with the dead were separated from God and his people, and could not be restored to communion with them but by the sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer upon them, so unless men are purged from the defilement and pollution of sin by the blood of Christ and its application to their conscience, they, as separated from God and his people, must eternally perish. By "dead works," therefore, we must understand sins with all the guilt and defilement attached to them; and they are called "dead works" for several reasons besides that which I have already assigned as peculiarly connected with the passage now before us. 1. First, then, they

are called "dead" as a principle of spiritual death, and as performed by men dead in sin or dead in a profession; 2, they are called dead works, as dead in themselves, and therefore useless to obtaining life or justification, being the fruit of trees, which Jude calls "twice dead, plucked up by the roots;" and 3, thirdly, they are termed "dead," as deserving of death, and tending and hastening thereto; 4, besides which they are also a dead load upon a living conscience, not only weighing it down as if with the pressure of a dead corpse, what the Scriptures calls "a body of death," but polluting it with all the defilement and uncleanness produced by such close contact with it.

Viewed in this light, all the works which a man may do before he experimentally knows the grace of God and the blood of atonement are dead works. He may work hard and long, and by his strenuous exertions work himself out of breath; but when he has done all that he can do in his own strength, wisdom, and righteousness, it is all but a dead work. His prayers are dead prayers, his services are dead services, his readings are dead readings, his duties are dead duties. Thus all that he does in the name of God, and as he thinks for the honour of God, are but dead works, no more accepted before God than the dead carcass from the uncleanness of which the defiled Israelite under the law had to be cleansed. Now as light and life are communicated to our souls, our conscience gets loaded with dead works; and as these dead works are not merely a load and burden under which the conscience groans, but as there is defilement also in them, and for the reason that I have already named, they become doubly burdensome; for there will always be in these dead works not only inherent imperfection, but actual sin mingled with them. Thus our works, our best works, what I may call our religious works, are not only dead in themselves, as the more twitchings and gaspings of a death-struck nature, but they are so polluted by the dark and turbid stream of sin ever running over and through them, that they defile the conscience with guilt. It thus has to bear not only a heavy burden but a guilty burden, a body of sin as well as a body of death. This makes the trial so keen. We have many heavy burdens to carry, such as a sickly body,

trying circumstances, or an afflicted family which may cause much suffering, but do not bring with them sin and guilt; but dead works lying upon the conscience gall with guilt as well as load with pressure. Have you not tried sometimes to get relief from this burden and weight of guilt, and perhaps only added to it by loading it with fresh dead works?

But perhaps there are other causes for your guilty burden. Some particular act of backsliding may lie hard and heavy upon your conscience, some slip or fall which you unawares have been betrayed into, of which the mournful remembrance haunts you well nigh night and day. You go to bed with it, and get up with it; it makes you hang your head with shame before God; and you scarcely dare venture among God's people lest they read your sin, marked upon your forehead. It has not been, perhaps, any outward sin, no reproach has been produced by it upon the cause, but it is some internally contracted guilt which makes you hang your head with shame before the people of God, as if they all knew your crime. Thus you are haunted night and day with this sin, and would give a thousand worlds, if you had them, never to have fallen into it; yet you feel that all you can do to remove it from your conscience are but dead works, which can never take away the guilt of that sin, or indeed of any other from off your burdened mind. But what is the fruit and effect of this teaching in your soul? Is it not that the blood of Christ, applied by the Holy Ghost, brought with a divine power and received and embraced by faith, can alone purge and appease the guilty conscience, and that, in this sense, it is the one thing needful? Now the Lord often, if not usually, enlightens the eyes of his people's understanding to see and recognise the sufficiency and suitability of the atoning blood of his dear Son before it is thus effectually applied. What then does the eye of faith thus spiritually enlightened see? It sees the blessedness and efficacy of that precious blood, as Abraham beheld the mount of deliverance, the Jehovah-jireh, afar off; it sees the gracious Lord offering himself without spot unto God; it sees the value of the sacrifice in the value of the Sacrificer; the Deity of our gracious Lord in connection with his pure, suffering humanity. Is not this

the reason why the blood of the Lamb has such efficacy; why it is such precious blood? Is it not because every drop has Deity stamped upon it? Now when the soul thus sees, though as yet afar off, what this blood is, what it can do, and how all sin is washed away and cast behind God's back by the virtue of that one offering by which Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, it casts itself, so to speak, under the shelter of that blood, and thus becomes bound by the cords of faith and hope to the horns of the altar. (Psa. 118:27.) But when the Holy Spirit goes on to manifest and reveal it in a more full, personal, and experimental way to the soul, then the conscience is purged from these dead works with all their weight and guilt; and resting wholly and solely on the atoning blood of the Lord the Lamb, it clearly sees and feels that all works rendered to God by a guilty conscience, everything done to recommend itself to his favour by the deeds of the law, and by any or everything which springs out of nature in its best or highest form, are neither more nor less than dead works which cannot please a living God. How gladly therefore does it now throw off all this load of dead works, as Joshua, the high priest, threw off his filthy garments when the Lord caused his iniquity to pass from him. (Zech. 3:4.) As then they are removed by atoning blood, and the conscience is thus purged from them, it now becomes a good conscience, a pure conscience, a conscience in which the blessed Spirit bears his testimony, and which moves in harmony with the will and word of God, as revealed in the gospel of his dear Son.

IV.—But what follows as the *fruit and effect* of this purged conscience, which brings us to our fourth and last point? It is "*to serve the living God.*"

i. If we are to serve the living God agreeably with his will and acceptably in his sight, it must be in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter; that is, not in legal obedience, which is not only defective and imperfect, but always attended with hard and heavy bondage. True service is gospel service, the obedience of faith which flows from the application of atoning blood, the effect of which is not only to purge but to heal. "Who healeth all thy diseases." "I am the Lord that healeth thee." And where there is

healing there is renewing. "So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." It thus becomes a purged, a healed, and a renewed conscience—purged by blood, healed by pardoning love, and renewed by the Spirit's work and witness—the whole being the spiritual workmanship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

I intimated that the conscience was called "an evil conscience," not only on account of the guilt of sin lying upon it, and thus defiling it with evil, but as inherently vitiated by sin, so as to be disabled from rightly performing its office, as recurring to self-justification as well as being partial, inconsistent, and rebellious. When, then, the conscience is purged, it is made a "good conscience," for now, truth and righteousness, simplicity and godly sincerity, tender reverence and filial fear take up their abode in it. Nothing makes a man so sincere as revealed mercy. David, therefore, after describing the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, as forgiving his transgressions and covering his sin, adds, "And in whose spirit there is no guile," as if there were guile before. (Psa. 32:1, 2.)

But with all this, we can only know that he is the living God by some discovery of his life to our soul, for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is; and we can only worship and serve him as the living God when guilt, doubt, fear, and bondage are removed from off the conscience by the blood of sprinkling. As long as the weight and guilt of dead works remain upon the conscience, there is a serving him with dread under the chains of the law, under the lashes of Moses, that pitiless and inexorable taskmaster. There is not that free, spiritual service rendered by a willing child as to a kind and loving Father, which makes it acceptable in his sight. The apostle, therefore, beseeches us not by the terrors but "by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service," that is, the worship and obedience of our enlightened understanding. (Rom. 12:1.) There is no delight in God under guilt; there is no pleasure in reading his word, in coming to his footstool, or believing in him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our religion, for the most part, is one of

heaviness and bondage, a weariness to the flesh. But when faith receives the atonement, when sin is purged by the application of atoning blood, and all these dead works are removed with their burdensome guilt, and God is seen to be a living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a God of grace, mercy, goodness, and love, who lives in his love and in his goodness—then there is a serving him with the free, acceptable, willing obedience of a child, a desire to know his will and do it, a tender reverence of his glory, a holy longing to walk before him in all humility and devotedness, with many earnest wishes to keep his precepts and adhere to his word. The law never can do this, or produce such effects. A man may sin on the very brink of hell; as I have said sometimes, may sin one moment and jump into hell the next; may sin in desperation; his very despair, bondage, and guilt only egging him on to sin the more fully and wilfully. The more he sees of the majesty of God, of his holiness, and what he is in a broken law, the more his heart may be filled with rebellion and enmity against that God whom he only knows as a consuming fire. But when guilt disappears under the blood of sprinkling, and these dreadful feelings are removed by a believing view of the spotless Lamb of God, when there is an apprehending by the hand of faith of the precious blood which cleanseth from all sin, when the dark clouds of sin and guilt are dispersed, a measure of peace felt in the soul, and liberty in approaching the throne of grace, then there is a holy delight in serving God, in walking in his precepts, in obeying his commandments, in seeking to know his will and do it. Then, there is a holy pleasure in living to his honour and praise, and walking before him in humility, simplicity, reverence, and godly fear.

Thus, the grand point in all true religion is to be brought by the blessed Spirit into that happy spot where we can serve the living God free from that guilt, bondage, darkness, doubt, and fear which often possess our mind, and are the worst enemies of our soul's peace.

ii. But though they are such enemies to all true peace and happiness, yet are they mercifully overruled for our spiritual

good; to convince us from whence our help must come, to strip us thoroughly of all creature help and hope, and bring us to the spot where the Lord meets the soul in mercy, sheds abroad his love, and brings near a precious Christ. We have no reason to thank bondage, guilt, and the law, still less sin and Satan, for any work they have done which God has overruled for our good. And yet without some experience of these dead works and the bondage and guilt produced by them, we could not know what it was to have our conscience purged by the blood of sprinkling to serve the living God. There are reasons, therefore, and wise reasons on the part of God, why his children should be thus vexed and plagued. It is true it is not the revealed will of God that his children should spend so many of their days in darkness, doubt, and fear. He has given us a glorious gospel; he has set before us in Jesus everything for our comfort and relief; he has promised to send his holy Spirit to testify of Christ, and has filled his word with promises and invitations suited to every case. And yet his secret will and purpose are that we should be thus exercised and tried, and walk in this path of darkness and desolation, that we might value more the precious liberty of the gospel, know more of what Christ is and what he has done to save us from the depths of the fall, be more deeply indebted to the riches of free and sovereign grace, and come more personally into the blessedness of gospel mercies as made known to our soul by a divine power.

It is on this point chiefly that the people of God differ from mere doctrinal professors. They hold the same doctrines as we hold; they believe, at least nominally and professedly, in the blood of Christ as cleansing from all sin; they own the perfection of his finished work; and they acknowledge all those blessings which are spoken of in the gospel; but without having any personal application or inward enjoyment of them, any spiritual experience of them, or walking in them as their chief delight and happiness. Now what is, humanly speaking, the reason of this? Is it not because they are not, as Asaph says, "in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men?" They are not exercised by a burden of guilt, by a body of sin and death; and, therefore,

there is no real value put by them upon the blood of sprinkling, no real faith in Christ, no good hope through grace in his mercy, nor real spiritual love to his Person. They have the word; but "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;" they have the doctrines, but not the power of the doctrines. But the family of God, being plunged often deeply into guilt and bondage and sharply exercised by the inward conflict they have to pass through, are brought to this point:—

"Good doctrines can do me no good,
While floating in the brain."

"I must have," says the living soul, "realities. What is the blood of Christ to me, though I see it in the word and know it cleanses from all sin, unless I know and feel its power? It is when applied to me that it does me good. I want the application, I want the revelation, I want the manifestation, I want to see my interest and read my title clear, to have all my doubts and fears cast behind my back, rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and walk in sweet liberty in the enjoyment of his presence and love." Thus, bondage prepares us for liberty; guilt teaches us experimentally the need of atoning blood to put it away; and the very exercises, trials, and temptations through which the soul is called to pass, are instruments to lead us into an apprehension of the only divine realities which God has provided to speak pardon and peace to the soul. We have no reason to thank these things for the good they do us, viewed in themselves. Like our slips and falls, they may be overruled for our good; but no thanks to anything we have done wrong whereby God is glorified, or which is overruled for our spiritual benefit.

But what a mercy it is to have a conscience in any measure purged from dead works to serve the living God; to feel any free access to his gracious Majesty, any happy liberty in walking before him, any deliverance from doubt and fear, any removal of those exercises which try the mind and often bring heavy burdens upon the soul. Still, after all our wanderings, we must ever come to the same spot; after all our departings and backslidings, still again and again we must be brought to the same place to get the

guilt removed, the mercy proclaimed, and the peace revealed. For is not this the blessedness that the blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin? Having obtained eternal redemption for us, his blood will never lose its efficacy, but will ever purge the conscience as long as the conscience of any burdened member of his mystical body remains to be purged, till he presents all his ransomed saints faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

QUICKENING AND MAINTAINING

Reprinted from *The Sower* 1932. As Mr Howard, in his *Comprehensive Index* lists this "extract", we have accepted it as being an original piece and not extracted from any other written source by Philpot. We consider that what follows is either an extract from a sermon, or very scanty notes taken by a hearer, or the headings of a sermon taken down by a hearer who perhaps expanded on them from memory at a later occasion.

"The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe"
Eph.1:19

Consider, first, the difficulties which grace has, so to speak, to encounter in the quickening of a dead soul into spiritual life. View the depths of the fall. See the death of the soul in trespasses and sins; its thorough alienation from the life of God, through the darkness, blindness and ignorance of the understanding, the perverseness of the will, the hardness of the conscience, and the depravity of the affections. View its obduracy, stubbornness and obstinacy; its pride, unbelief, infidelity and self-righteousness; its passionate love to, habitual practice of, and long inurement in sin. Consider its strong prejudices against everything godly and holy; the desperate, implacable enmity of the carnal mind against God himself; its firm and deep-rooted love to the world in all its varied shapes and forms; and remember also how all its hopes, happiness and prospects are bound up in the things of time and sense. O what a complicated mass of difficulties do all these foes form in their firm combination, like a compact, well-armed, thoroughly trained army, against any power which would dislodge them from their position.

Consider, too, the sacrifices which must often be made by one who Reprinted from *The Sower* 1932. As Mr Howard, in his *Comprehensive Index* lists this "extract", we have accepted it as being an original piece and not extracted from any other written source by Philpot. We consider that what follows is either an

extract from a sermon, or very scanty notes taken by a hearer, or the headings of a sermon taken down by a hearer who perhaps expanded on them from memory at a later occasion, is to live godly in Christ Jesus; the tenderest ties, perhaps, to be broken; the lucrative or advantageous prospects which have to be abandoned; old friends to be renounced; family connections to be given up; position in life to be lost; and often the shame and contempt to be entailed on one's family and oneself. All, indeed, are not so hedged about with these peculiar difficulties which we have just named; but few are wholly free from them, and he who thus describes them had much personal experience of them in his first setting his face Zionward.

Similarly we have to know, as a fruit of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, the mighty power of God in maintaining divine life in our soul, when it has been communicated. We have to see and feel what mountains of difficulty, what seas of temptation, what winds and storms of error, what assaults and snares of Satan, and the latter more dangerous than the former; what floods of vileness and ungodliness without and within; what strong lusts and passions; what secret slips and falls, backslidings and departures from the living God; what long seasons of darkness, barrenness and death; what opposition of the flesh to the strait and narrow way; what crafty hypocrites, pretended friends, but real foes, false professors and erroneous characters, all striving to throw down or entangle our steps, we had to grapple with; what helplessness, inability and miserable impotency in ourselves to all that is good; what headlong proneness to all that is evil. All these things we have to pass in solemn review.

We have also to ponder over what we have been, and what we still are, since we professed to fear God, and how when left to ourselves we have done nothing but sin against and provoke him to his face from first to last, and yet still have divine life maintained within. And thus as we hold in our hands and read over article by article this long dark catalogue, still to have a sweet persuasion that the life of God is in our soul, and that because Jesus lives, we shall live also. This to realise, believe and

feel, and bless God for his surpassing, super-abounding grace, is to know the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward who believe, in maintaining divine life after it had been first communicated.

Reconciliation and Salvation

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, May 16, 1858

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:10

There are two points of divine truth on which the Scriptures are very express and plain, and yet both of them are most stoutly resisted by the pride and self-righteousness of man's heart. These two truths are the completeness of the fall, and the equal or more than equal completeness of the recovery. Neither of these truths, though for different reasons, is palatable to man's self-righteous nature. As to the first, the depth of the fall, how few are willing to admit that man is in such a state as the word of God describes him to be—"dead in trespasses and sins;" "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart;" "serving divers lusts and pleasures;" "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another," "having no hope, and without God in the world." But how plainly are all these evil fruits traced up in the Scriptures to their parent stock—the Adam fall. How clear on this point is the language of the apostle: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death," not only naturally but spiritually, "passed upon all men for that [or "in whom," margin] all have sinned;" "through the offence of one many be dead;" "the judgment was by one to condemnation;" "by one man's offence death reigned by one;" "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;" "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. 5.) And yet these positive and express declarations of Scripture are so opposed to that natural principle which exists in all of us, that though, to a certain degree, maimed by the fall, yet we are not so thoroughly helpless as not to be able to do something to please God and obtain salvation, that they ever will be exposed to all the desperate rebellion that man's wicked heart is capable of manifesting. It is

true that from a kind of traditional respect for the Scriptures there is a bridle in the jaws of many which prevents them from speaking against them; but when the truth contained in them is brought forth and enforced in other language, then it is that the enmity manifests itself. In a similar way, the other grand and glorious truth which is the correlative of the first, the completeness of the recovery, the perfection of the finished work of Christ, the full atonement which he has made by his bloodshedding and death, is as much opposed as the depth of the fall, because it equally stands in the way of that self-righteousness which is innate in every man's disposition. See how it cuts both ways. If I can do something toward my own salvation, then the fall is not complete; for it has left me some power. If I can do something for my own salvation, then the recovery is not complete; for to become effectual it needs my cooperation. But how plainly has the Holy Ghost revealed not only the depth and completeness of the fall, but the height and completeness of the recovery. The apostle, in the chapter before us, ascribes justification to the obedience of Christ as plainly as condemnation to the disobedience of Adam, summing up the contrast he has drawn between the two covenant heads in these words of truth and power: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:17, 18, 19.)

In the words of our text, we find him seeking to encourage the desponding saints of God, by laying before them what Christ has already done, and what he still lives to do. It is the summing up of the argument laid down in the preceding verses. The main point which he enforces, and whereby he sets off the wondrous love of God, is that "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The death of Christ and that for

"the ungodly" is the key-note of his melodious theme—the grand fundamental truth of the gospel—on which he insists and enforces with all the strength of his pen. From this gospel doctrine he draws a no less gospel conclusion, that thereby God "commendeth," or, as the word means, "recommendeth," "his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He would thus to the utmost of his power enhance and set before our eyes the greatness of the love of God; that this love was not to "the righteous man," of whom he had spoken in the preceding verse, if indeed such a one could be found; nor for "the good," that is, the kind, benevolent man for whom some would even dare to die; but that it flowed so freely forth towards us while we were yet sinners that he sent his only begotten Son to die for us. He would thus open a door of hope for every sensible sinner who is led by divine teaching into an experimental acquaintance with the depth of the fall, and encourage him to come to God as he is, in all his sin and shame, that he may receive mercy from the hand of him whose name and nature are love. He then goes on still further to encourage the drooping saints of God by pointing out to them the fruits of justification by the obedience and bloodshedding of Christ and the way in which it makes salvation sure: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The saints of God are justified, that is, are accounted righteous, through the blood of Christ; and though it may seem at first sight unusual language, yet it perfectly harmonises with an expression in the same chapter: "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (verse 19); for the bloodshedding and sacrifice of Christ were a part of this obedience. Thus by setting before them that they are already in a state of justification and acceptance before God; that the blood shed upon the cross is their plea and title to eternal bliss—a plea and title that never can be set aside by the curse and condemnation of the Law or the accusations of Satan and a guilty conscience, he encourages them to believe that they shall be fully saved, and are in fact already saved from the wrath to come.

But this glorious and most encouraging truth he sets forth more

fully in the words of our text, as the general summing up of the preceding argument: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

In bringing before you what I seem to see and feel as the spiritual and experimental interpretation of these words, I shall, with God's help and blessing, divide our subject into two leading branches, showing, under the first, the *reconciliation of enemies*; and, under the second, *the salvation of friends*.

I.—*First, the reconciliation of enemies.*

i. What language can describe more fully or forcibly the lost, ruined, undone condition of man by nature than the declaration from the mouth of an inspired apostle that he is an enemy of God? Have we ever considered the depth and meaning of that pointed and pregnant expression? Have we ever viewed it in the light of God's countenance and seen in that pure, holy, and heavenly light what it is to be an enemy of the great God of heaven and earth? Let us endeavour, then, as the Lord the Spirit may graciously enable us, to devote a few moments to the consideration of this point, for only as we are led into an experimental acquaintance with it, humbling though it maybe to our pride or painful to our conscience, can we see or feel any grace or glory in the reconciliation which has been effected by the bloodshedding and death of Jesus.

But how came this to pass? What brought us into this miserable condition? God did not make man his enemy. On the contrary, he made him upright, in his own image, after his own likeness. Here was friendship, not enmity. But what a depth of condescension was it in God to breathe into man an immortal soul, bearing in every feature and lineament a visible representation of the purity and perfection of himself, that is, so far as a created, and therefore finite and limited being was capable of it. Man thus made in the image of God was God's friend. God walked with, and talked with him in the garden of Eden; and acceptable were his

visits, for a divine familiarity came with them, and such a mutual intercourse as a pure and innocent man could maintain with a condescending God. Standing in his created purity and native innocence, Adam had no alarming apprehension of the majesty of God, for there was no bar between him and his Maker, any more than there is now in the angels who ever stand in his presence. But ah! how soon the scene changed: how Satan envied man's happiness; how determined that old enemy the Serpent was to make a breach between God and man who seemed in his eyes raised to occupy a place in God's favour from which he himself had fallen; and how fearfully, through God's permission, he succeeded by planting, through the subtle medium of temptation, in the breast of man the same evil root of wickedness that had struck so deeply into his own being, degrading and polluting a pure angel of light into a foul fiend of darkness. Sin being thus, as it were, infused into the heart of man, broke up that friendship which existed between the Creator and the creature, and hurled man down into a state of enmity and alienation from the Author of his being. God did not put enmity into man's heart; God was not the author of man's sin. Satan was the author of the whole. Yes, it was the old enemy, the Serpent, who injected sin as a secret and subtle poison into man's nature, which was created pure and yet subject to fall, and by this infusion of sin, introduced that enmity and alienation into his heart, which constituted him an enemy of God. Let us be clear here. Satan himself could have had no power of introducing sin into man's heart but through the medium of temptation. Though I have spoken figuratively of the injection and infusion of sin; I do not mean thereby that Satan infused sin into man's nature as a venomous serpent by a sudden bite introduces poison into the blood of a bitten man. He rather, to change the figure, presented a cup to man's lips, which seemed sweet and good, but really contained deadly poison. It was the free act of man to take and drink it in disobedience to the revealed will of God. Thus, though Satan was the tempter, and man the tempted, yet, by yielding to the temptation, man sinned by a voluntary act, and so became a personal transgressor. Now this sin, with all the alienation and enmity consequent upon it, has been handed down from our fallen ancestor to us. We are

born into this world enemies of God, what I may call natural enemies, because we bear the same corrupt nature that Adam had when "he begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness."

ii. But have you ever considered what it is to be an enemy of God, and what it means and implies? It is to be at war with all the perfections of God, nay more, with the very Person of the Almighty. Such is man by nature and practice. Such are we, every one of us as born into this world,—at open or secret, direct or implied war against the Majesty of heaven, and against all those glorious perfections whereby God is what he is. Thus, man by nature, is at war against God's *holiness*, for his heart and life are unholy, unclean, polluted, and vile; and as such, he is at war with the spotless purity and holiness of God, as opposed to the corruption and uncleanness of his heart. There always is a war, express or implied, between opposites. Filth is at war with cleanliness, drunkenness with sobriety, unchastity with purity, falsehood with truth, covetousness with liberality, pride with humility, ungodliness with godliness. Similarly, man by nature is at war against God's *justice*, for he is ever doing the things that the Law, which is the declaration of God's justice, expressly and positively forbids, and never does a single thing that it with equal authority commands. He is at war with God's *omnipresence*, daily committing those iniquities which God's presence, were it known in his soul, would effectually prevent. He is an enemy to God's *omniscience*, as living in ignorance and contempt of that omniscient eye which reads every secret thought of his heart, and is privy to every act performed by his hands; and to that omniscient ear which hears every idle, and worse than idle word, continually issuing from his lips. He is at war against God's *truth*; for he hates it with a determined hatred. He is an enemy to God's *people*; for he persecutes them and despises them to the utmost of his power. And he hates God's *word*, because it condemns him; and he knows if he were to live under its power and influence he must give up those practices which that word condemns.

But you, or some of you say, "I am sure I am not that character: I am not an enemy of God." O, my friend, it is because you do not know yourself; it is because there is a veil of unbelief and self-righteousness over your heart, which hides yourself from yourself. Did you see what you were by nature; if you had a right view of what your carnal mind really is, you would confess with the apostle it was "enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Could you read your heart as God scans it with his omniscient eye, you would see nothing but enmity against God there. You would see that your heart by nature hates what God loves, and loves what God hates. And can there be a greater proof of enmity than that? You would see that your inclinations and desires, thoughts and affections were all at war against every perfection of heaven; and can there be a greater mark of enmity than to be bent on doing what God abhors? You would find your will totally opposed to the revealed will of God; and can there be a greater mark of enmity than a will diametrically opposite? You would find there was no love in your soul for God or godliness; no love for heaven and holiness; no love for God's truth and the perfections of his adorable Majesty; no love for Christ or his people; but, on the contrary, you would find nothing but enmity, rebellion, pride, and self-righteousness lurking and working in its lowest depths. You must not think because you are moral and upright, correct in your outward walk, and consistent in all the relations of life, that you are not by nature an enemy of God. Neutrality in this warfare is enmity. Not to be on Christ's side is to be against Christ; not to be separate from God's enemies is to be God's enemy; not to love him is to hate him, and not to be his is to be Satan's. The Lord, if it be his will, give you light to see there are but two classes—enemies and friends, children of God, or children of the wicked one.

But this state of enmity and alienation from God we have each to learn for ourselves by personal experience; and until we learn thus, in some measure, what we are by nature and practice—enemies of God by wicked works, we never shall be able to enter into that wondrous way of reconciliation which God has revealed in the Scriptures of truth, and which he makes known with a

divine power to all whom he brings within the bonds of the Covenant.

iii. This leads me to the "reconciliation" spoken of in our text as effected by the death of God's dear Son. Good men use the expression sometimes "a reconciled God;" and there is a sense in which it may be properly used. There being an alienation between God and man, there being enmity on man's part and righteous indignation on the part of God against sin, there was a necessity that this anger of God should be appeased. The anger in the bosom of God was not against the persons of the elect, for being chosen in Christ and viewed complete in him, they were ever "accepted in the beloved." But sin having made a breach between God and them, the anger of the Almighty was justly due to their transgressions, and needed to be appeased or pacified before it could cease. Thus the church says, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isai. 12:1.) So the Lord speaks, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isai. 54:8); thus he says also in Ezekiel, "When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." (Ezekiel 16:63.) These, and similar expressions, show that there is a sense, a sound and Scriptural sense, in which God may be called "a reconciled God," and when so used, I have no objection to the expression. And yet I freely confess I prefer to speak as the Scripture speaks here of our being reconciled to God, rather than of God being reconciled to us: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

What a glorious flood of light does this throw upon that wondrous scheme of eternal love and superabounding grace whereby God's enemies became God's friends. Let us endeavour to enter into the nature and efficacy of this reconciliation.

1. The first thing that the word *reconciliation* implies is that there was a previous state of friendship, and that this friendship had been broken up, and, as a consequence, been converted into

enmity. This, however, we have already seen. It implies also a healing of that breach, a making it up again, and a restoration to the same or greater state of friendship.

Now the first thing necessary was to reconcile *the persons* of these natural enemies of God as having become inimical to God's justice and holiness. Sin had defiled them individually, and personally made them loathsome and abominable. Sin had brought them individually under the stroke of God's justice, so that the demands of a righteous law opened to them the door of hell and shut against them the gate of heaven. Sin also, as a polluted thing, had contaminated them from head to foot, clothed them in filthy garments, so as to render them unclean in body and soul, and, as such, unfit to enter into the pure courts of heavenly bliss.

This is beautifully typified in the forlorn child spoken of in Ezekiel (16.), "cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born." Though a child, and a beloved child, its native filth made its person loathsome. So with Joshua, the High Priest, who was "a brand plucked out of the fire," and yet "stood clothed with filthy garments." Until his iniquity was caused to pass from him, his person was loathsome, on account of his loathsome garments. (Zech. 3.) The persons, then of the people of God needed to be reconciled; and this they were through the atoning blood of God's dear Son. This made John say, "Unto him that loved us and washed us" that is, our persons, "from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:5.) "And such were some of you; but ye are washed." (Cor. 6:11.)

This reconciliation is for the sins of God's own people through the bloodshedding of his dear Son, and thus an atonement was made for them, that is, a satisfaction to the justice of God which had been, as it were, injured and offended by their transgressions. Thus, there was a reconciliation betwixt the apparent jarring attributes of God, such as his justice and holiness, which would condemn, and his love, mercy and grace, which would save. Sin had caused the breach, sin had produced the enmity; and

therefore when by the full satisfaction of Christ, sin was atoned for, put away, blotted out, and cast behind God's back, reconciliation was effected. Now nothing but the infinite wisdom, pure grace, and sovereign power of God could have devised, brought to light, or carried through this way of reconciliation for those who were his born and natural enemies. The first movement was on God's part to us, not on our part towards him. Reconciliation was in his bosom, not in ours. Mercy was in his heart towards us when we had no mercy upon ourselves nor indeed any sense of our need of it. The whole plan of salvation was devised from eternity in the mind of God and carried out in the incarnation of his dear Son before we here present had birth or being. Thus the whole of the work, from first to last, was devised in the purposes of eternal love and executed by the hands of omnipotent power.

But having seen a little into the meaning of the word "reconciliation," let us endeavour to look at the way in which it was carried into execution. This the apostle declares was effected by the death of God's Son, his true, proper, and eternal Son. This is in full harmony with the whole current of sacred writ. We therefore read of God "sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10); of "not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32); of his "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24); of his "putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:28); of his "having by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12); of his being "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" of his "bearing the sin of many, and making intercession for the transgressors." Thus by the incarnation, sufferings, and sacrifice of the Son of God and by taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, and in that nature, suffering, bleeding and dying, he reconciled those who were by transgression enemies to God and godliness. Thus also, by his mediation he reconciled all the perfections of God, some of which seem to clash, as his justice and holiness on one side, and his love, mercy, and grace on the other. Justice called for its victims, demanding its just due. Mercy, as pure mercy, apart from justice,

would have spared the transgressor, but justice could not give up its rights. And yet the perfections of God must suffer no tarnish or diminution. Each must have its own unsullied, unimpaired lustre. Now the Lord Jesus Christ by his incarnation, mediation, sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death reconciled these apparent jarring attributes of God, and thus made mercy and truth to meet together, righteousness and peace to kiss each other. He put himself into our place, standing under the weight of our transgressions and sins, and thus by exposing his own precious body and soul to the strokes of the sword of God's wrath, he received in his own person the strokes of that wrath due to us. God therefore said by the prophet, "Awake O sword against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 13.) As then he voluntarily undertook to endure in his own Person the wrath against sin which must otherwise have fallen upon us, his sufferings, bloodshedding, and sacrifice were acceptable to God, a sweet savour that rose up into his nostrils; not that God took delight in the sufferings of his dear Son, as sufferings, but he delighted in the obedience to his will thus manifested, according to the words, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." When, then, he had finished the work which God gave him to do, and had put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciliation was effected and accomplished. It was this of which the angel Gabriel spoke to Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24), all which were effected by the bloodshedding, obedience, and death of the Son of God.

Now there was no other way whereby enemies could be reconciled. It will be our wisdom and mercy to ponder over this solemn truth, and to view it in its various bearings. And first, in what a dreadful state of enmity and alienation must sin have placed us as enemies to God, if we could be reconciled to him by no other means but that his only begotten Son should die for our sins. How awful must those iniquities be which demanded such a bloodshedding and such a death as this! What eternal hatred

must God have to sin so to punish it in the Person of the Son of his love; yet, what eternal love must he have to the persons of his elect, to send his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to reconcile them unto himself, and to make them partakers of his own holiness. Could any other way have been devised, that way would have been chosen; but all the wisdom of God could contrive and choose no other. And so far as our faith can embrace the great mystery of godliness, we clearly see that no other way but this could have reconciled the jarring attributes of God. By no other way could the Law have been fulfilled, or the claims of divine justice satisfied; by no other way could grace have superabounded over the aboundings of sin; by no other way could the wondrous love of God and of his dear Son have been made manifest; and by no other way could the love and obedience of the people of God have been effectually secured.

iv. Now we have to learn these things experimentally for ourselves; and the first lesson usually taught us in the school of Christ, and a most painful lesson it is, is that we, by nature and practice, are enemies to God and godliness. We have to be taught by the blessed Spirit the evil of sin in our own conscience, and to feel the working of enmity against God in our own carnal mind; and thus to learn painfully for ourselves the havoc and ruin that sin has made in and of us. It is a fearful discovery, when first made known to the soul, to find ourselves enemies to God; that as such we are in his hands for life and death; that we have sinned against the Majesty of heaven, and are justly doomed to die; that his law makes no allowance for human infirmity, but exacts its full demands to the utmost penny; that when we look up we see nothing but an angry God, and when we look down see nothing but an opening hell; when we look within find nothing but sin morning, noon, and night; and when we look around us for help, find no help or refuge in man or minister, the church or the world. This is a most painful discovery; yet it opens a way to learn most effectually, because most experimentally, how the sinner is reconciled to God. For the Lord the Spirit in due time enlightens the eyes of the understanding to see the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and obedience of the Son of

God; and thus seeing light in God's light, as one enlightened with the light of the living, he discovers that there is a salvation of which he had no previous idea, or at least no spiritual perception. By a ray of divine light he sees that there is a way whereby he may be reconciled, brought near, accepted, have his sins pardoned, and stand justified and acquitted, so as to be without spot or blemish before the throne of God. With this divine life and light, and as a consequence of it, there is a communicating and a drawing forth of a living faith in the Son of God. The soul is now made willing in the day of God's power; it submits itself, as the apostle speaks, unto the righteousness of God, which is attended with a believing with the heart unto righteousness. (Rom. 10:3-10.) A reconciliation now takes place inwardly in the heart, springing out of the reconciliation already made by the death of God's dear Son. This is a receiving the reconciliation; or, as the apostle speaks, "receiving the atonement." (Rom. 5:11.) The word "atonement" there, means "reconciliation," as rendered in the margin, and indeed is the same term as is translated "reconciliation" in the text. This "receiving the atonement" is to receive it in faith, hope, and love into a believing and broken heart. It is a being willing to be saved, not in our own way but in God's way; approving of and delighting in the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and death of the Son of God, as revealed in the Scriptures and received into an enlightened understanding, a purged conscience, and a loving, humble, penitent spirit, the mouth confessing what the heart believes, and praising and blessing God for his manifested mercy. But short of this sweet assurance and filial confidence, there is also a receiving the atonement as suitable and desirable, attended with an inward testimony that if this is the way of salvation there is hope for me. With this there is a view of the beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ as a suffering Immanuel, and a looking unto him as those who were bitten by serpents in the wilderness looked to the brazen serpent and were healed. There is also connected with this believing view of Jesus, a receiving into the heart the precious promises that hold forth salvation to those who look to him, according to his own words, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am

God and there is none else." And as love crowns the whole, and is the surest evidence of the new birth, there is a flowing forth of love and affection towards this bleeding Lamb of God, this man of sorrows, this suffering Saviour; an embracing of him and a cleaving to him with full purpose of heart, as all our hope and help, all our salvation and, all our desire.

v. We see, therefore, that "reconciliation" wears two aspects, and has two different relationships. One is external, the other internal. As a past act of satisfaction to the justice of God, it was once and for ever fully effected by the bloodshedding and death of God's dear Son. This work is complete. Nothing can be taken away from it, nothing added to it. But there is a receiving this atonement into the heart, the effect of which is to reconcile the understanding by a divine light, to reconcile the conscience by the application of the blood of sprinkling, and to reconcile the affections by fixing them on the glorious Person of the Son of God as now at the right hand of the Father. As, then, this inward reconciliation takes place, there is a subduing of the ancient enmity, rebellion, and working of hard, obstinate thoughts and feelings against the Majesty of heaven, and a communication of meekness, humility, contrition, godly sorrow for sin, and love to the Lord and his people. Here is the peculiar blessedness of the gospel as it becomes the "power of God unto salvation;" and here we see the contrast between it and the law. The law reveals the wrath of God against sin, discovers the evils of the heart, but gives no remedy for them; lays bare the iniquity of every secret thought, but holds out no prospect of escape from the wrath to come. But the gospel comes in demonstration of the Spirit and power. It addresses us as a message from God, speaking by authority in his name, and says, "You are an enemy to God by wicked works; you are a sinner in thought, word, and deed; everything in you is opposed to the justice, holiness, and majesty of God. But there is salvation for poor sinners such as you, through the blood of Christ." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.). "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is

in his Son." (1 John 5:11.) "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 1:1, 2.) It thus assures us that he has reconciled enemies to God; has put away their sins by his own bloodshedding upon the cross. And now having gone up on high, and sent his Spirit into the heart of his servants to preach the gospel of his grace, he speaks by them encouraging words to poor sinners, that they might come to him and find in him rest and peace; still saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The gospel comes with these declarations, promises, and invitations, that there is salvation through Christ and no other. Now as "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," when the gospel comes with power, faith is raised up to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to look unto him for salvation, to hope in his mercy; and as the gracious Lord is pleased to draw near in the manifestation of his blood and love, and to whisper some sweet promise into the heart, the enmity that was stirred up by the law against God with the rebellion, unbelief, prejudice, and self-righteousness, which had hitherto stood up as invincible obstacles in the way of believing, at the voice of mercy melt, break up, and disappear out of sight like the ice before the sun, and faith, hope, and love take their place. It is in this way that the soul is reconciled unto God, as the apostle speaks, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God;" that is, internally and experimentally, because it now receives the atonement, embracing the reconciliation effected by the death of God's dear Son. The word "atone," means "to make at one," that is, at one with God; and therefore to receive the atonement, is to receive the "atonement" of the way whereby God and man become "at one," or as one, in Christ.

Now have you ever felt these two things that must be experimentally known by every saint of God—enmity and reconciliation; your lost state by nature, and your salvation by grace; the fall and the recovery; the malady and the remedy; the wounding and the healing; that you have nothing in yourself but sin and misery; that you deserve the lowest hell; that in you

there is neither hope nor help; and that if you live and die without a knowledge of Christ, you must sink into hell with all your sins upon your head? And yet there has been that manifestation to your soul of the Person and work, blood and righteousness, grace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, which has not only enlightened your understanding but delighted your heart. Or if you cannot rise up into the power of a full confidence, yet that you have seen that sweet suitability, that beauty and blessedness in the Lord Jesus Christ, which have raised up in your soul a living faith in him, shed abroad a love to his name, and given you a good hope through grace. If you can find this, you will be able to trace such a change in your heart and affections, that though you once were an enemy to God by wicked works, yet there is a reconciliation in your mind to his way, word, and will, a subduing of your unbelief, and a longing for a fuller and clearer testimony to your pardon and acceptance. If so, you are no longer an enemy, but a friend; no longer an alien from God, but one of his own dear family, even though you cannot claim the full enjoyment of the relationship, or cry, "Abba, Father."

II.—But we pass on to the declaration from the mouth of an inspired apostle, *the salvation of friends*.

i. The apostle says, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be *saved* by his life." Then they are already reconciled, for reconciliation is a past act: effected by the bloodshedding of Christ upon the cross, once for all, and cannot be repeated. When he shed his atoning blood as a sacrifice for sin, and laid down his precious life as a ransom price, reconciliation was then thoroughly effected. It is a finished work, and was so proclaimed by his dying lips. The church was then reconciled to God, and in a sense God reconciled to her; for though God ever loved the Church as in union with his dear Son, there was a law-enmity which needed to be removed, and an anger against sin which required to be appeased. We may illustrate this by the case of David and Absalom. David loved Absalom and never ceased to love him, but he was justly

displeased with his crime in slaying Amnon. But he was reconciled to him when Absalom submitted himself, and kissed him as a proof of it. (2 Sam. 14:33.) So God was justly displeased with the sins of his people; but his righteous anger was appeased by the obedience unto death of his dear Son, and in this sense he became reconciled.

Now, as I have already explained, when we receive the atonement thus effected, and feel its power in our souls; when our conscience is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ; when his love is shed abroad in the heart, and faith is raised up to embrace him as the Christ of God, then we are experimentally reconciled; then we are drawn near to God through the blood of Jesus Christ, and embrace him as our Father and Friend. But the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead; he triumphed over death and hell; he ascended to the right hand of the Father, and there sits as the great High Priest over the house of God, as the Mediator between God and man. As the apostle says, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Now this is the benefit and blessing of Christ being at the right hand of the Father, that he lives to carry out and execute his own testament—that new testament or covenant of which he spoke at the last supper, "The cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20); or, as we read in Matthew, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28.) You may make a will and die, leaving your property as you think secured and guarded by the strictest regulations. But can you guarantee that your executors will carry out your injunctions? Your property, when realised, may not be sufficient to pay your legacies; your trustees or executors may decline to act, or they may be fraudulent men, and your children and relatives may be cheated by them of their due rights, as has occurred over and over again. Or there may be some flaw or defect in your will as being improperly signed, or making a provision which the law does not allow; and thus all your death-bed intentions may be thoroughly frustrated. But how different it is with the New Testament or will of the Lord Jesus Christ. He made his own will, which he signed and sealed with his own

blood, thus giving it eternal value and validity. And O how blessed the truth that he has risen to the right hand of God to be his own executor; so that he himself executes all the provisions of his will. This blessed truth is contained in the words, "*we are saved by his life.*"

ii. Now if you know anything of yourself inwardly and experimentally of the evils of your heart, the power of sin, the strength of temptation, the subtlety of your unwearied foe, and the daily conflict betwixt nature and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven, you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. Think not that the only salvation to be felt and known is salvation past—salvation accomplished by the bloodshedding and death of the Son of God. There is salvation present—an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fulness of Christ as a risen Mediator. Don't you want to be daily and almost hourly saved? But from what? Why, from everything in you that fights against the will and word of God. Sin is not dead in you. If you are reconciled and brought near to God; if you have an interest in the precious blood of Christ; if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and heaven be your eternal home, that does not deliver you from the indwelling of sin, nor from the power of sin either, except as grace gives you present deliverance from it. Sin still works in your carnal mind, and will work in it till your dying hour. What then you want to be saved from is the guilt, filth, power, love, and practice of that sin which ever dwells and ever works in you, and often brings your soul into hard and cruel bondage. Now Christ lives at the right hand of God for his dear people that he may be ever saving them by his life. There he reigns and rules as their glorious covenant Head, ever watching over, feeling for and sympathising with them, and communicating supplies of grace for the deliverance and consolation for all his suffering saints spread over the face of the earth. The glorious Head is in heaven, but the suffering members upon earth; and as he lives on their behalf, he maintains by his Spirit and grace his life in their soul, according to his own words, "Because I live ye shall live also."

It is by this life that, in the words of our text, we are "saved;" not that salvation is not already complete; not that anything remains for Christ in heaven to do, to make up that which was left undone in his work of redemption here below. That is not the meaning of the words. It is, so to speak, the handing down of that already accomplished salvation into our hearts—the ratifying of it in the court of conscience, the sealing of it with a divine power and influence upon the heart. We therefore read: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Ephes. 4:8.) In fact, upon the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ hangs all the salvation of the church; for without it, redemption could not have been made effectual. The salvation, therefore, spoken of in our text is an experimental salvation, in a gracious communication of that divine light, life, and power which spring out of it. Now in order to realise this we need a life of faith—the life of which Paul speaks: "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.) And this life of faith in Christ is as necessary to our present and experimental salvation as his death upon the cross was to our past and actual salvation. If you are alive to what you are as a poor, fallen sinner, you see yourself surrounded by enemies, temptations, sins, and snares; and you feel yourself utterly defenceless, as weak as water, without any strength to stand against them. Pressed down by the weight of unbelief, you see a mountain of difficulty before your eyes, sometimes in providence, sometimes in grace; sometimes as regards yourself, sometimes as regards others. You find too, that your heart is a cage of unclean birds, and that in you, that is, in your flesh there dwelleth no good thing; neither will nor power have you in yourself to fight or flee. How then shall this mountain become a plain? How shall you escape the snares and temptations spread in your path? How shall you get the better of all your enemies, external, internal, infernal, and reach heaven's gates safe at last? If you say, "By the salvation already accomplished," are you sure that that salvation belongs to you? Where is the evidence of it if you have no present faith in Christ? How can that past salvation profit you for present troubles unless

there be an application of it? It is this application and manifestation of salvation which is being "saved by his life." See how it works; and what a suitability is in it. You are all weakness, and he is and has all strength, which he makes perfect in your weakness. So Paul found it, which made him "glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him." You are all helplessness against sin, temptation, and a thousand foes. But help is laid upon him as one that is mighty; he therefore sends you help from the sanctuary and strengthens you out of Zion (Psalm 20:2), that these sins and enemies may not get the better over you. You often feel yourself cold, lifeless, and dead, and therefore need continual supplies of grace and strength to revive your soul, to make you believing, watchful, and prayerful. The Lord Jesus Christ, who lives at God's right hand, has to send down supplies of his grace continually to keep your soul alive unto himself. Without this life being kept up and maintained by these continual supplies of his grace, you cannot pray, or read, or hear the word, or meditate with any feeling or profit. You cannot love the Lord and his blessed ways; you cannot submit to his righteous dealings; or bear the rod and him who appointed it. You may approach his throne, but your heart is cold, clouded, and unfeeling; your spirit sinks under the weight and burden of the trials and difficulties that are spread in your path; nor are you able to do anything that satisfies yourself, or that you think can satisfy God. By these painful and profitable lessons you are experimentally taught that you want the life of Christ as well as the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, as much as the crucifixion of Christ; Christ as an ever living, ever gracious, ever glorious Mediator, to send down supplies of his love and power into your soul, as much as you needed him to die upon the cross for your redemption. We therefore read, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25), that is, that there might be an application in his risen life of his righteousness that we might be not only pardoned, but experimentally justified in the court of a believing heart and a purged conscience.

iii. Here then is the life of faith that a believer lives upon the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. He comes to the cross to

receive pardon of his sins through the sacrifice and death of Jesus; there to find peace with God by believing in his Son; there to have reconciliation by seeing his sins cast behind God's back, and receive mercy into his soul as flowing through the atoning blood of the God-Man. But he has to walk through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought (Deut. 8:15); where he is surrounded with temptations and snares, his own evil heart being his worst foe. How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness unless he has a Friend at the right hand of God to send him continual supplies of grace; who can hear his prayers, answer his petitions, listen to his sighs, and put his tears into his bottle; who can help him to see the snares, and give him grace to avoid them; who descries from his heavenly watch tower the rising of evil in his heart, and can put a timely and seasonable check upon it before it burst into word or action? Does he not need an all-wise and ever-living Friend who can save him from pride by giving him true humility; save him from hardness of heart by bestowing repentance; save him from carelessness by making his conscience tender; save him from all his fears by whispering into his soul, "Fear not, I have redeemed thee;" and save him from a thousand deaths in fear or feeling by supplies of a hidden life? So that the life of a Christian is to be continually looking to the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, to revive his soul when drooping, to manifest his love to his heart when cold and unfeeling, to sprinkle his conscience with his blood when guilty and sinking, to lead him into truth, keep him from error and evil, preserve him through and amid every storm, guide every step that he takes in his onward journey, and eventually bring him safe to heaven.

Thus there is a reconciliation of enemies by the death of Christ, and a saving of friends by the life of Christ; and we must know both. We are reconciled as enemies, not as friends; for friends need no reconciliation. Reconciliation in and from a state of enmity against God is the very first thing we have to learn by divine teaching. Here it is we come to see salvation through the blood of Christ; and this makes us cast away all our own righteousness as filthy rags, and have no hope nor help but in the

cross of Jesus Christ. That is the first thing we have to learn; for until we have learnt our first lesson, we cannot learn our second. But we are very slow learners. Unbelief and infidelity, pride and self-righteousness, guilt and despondency, all conspire to prevent us effectually learning it thoroughly, and as it were finally. Again and again then have we to recommence our first lesson, that we are sinners saved by the pure mercy of God, through the bloodshedding of Christ—enemies reconciled and brought near by the death of the Son of God. You, who are burdened by your sins; you, who feel the enmity of your heart; who would be reconciled and brought near to God, who desire nothing so much as to feel the love of God shed abroad in your soul; who want to experience the pardon of your sins and have a manifestation that you have an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ; to you, even to you, is the word of this salvation sent. And come you must, and come you will, with all your sins and transgressions, however black they may be, and lay them down, so to speak, at the foot of the cross; you must and will look with believing eyes to the crucified Son of God, and look and look, till he speak a word of peace, pardon, and consolation to your soul, through his bleeding wounds and suffering death. And then, when you have been thus reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and his precious blood has been sprinkled upon your conscience, making you a friend of God, you will have to live a life of faith and prayer upon him as a risen Mediator, as a gracious and glorious Head of influence, and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father. To him you will have to come day by day with your sins and sorrows, your mournings and lamentations over your repeated and aggravated backslidings, your numerous, yea innumerable infirmities and short comings; and thus make him your best, may I add, your confidential Friend; for he is "a friend that sticketh closer than any earthly brother." In this way, by confessing your sins, and by faith in his name, you will receive communications of his grace, mercy, and love into your heart, so as to save you from the love and spirit of the world, from error, from the power and strength of your own lusts, and the base inclinations of your fallen nature. These will often work at a fearful rate; but this will only make you feel more your need of the power and presence of the Lord Jesus

to save you from them all.

Now it is an experience of these inward exercises and of the power and presence of the Lord in and under them which makes real religion such a living thing in a man's bosom. A man, taught of God, will not and must not say, "All my sins were freely forgiven and blotted out by Christ's bloodshedding and death upon the cross. Then and there I was reconciled to God. I have now nothing more to do with sin, nor sin with me." This is to pervert and abuse a blessed gospel truth. You have still a great deal to do with sin, and sin has still a great deal to do with you; for it dwelleth in you, and will work, and that sometimes at an awful rate. And you will find, if your heart be right with God, that you will have many trials and temptations, conflicts and sorrows to bear; many battles to fight, and, I may add, victories to gain. You are a poor, defenceless sheep, surrounded by wolves, and, as such, need all the care and defence of the good Shepherd. You are a ship in a stormy sea, where winds and waves are all contrary, and therefore need an all-wise and able pilot to take you safe into harbour. It is in this way that we learn that "we are saved by Christ's life."

iv. And do bear in mind the words "much more;" for how they show the fulness and certainty of this salvation: "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." It is as if the apostle would say, "The greatest, the hardest, the most difficult part of the work is already done; and if the main task has been accomplished in the reconciliation of enemies, how much easier, so to speak, must be the salvation of friends. Thus there is the fullest assurance that all who were reconciled shall be saved; for if a dying Christ reconciled them, a living Christ will save them. O to feel the power of this death and this life—this death to reconcile, this life to save! And how an experimental knowledge of this death and this life opens up heavenly communications between Christ and the soul; makes religion a living reality; causes the Bible to shine forth as a book filled with ever new and ever glorious truths. How too a living experience of this kind separates from the world, and from everything which

intervenes between Christ and the soul. If your feet are in this blessed path there is no difficulty that you can meet with beyond the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to overcome; no temptation can attack you, no trial await you, no enemy assault you which he cannot defeat. Nor is there a single thing on earth or in hell which can harm you if you are only looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, and deriving supplies of grace and strength out of him. This reconciliation and this salvation thousands have proved; and why not you? With this parting question, in the hope you may take it home to your own breast and find the answer manifested there, I shall leave the subject before us in the hands of the blessed Spirit to do with it what seemeth good in his sight; and if he attend it with the unction of his grace, all praise and glory be ascribed to a Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now and evermore.

Amen.

Reconciliation by Death, and Salvation by Life

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening, July 30, 1850

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:10

The grand object of the Epistle to the Romans is to set forth and exalt salvation by grace. In order fully to do this, the Apostle shows, first, *its necessity*; and secondly, *its nature*.

1. He shows its *necessity* by drawing, in the first chapter, an appalling sketch of the practices of the Gentile world; by proving, in the second, that the Jew derived no benefit from his outward privileges, if he were a transgressor of the law on which he rested; and in the third, brings in all mankind guilty by the sentence of God's holy law, laying the whole human race under this solemn sentence of condemnation: "By the deeds of the law there shall no *flesh* be justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." And again: "There is no difference; for *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." He thus shows the *necessity* of salvation by grace; and that if man is, as he proves him to be in this fallen condition, in this desperate state, nothing short of salvation by grace can either suit or save him.

2. But when the Apostle has thus established the necessity of salvation by grace, he goes on to show the nature of it: that God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

In the chapter before us, he draws a striking contrast between the doings of man and the doings of God. He says, in the verses almost immediately preceding our text, that "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die;" taking here a character universally accounted righteous, that is, a man upright, just, and sincere in

all his doings. Find, he would say, such an one—can you shew me a man that would die for him? Will his justice, uprightness, and sincerity of conduct and character so influence any one individual man as to induce him to lay down his life to redeem him? And he adds, by way of parenthesis, "Peradventure for a good man," that is, not a gracious man in the gospel sense, but a benevolent man, a man of kindness and philanthropy, a man who had gained the affections of men generally by his amiable conduct—for such "a good man," he says, "some would even dare to die." But contrast, he would add, the love of God with these two instances. Those for whom Christ died were neither just nor good. Viewed in a gospel sense, man has no righteousness in him to make him righteous; and viewed in a spiritual light, he has no goodness to constitute him good. What, then, is his character? An enemy, ungodly, without strength—a wretch, and a rebel. And thus he heightens and magnifies the exceeding riches of God's grace, by shewing, that whereas upon mere human grounds and natural principles, we could not find any individual who would lay down his life for a just man, and scarcely for a good man, "yet God," he says, "commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet *sinner*s Christ died for us."

Having shewn the death of Christ for sinners, he passes on, by way of encouraging the children of God, to say, that the love of God in giving his Son did not terminate in Christ's death, but went on to Christ's resurrection, and still goes on saving to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Therefore, he says, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," adding the words of the text: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

We may observe two prominent features in our text.

I.—*First. The reconciliation of enemies.*

II.—*Secondly. The Salvation of friends.* And these two points I

shall, as the Lord may enable, endeavour to unfold this evening; looking up to him who can make his strength perfect in weakness, and from whom alone cometh the blessing.

I.—*The reconciliation of enemies.* By the reconciliation of enemies, I understand two things. I understand their *real* reconciliation by the *actual* death of Christ; and their *spiritual* and *experimental* reconciliation by the application of the death of Christ to their consciences.

But before we can enter into the beauty and blessedness of reconciliation, we must see in what state the people of God are; for to them the Apostle is speaking. What word does he use to point out their state by nature? "Enemies." Enemies to whom? To that great, glorious, and ever-living God, "in whom they live, and move, and have their being;" the God of heaven and earth; that called them into existence, and upon whom they depend for every breath they draw. What an awful state must they be in to be "enemies" to such a God! Unless we know who God is; unless we have some spiritual apprehension of his dread Majesty; unless we have some experience of his greatness and power, tremble before him, we cannot duly enter into the meaning of this word "enemies." There could not be a more dreadful word written. The Bible itself scarcely contains a more awful term. "Enemies of God!" who could crush them with a frown into the dust; who by one look could hurl them into hell; who could trample upon them in his righteous wrath, as I might trample upon a beetle beneath my feet.

But how are they "enemies?" They are enemies in a threefold sense. 1. They are enemies by *birth!* 2. They are enemies by *nature!* and 3. They are enemies by *practice!*

1. They are *born* enemies. As a toad is born a toad, and as a viper is born a viper, so man is born an enemy to God. Like can only beget like. An enemy to God can only beget an enemy to God; and therefore, we are enemies to God by birth. We are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; and therefore we come

into the world, so far as we stand in the Adam fall, enemies to God.

2. We are enemies, also, by *nature*. "The carnal mind," we read (and what are we but carnal minds, as fallen children of a fallen parent?) "is enmity against God." That is a stronger word still. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Thus, our very nature is intrinsic, abstract, irreconcilable, enmity against God; hating him, hating his ways, hating all that is God and Godlike. And O, what a fearful condition! Not only to be born enemies, but to grow up enemies; to be woven throughout in enmity to God; as full of enmity, as a sponge dipped in water is full of the element in which it is dipped; every nerve, every fibre, every power, principle, faculty and passion at enmity with God, warring against the Most High.

3. But, besides this, there is the enmity of *works*—enmity by *practice*. We are "alienated from the life of God"—"enemies in our mind by wicked works." (Col. 1:21.) We go astray, speaking lies from the womb. All our acts in babyhood, in childhood, in youth and manhood, (though they may not at the time be known as such), are all acts of daring enmity against God; they all shew forth the enmity of the human heart against the blessed Jehovah. O, how deeply dyed in enmity must man be when he has this three-fold enmity, and is by birth, nature, and practice utterly alienated from the life of God!

And why does not the anger of God burst forth against such wretches? Why are they not all dealt with like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whom the earthquake swallowed up? Why are they not all like those slain by the Levites in the wilderness? Because the Lord is a God of grace, of infinite mercy, compassion, and love; because he is determined to have a people in whom he will be eternally glorified; because, in other words, salvation by grace was fore-determined in his eternal mind; and therefore a reconciliation was to be brought about.

You observe, it is *man* who is to be "reconciled." I do not object

to the expression of God's being "reconciled;" but the Scriptures seem certainly to speak more of reconciliation on the part of man; "Who hath reconciled *us* to himself." So here: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God."

Now we could only be "reconciled" to God by this enmity being put away. It is in grace as in nature. Here are two friends who have been long walking together as brothers. A division takes place; enmity breeds in the heart of one or of the other; they are sundered, and perhaps become enemies. They may be reconciled; but only effectually by the enmity being taken out of the heart. All other reconciliation is to patch up the breach; it is hollow and insincere; there is no reality, no depth in it. The enmity must be taken away before there can be any real reconciliation. So with man and God. Unless the enmity be taken away, there can be no reconciliation. Thus we see the futility and fallacy of a few works of righteousness doing away with our fallen state by nature. They cannot take away the enmity; they are like the blood of bulls and goats, they never can atone for sin; like the ashes of the red heifer, they may sanctify to the purifying of the flesh; but here they fail. Something more was wanted, something which God himself provided, and that was the death of his own Son: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." His dear Son coming into our place and stead; taking our nature; bearing our sins in his own body on the tree: obeying the law that we had broken; fulfilling a righteousness which we were altogether deficient in; enduring the curse, and suffering the penalty; in this way, by death, he reconciled the enemies unto God; he obeyed the law which stood in the way; he satisfied God's justice; he removed the transgression, and thus took away the enmity.

But I hinted that the reconciliation was of a two-fold nature. The *actual* reconciliation took place when Christ died upon the cross: the *spiritual* reconciliation takes place when this is applied to the conscience.

I think I may thus illustrate it. Here are two friends who are

sundered, enmity being in the heart of one or the other. One of them comes to a death-bed; his friend is not reconciled; but on the death-bed his heart is softened; the enmity is removed; he sends by some friends or acquaintance a message of love to his former friend, and dies in happiness, blessing and praising God. The friend at a distance has still, perhaps, enmity working in his heart against the friend whose death he yet knows not. The dying friend is reconciled; the living friend is where he was before. But the message comes; the letter is received; the tidings are brought; and when this is received into the heart, it takes away all former enmity, and immediately a sweet reconciliation takes place. His friend has passed into eternity, but all the enmity is gone; and he feels, as before, love and union reigning in his heart. I have experienced this; and therefore I know it. It is not a fancied illustration, but a fact; the case having occurred to myself—at least, something like it. I merely throw it out, to shew you, there may be an *actual* reconciliation on a certain day, and yet the *felt* reconciliation may not take place till days or weeks pass over. My friend indeed was reconciled to me, and wrote to express it a few days before he was taken for death, but received my friendly answer on his death-bed, and sent me his dying love. Thus, the actual reconciliation was wrought out by the death of Christ; the felt reconciliation must be wrought out in the soul by the application of the death of Christ to the conscience.

But before we can experience this reconciliation, we must be brought to feel the enmity. Reconciliation is only of enemies; and we must therefore know ourselves to be enemies before we can feel reconciled.

But what a fearful spot it is to be in—to feel and fear oneself an enemy to God! I think it is one of the most painful feelings that ever passed through my breast, to fear I was an enemy to God. For what must be the consequence if a man live and die having God for his enemy? In that warfare he must perish. If God be his enemy, who can be his friend? Such sensations in the bosom are well-nigh akin to despair. Let a man fully feel that he is God's enemy, where can he hide his head? Hell itself seems to afford

him no refuge.

But he must be exercised with something of this before he can prize reconciliation. He must see himself to be an enemy to God by birth—that he was born in what our Reformers called "birth sin;" and that his carnal mind is enmity against God. O the painful sensations of the carnal mind being enmity against God! It is bad enough to be God's enemy; but that every fibre of our nature should be steeped in enmity against God, that holy and blessed Being to whom we owe so much, and to whom we desire to owe everything; that our carnal heart in all its constitution, in its very blood, should be one unmitigated mass of enmity to God, O it is an awful thought! If you are made to experience that enmity in your bosom, and to feel more or less of its upheavings and raisings—that will cut to pieces all the sinews of creature righteousness; that will mar all your comeliness, and turn it into corruption.

Thus all our evil works are all marks of enmity to God. Every sin that you commit (and you sin with every breath you draw) is steeping you more deeply in enmity to God, and manifesting more that you are in this condition.

Now, when a man is thus exercised, it will make him look out, if he has any root of spiritual feeling, for a remedy. God has provided such in the sacrifice of his dear Son, in the blood of the blessed Jesus.

Now when this is opened up in our soul by the Spirit of God; when faith is given to receive it; when the Holy Ghost applies it; when it is received into the heart (for the Apostle says, "we have received the atonement") then a *felt* reconciliation takes place; we are then reconciled to God; love takes the place of enmity, praise of sighing, and blessing his name instead of writing bitter things against ourselves.

This reconciles the heart, which nothing else can. The law cannot; that engenders bondage, works wrath, stirs up enmity. It is the

very nature of the law to do so; the law never did anything else. You never felt the law, if it wrought anything else but that in you: you did not know it spiritually; it never came into your conscience if it wrought anything but bondage, death, and enmity towards God, and bitter thoughts against him. When men set the law before their eyes as a way of salvation, they are only setting up that which when felt in the heart, stirs up enmity and disobedience. This is man's nature. God says, "Do this." 'I will not!'—answers the carnal mind. 'But I charge you to do it; hell will be your portion, if you do not.' 'Well, I will brave it; I will sin in spite of hell; I will do this if I am damned for it.' That is human nature; that is the heart of man; and these are the workings of the carnal mind under the law. The more you try to keep the law, and the more it comes into your conscience, the more you will find such workings till you are fairly horrified. Such poor souls are ground as between the upper and nether millstone; the law above, and the carnal mind beneath, and they ground between the two; desiring to be holy, wishing to obey the precept, and yet finding that eternal devilism in their heart which kicks against all, will not submit, will not obey. The heart has to be conquered by kindness; enmity has to be killed by love. It is the gospel that is to do the deed. And when Christ is viewed by the eye of faith; when his death is felt in the soul, and his blood applied to the heart, then reconciliation is effected. The soul, then, does not find it hard work to serve God; does not drag a mill-horse round of tiresome duties; is not making ropes of sand, nor drawing water up with a bucket of which the bottom is knocked out; but it finds the service of God perfect freedom, and the gospel of Christ a sweet constraining to obedience. This is being reconciled to God; loving God, and feeling a desire to serve him and to obey him from a principle of affection; being upheld by a free spirit, and not a legal one.

Do you think you can trace three things in your soul? Enmity by nature; the work of the law in stirring up the enmity; reconciliation by the blessed gospel revealing the love and blood of Christ to your heart? And all this sensibly known, felt, experienced, realized, and enjoyed? Here is the cream of religion;

here is the marrow of vital godliness; here is the sum and substance of divine teaching. Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! He is only really taught of God, who knows and feels that there is nothing else worth having or enjoying.

II.—But we pass on to our *second* point, which is, *the salvation of friends*. Before we are reconciled, we are enemies. When reconciliation is brought about, we become friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants," says the Lord, "but I have called you friends." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Thus we become friends when we are reconciled. It is then, as Hart says,

"When thus we're reconciled,
He sets no rigorous tasks;
His yoke is soft and mild,
For love is all he asks."

But does all end here? The apostle says, "Being reconciled, we are saved by his life." Then there is the salvation of friends by life, as well as the reconciliation of enemies by death. Christ died; Christ rose again; Christ now lives at God's right hand. And does he live there for nothing? Has his work ceased? Is his love gone? Has he no regard for his suffering children here below? The apostle sets before our eyes that we have the same, or almost the same necessity for Christ's life, and the benefits of Christ's life, as we have for Christ's death, and the benefits of Christ's death.

Let me open this a little. Perhaps, when the Lord was pleased to bless your soul with some sense of reconciliation, you thought you should walk happily from earth to heaven. Like the children of Israel, you saw your enemies dead upon the sea-shore, little thinking, little dreaming of the wilderness before you. But after a time you began to lose your sweet and blessed feelings; sin, which seemed dead, like the host of Pharaoh, began to revive, to lust, to crave, to work, to seek its objects. The carnal mind lies

still and dead when Christ is present; sin has little power when he is there; these beasts of the forest then retire into their dens. But let the Lord withdraw himself; let him leave us to prove a little (as he left the Apostle Paul) what our strength really is; let him give us a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet us, and we shall then soon find what we are.

There is one thing which has often harassed and puzzled many—that all they have experienced and enjoyed has made no change in their carnal mind. This is a deep mystery—the mystery of ungodliness, I may well call it, that the carnal mind, the old man, undergoes no change. He may be subdued, and withdraw himself into some dark recess; for the human heart is full of caves and grottos; and in these dens, "hideous monsters sit." But these hideous monsters withdraw themselves in the light of day. The human heart is very deep; and these grottos and caves lie so out of sight, that we know not what these monsters are about; but there they are, and creep forth when night comes on. Why is this? To teach us our dependence upon a living Christ. A dying Christ is not enough; we want a living Christ. You will observe how through all the Epistle to the Hebrews the Apostle dwells upon this point chiefly, that Christ sits at God's right hand as the great High Priest over the house of God; he tells us, that "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" he sets him forth as sitting on a throne of grace, knowing that we need him as such, that we need him as much as a living Jesus as a dying Jesus, because when sin works (as sin will work) we want a present deliverance, a present, real, actual salvation.

Look at the words: "We shall be saved *by his life.*" It might be said, 'Are we not saved by his death?' But here we are said to be saved by his life. And why? It is in an experimental, in a living, in a daily way. Here is the great mystery—to be receiving a living Christ into our soul; to have union and communion with a risen Jesus. "The life," says the apostle, "that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Now, in being "saved," we must be saved from certain things—

things that would otherwise destroy us—that is evident. Sin, then, in its workings in our nature is that from which we are saved by Christ's life. Let me open up this. As regards sin in its workings I think we may say there are five things from which we need a living Christ to save us. There is, 1, the *guilt* of sin; 2, the *filth* of sin; 3, the *love* of sin; 4, the *power* of sin; and 5, the *practice* of sin. Sin, in these five devilisms, we need the living Saviour to save us from.

1. Now when we are entangled, as we often are, in sin, (and who dare say he is not? none but a pharisee) what is the first thing felt? The *guilt* of sin upon the conscience. What a heavy burden is guilt upon a living conscience—a sense of having sinned against God, how painful, how piercing it is!

2. But there is not only the guilt of sin upon the conscience, there is the *filth* of sin defiling the imagination; because sin defiles, as well as brings guilt upon the conscience. You who live in the country (and I dare say in town as well) see sometimes oozing out of a dunghill what the farmer calls 'liquid manure;' and you see, wherever this filthy stream takes its course, it defiles all it touches. Such is sin; it defiles the imagination, by oozing forth out of our dunghill heart, as the liquid manure oozes forth out of the natural dunghill. Do not your sins sometimes come into your mind, and pollute your imagination, by being acted over again, and defilement thereby produced; so that you fall down before God in self-loathing and self-abhorrence, as the vilest monster that he suffers to live; sin so defiling throughout, and rendering you an object of abhorrence to yourself? This is what Job expresses; and I wish our pharisees had Job's experience written upon their souls: "If I wash myself with snow water," (said that tried saint) "and make myself never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me into the ditch (of liquid manure), and my own clothes shall abhor me," as they would if you fell into a cesspool, or got a roll into the Thames' mud. How glad would you then be to get every rag off you, and to be washed from head to foot, your own clothes abhorring you, and you abhorring them! Such are the feelings when sin defiles and pollutes the heart, rendering us

objects of self-abhorrence.

3. But there is besides this, the abominable *love* of sin. I am not fond of using strong language; but if a person were to tell me he did not love sin in his carnal mind, I should be strongly tempted to apply a strong word in our language to him: at any rate, if I did not use the word, I could say with all mildness, "You do not speak the truth." If your carnal mind does not love sin, why do you think of it? why do you in imagination secretly indulge in it? why do you play with it? why do you seek to extract a devilish sweetness out of it? O, what a mercy it would be, if there were not this dreadful love of sin in our heart! This is the struggle—that there should be this traitor in the camp; that our carnal mind should be so devilish as to love that which made the blessed Jesus die; as to love that which crucified the Lord of glory, and to love it with a desperate love! Do we not want saving from that? If there was nothing else, we should want to be saved from the hideous love of evil.

4. Then, there is the *power* of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion." But over whom? Those who "are not under the law, but under grace." Set the law before you; try to keep it; and you will find sin will have dominion: and the more you try to keep the law, the more power you put into sin. Now, wherever there is the *love* of sin in the carnal mind, there will be the *power* of sin; for the power of sin is ingrafted as it were into, and springs out of the love of sin. Let me illustrate this. I will take, first, the case of a drunkard. Why has strong drink such power over him? Because he loves it. Take away the love of strong drink, and you destroy its power. Take again the man who loves smoking, (though I do not condemn both practices alike); why does he say, 'My pipe has such power over me?' Because he loves it. Take away the love of the pipe, and you destroy the power of the pipe. (Though I class smoking and drinking together here, I am not pronouncing a judgment upon them in a similar way. The one is to be utterly condemned; the other I leave.) So, if there were no love of sin, there would be no power in sin. Sin does not come with a strong hand, seize us by the throat, and say 'Obey me;' but sin

insensibly creeps into our heart, catches hold of our carnal mind, insinuates itself into our vile affections, and thus encloses us in the things we desire to abhor. Thus, the power of sin is engrafted upon love of sin. May God keep us from the love, the power, and the *practice* of sin; and, above all, from the last, the doing of anything which is dishonouring to, and inconsistent with the profession of the gospel we make.

5. For we shall find as we journey onward, that we need the life of Christ to save us from the actual *practice* of sin. We need the life of Christ, and the application of his precious blood, to take away the *guilt*; we need the Spirit of Christ to sanctify, and to wash the soul in the fountain from its *defilement*. We want the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts to take away the *love*—we want the power of Christ to rescue us from the *dominion*—and the grace of Christ to preserve us from the *practice* of sin. All this we have in Christ; nor is there salvation from sin in any other way, by any other means, or through any other channel. It is in vain to look to any one but to him whom God hath set up. All other seeking will prove vain. You cannot wash the Ethiopian white, nor make the leopard change his spots; God never has appointed Moses to bless or save. Christ is the God-Man, the Saviour of his own appointments, who only does, and who only can do these things. What a mercy that he has reconciled us to God by his death, and is thus able to save us by his life! It is feeling sin in its various workings (and chiefly in these five points), that makes us value a living Christ. Strange mysterious way! A man that sets up his own righteousness can do without Christ's righteousness. A man not plagued, not exercised, not tried with sin, can do without a living Jesus; his strength is his own; he derives it not out of the fulness of a living Head. O, strange path! that to be exercised with sin is the path to a living Saviour! that by the miserable feelings which the soul suffers, the sinner is made to value, not only reconciliation by death, but salvation by life. It is thus we come to know a living Christ. We do not go to the sepulchre to find him there. "He is risen!" and when we know he is risen for us, our affections rise with him, and are set upon heavenly things with him at God's right hand. This is

being saved by Christ's life.

Try this by your own experience, you that have any. When your soul is not plagued nor exercised with sin, cannot you do without a living Jesus? What sighs, what cries, what groans, what prayers, what longings for his manifested presence, love, and power to be felt in your soul! When not exercised, the world is uppermost, self is all alive, not Christ: but when you are brought to a spot where you are exercised and tried with a body of sin and death, with sin working and no power to restrain it; 'Blessed Jesus,' you cry, 'look upon me; visit my soul; come into my heart; leave me not; let not Satan thus tempt; let me not fall; hold me up; keep me as the apple of thine eye!' Here is heart work; here are living dealings with a living Jesus; here is no notional, formal religion wrapped up in a mass of duties; but a living Christ in a living soul; a living breathing after a living Saviour. This brings Christ and the soul near; this gives us a daily experience; this puts us into a place where Christ is our all in all. Very painful, very mysterious, very inexplicable—that the more you feel yourself a wretched, miserable sinner, the more you long after Jesus; and the lower you sink in the depths of the fall, the higher your soul rises up to that Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost.

Thus, we shall find, if the Lord be our Teacher, that we want all that Christ is. He is no little Saviour; for we are no little sinners. He is a Saviour, and a great one; and we (I speak for myself) are great sinners. I do not know a greater sinner than he that now speaks to you this evening—the "chief of sinners," and "less than the least of all saints"—and that makes him want such a Saviour as Jesus is: and to be reconciled not only by his death, but to be saved, and that well-nigh every day, by his life. O what a mercy that he who was dead lives at God's right hand! that he lives as a risen head; that he is not a dead Saviour; but a Saviour that lives for evermore; that can and does bless; that can and does comfort; that can and does bring the soul safely through all. He is not a Saviour that stands as it were upon the brink of a river, and pulls us out when we have swum half way out ourselves: he is

not a Saviour that will take us half way to heaven, and then, as Rutherford says, let us 'fend' or shift for ourselves. He must take us to heaven throughout. We are nothing, we have nothing without him. He must be, as he is, our, "all in all." We value him in his death; nothing but his death could reconcile: we value him in his life; nothing but his life can save. We want salvation now; salvation in the heart: a spiritual salvation revealed in and unto the soul: a salvation worthy of the name, wholly, fully, completely, finally, and everlastingly to the praise of superabounding grace; a salvation indefeasible, never to be lost; worthy of God, worthy of the God-Man: adapted to every want of the soul, coming into every trial of the heart, and able to save the vilest and the worst, "without money and without price."

Be this religion mine. I want no other: I trample all other under my feet as filthy rags. Any other is no more fit to be taken up than a worn-out shoe in the street. It is, as the Apostle says, but "dung;" off-scouring trash; unworthy of the name of religion. There is no religion but what is wrought in the soul by the power of God; and that religion is worthy of the name. It comes from God; it leads to God. It is given us in Christ; yea, it is Christ in the heart, "the hope of glory." Such a religion will do to die by, as well as to live by. Thousands have found it so; it has never left them upon a dying bed; it has soothed the aching heart, sweetened the bitter draught of death, and received their souls into a happy eternity. Would to God that every heart who desires to fear his name, could beat responsively, 'Be this religion mine!' And may we, with God's blessing, desire to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. No other will do in a dying hour; and why should any other do in a living hour?

I cannot conclude without just leaving this testimony behind. My desire is, for you and myself to be led into the very experience of these things, in the sweet enjoyment of them; for I am well convinced, that nothing but the sweet experience and blessed enjoyment of these things, can ever be for our present profit, or ever contribute to our future peace.

May the Lord, in his infinite mercy, give us to experience and enjoy much of this; and to him will we cheerfully give all the praise.

Redemption by Price, and Redemption by Power

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 28, 1867

"For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he." Jeremiah 31:11

In reading the writings of the Old Testament prophets, two remarkable features seem to present themselves to an enlightened and reflective mind. The first of these is, their stern denunciation of the sins and crimes of Israel, accompanied by the severest threatenings of punishment on account of the repeated and aggravated transgressions of the people which God had separated unto himself. These stern denunciations spare neither rank, nor age, nor sex. The king on the throne, the priest at the altar, the prophet in attendance upon the royal court, the learned man with his pretensions to superior knowledge, and the poor man with his unlettered ignorance, the matron who made cakes to the queen of heaven, and the daughter of Zion that went tinkling and mincing with her feet, decked with her mantles, wimples, and crimping pins, and her changeable suits of apparel,—all come equally under the prophetic lash. Iniquity indeed seems in those days to have arisen to an enormous height, and a flood of sin to have overflowed the land. What a burst of indignation gushes from the lips of Isaiah: "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. 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 putrefying sores." (Isa. 1:4-6.) What extraordinary language is that which comes from the mouth of Jeremiah: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." (Jer. 5:1.) Well might Isaiah compare

Jerusalem to the ancient cities of the plain; for Abraham did not venture to plead for the preservation of Sodom unless ten righteous men were to be found in it. But in Jerusalem not one was to be found; no, not one Lot who vexed his righteous soul from day to day in seeing and hearing its abominations; nor was there one who "executed judgment and sought truth." Thus God himself came down to lower terms in saving Jerusalem than he would have taken, so to speak, in the case of Sodom, for had he found one righteous man in Jerusalem he promised to pardon it. And what a pregnant and pithy sentence is that uttered by the prophet at the end of the same chapter, which I have thought sometimes is one of the strongest marks of the last point of degradation, hypocrisy, and self-deception to which a people can sink: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." (Jer. 5:30, 31.) The prophets who should have been mouth for God prophesied lies in his name; the priests availed themselves of the lying prophecies of the false prophets to rule the people; and the people, instead of seeing through the lying prophecies of the false prophets and shaking off the priestly yoke thus bound round their necks, loved to have it so. Gladly did they listen to those prophecies of peace and prosperity when war was thundering at their gates, and sword and famine were about to desolate the land; and willingly did they submit to every rite and ceremony imposed upon them by the priests, heaping offering upon offering and sacrifice upon sacrifice, on the single condition that they should not part with their sins or mend their lives. Now what hope was there for a people who loved to be deceived to their own ruin? What hope was there of any reformation when the prophets were continually sounding in their ears, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we? God will never cast off his people; let us not therefore fear his displeasure; for he doth not behold iniquity in Jacob, neither doth he see perverseness in Israel." Thus were they rotten at the head and rotten at the foot, rotten in the prophet, rotten in the priest, and rotten in the people.

But were God's denunciations of their sins or his threatenings of

punishment idle and vain? Had he spoken and should it not come to pass? Yes. They were all fulfilled, nor did God let one word spoken by the mouth of his true prophets fall to the ground. Jerusalem was destroyed and burnt by the Chaldeans and the people carried into captivity to Babylon. This was their first fulfilment; but they were more fully and terribly accomplished when their crimes having culminated in the rejection of the Messiah and the crucifixion of the Son of God, they were cast off as a people, and have become wanderers among the nations. Let none therefore presume to despise or think lightly of the denunciations of God against sin and sinners in the word of truth; for every one of them will be accomplished to the uttermost against all who live and die in their sins, or turn the grace of God into licentiousness. Doctrine is good, and sound doctrine the very foundation of faith, hope, and love; but the doctrine which does not lead to holiness of heart and life is a snare, a mockery, and a delusion. But what is the other feature not less strongly marked in the prophecies of the Old Testament? It is the restoration of this people, in God's own time and way, to a place in his favour which will not again be forfeited. Read the last chapters of Isaiah: read the chapter from which our text is taken, and see in them and in almost every page promises to the literal Israel of restoration, in what the Scripture calls "the last days," to their own land, and to far higher and greater privileges and blessings than they ever enjoyed or could enjoy under the legal dispensation. I quite admit and indeed fully believe the spiritual fulfilment of all these promises in us believing Gentiles. But to my mind it is scarcely possible to read these ancient prophecies with an enlightened and impartial eye without being compelled to believe that they will be literally fulfilled in the literal Israel as well as spiritually fulfilled in the spiritual Israel. Have we not seen the literal fulfilment of the threatenings? Why then should we disbelieve the literal fulfilment of the promises? Why are the Jews preserved as a people to this day? Is there an instance of any other nation being preserved, as they have been, as a people separate from all others and retaining their ancient creed, their sacred writings, and as far as they can practise them, their appointed rites and ceremonies generation after generation? This,

however, is too wide a subject for me now to enter into.

Assuming, then, that the promises made to the literal Israel will have one day a complete, and, I must add, spiritual fulfilment, for they will be fulfilled spiritually in the Jew as they have been and are in the Gentile,—now comes a very important question. If the words of our text were spoken to the literal Jacob, and, as is clear from the context, will be fulfilled both literally and spiritually in God's ancient people in the appointed time, what right have I to take those words and preach from them this morning as if they belonged to us? What right have you to sit and hear words addressed to the literal Israel, to take an interest in those words, and believe that you can claim them as a portion belonging to you? This is a great mystery, and unless the Lord had himself thoroughly cleared it up, we could not of ourselves have unravelled it. I have called it a great mystery, for such is the language of the apostle concerning it: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." (Eph. 3:3-6.) It is, then, because we poor Gentiles, who were strangers from the covenants of promise, having as such no hope, and being without God in the world, have been made nigh by the blood of Christ, who has broken down the middle wall of partition between us and reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross, that we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Thus in Christ the distinction between Jew and Gentile is done away, and in him there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female.

But besides this, the Gentile church is grafted into the olive tree, to partake of its root and fatness; because the natural branches—that is, the Jews—have been broken off on account of unbelief. (Rom. 11:20.) I wish I could enter more fully upon this point, as

it involves so much precious truth and casts such a clear and blessed light upon both the Old and New Testament. But you will find it fully and beautifully opened in the Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Ephesians; and if you are able to read them with an enlightened and a believing eye, you will find in them a mine of deep and blessed truth able to enrich your soul with the treasures of wisdom and grace.

I shall therefore this morning lay aside all further mention of the literal Israel, and apply the words of my text to the Israel of God—the spiritual Israel of whom the literal Israel was a figure and type.

In opening up the words which lie before us, I shall endeavour to show what *redemption* is, and especially, as our text has laid it down in a very sweet and blessed manner, the *power* which attends it, as displayed in rescuing and ransoming us from the hands of those who are stronger than we.

I.—To understand what *redemption* is, it will be desirable to take a glance at man before he needed redemption. God made man in his own image, after his own likeness; and he set him at the head of his visible creation. We therefore read, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and, have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. 1:27, 28.) If you will refer to Psalm 8 you will find there a striking and beautiful reference to this dominion given to man at his first creation. The Psalmist, walking abroad, it would seem, one starry night in that clear and beautiful climate, where the stars shine almost like little suns, is struck with admiration when he contrasted the magnificence of God's work, thus spread before his eyes in the starry heavens, with the apparent insignificance of man as set at the head of this lower visible creation: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that

thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." (Psa. 8:3-6.) Thus the whole of this lower creation was placed under man's dominion. Then man was stronger than all surrounding objects. He stood at the head of God's visible creation, in all the strength of primeval innocence. He could look round and say, in all that dignity of power with which God had invested him, "There is none upon earth stronger than I, for earth and its inhabitants are all put under my feet." No doubt the Psalm has a spiritual and further meaning as opened by the Apostle, Heb. 2, in which he shows that the words were spoken prophetically of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ; but taking them as they stand, they are a beautiful comment upon the text which I have quoted from the book of Genesis, and bring before our eyes very vividly the original place which man occupied when he came forth in all the purity of his native innocency, and stood forth at the head of God's visible creation.

But this happy state did not last long. "Sin entered into the world and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned." And O what a change did this introduce into this world! What havoc and ruin did it work! What a hurling down of man from his place of supremacy! For now man, instead of being stronger than all, became weaker than all. Sin, horrid sin had spoiled him of all his primeval innocence, marred and defaced the image of God in which he was created, and stripped him of all the strength which he had as standing in the image of his Maker, having dominion over the things of earth. We know some of us by painful experience how sin weakens a man. We know from the way in which we have had to confess our sins before God when they have been laid with weight and power upon our conscience, and from the daily experience of what we are as sinners, how sin strips us of all our strength and brings us down before the Almighty in perfect weakness. We feel, and have to confess it with many bitter lamentations, that sin has mastered us, been too strong for us, overpowered all our resistance, and either by

force or subtlety drained out of us all ability to do anything but mourn, sigh, and confess what we are and have been before the eyes of infinite purity and holiness.

Now this may serve as a key to the expression of our text, "*stronger than he*;" the force of the words being in this, that Jacob, of whom the words are spoken, being weaker than all his foes and opponents, the Redeemer came to ransom him from the hand of all who are stronger than he; and by redeeming and ransoming him from the hand of those stronger than he, gave him that victory over his foes which he never could have accomplished of himself.

In fact, without a knowledge of man's state by nature and practice, and, I may justly add, without a living experience of the state of ruin, misery, and wretchedness, to which sin has personally reduced us, we can never understand what redemption is, either in doctrine or in experience. Let me now therefore attempt to unfold it, that you may obtain some testimony how far you know what it is as made manifest in your own breast.

Redemption, as it stands clearly revealed in God's word, is of two kinds: redemption by *price* and redemption by *power*. And they come in the order in which I have named them, for redemption by price precedes and makes a way for redemption by power. Let me explain this; and I shall do it more clearly and experimentally by showing the various enemies which are stronger than we, and how redemption from them by price makes a way for redemption from them by power.

1. Let us first look at the *law*. May we not well say of the law that it is stronger than we? How strong the law of God is. It demands perfect obedience; it comes to us armed with all the authority of omnipotence, sanctioned with all the claims of absolute holiness, and invested with all the demands of infinite justice. And what does it require at our hands? Nothing less than perfect love to God and perfect love to man. It takes no note of, it makes no allowance for man's state as a helpless sinner. It does not lower

in the slightest degree its demands because man has lost the power to fulfil them, but with an awful curse it sentences to eternal ruin and misery all who do not perfectly fulfil it. This may seem very hard; but can God lower his law to suit the ability of man? If he is to lower it, what is the first step, and, I may well add, what is the last? If he once begin to lower it, how low must he go? Must it be so low as to come down to all the sins of the vilest sinners? Is there to be law at all? And is it not the very essence of law that it must stand, must prevail, must not be lowered? It is true that mercy may come in to pardon those whom the law has condemned. That is a different matter; but law itself must stand in all its integrity that it may be law. Is there, then, any man stronger than the law? Has any one who has ever felt the power of the law, felt himself stronger than it? Have not the requisitions of the law been stronger than all his ability to fulfil them? Has any one loved God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and his neighbour as himself? Has any one kept the law as the law requires to be kept? It baffles every attempt to keep it. Its tremendous curse enters into the conscience, as an arrow from the Almighty. No man ever has fulfilled the law; no man ever can fulfil it. It is meant to be stronger than we. It is intended to break down all creature righteousness; it is intended to bring us all in guilty before God. This is the express language of the Apostle: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:19, 20.)

Now how are we to get out of the hands of this terrible law—this fiery law that comes with demands which we cannot perform, and yet attaches to their non-performance a curse, to be tied like a millstone round our neck before we are hurled by it into the depths of an unfathomable sea? Here then comes in the gracious Redeemer. Here is the blessed Goel—the near of kin who has a right to redeem. And why? Because he is near to us, "our next kinsman," as Boaz was to Ruth, in having taken the flesh and blood of the children. This gave him right to redeem. And as he

has all the right, so he has all the power. If Boaz had been a poor man, he could not have redeemed the parcel of land which was Elimelech's; but he was "a mighty man of wealth;" and his heart was as large as his hand, for having fallen in love with Ruth, and being able to obtain her only by the right of redemption, he would not be in rest until he had finished the thing which was in his heart. Being then such a great and glorious Redeemer, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." But how redeemed us? By *price*; by paying the penalty; by discharging to the uttermost what the law demanded; by loving God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and by loving his neighbour as himself, aye, and better than himself, for he died for him. John therefore beautifully says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." (1 John 3:16.) "Greater love," said our blessed Lord, "hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13.) It was this love which enabled him to endure all the sufferings of the cross; for love in him was as strong as death; and his holy love for his people and his holy zeal for his Father's glory were as coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame, when he offered himself as a burnt offering and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Here, then, was redemption by price, that price being no less than the precious blood of Immanuel, God with us. I shall by and by show how he redeems with power those whom he has thus redeemed by price.

2. But I pass on to show another enemy that is stronger than we: *sin*. How have you and sin managed the matter when you came hand to hand in a life and death conflict? Have you mastered sin, or has sin mastered you? Admitting that you have not been publicly defeated and disgraced, been openly driven out of the field with shame and ignominy, and that sin has not waved its flag triumphantly over you before the face of the church and the world, though perhaps, you may seem in your feelings to have come half dead out of the terrible battle, yet may I not justly ask: Have you always resisted even unto blood, striving against sin? Have you always crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts? Has sin never entangled you in any secret snare? Has it never

overcome you by force or fraud, never seduced, never allured, never got the better of you, never beaten down your defences? Who is there in this congregation, old or young, professing or not professing, but yet having a conscience to speak in his bosom, that can lift up his head before God, and say that sin has never mastered him, sin never entangled him, sin never carried him away, sin never broken through all his defences? Has your temper never mastered you, nor your pride, nor your covetousness, nor the lusts of your flesh, nor some besetting sin which again and again has foiled all your attempts to overcome it? Then sin, according to the verdict of your own conscience, if you will be but honest with yourself, has been stronger than you; and though you may hope or expect it may be better with you in time to come, or as years roll on, yet you will ever find, unless the grace and power of God come to your aid, that in the very next conflict you will be as much defeated as you were in the last. This is a very humbling feature of our experience, and one which we are scarcely ever willing to acknowledge before man, however we are compelled to acknowledge it before God. Nay, I fully believe that there is not a saint of God now in his presence who if he would speak honestly would not acknowledge he has found sin stronger than his prayers, stronger than his cries, stronger than his resolutions, stronger than his vows, and stronger than all his attempts to overcome it. Do you not sometimes think yourself singular here? That there is something in you different from other men, and especially from all the people of God? Do you not often look at the favoured saints of God with a mixture of reverent admiration and poignant self-condemnation? How holy, consistent, godly, upright and tender do they seem compared with what you see and feel yourself to be. Measuring them by their outward walk and conduct, and comparing what you are inwardly with what they are outwardly, you can scarcely venture to consider yourself one of the chosen family of God; for sin seems to work in you in a way in which you cannot believe that it works in them. Well now listen to the experience and confessions of one of the greatest saints, if not absolutely the greatest, whose experience is recorded in the word of truth. What does he say about sin as felt in his own bosom? He says, "Sin taking occasion

by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Sin then worked in him at a dreadful rate if it stirred up in him every vile and base lust. But now hear him again: "Sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me." Did not this man know something of the deceitful snares of sin? Did not he know something of its killing, slaughtering strength? Hear him again that we may see the man as he has painted himself, and learn what he is by his own description and by his own confession: "I am carnal, sold under sin. What I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." Now are not these the simple, honest confessions of a man eminent for holiness? And why are they recorded in the word of truth but to comfort and encourage the saints of God who are engaged in the same conflict, that as they are able with him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" so they may be able to break forth with him, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is indeed this experience of the strength of sin which makes us value Jesus Christ and redemption by his most precious blood: for I shall hope presently to show how that the Lord Jesus has redeemed us from sin both by price and by power.

3. And is not *death* stronger than we? How death time after time takes away the objects of our dearest affections. How many widows do I see in this congregation. Was not death stronger than all your fears and all your hopes, stronger than all your nursing cares shown to the dear departed one, all your tender anxieties to prolong his life or ease his pain, and all your griefs already felt in the forebodings of your troubled heart? What power had you to repel the messenger of death when he came in God's appointed time and way? No prayers, no entreaties, no tears, no heart-rending sobs or sighs procured even a temporary respite. Death was stronger than either he or you, and when he came would not be denied. Nay if your loved one were a partaker of divine grace and the Lord were with him in that trying hour, he was willing to depart and be with Christ, which was far better

than being even with you.

But there is something in death more than the separation of soul and body. When, then, the gracious Lord came to redeem us from death, it was to redeem us from what follows after death, viz., the second death. From this he redeemed us by price, and from the first death he redeemed us both by price and by power, as he himself speaks in the language of prophecy: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." (Hosea 13:14.) To those therefore who die in the Lord, death is not death. He himself by lying in the grave has perfumed it, and by putting away the curse of sin, has turned death into a sleep. May I not say therefore to you, ye mourning widows, who sorrow not as others which have no hope, that those loved ones whose remains you have borne to the cemetery are but sleeping there till the resurrection morn? For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. When, then, ye gracious widows get together to commune of your sad bereavements, do not give way to, nor encourage each other in that sorrow of the world which worketh death, but rather comfort one another with the words of heavenly truth.

But do not most of you, as regards your own experience, find death, in the fears that you have about dying, stronger than you? Are you not sometimes afraid how it will be with you at death? You know that it will be stronger than your body; but will it be stronger than your soul? stronger than your faith, stronger than your hope, stronger than your expectation, stronger than any experience which you have had of it in prospect, so as to become when it does come a terrible reality? You need then a Redeemer who shall be stronger than death.

4. And is not *Satan* stronger than you? Have you always resisted his wiles? Have his cunning stratagems never been too much for all your wisdom, your caution, and your strength? And were they not devised as secretly as they were successfully, so that you

were entangled and overcome before you were well aware either of the tempter or the temptation? We can look back sometimes with shame and sorrow and see how secretly Satan spread his snares and entangled us in this and in that direction when we were quite off our guard. We did not know at the time that it was Satan laying a trap for our feet, for it came from a quarter which we did not anticipate, and was laid so secretly and hidden so craftily that we were surprised into it before we were aware, nor perhaps knew that it was a snare till afterwards. But we now can trace it step by step, can see its beginning and end, how subtly it worked, how gradually it gained strength, until the chains were fastened on our hands, and the fetters on our feet. Did not Satan then in this case prove himself stronger than we? Is he not the prince of the power of the air? Is he not as an eagle or a vulture, ever looking out for prey, and watching his opportunity to steal it by fraud or seize it by violence? Was there then no necessity to be redeemed from the power of Satan, as well as from the power of death and the grave? We shall see by and by how this redemption was accomplished.

5. And is not *hell* stronger than we? Who can deliver his own soul from hell? Who can find a ransom of such sufficient value that he can say unto God, "Is not this enough to deliver me from going down into the pit?" And have not fears of hell often terrified and alarmed your soul, especially in the first dealings of God with your conscience? When these fears of hell pursued you perhaps night and day, were they not stronger than you, so that you could not bid them depart nor get deliverance from them?

6. Is not the *world* often stronger than we? Sometimes how its cares and carking anxieties, connected as they are with each man's necessary business and daily employment, prove stronger than all our faith in the providence of God which has so often appeared on our behalf. At other times, how the alluring ways and insinuating charms, the customs, maxims, opinions, and, what the Apostle calls "the course of this world," prove themselves stronger than we in entangling our thoughts, desires, and affections, and gaining for the time a mastery over our mind.

7. Our *fears, doubts* and *apprehensions*, connected with our state and standing before God for eternity, do we not often find them stronger than we? Can we subdue them, overcome them, put them to flight, and get the better of them? When the Lord denies the light of his countenance, when we are pressed down with a sense of guilt on account of our grievous and manifold sins and blackslidings, can we deliver ourselves from the weight and pressure of dismal forebodings and many painful exercises? Who has not found, that knows anything of divine realities, that his unbelief is often stronger than his faith, his doubt than his hope, and the evidences against him than those which are for him?

8. But that I may not detain you longer on this part of our subject, have we not all our peculiar *foes external, internal* and *infernal*; and have we not found that all of them have been at various times stronger than we?

II.—But now let us advance a step further into our text. What is its main force, blessedness, and beauty? Is it not in this, that the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he? There is no blessedness in being bound and fettered, no comfort or happiness in being grasped by the hand of an enemy who has no pity or compassion, and rather glories in his strength over us. The blessedness is in redeeming love, atoning blood, and delivering power. I have already pointed out that the blessed Lord came to redeem us from the hand of our enemies, first by price and then by power. Here we see the love of God in the gift of his dear Son. There being no other way of deliverance, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Had there been any other way, we may well believe that God would have taken it. But there was no other way consistently with the perfections of God.

i. I shall now therefore take one by one the various foes which I have brought before you as stronger than we, and show how the Lord has redeemed us from them all—first by price, and then by power; thus fulfilling the words of our text, "the Lord hath

redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he."

I showed you from the word of truth and from the experience of the saints, that the law was stronger than we; for the law demanded what we could not pay, and then bound round our neck a terrible curse for nonpayment. Here then see the grace and the glory of the Redeemer, of whom it was prophesied, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion." (Isa. 59:20.) He came therefore to redeem us from the law and the curse attached to it, as the Holy Ghost testifies: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13.) And what price did he pay? Those shall tell us who are ever singing his praises before the throne: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." This is "the new song which no man could learn but those which were redeemed from the earth." (Rev. 5:9, 14:3.) Having, then, first redeemed us from the curse of the law by price, he can then come and redeem us by power. But what is this power? What but the manifestation of his mercy, the application of his blood, the revelation of himself, and the sealing home of his redeeming work upon the heart and conscience, by the breaking in of the light of his countenance and the shedding abroad of his love? This is redeeming by power; and we may be well assured that those whom the Lord has redeemed by price, he will sooner or later redeem by power. Let me illustrate this by a figure. Suppose there were a number of prisoners, insolvent debtors in the Whitecross-street prison; and suppose that the Queen's ministers took compassion upon them, and said to one another, "We understand that there are a number of poor insolvent debtors in the London and Middlesex prison. Would it not be well to pay their debts and set them free?" A bill to that effect is proposed. Parliament consents. The money is paid and the creditors are fully satisfied. But suppose that the city sheriffs, who have the government of the prison, should start up and say, "All this has been done without consulting us. The prisoners have been committed to our custody. We shall not let them go; we

shall keep them there. It is nothing to us what the Government does. It is our prison." Now would not Government be warranted, if there were no better means, in sending a troop of soldiers, breaking open the prison doors, and taking out the insolvent debtors? Their debts are paid, their creditors satisfied. Have they not a right to their liberty? Apply this figure spiritually. The law has been satisfied by the perfect obedience and suffering death of the Son of God. If then the law refuses to give up the prisoner when the claim has been satisfied, surely he who has paid the debt may lawfully come, break open the prison cell, and take out the prisoner. Having redeemed him by price, he may now redeem him by power. But take the converse. Suppose that the Lord of life and glory had come to redeem by power when he had not first redeemed by price. There would have been no way then for the law to be satisfied, its claims honoured, the justice of God glorified, and all his attributes harmonised. Besides this trampling down of the majesty, justice, and holiness of God, there would have been no coming down of the Holy Ghost to sanctify; for you will observe that the gift of the Spirit was dependent upon redemption by blood—as the Apostle speaks: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3:14.) What then would have been the consequence, assuming for a moment such a thing had been possible, that the Lord had redeemed a people by power but had not redeemed them by price? There would have been a company of rebels, unwashed from their sins, unsanctified in their souls, still alienated from the life of God, steeped in wickedness up to the very lips, without will or power to please God or serve him. And should these be taken to heaven in all their filthy rags and their still filthier souls, to stain the courts of Paradise, and make the very angels blush for shame? It was needful therefore first to redeem by blood, that sin might be put away from the sight of God, the law fulfilled, justice honoured, God glorified, and a fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, that the redeemed might stand before God without spot or wrinkle, and that those whom the Son hath redeemed the Holy Ghost might sanctify. But blood having been shed, a price having been paid, then power

might come upon the back of price and enforce what justice demanded when its claims were satisfied.

ii. But this redemption by price leads me to drop a few remarks upon the meaning and nature of redemption. Redemption under the law was chiefly in three things:—

1. There was the redemption of a prisoner from *captivity*. In those days, when captives were taken in war, they were not set free except under the payment of a heavy ransom. This custom is not practised now; but there is one in Italy almost similar to it, when brigands carry off travellers to the mountains and will not liberate them unless a ransom, depending upon the assumed rank and property of their captives, is paid by their friends or relatives. Readers of English history will also remember how that our Richard I. was kept in prison by the German Emperor until a large ransom was paid him by this country. There is an allusion to a prisoner being thus ransomed by the prophet Isaiah: "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed;" that is, by payment of a ransom. This is one instance of redemption by price.

2. Another is that of the redemption of a *slave* liberated by his value being paid. A freeborn Jew could not be made a slave to any of his brethren, for that was expressly forbidden; but he might sell himself to a sojourner or a stranger. But there was this merciful provision, that if he had so sold himself, he might be redeemed by any one that was nigh of kin to him paying the price, calculated according to the year of Jubilee.

3. But there is also a third case, viz., the redemption of *mortgaged property*; for an Israelite was allowed to mortgage, but not to sell his land out and out. This last instance we see very clearly in the case of Boaz and Ruth, where Boaz had to redeem a mortgaged property, and according to the provision that the land should not go out of the family, had also to marry the widow. In all these cases there was a redemption by price, and the money must be actually laid down and paid before the redemption was

effected. The poor captive prisoner could not return home before the ransom was sent; the slave could not be liberated before his value was paid; the land would not revert to the possessor until the mortgage was fully cleared off. In all these cases there was a necessity to pay the price to make the redemption complete. But suppose that the warrior retained the captive after the ransom was paid; suppose the foreign master kept the Jewish slave after being paid the full demand; suppose the mortgagee would not give up the land when the mortgage was taken up. Then there was a way opened for redemption by power. Justice being satisfied, it was perfectly legal to send an armed band into the land of the conqueror to deliver the captive whose ransom had been paid, or take by force the Jewish slave, now no longer such, from his heathen master, or regain possession of the mortgaged estate. So it is in the things of God. Had not the justice of God been satisfied, there would have been a tarnish upon the holiest of his perfections. But the ransom being fully paid, power can come in to carry it into execution. Now let us see how this acts and works.

1. Observe, first, how this opens a way to rescue us from *sin*. I have pointed out that sin is stronger than we. There are five particular points connected with sin, from all of which we need redemption both by price and by power. These are, the guilt of sin, the filth of sin, the power of sin, the love of sin, and the practice of sin. The guilt of sin we must be delivered from by the application of atoning blood to the conscience; the filth of sin we must be washed from by the sanctifying operations and influences of the Holy Ghost; the power of sin we must have broken in us by the power of Christ's resurrection; the love of sin overcome by the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; and the practice of sin destroyed and broken up by the fear of God planted deep in the soul. It is through the blood of the Lamb, that is, redemption by price, that each and all of these blessings are granted, and thus manifested blessing is redemption by power. Now assume that you had been redeemed by price, but were not redeemed by power. Could you stand before God among his glorified saints without your nature being

renewed by his heavenly grace—without the sanctifying work and influence of the Holy Ghost upon your soul? Would you be fitted for heaven unless a new and heavenly nature had been raised up in you, to make you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?

But look at this point even as regards our present state and standing. I have spoken just now of the power of sin, and I went at some length into the nature of this power in the first part of my discourse. But how is this power to be broken? And just contrast the contrivances of men with the wisdom and power of God. Since I was last in London, a convent had been erected near where I am now staying. Now how many devices will be set on foot in that convent, assuming it to be like others, to overcome the power of sin. What fasting, confessing, praying, telling of beads; and will any succeed? They will all prove ineffectual remedies. Sin never was weakened or destroyed by devices of human contrivance. The hermit in his cell, the monk in his hairy shirt, the nun upon her bended knees, never overcame sin by all their attempts; and if they did so, it would not be a remedy God approved of. But view God's way; view the Person of his dear Son; see Deity and humanity meeting together in one glorious Immanuel; see by faith the bleeding wounds of the Son of God, and on every drop of blood Deity stamped. What efficacy to purge the guilty conscience; what power to renew the soul; what motives to holy obedience; what an influence upon a God-fearing heart; what a constraining power to overcome and subdue the strength of sin. For this is the beauty and blessedness of atoning blood and redeeming love, that it sanctifies as well as justifies, gives strength and power as well as communicates salvation. So redemption being effected by price, upon it follows redemption by power.

2. Take another enemy, *Satan*. We read that the ancient martyrs overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death. These were the three weapons with which the ancient martyrs overcame the accuser of the brethren. Satan laughs at shield and

spear; he smiles derisively at human attempts to cleanse and purge the conscience. He knows well what the human heart is; that nothing but blood can purge a guilty conscience, and nothing but grace sanctify the soul. But Christ having redeemed his saints from Satan by price, saves them also from his hand by power. Through death he has destroyed him who had the power of death, to deliver them who through fear had all their life been subject to bondage. He has put his foot upon Satan's neck; he has overcome principalities and powers. Satan is a conquered foe, overcome by blood and vanquished by death and resurrection.

3. And *death* also. How did those whose loss we mourn meet death? Under a sense of pardoned sin, having had atoning blood applied to their conscience to take away the sting of death. Death can only be overcome by the application of atoning blood and dying love, the manifestation of pardon and forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. Every one is weaker than death, till the word comes: "Son or daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee." Then he can look death in the face and depart in peace. And as death was overcome by blood, so it will be overcome by power. In the resurrection morn, the saints will rise from their dust and shout aloud, "O grave, where is thy victory," as they before shouted, "O death, where is thy sting?"

4. And *hell* too. The Lord has closed the mouth of hell against his saints, by enduring a hell in his own bosom; and as by the power of his blood he has closed the gates of hell, so by the power of his grace he gives the soul a sensible knowledge of it; thus redeeming by power those whom he has ransomed by blood.

5. So it is with *foes*. We have all our foes: need we fear them? I will tell you the greatest foe you have to fear: *self*. Never mind your foes: who shall harm you if you be followers of that which is good? Conduct yourself consistently, act uprightly, live a life of faith in the Son of God, walk in the fear of the Lord, have a good conscience toward God and man: what foe can hurt you? But you can sadly hurt yourself. You can do yourself more harm in five

minutes than all your foes in fifty years. One incautious word, one heedless footstep, one wrong action, may lay you crippled and wounded at their feet. Fear not your foes; fear God, and you need not fear the face of man. The Lord will fight your battles; you have no need to fight them. "Be still and know that I am God." The Lord will fight your cause if it be a right cause. He has redeemed you by his blood from all your foes, and he will redeem you by his power from anything they may do to harm you.

6. And your *fears*. How strong your fears have always been. What doubts have chilled your soul; what apprehensions have pained your spirit. Perhaps many here have had little else all their days but doubts and fears as to the reality and genuineness of the work of God upon their soul. And these fears you still find too strong for you. You fain would master them; you would not be in bondage; you would come forth into the liberty of the gospel; you would have a manifestation of pardoned sin, and of your acceptance in the Beloved; you would not doubt your interest; you would see your signs and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. But your faith is weak, your hope feeble, and your love but faint. Many things try your mind, cast down your spirit, and seem to breed continual apprehensions how the case may end. But if the Lord has redeemed you by his blood, he will surely redeem you from all your fears by his power. He has but to speak to your soul. Are you not waiting for that speech to come? Are your eyes not looking up to him, that he would commune with you from off the mercy seat, and drop a sweet promise, apply a word, give a touch, breathe a whisper, manifest himself, and come over all your sin and shame to dissolve you under a sense of atoning blood and dying love? What has made you thus wait, thus seek, thus ask? I may say, what has made you thus doubt and fear? Because you know that you have a soul to be saved, sins to be forgiven, a conscience to be purged, and the love of God to be enjoyed; and feeling your deficiency in these matters, it fills you with doubts and fears as to your state and case before God. But if the Lord has redeemed you by his blood—and these are, as far as they go, favourable signs, gracious marks, and intimations of divine life—He will redeem you by power. One word will do it; one

smile, one touch, one manifestation, or one soft whisper, will in a moment remove every doubt and fear, and land you in the liberty of the gospel.

O what could any of us do but for this Redeemer? How highly we should value him; how we should ever cleave to him with purpose of heart, and be determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. How good it is to lay aside all human strength and righteousness, and cast our poor, needy, naked souls upon the blood of the Lamb. Many are exercised all their days with doubts and fears, from looking too much to self. There is a secret legality, a Pharisaic self-righteousness, so that they cannot come out of themselves to trust in the Lord and the Lord only. And this looking with double eye, sometimes to themselves, and sometimes to the Lord, keeps them all their lives in bondage and torment. Never will you get real liberty of soul till you come out of yourself, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as he reveals himself in his word, in all the fulness of his blood and righteousness. And then as you come out of self, and come into the glorious liberty of the children of God, you will see what a fool you have been to be looking to yourself nearly all your life, trusting to your own righteousness which is but filthy rags, and putting away the only righteousness in which a soul can stand accepted. But the Lord is very pitiful and very gracious. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust;" and having redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he, he will never leave his work incomplete; he will go on and fulfil it, that he may have all the praise honour and glory.

THE REFUGE OF THE OPPRESSED

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street. London, on Lord's Day Evening, August 10, 1845

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed: a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, has not forsaken them that seek thee."
Psalm 9:9, 10

I found upon the vestry table this morning a letter requesting me to preach from a certain text, "Jesus wept." The writer of that letter must know very little of the perplexities and exercises that I and every minister of truth have with respect to the texts that we preach from. I cannot take a text, and speak from it in the mere exercise of my judgment. Before I can take a text, and preach from it, I must have three things. **First**, I must see a vein of experience in it; in other words, I must have **light** upon it: **secondly**, I must find a measure of sweetness and savour in it; I must know something personally of the experience contained in it, and feel a measure of dew and unction to rest upon it; in other words, I must have **life** from it: and **thirdly**, I must find in it sufficient matter to form a tolerably full and connected discourse. I cannot run here, there, and everywhere all through the scriptures, nor deal in vague, loose generalities: but as far as the Lord gives me wisdom, strength, and ability, my path is to unfold the mind of the Spirit in such portions of the scripture as are commended with some savour to my conscience. In making these remarks, I wish not to condemn other gracious men who are led differently. Each has his own path and his own work: and God will bless each according to that line in which he leads him.

I have been much exercised and perplexed as to what text I should preach from. I think I have turned the Bible over this afternoon from beginning to end, without finding any one text in which I could see and feel these three things. At last, my eyes, in turning over the Psalms, fell upon these words. But it remains to

be proved whether God directed my eyes there; for if he directed my eyes there, and brought a measure of their sweetness and savour into my soul, the effects and fruits will be seen and felt in your consciences.

The text consists of four clauses. May the Lord enable me, in taking up these clauses, so to unfold them, that the dew, power, and savour of the Holy Ghost may rest upon, and seal them with a divine unction to our hearts.

I.—"**The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.**" By "the Lord," in the text, we are to understand Jehovah in his Trinity of Persons, and Unity of Essence: Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the Son, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit, Israel's Three-one God. Now God, in his Unity of Essence, and Trinity of Persons, is a refuge to God's poor, oppressed family.

How he is. I shall endeavour under my third head more particularly to unfold: but previously, it will be desirable to enter a little into the meaning of the word "refuge."

1. The leading idea contained in the word "refuge" is that of **shelter**. For instance, we read in the scripture of "**the cities of refuge.**" These were certain cities, three on one side of Jordan and three on the other, which God appointed for the manslayer to flee unto, that the avenger of blood might not smite him with the sword. When the manslayer had fled into these cities of refuge, he found in them shelter, protection and safety.

2. Again, **Strong holds, fortified cities, and lofty rocks** are set forth in scripture as places of refuge. David says, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer., my high tower, and my refuge" **2Sa 22:2,3** . "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats" **Ps 104:18**. All these expressions imply, that when a person escapes to a fortified city, a lofty tower, or a high rock, there he finds shelter.

3. Again. **A harbour of refuge** is an expression in common use, that is. a natural or artificial haven along a rocky or dangerous coast, into which a ship tossed by the storm, or in danger of being cast upon the rocks, may run, and find safety.

Thus, the leading idea in the word "refuge" is shelter and safety: a place where one that has the guilt of blood upon his conscience, or one who is attacked by an enemy, or one who is tossed upon the stormy main, may find a secure shelter.

The Lord Jehovah in his Trinity of Persons, is this refuge for his people? He is their city, he is their rock, he is their harbour: unto him they flee in their distress, and find eternal safety.

But before we can find the Lord to be a refuge and a shelter for our souls, we must, by the work of the Holy Ghost upon our conscience, **be brought into that spot to which the Lord as a refuge is adapted.** The cities of refuge were nothing except to the man who had shed blood: the strong hold and fortified city are nothing except to one who is pursued by an enemy: the harbour of refuge is nothing to a vessel sailing before the wind, on a smooth sea. Danger, attack, alarm, violence, peril—these things make a refuge suitable and desirable.

Carry this idea into spiritual things, as the text unfolds it. "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed." Does not the Holy Ghost here point out the persons who need refuge?

Who are these **"oppressed"**? They are the Lord's tried family, his quickened, exercised, and often perplexed people. These are oppressed in various ways. But it is their oppression which makes Jehovah sought after as a refuge for their souls.

There is a great deal of **natural** oppression in this country. What strides it is making! This country presents at this moment a fearful spectacle—the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer; avarice sweeping into its lap the labours of the poor,

increasing thereby its ill-gotten substance: and many of those who toil by their hands reduced to extremity and well-nigh starvation. These things I should not allude to, were not many of God's people suffering participants. The poor child of God suffers under the iron hand and iron heel of oppression just as much as his fellow men. But there is this difference between them. The oppressed men of the world know no Jehovah as a refuge to flee unto: but the Lord's oppressed family flee for refuge unto that invisible God whom the world knows nothing of. They have a God of providence on whom to fix their eye: and the Lord, who counts the very hairs of their head, and who knows they stand in need of supplies for their temporal necessities, at times opens his hand. They have not fled to him for refuge in vain: for they thus see more clearly his bounty in providence relieving them from their oppression.

But there is another sense of the word, a higher and deeper signification, that is, **oppressed spiritually**. All the Lord's people are not oppressed naturally: but all the Lord's people are, in their measure, oppressed spiritually. For instance,

1. There is the **heavy burden of sin**. The guilt of sin lies weighty and powerful upon many a tender conscience. This is an oppression which often bows the family of God down to the earth with sorrow, fills them with fearful pangs of apprehension as to what will be their future portion, lays and keeps them low, and often makes them sigh and groan under the heavy burden upon their shoulders. But it is this very oppression, in the hands of the Spirit, which leads them to make the Lord their refuge. We need heavy weights and burdens to bring us to a point in our souls. We are often trifling with the things of God, getting a few doctrines in our judgment without knowing their power and blessedness in our soul's experience. And so some go on for years hovering around the truth, without coming into the feeling power of it, satisfied with a sound creed, without having the sweetness and savour of divine realities made manifest in their conscience. Now, when the Lord has purposes of mercy and love to manifest—when he is determined that a man should know him to be the only

refuge, he lays burdens upon his back, he brings guilt into his conscience, he sets his secret sins before his eyes, he makes him feel that of sinners he is chief. Wherever this is laid by the Spirit upon a man's conscience, it will bring him, sooner or later, to the Lord as his refuge. 'What can I do?' says the poor burdened soul; what help can I find from the creature? What salvation can I find in myself, a poor guilty wretch, weighed down with the oppression of sin?' This will make him seek after the Lord as his refuge, for he has none other to flee unto.

2. But he is oppressed also **by Satan**, that enemy of his soul's peace. And O, what an oppressor is this! I have been speaking of earthly oppressors. I have been endeavouring to shoot an arrow at those exactors who grind the face of the poor. But what are those outward oppressors to the inward oppressor? What is the iron hand of creature oppression to the iron hand of Satan when he is let loose upon a man's soul? How many of God's people have to groan and sigh bitterly on account of the oppression of this cruel exactor, harassing, teasing, assailing, tempting, perplexing, and confusing them in some way or other: drawing them into sin, or driving them into despondency. The Lord came, it was an especial part of his mission, to heal those that were oppressed by the devil. Satan is the oppressor of the whole human race: but he is the oppressor particularly of God's family. But when we are oppressed in this way, if the Lord be our teacher, it will drive us off the creature, out of a name to live, out of fleshy religion and natural wisdom, and bring us to the Lord himself, as the refuge of our souls.

3. **The daily conflict** that God's people have to pass through, produced by the body of sin and death under which they "groan being burdened," and by the sinfulness of a depraved nature, grievously oppresses all the living family of God. But this very oppression is overruled for their good—this very body of sin and death, which is the heavy burden of their souls, is made to work for their spiritual profit: it leads them to the Lord to support them under it, who graciously brings them through, and enables them to overcome in this battle.

Now the Lord is "a refuge for the oppressed." Every oppressed soul, sooner or later, finds him to be such. But in order to find the Lord to be our refuge, we must be cut off from every false refuge; as the prophet declares, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place" **Isa 28:17**. As long as we can hide our heads in a lie, we shall hide them there; as long as we can escape into a creature refuge, into that hole shall we slink. The hail therefore of God's wrath needs to be felt in the soul to sweep away the lying refuges; the waters of judgment must come into, and overflow the hiding-place, and bring us out of it, lest they drown us in it; and then, and not till then, shall we know by heart experience that the Lord God Almighty is a refuge for the oppressed.

II.—But the second clause of the text opens up still further when Jehovah is a refuge—a **refuge in times of trouble**. Do you not see how the scriptures always put together the malady and the remedy? How they unfold the promises as suitable to certain states and cases of soul? and how all the perfections of God are adapted to his people only so far as they are brought into peculiar circumstances? This vein runs through all the scripture. So here the Lord is declared to be a refuge. But when? "In times of trouble." We do not want him to be a refuge when there is no trouble. Shall I use the expression without irreverence? we can **then** do without him. We can love the world, can amuse ourselves with the things of time and sense, can let our heads go astray after the perishing, transitory vanities of a day: we can set up an idol in our heart: we can bow down before a golden god: we can have our affections wholly fixed on those naturally dear to us: we can get up in the morning, pass through the day, and lie down at night very well without God. But when times of trouble come, when afflictions lie heavily upon us, when we are brought into those scenes of tribulation through which we must pass to arrive at the heavenly Canaan. **then** we want something more than flesh and blood: **then** we want something more than the perishing creature can unfold; **then** we want something more than this vain world can amuse us with. We then want God; we

want the everlasting arms to be underneath our souls; we want to feel support; we want manifestations and consolations; we want something from the Lord's own lips dropped with the Lord's own power into our hearts.

1. These "times of trouble" are sometimes times of **temporal trouble**. If you live long enough, you will have about as much temporal trouble as you can well stand under; you will have as many waves and billows of temporal sorrow as will sometimes seem about to drown you. But what a mercy it is, when the waves and billows of temporal sorrow beat upon the head, like the surf upon the rocks, to have a God to go to! not to be looking here and there, driven perhaps to a mad-house, to strong drink, to the halter, razor, or pond. But to have a God to go to! an ever-living, ever-loving Jesus, who opens wide his arms, unfolds the treasures of his sympathizing bosom, and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now these "times of trouble" which the Lord's people have to pass through, make them to know that there is a God above. And this is a grand distinguishing feature of a child of God that his very worldly troubles are, so to speak, the wave that carries his bark farther on to the kingdom of God. When worldly troubles come upon a natural man, they are the **ebbing** wave that carries him away from God to dash him upon the rocks. But when temporal troubles come upon a child of God, they are the **flowing** wave that takes him into the peaceful haven of Jehovah's bosom.

2. But there are **spiritual troubles**. And what are all our temporal troubles put together to our spiritual troubles? They are but a drop in a bucket: they are but the dust in the balance. Soul trouble outweighs and ever will outweigh natural trouble. But soul trouble will drive a man to the Lord, if anything will. When we are in soul trouble, we want such a God as he has revealed himself to be in the scriptures—a God of infinite power, infinite mercy, infinite faithfulness, infinite forgiveness, and infinite love.

These times of soul trouble make God's people know that the Lord is their refuge. If I am in soul trouble—if my heart is surcharged with guilt—if my conscience is lacerated with the pangs of inward compunction, can the creature give me relief? can friends dry the briny tear? can they still the convulsive sigh? can they calm the troubled breast? can they pour oil and wine into the bleeding conscience? They are utterly powerless in the matter. They may increase our troubles, and they often, like Job's friends, do so; but they cannot alleviate it. Only one hand can ease the trouble—the same hand that laid it on; only one hand can heal the wound—the same that mercifully inflicted it.

Now, in these times of soul trouble, if ever we have felt it **and we must know for ourselves whether we ever have**, we shall make the Lord our refuge. There is no other to go to. We may try every arm but his, we may look every way but the right, and we may lean upon every staff but the true. But, sooner or later, we shall be brought to this spot—that none but the Lord God Almighty, who made heaven and earth, who brought our souls and bodies into being, who has kept and preserved us to the present hour, who is about our bed, and about our path, and spieth out all our ways, and who has sent his dear Son to be a propitiation for sin—that none but this eternal Creator. Preserver, and Redeemer, who made and upholds heaven and earth, can speak peace, pardon, and consolation to our hearts.

But you will observe, that the text speaks of "**times** of trouble." It does, not define **and it is a great mercy it has not defined** what these times are, how many, or how long: nor does it define what that trouble shall be. Whatever trouble comes upon a child of God, is a "time of trouble:" and however long it may last, or however short it may endure, it is still a "time of trouble." And in these times of trouble, the Lord will be his refuge. But how sweet it is in these times of trouble to have a God to go to: to feel that there are everlasting arms to lean upon, that there is a gracious ear into which we may pour our complaints, that there is a heart, a sympathizing heart, in the bosom of the Lord of life and glory,

that feels for us; to know that there is a hand to relieve, and to experience, at times, relief from that Almighty and gracious hand!

III.—"**And they, that know thy name will put their trust in thee.**" There is a knowing of God's name. By the "name of God" are to be understood the revealed perfections of the Almighty—all that he has revealed concerning himself in the scriptures of truth. Every attribute, every perfection, everything that God has said of himself, is summed up in the "name of God." But especially does the "name of God" signify the Son of his love, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person;" as he said to Moses, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for **my name is in him;**" that is, all my revealed perfections, all my glorious character, all my divine attributes are in him; for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Now, there is a **knowing** this name of God; that is, there is such a thing as an experimental acquaintance in the soul with the perfections of God as revealed in the scriptures. His name is therefore known when the perfections of God are revealed in the heart and conscience by the power of the Spirit. And this is by virtue of living faith in the soul. By faith we see God. By faith we know God. When we receive into our hearts the truth as it is in Jesus, and when we believe by living faith what God has said of himself in the word, then we know the name of God: and every manifestation of God's mercy, every token of God's favour, and every shining in of God's perfections, is a discovery in our hearts, a raising up in our souls of the knowledge of God's name.

Now, till we know God's name, we cannot, we shall not, put our trust in him. But if we know his name, if we have received into our hearts the perfections of God, and have a personal experience of them—then the necessary and infallible consequence will be, that we shall put our trust in him. Let us take a review of some of these perfections of God, which when made known enable the soul to put its trust in him.

1. For instance. There is God's **eternal faithfulness**—the covenant faithfulness of a covenant God. Now, if we have received into our hearts this perfection of the Almighty—if we have any personal, experimental knowledge of it, from having found God faithful to his word in our soul's experience—by knowing that name, or that part of God's name, we put our trust in him, as in a faithful, promise-making, and promise-keeping Jehovah. But wherever the Lord makes his faithfulness known to his people, he will try that knowledge. Our faith is to be put into the furnace, and our knowledge of God is to be tried as with fire. We may believe his faithfulness: but that is not enough. Our belief in his faithfulness must be tried before it can be known, or proved to be genuine. The Lord therefore hides himself, veils his face with a dark cloud, does not shine forth into our souls as we would fain have him, brings upon us a train of perplexing circumstances, and appears, instead of doing the thing we desire him to do, to do the thing exactly contrary. But if we know his name, if we know him to be a faithful God, in spite of all appearances—then we shall put our trust in that faithfulness, because that faithfulness has been proved in times past, and has been received into the heart as a part of God's eternal character.

2. His **lovingkindness and tender mercy** are another part of the name of God. He has shown this in the gift of his only-begotten Son. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" **1Jo 3:16** . Now, if we have tasted a measure, though it be but a small measure, of the lovingkindness and tender mercy of God: if ever his favour has dropped into our souls, like the dew upon a branch: if ever this secret of the Lord has been upon our tabernacle,—we know that part of the name of the Lord, and if we know it, we put our trust in it. We feel it to be trustworthy, to be a support for the soul that knows that the lovingkindness and tender mercy of God are from everlasting to everlasting.

3. Another part of his name is, his **infinite and unspeakable wisdom**. Can he err? Has he ever erred? In all the multiplicity

and variety of circumstances that have distressed the children of God, has the Lord ever taken a wrong step? Though he has baffled nature, though he has disconcerted reason, though he has turned our plans upside down, though perhaps he has done the thing that we most feared, and thwarted every natural purpose and inclination of our heart—can we say that he has erred? that he has made a mistake? that he has acted unwisely? that he has not done that which is for our spiritual good? Murmuring, rebellious, unbelieving heart, hold thy peace! Shall man, foolish man, a worm of the earth, a creature of a day, lift up his puny voice and say, that God can make a mistake? Your path is very dark, very intricate, very perplexed: you cannot see the hand of God in the trial that is now resting upon you; you cannot believe that it will work together for your good. I admit it. I have felt it. I have known it.

But the time will come, when this dark path in which you are now walking, shall be seen full of radiancy and light, when you will prove the truth of those words—"He brought the blind by a way that they knew not." When we know God to be infinitely wise, that he cannot err, that all his dealings must be stamped with his own eternal wisdom, we are silenced, we hold our peace, we have nothing to say, we are where Aaron was. When Nadab and Abihu were smitten by the Lord, Aaron knew that God could not err; he "held his peace" **Le 10:3**. This is our right spot. If we know anything of the folly of the creature—if we know anything of the wisdom of God—this is our spot. When our dear Nadabs and Abihus are smitten before our face, our spot is to hold our peace, to put our mouth in the dust; for God is still accomplishing his object, in the face, and in spite of nature, sense, and reason.

"They that know thy name." They who have these perfections revealed in their hearts, who have something more than a name to live, who have something deeper than a sound creed, that know God's name by a manifestation of that blessed and glorious name to their conscience, they, and they only, will put their trust in God. These are great words. Put your trust in God! Have you ever seen him? Is he not invisible, dwelling in the light, which no

man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see? What! put our trust in an invisible Being, one whom we have never seen? Surely, there must be something more than nature here. Yes, there is something more than nature here. What says the scripture of one of the ancient worthies? "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." He saw him that was invisible: he felt the presence, he knew the power, he beheld by the eye of living faith, the invisible Jehovah.

We must have precisely, in our measure, the same experience in our hearts, before we can put our trust in God. The faith of most professors **shall I say, nine out of ten?** is nothing but an empty trust, nothing but a name, an idea, an opinion, a speculation. It is not a heartfelt reality, known in the depths of their conscience before the eyes of a living God. 'But,' say they, 'they put their trust in God.' Yes, so they do—in a God of their own framing, by a trust of their own devising. But to put their trust in an invisible God, just as though he was present for their eyes to look upon and their hands to touch; to rest on him the salvation of their immortal souls; to put all their concerns into his hands, and carry that on for a series of years,—thus to put their trust in the invisible God, something more than flesh and blood—something more than nature, sense, and reason—something more than creature wisdom and creature prudence—something more than an enlightened judgment, is needful here.

On this wide sea all will be wrecked, except the vessels of mercy that God is bringing to their destined haven. But he that in the quiet depths of conscience, and in the actings and exercise of that faith of which God alone is the giver, puts his trust in the name of the Lord God, and gives up himself, with all that he is and has, in the solemn moments when God weighs up the secrets of his heart and puts the thoughts of his soul into his balance—he that can solemnly, deliberately, feelingly, experimentally, and believingly thus put his trust in an invisible God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—does so because he knows the name of that God in whom he trusts.

Here is the turning point. Here is the grand line betwixt life and death: on the one side, a dead professor; on the other side, a living soul. Notional confidence, feigning to be true faith—that will one day be consumed by the blaze of God's nostrils, as flax before the fire: it will never endure the appearance of the Son of God. But the weakest spark of living faith in the soul, the humblest confidence of a child of God, will never be disappointed. That faith will be crowned in the day of the Lord's appearing. It will issue in honour, bliss, and glory.

IV.—"For **thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.**" There is a word here that sweetly closes the subject—"**them that seek thee.**" There are some perhaps here who say, 'These things are too high for me: I cannot attain unto them.. 'I have searched my heart,' say some of you; 'I don't know whether I have passed through all that oppression you have been speaking of.' 'I have cast a hasty glance over what I have felt to be my experience,' say others, 'and I cannot speak positively of times of deep soul trouble. You have been explaining to us what it is to know the name of God, and to put our trust in the invisible Jehovah. When I search my heart, and trace out the feelings of my soul, chilling apprehensions arise, whether I am really a partaker of that grace you have been describing.' Now, shall I cut you off? Does the word of God rather cut you off? Look at it. It puts in a word for you—"Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken **them that seek thee.**"

"**Them that seek thee.**" Now, this takes in the poor, the halt, the lame, the crippled—the little ones of God's family, who cannot mount up into great heights of experience, and have not sunk into great depths of soul trouble. It does not leave out any of God's family, for not a hoof of Israel is to be left behind.

There is, then, a seeking of God. But before we can seek God, we must have two things wrought by divine power in our souls. **First**, we must have a desire to find something; and **then**, we must know something of that God from whom we are seeking that which we desire to find. If I lose anything, I seek for it. I am

merely playing, merely trifling, I am at a child's game, to be looking and searching into every corner, if I have lost nothing, and want to find nothing. So that, if there be not lodged in the depths of our heart, a solemn spiritual desire to find Jesus as the salvation of our soul, as our hope, our portion, our treasure, our all, our seeking is a dream: it is only child's play: it is mocking God: it is trifling with our own soul: it is only playing the part of a varnished hypocrite.

Is this, then, wrought with divine power in your conscience—that you want to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection—that you long to feel his atoning blood sprinkled upon your conscience—that you pant to taste his dying love shed abroad in your heart—that you desire to know the fellowship of his sufferings, and be led by the Holy Ghost into solemn union with a broken-hearted Lord? Do you want to know whether your name is in the book of life? Whether the Holy Ghost has really begun a work of grace upon your conscience? Whether you are truly in the narrow, narrow way that leads to eternal life? Does this ever fill your soul with trembling anxiety, so as to lie nearer to your heart than any worldly care, or any earthly thing?

Then, if this be the case, you are seeking that you may find something; and you know what you want. You want power, you want mercy, you want the blessing that maketh rich, you want the testimony of God and the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost in your soul. If you want not this, all your profession is a lie. But if you want this, you have also been taught by the Holy Spirit where to get it. You have been brought off the creature, been emptied of your own righteousness, weakened as to your own strength, had your evil heart laid bare, felt the burden of sin in a guilty conscience, and known real anxiety, and, at times, distress of mind. You have seen the way of salvation through the Son of God. You believe **though it may not bring peace into your heart** that he is "the way, the truth, and the life:" and you believe that none but he, in his sweet manifestations, can do your helpless soul good.

Now, this leads you—if you know these things by divine teaching—this leads you to seek. How do you seek? You pray, you sigh, you cry, you groan, you search the scriptures, you hear the word. Your poor heart, sometimes, is panting after the Lord as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks. You are crying for a sweet discovery of Jesus' blood to your conscience. Sometimes you are doubting, sometimes fearing: sometimes hoping, sometimes desponding: sometimes lifted up, sometimes cast down: sometimes feeling that you are a child of God, sometimes almost believing that you are a child of the wicked one. And yet on you go. You cannot rest satisfied, as thousands are, with a name to live, with a form of godliness, with the outside of religion. Something vital, something inward, something experimental, something saving, revealed by the Holy Spirit in your heart and conscience, you know to be the sum and substance of vital godliness: and if you have not this, you feel you have nothing. You cannot take up with anything short of this. You cannot rest upon outside consistency. You cannot believe by your own strength. You cannot store your head with a system of sound doctrines, and rest in a scriptural creed. If you have not Jesus in your heart and in your arms, you have nothing, you feel you have nothing.

And this often tries your mind. You cannot get a sweet view of Jesus, cannot feel him coming into your heart in soft love and power. He will not speak. He will not whisper peace. He will not tell you that you are his. He will not bind up your wounds. He will not discover himself in the manifestations of his mercy. This tries you. It is a good thing it does. For this whets your appetite for divine things. This makes you hunger and thirst after righteousness. This makes you weary, and therefore to want rest. This makes you troubled, and therefore to need consolation. This makes you perplexed, and therefore to crave a divine solution to your difficulties. This makes you empty, and therefore you long to be divinely filled.

Now, it says for your comfort who seek the Lord—who really pour out your very soul before him—who seek him on your bed—who

seek him in the different hours of the day—who seek him with an honest heart—who really hunger and thirst after him for what he is in himself—this is spoken for your consolation, "Thou, Lord"—David solemnly appeals to God himself—"Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." 'They often fear that thou hast forsaken them. They often doubt and tremble in their minds whether thou wilt ever appear. But thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them.' Do you often find it so? Is there not sometimes a little encouragement? Do you not sometimes under the word hear your experience traced out? Is there no little enlargement sometimes in prayer? Is there no sweet text, that sometimes comes into your bosom, and makes your very soul feast, as it were, with honey and the honey-comb? Is there no sweet sensation raised up in your heart, whereby you believe that really God is at work upon your soul?

Now, the Lord never forsakes his people. He says, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." O these secret waterings of God upon the soul! O these secret leadings of the blessed Spirit in the heart! How he revives the soul when dead! How he opens it when shut up! How he enlarges it when contracted! How he draws it with the cords of love! How, from time to time, he lays the everlasting arms underneath the fainting, tottering spirit! He "has not forsaken them that seek him." There may be long seasons of darkness. We may pray, and get no answer. We may cry, and the Lord give no token. We may fear that he never will hear us; yet it will be found in the end, that the Lord has not forsaken them that seek him. No, not for one moment; some appearance on our behalf, though we cannot clearly see it: some support, though we may not sensibly feel it; some check in the conscience, though we may not be fully conscious of it; some secret guidings of the feet, though we may not be able plainly to discern them.

"Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." No. He never will forsake them, for his promise runs thus, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The Lord never forsakes the work of his hands. He will never give up his little ones into the

hands of Satan that he may destroy their souls. He will not forsake them that seek his face, and call upon his name.

Can you find, you that desire to fear God—**and there is no use my speaking to any one else, for they have no ear to hear, nor heart to feel**—can you feel anything of this experience in your heart and conscience?

Let me just recapitulate a few of the things I have endeavoured to unfold this evening, that they may be warm in our memory, and sealed upon our conscience, if God please.

Were you ever oppressed, or had a real burden of sin? Were you ever harassed by the devil? ever plagued by a body of sin and death? Did you ever grieve and groan on account of the sin that dwelleth in you? If you have, I will pass on to another enquiry. Did this lead you to God as your refuge? There is the turning point. A man may have convictions, fears, and troubles, and they may only harden his heart the more—drive him from God, instead of drawing him to God. But what has been the case with your soul? Has it brought you to God as your refuge? so that, in solemn moments, you have fallen down before God, and said, "Thou art my refuge, and my hope in the land of the living!" If ever this experience has taken place in your soul, you are a child of God. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed. But he never opens his arms, and never bows down his ear, except to his own poor and needy family.

You have known—have you?—"times of trouble." I do not mean natural trouble **though you will have your full portion of that**, but soul trouble. Can you recall when? Do you remember how it came on? How long did it last? How weighty did it prove? Above all, what was the effect? Did it bring you to God as a refuge? Did it drive you out of a refuge of lies, a name to live, a form of godliness, an outside profession? We must look at the result. Trouble does not prove you a Christian, but your making God to be your refuge in times of trouble proves it. Cain had trouble—Saul had trouble—Ahab had trouble—Judas had

trouble—and it never drove them to God. But the trouble of God's people leads them to God, for they have no other rest, no other refuge. Have you not found it so? It is a mercy for you, if you have. Have you any testimony that you know God's name? Have his glorious perfections ever been opened up in your heart? Have you ever received the love of the truth, and seen the glory of God shining forth in the face of his dear Son? And has it produced this effect in your conscience—that you have put your trust, cast your hope, anchored your soul in these glorious perfections? If so, you are a child of God: none but living souls know these inward dealings.

One word more before we close. If you cannot come in here, can you come in with this—**that you seek God?** that there is a cry in your soul after him, a desire in your heart to find him gracious, a breathing out of your spirit into his ears and into his bosom? This is almost the lowest evidence of a living soul: and God has mercifully given that evidence to encourage the hearts of his fainting family. Then you are a child of God. If this seeking of your heart is really a spiritual breathing of your soul into his bosom, God will not forsake you; he will not leave undone the work he is carrying on; he will not suffer sin, the world, the devil, and self to get the mastery; he never has forsaken, he never will forsake, those that seek him sincerely.

Surely, if we are children of God, we can find our character under one of these heads. Here it is traced out by the finger of God the Spirit; surely, if the Lord is our teacher, we can find some of these characters in our hearts. O what a mercy to have the feeblest spark of grace in our souls! Some men think that I am some reckless—what shall I say?—some reckless hacker and hewer, who does not care how he cuts down men, women, and children. God forbid I should lay the weight of my little finger upon the soul that the Lord has touched, though it be but the birth of yesterday.

This is my desire and aim—however far I may fall short of it—to trace out every mark of divine life in the soul, and to cut down

and pull to pieces every empty profession that wears but the appearance of it. I would, if God gave me wisdom, strength, and ability, encourage the feeblest breath of divine life in the soul, the faintest mark of the finger of God upon the conscience. But as to encouraging an empty profession, as to bolstering up vain confidence, as to deceiving those who would gladly deceive themselves—God in his mercy, as long as I occupy a pulpit, keep me from doing the devil's work! On the one hand, may he enable me **he alone can** to take forth the precious from the vile, and thus be as God's mouth, and as a Barnabas to comfort God's children; and on the other hand, may he enable me to cut down and hew to pieces everything that does not bear the stamp, lineaments, and features of the work of God upon it.

And I know—I speak not of myself—I am a poor instrument in the hands of the Lord—I know such a ministry God will always bless, if he indeed has sent forth a man with it in his heart and mouth. Such a ministry he will bless, and no other. He will not bless a mere doctrinal ministry; neither will he bless a mere practical ministry: he will not bless anything but an experimental ministry: men equipped, commissioned, and sent forth by his own glorious power to trace out the work of God the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of his people, and distinguish spiritual life from professional death: and thus become instruments in the hand of God to build up the church in its most holy faith.

Some of you I may not see again, perhaps the greater portion of you; for though **if God will** I speak again on Thursday evening, yet many of you may not hear me, at least this year, again. Therefore I would leave this with you, and may God in mercy seal it upon your conscience—**What do you know of the things of God in your soul?** If you know the least of God's teachings, you are as safe as if you knew the most; but if you know nothing whatever of the teachings of God in your soul, may God in mercy lead you to reflect on what the awful consequence will be of living and dying with a name to live, and with nothing but a lie in your right hand.

THE REPROACH ANSWERED

Preached on Sunday Morning, August 9, 1840, at Arlington, near Devizes

"Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord; even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word." Psalm 119:41, 42

Unless we have a right conception of the situation in which a person is, we shall form very inadequate opinions as to the expressions which that person utters. Mere detached sentences of this nature, taken separate from their connexion, will often no more enable us to understand their meaning, than to see the broken branches of a tree scattered on the ground will enable us to gather what was its majestic form and beautiful foliage in the situation which it lately occupied. So, to understand the expressions which many of God's saints have made use of in the Scriptures of truth, we must know the peculiar situation in which those saints were placed, before we can enter into the real meaning of the words which fell from their lips.

For instance, when we find Job expressing himself in this passionate language **Job 3:3**, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived; let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it;" if we did not know the peculiar circumstances in which Job was placed, Satan tempting him, God hiding his face from him, and everything without and everything within conspiring to write bitterness upon his path, we should be staggered that a gracious man should ever give vent to such unbecoming expressions. So when we find the prophet Jeremiah exclaiming **Jer 20:14,15**, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed; cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee, making him very glad;" if we were unacquainted with the peculiar temptations under which

at that time Jeremiah was labouring, we could scarcely conceive that such God-dishonouring language could ever fall from his lips. So again in the case of King Hezekiah; if we did not know that the sentence of death was written in his heart at the time, we could scarcely understand him when he cries **Isa 38:10,11**, "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living; I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world."

Now, so it is with respect to the words, from which I mean, with God's blessing, to deliver a few thoughts this morning. If we do not know the precise situation in which David was when he uttered the words, we shall form very inadequate conceptions of their meaning, and we shall be very much at a loss to gather what he intended by them. Before, therefore, I can enter upon my text, I must endeavour to show from the Psalm the peculiar situation in which the Psalmist was when these expressions fell from his lips.

He was not then in the full assurance of faith. He was not at this moment seeing his name clearly written in the book of life. He was not living under the shinings in of the Sun of righteousness; he was not "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is clear from **Ps 119:25,28 Ps 119:81,82 Ps 119:120 Ps 119:143 Ps 119:153,154 Ps 119:174,176**, as well as from the words of the text itself. But then, on the other hand, he was not by any means on the brink of despair: he was not sinking, in the despondency of his soul, into utter blackness and darkness. He was **if I may use the expression** in a kind of medium state—in that average experience, which the greater part of God's people are walking in. He was not in the enjoyment of light; he was not in the depths of darkness. He was not bathing in the love of God; neither was he without a firm hope of God's mercy in his soul. For we find him saying lower down, "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." "This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, because I have

hoped in thy word." "My soul fainteth for thy salvation, but I hope in thy word." So that if you look through the expressions of this Psalm, you will find them to be those of a soul which is exercised, harassed, tried, and tempted; and yet having an abiding hope in the mercy of God; like a ship at sea, tossed with the storm, and heaved up with the waves, yet having the anchor firm down in the sand.

That he had this firm anchorage we gather from the last clause in the text: "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: **for I trust in thy word.**" But how came he to trust in God's word? Was it letter faith? Was his trust a mere notion or opinion? Was it mere moral or natural persuasion? Was it in any respect the fruit and creature of his own heart? No; his trust arose from this, that he had felt the power of God's truth in his soul; that he had experienced the life-giving effects of the promise applied to his heart; for he says, "Remember **thy word** unto thy servant, **upon which thou hast caused me to hope:**" that word which God had brought home to his soul; that word which had been commended with life and power and feeling to his conscience, and had raised up faith and hope with all their blessed train.

His state then was this—hanging, relying, depending upon, and trusting to that word of promise which the Holy Ghost had applied with power to his conscience; not relying upon the bare letter of truth, but leaning upon the sure word of promise which had been brought home with power to his heart. He had been quickened by it, strengthened by it, comforted by it, and encouraged by it, and was therefore now hanging upon it, as a child hangs upon its mother's breast. And mingled with this trust there was a pressing case of need; so that these three things, like the three strands of a rope, were entwined together in his heart; need—faith—and desire.

Being, then, in this state, he only had a greater hungering and thirsting after further food. What he had already received from God had not brought into his soul lasting satisfaction; it had

rather enkindled his appetite for more. Fresh wants called urgently for fresh deliverances; new diseases required anew the healing hand. This is the effect of the first word which the Holy Ghost drops with power into a man's heart. It deadens him and sickens him to all letter religion, and all creature faith, and all taking God at his word, and at the same time enkindles in his soul an appetite for, and a breathing after other testimonies, which shall come in the same way, and be let down into his heart by the same golden cord from the throne of mercy and grace above. He had just enough given to him to make him long for more; just enough to open up a ray of light into God's truth; just enough to write beggary, poverty, and bankruptcy, upon all creature attainments; just enough to anoint his eyes to see the insufficiency and inability of everything the creature could do for him; and at the same time just enough to kindle in his soul burning desires and breathing longings after increased and increasing testimonies and manifestations of God.

Now, this I may perhaps be allowed to call an average experience; the medium experience in which most of God's people walk. They are not, for the most part, sinking into despair; they are not, for the most part, rising in assurance. They have received that which has opened their eyes to the poverty of everything else; they have tasted that, which by its mysterious entrance into the soul has brought with it feeling, power, unction, dew, and sweetness. They have experienced enough to make them earnestly desire to enjoy the fulness of that of which they have received the foretaste: so that they are not cloyed by it, nor yet satisfied with it; but only fitted and prepared to receive more gracious communications out of Christ's fulness. And they are continually brought into those situations and trying straits to which alone Divine help is suitable.

Being in this state, then, the Psalmist was made dead to everything that the creature could do for him, and was brought into a waiting posture—into an earnest expectation of further good—into a longing desire to receive that which alone could satisfy him. His eyes being now opened to see what God was, and

his heart having a drop of this Divine good let down into it from the fountain of all grace, his affections were inflamed and his heart wrought upon, so as to be satisfied with nothing short of fresh communications of the Divine favour.

Being in this state, then, he "longs after the mercies" of God, and he "hungers" after his "salvation." But what was the peculiar state of soul in which he was that made him hunger after these "mercies," and thirst after this "salvation?" There was something in his heart more than desire. There was a very pressing need. He was driven as well as drawn, impelled by urgent necessity as well as allured by Divine encouragements. An enemy was at hand who dogged his steps, an accuser with a heavy bill of charges was waiting at his gate. It was "that he might have wherewith, to answer him that reproached him." Though not in despair, he yet felt daily that there was that which reproached him, and he found daily an inability to return an answer to these reproaches; and being thus struck dumb, he was wrought upon by the blessed Spirit to seek and sue unto God after his mercies, that "the coming in of mercies and the manifestation of salvation" might furnish him with the answer that he needed. Now, none but a spiritual beggar and bankrupt could ever put up such a prayer as this. None but a tender conscience can feel reproach; and none but a soul made alive unto what God is, and spiritually led into the secrets which are with those that fear Him, could ever seek such an answer from God as should be a sufficient reply "to him that reproached him."

With God's blessing, then, we will look, first, at a few of those things which reproach a living soul; then at the poverty, helplessness, and inability of the creature to answer any of these reproaches; then at the desires and breathings of the soul after such a manifestation of mercy as shall afford a sufficient answer and lastly at the way in which these answers are communicated.

I have just now hinted that there are many accusers that reproach a living soul. One of these is **the law of God**, which reproaches every soul to which it is spiritually applied. And what

does it reproach that soul for? Disobedience to it. Every one to whom the law is applied with power is reproached, and put to shame, and brought in guilty, because he cannot fulfil the requirements of that law. Wherever the law is written upon a man's conscience, he will find a thorough inability in himself to answer its reproaches. A self-righteous pharisee can always furnish an answer. The law says, "Do, and live." His answer is boldly, "I do, and therefore I live." And why can he make this answer? Because the law in its holy requirements, in its length and breadth and height and depth, in its magnitude and spirituality, is not opened up to his heart and conscience; and, therefore, by the performance of a few duties he is easily able to answer the reproaches of the law, as long as it stands in the external letter. But a living soul, whose eyes are open to see its inability to perform that which the law demands, and who feels these reproaches cutting it through and through with piercing and sharp convictions, is brought in utterly unable to return an answer. This is that to which the apostle points, when he says, "That **every mouth may be stopped**, and all the world become guilty before God." That the mouth may be **stopped**; that is, unable to "return an answer." Here all self-justification is cut off; here all fleshly excuses are put to an end; here the soul falls down guilty before God, unable to utter a word, or bring forward a single plea why judgment should not take place; and, therefore, the living soul which is wrought upon by the application of God's holy law is so convinced of its inability to answer the law charges, of the utter imperfection of everything it performs, of the entire helplessness of every movement, of the thorough beggary and bankruptcy which are written upon it, that it falls down before God, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" instead of seeking to answer the reproach which the law brings against it.

Again: **our own heart** is continually reproaching us, according to those words of John, "Beloved, **if our heart condemn us**, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Our heart, then, often reproaches us, that is, condemns us. And what does it condemn us for? It condemns us for our shortcomings in all we desire to perform to God's glory. It condemns us for the base

lusts which are continually working up from the bottom of that filthy puddle which is within us. It condemns us that we cannot live as we would, think as we would, pray as we would, speak as we would, or do anything as we would: and thus our heart is continually casting reproaches upon us, condemning us, and bringing us in guilty.

Now, we have no answer to make: we can offer no excuse; we can bring forward no plea nor self-justification. We cannot, as many do, throw it off upon the old man, and say unto God, "Why hast thou made me thus?" Why didst thou create me as I am? Why didst thou cause me to come into this world to add to my iniquities? All such pleas and self-justification, and all such excuses are effectually cut off; and the soul can return no answer to the reproaches of the condemning conscience, but in its right mind falls beneath them, and cries, "Guilty! guilty!"

But again: **professors of religion** are continually casting their reproaches upon us. They treat us as Peninnah treated Hannah. Peninnah had children; Hannah had none; typical of how the mere professor of religion is abundantly fruitful in zeal and good works, whilst the living soul is barren, because it is unable to produce anything in the strength of the flesh, and must have all its fruits wrought in it by the power of God. It, therefore, accounts nothing as fruits but those which spring from the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost: and thus, whilst the bondwoman has abundance of children, the real wife, the free-born spouse, the beloved Hannah, is barren, and unable to produce those fruits which she considers as such. Professors are continually casting into our teeth our want of zeal, our carelessness about the perishing heathen, our neglect of what they call the means of grace, our not getting up a number of duties which are highly esteemed in their eyes, our not joining ourselves to a variety of associations for which the word of God gives no precept, and which the Lord himself never has enjoined. These reproaches we may despise; but there are others that they bring, to which we often find that we have no answer to make. They say, for instance, "Why don't you read the Bible more? Why

don't you pray more? Why don't you bring your children up with greater attention to that which becomes godly parents? Why are you not more liberal in the cause of God? Why do you not show more by your life, conduct, and conversation, that you are what you profess to be?" These reproaches are cast in our teeth, and we often feel unable to answer them; for our own hearts condemn us, and we groan under the burden that we cannot do the things that we would.

Again: even **the world** will sometimes reproach God's people. They can often see in them a spirit of covetousness, whereas they profess to have their hearts and affections set on things above. They often observe in them a spirit of worldliness, when they profess that their kingdom is not of this world. They often perceive in them a slanderous tongue, when they profess to have the mind of Christ, and to walk in love as he walked. They often discern in them resentment of injuries, when they profess to be meek, and to be followers of Him, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. They often see in them a levity, frivolity, and carelessness, when they profess to have their hearts drawn up from the things of time and sense, and their minds engaged in spiritual things.

Well, these reproaches are often cast in their teeth, and they have no answer to make to them, because their conscience brings them in guilty. Where the conscience is not wrought upon by the Spirit so as to have life in it, it can make excuses, and can retort angry word for angry word. But where the conscience is quickened into spiritual life and feeling, and is made tender, it sooner or later falls beneath the accusation; it pleads guilty to the charge; it is unable to lift up its head, and says, I confess that I am guilty of the things which are brought against me.

As I observed before, this experience has been wrought in the conscience, viz.—the utter inability of the creature to return an answer. Our helplessness and miserable impotency are so deeply engraved upon the table of our hearts, that we are unable to say a word in self-defence, or reply boldly. These charges are untrue.

Again: **Satan** often reproaches the children of God. In **Re 12:10**, he is therefore called "the accuser of the brethren." We know how he reproached Job, and even accused him unto God when he said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" As though Job was a mercenary character, as if he had a religion which only lived and prospered as long as worldly things flourished with him, and that if God only put forth his hand, he would curse him to his face. Thus Satan is continually reproaching the children of God; and, like a base wretch as he is, he will be perpetually seducing God's people by the pleasing baits and allurements which he presents before their eyes into some forbidden lust, or unhallowed gratification; and then, when he has entangled them fast in his snare, he will turn round upon them, and become their accuser. Nay more; this base devil will continually inject his own infernal thoughts into our hearts, and then turn round upon us, and reproach us as if they were ours. He will stir up the infidelity of our carnal mind; he will inject blasphemous thoughts; he will present before our eyes horrible pictures; he will breathe into our hearts most abominable imaginations; and when he has insinuated these hellish feelings into our depraved nature, he will come in another form, and reproach us with them as though they spontaneously arose from our own hearts, and then will say, "There is no hope for you; a child of God never had such feelings as these; if you were a living soul, you never could have such workings in your heart." Thus he turns round on the soul, and tries to sink it into despair by making it feel guilty of the very things that he himself has injected.

Now a living soul wants to return an answer to him that reproaches it. But he cannot do it of himself, for he has not a word to speak in self-justification; that is utterly cut off; and therefore he wants to have that which shall furnish him with an answer to these reproaches. And what alone can furnish him with an answer? The mercies of God in his soul. "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word;

so shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me." The coming in of "mercies" into the soul, and the manifestation of "salvation" to the heart afford an answer "to him that reproacheth us." If you will observe, the word "mercies" is in the plural number, there being many mercies; but "salvation" is in the singular number, there being only one salvation. In what way, then, did he want these "mercies?" Merely as standing in the letter of the word? Only as recorded in the inspired word of truth?—as things to look at—as objects hung up, as it were, in a picture, merely for the eye to gaze upon? No; he wanted them in his heart, "to come to him," to visit him, to be breathed into him, to be made part and parcel of him, to be the life-blood that should circulate in his veins, to be the very kingdom of God set up with power in his soul. And why did he want internal mercies? Because he had internal reproaches. Why did he need mercies in his soul? because condemnation was in his soul. It was there the sentence of death was written; it was there the sentence of acquittal was to be recorded. It was there that reproach was felt; it was there the answer to the reproach was to be given. If the reproach were merely outward, the answer might be outward also; but the reproof being inward—in the heart, in the conscience, in the feelings—it was needed that the answer should be in the same place, written in the same spot, engraved in the same tablets, and brought home with the same or far greater power, so as to be a sufficient answer to the reproaches of him that reproached him.

Well, here is the law then, which brings its cutting reproaches against a man, and that in a man's conscience, accusing him, and bringing him in guilty. Where shall he find an answer to this? Can he bring forward his good works? No; the sentence of the law is within, and good works, could he perform them, are merely external thing? Can he bring forward resolutions, and promises, and vows to do better for the future? No; these promises, resolutions, and vows spring from the flesh, but condemnation is written in his spirit. Shall he answer these reproaches by his own prayers? No; for the condemnation of the law is written in his spiritual conscience, and only as far as prayer is indited by the

Spirit, will it go up out of a spiritual heart. The malady, therefore, being so deep, the remedy must be deeper still; the condemnation being so poignant and internal, the answer to condemnation must be carried deeper still, into the secret recesses of the soul, that it may meet it in its very spot, that it may come into the very place, that it may encounter it at the very fountain head, and answer it in the very court where it is speaking against him so that the way in which the soul is brought to want internal mercies, and an internal voice speaking in power the inward whisper of love, and the inward testimony of God that we are his, is by the deep feeling of inward condemnation. If I have a mere external wound, an external plaister will cure it; but what if I have an internal disease preying on my vitals? Then I must have an internal remedy. So, if I have an internal condemnation, I must have an internal acquittal: if I have internal guilt I must have internal pardon; if I have internal damnation, I must have internal salvation: and if I have an internal devil whispering his internal accusations, I must have an internal Christ to answer this internal devil. So that none but the man who has these internal reproaches, and this internal condemnation, will ever want to have internal manifestations and internal testimonies. All others have the scratch of the finger which a little sticking plaister will cure; but really sin-sick souls, who have the disease preying upon their vitals, must have the blood and love of Jesus applied to the same place, and coming in to the very same spot.

As I remarked before, the word "mercies" is in the plural number; and I shall now endeavour to show how the different mercies of God answer the different accusations.

When the law speaks guilt, mercy coming into the heart answers that reproach—for mercy flows through the atoning blood of the Saviour; mercy comes through the channel of Christ's glorious righteousness, which was a satisfaction paid to the law: and therefore when the law says, "guilty," mercy, speaking with the voice of atoning blood—mercy, using the language of imputed righteousness, answers that reproach and says, "The blood of

Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Does the law then condemn? Christ has fulfilled the law? Does the law speak wrath? The blood of Jesus speaks better things than the blood of Abel; for "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." So that mercy testifying in the soul of the atoning blood of Jesus and speaking of his glorious righteousness furnishes the inward answer to the inward reproach.

Again, **our own heart** condemns us, for our shortcomings, our imperfections, our frailties, our numerous backslidings, our continual spiritual idolatries. Now when mercy comes into the soul, it covers, overflows, superabounds over all these frailties, imperfections, backslidings, and shortcomings. And thus mercy entering into the soul answers the reproaches. Do I come short? I do. Am I inwardly reproached for my shortcomings? I am: but is there any shortcoming in God's mercy? Am I reproached for backsliding? I am, daily and hourly: but is backsliding beyond the reach of Jesus' blood? Is backsliding beyond the outstretched arm of his mercy? Is the guilt of backsliding so great that atoning blood has no power to redeem or heal? So that when atoning blood comes into a man's conscience, it answers the reproach, "You are a backslider." I confess it; I acknowledge it; I feel it; I mourn over it; but is it beyond the power of Jesus' blood to put it away? So that when the blood of Jesus is sprinkled upon a man's conscience, it opens its mouth for the dumb in the cause of him that is appointed to destruction; it pleads the cause of the poor and needy, and answers the charge, not by denying it, but by bringing in a sentence of acquittal. When the soul, then, is reproached by internal condemnation, it does not escape the charge by pleading innocency, but by pleading guilty; and then the surety coming in to plead his atoning blood, the internal reproach is internally answered, and internal condemnation is taken off—not by saying, "We have not done the thing," but by owning it and confessing it, and feeling in our heart that "where sin has abounded, grace doth much more abound."

So again, professors cast their reproaches on us for our barrenness, our slothfulness, our worldliness, and the many

things which tarnish our life and conduct in their eyes. We want an answer to their reproaches. And what answer! Sometimes the answer of a good conscience towards God, when innocent of their unjust accusations. At other times, God makes our conscience tender to own the charge, and avoid these things for the future. When he plants his fear in the heart, to be "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death"—this is a mercy. When he raises up in our soul a sense of weakness and helplessness, and at the same time a piteous cry to hold us up that we should not fall; and in answer to this piteous cry strengthens our souls, so that we "stand in the evil day, and having done all, stand"—then this mercy is an answer to him that reproaches us.

So when Satan comes in with his accusations; when he tempts us, for instance, to believe that we are hypocrites, and a sweet spirit of sincerity is breathed into our hearts, it is a mercy that comes into the soul; and coming in as a mercy into the soul, it is an answer to this charge of hypocrisy. When Satan injects his hellish suggestions against the work, person, blood, and love of Jesus; when the conscience is made tender to hate these fiery darts, when the mind shrinks from them with holy horror, when the very spirit trembles, and the soul cries unto God to be delivered from such dreadful imaginations, it is a mercy; and this mercy is an answer to him that reproaches us, our hatred to them showing that they are not ours. When Satan says there is no hope for us; when God drops his own blessed word into the soul, it is an answer to this reproach by communicating hope. When Satan tells us we are deluded and deceived; and a desire to be delivered from all deceit and a solemn dread of all delusion are implanted in the heart, it is an answer to this reproach.

Thus as the world, our own hearts, professors, and Satan, all bring in these internal reproaches, and the soul is unable to answer them in its own wisdom and strength, and is brought to sigh and cry unto God that his "mercies" may come into the heart; when his "mercies," in answer to that prayer, do come into the heart, they are a sufficient answer to these internal reproaches and condemnations.

But again: the Psalmist not merely wanted to have "mercies" come unto him, but he wanted "**salvation**"—"even thy salvation according to thy word." It was internal salvation that his soul was longing after, the experience of it, the enjoyment of it, the sweet earnest and foretaste of it; and he wanted to have this in his heart, lodged deep and safe in his conscience. Now, this is the grand answer to him that reproacheth us, to have the testimony of salvation in the soul. If the law reproaches, salvation in the heart is an answer to its reproach. If our own heart condemns us, to have a sense of God's salvation in the soul is an answer to every reproach that the heart can bring. If the world condemns us, casts out our names as evil, imputes to us practices which we abhor, tarnishes our fair fame, and throws upon us every base imputation, if we have salvation in our hearts, it is a sufficient answer to all the reproaches that are cast upon us. If professors say how slothful we are, how lazy we are, how little we care for the means of grace, how little we trouble ourselves about the perishing heathen, and so on; if we have salvation in our hearts, written there by the finger of God, it is an answer to these reproaches. What need we do for ourselves when Christ has done all? Why need we be busy, anxious, and restless, when He has finished the work which his Father gave him to do? The strength of the child of God is to sit still "**stand still, and see the salvation of God**"; to have no will, no power, no wisdom, no strength; to be a beggar and a bankrupt, and live upon daily alms; to be a dependant upon Jesus to supply him every day and every hour: this is the state of a happy, blessed child of God. Now, if he can have the enjoyment of this in his soul, if he can have the sweet manifestation of this in his heart, why need he care for the reproaches of them that reproach him? Is he lazy who does nothing but simply receive out of Christ's fulness? Let them term it laziness; but is the vessel lazy that merely receives as it is filled out of the fountain? Is the child lazy that lies reclining upon its mother's lap? Is the aged man lazy who cannot walk without support? Is the fond wife lazy who loves to recline on her husband's bosom? Is the vine or the ivy lazy because its tendrils clasp round the oak? No man calls the weakness of these

objects laziness, because their very blessedness, happiness, and satisfaction is to lean upon another. We read of two sisters, of whom one was active, and the other, in her sister's opinion, was very lazy, one must needs bustle about the house, whilst her sister was sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing his word: and the busy Martha must not only condemn her sister for her laziness, but must needs involve the Saviour in the same reproach, saying, "Lord dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." She was so zealous, active, and busy, that she was not satisfied with reproaching her sister for her laziness, but must needs cast an imputation on the Saviour also. But what did he say? Did he sanction her reproach? He said "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." One thing was needful; and what was that "good part," but to sit at his feet, to hear his word, to drink in of his spirit, to gaze on his countenance, and to draw rich draughts of love out of his loving bosom? So it is with the soul that is really taught these blessed lessons: it never does so much as when it does nothing; it is never so active as when it is most passive; it is never so strong as when it is most weak: it is never so full as when it is most empty; it is never so wise as when it is most convinced of its own folly; and it is never so satisfied with Jesus as when it is most dissatisfied with itself.

Here, then, we have a striking contrast betwixt the feelings of the living soul—and the restless, busy activity of a mere unhumbled, puffed-up professor of religion. The hardened conscience feels no reproach; it glances off from it as an arrow glanced off the armour of some ancient knight in chivalry. The law never touches him; the world never condemns him; his own heart never convicts him; he is never brought in guilty, internally guilty; because his heart is like Leviathan, of whom we read in the book of Job—"His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; sling stones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear." Such

is a carnal, dead, unhumbled, conscience-seared professor; nothing touches him, nothing moves him, nothing condemns him, and nothing reproaches him. But where the conscience has been wrought upon by Divine teaching, so as to become tender, sensitive, and quick, it feels keenly reproaches cast upon it. These reproaches being internal, it must needs have an internal answer to them; and this internal answer is when God sweetly and blessedly satisfies the soul as to its own eternal interest in the blood and love of the Lamb, fills it out of Christ's fulness, and gives it grace for grace.

But you will observe that the Psalmist was not enjoying this at the time; he was panting after it. It was indeed the longing desire of his soul, but he was not settled down in the sweet comfort of it: and yet, as I have endeavoured to show you, there was that in his heart which was preparing him for it; which had opened His eyes to see the beauty of it; which had raised up a longing and panting in his soul that he might enjoy it: and therefore he adds, "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, **according to thy word.**" What word was this? Not the bare letter of the word, though salvation always comes agreeing with the letter of the word, without money and without price, rich, glorious, unbought, and free. But the word of which he is here speaking is the word which God had applied to his soul, upon which he had caused him to hope; the first testimony which he had dropped into his heart, the first living evidence in his conscience, sealed there by a Divine witness. Now, this word which had quickened him, upon which God had caused him to hope, in which he trusted, and upon which faith was exercised and hanging, had respect to salvation, and God's salvation, not man's. "Even **thy** salvation." He had been put then, into a waiting posture; he had been brought into that state of emptiness, helplessness, insufficiency, and creature-nothingness, which had prepared his soul for the manifestation of this rich salvation. He wanted no half-salvation, no mixed salvation; no blended medley part of grace and part of works; but he wanted God's salvation, and God's salvation alone; for he says, "Even **thy** salvation"—salvation designed by thee, salvation accomplished by thee,

salvation manifested by thee, salvation bearing thy stamp, and carrying thine impress, salvation witnessed by thine own power, salvation lifting up the soul into the enjoyment of thyself. Now, nothing else than that salvation can ever satisfy a soul which has had the word applied to it, upon which God has caused it to hope. All other salvation will never reach to the spot where condemnation is. Everything external here falls; everything outward is here at fault. God's salvation, ratified by God's power, attested by God's Spirit, and brought home to the soul by God's own operation, is the only salvation that can give an answer to him that reproacheth us; and this will always flow in sweet accordance with the word of promise upon which God has caused the soul to hope; it will always flow in sweet union with that word which has dropped into the heart, and by dropping into the heart has communicated life, light, and feeling.

If you are a living soul, you will know some of these workings. Is there a day in your life that you escape reproach? Do you escape it from the world? If you do, it is because you are of the world. Do you escape it from your own heart? If you do, it is because your heart is like a piece of the nether millstone. Do you escape it from professors? If you do, it is because you are one with them. Do you escape it from the devil? If you do, it is because you are a subject of his kingdom. But if you are brought out of the world, out of the professing Church, out of the kingdom of Satan, and set down into the kingdom of God, you will have all these inward reproaches working death and condemnation in your soul; and you will be so convicted of your own helplessness, inability, and impotency to answer any one of these charges that the longing cry and panting desire of your heart will be, that the mercies of God should come into your heart, and the salvation of God visit your soul; that by them, and them only, you might have wherewith to answer them that reproach you.

But you may be very weak in the Divine life, very tried and exercised in your minds, very full of doubts and fears in your souls; and yet here is the door by which you can come in. I am not going to open the door wider; it is as wide open as it can be

to let in every quickened soul. Every quickened soul knows these three things: internal reproach—"**For thy sake I have suffered reproach;**" helplessness and inability to answer these reproaches; and a longing desire that God, by the manifestation of his salvation, would plead our cause, bring us to the light of his countenance, and overcome our enemies by giving us an answer of peace and love in our soul. Now, every living soul can come in with these three evidences—reproach, helplessness, and longing desire after God's salvation. Is not this a low standard? Well, if you can come in here, there is reason to believe that God the Holy Ghost has put these evidences into your heart. And these will be no half-hearted evidences; they will not be perpetual, I grant, but they will be at times kindled most fervently in your soul. And the more reproach comes in, the more you will want reproach answered; the more you feel condemnation, the more you will need salvation; and the more you feel your own helplessness, the more you will want God to manifest his strength in your weakness, and give that answer to these accusations which you are unable to give yourselves.

I leave these remarks in God's hands: and if you have an internal testimony that you have experienced these things in your souls, may it be His blessed will to seal home these words with power upon your heart, that you may have all the comfort, and then you will render to God all the glory.

THE RICHES OF GOD'S MERCY

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, July 27th, 1856, at Gower Street Chapel, London

"And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:3-6

There are three subjects, branches we may call them, of divine truth, which seem to have been specially opened up in the experience of the Apostle Paul; and which he therefore, as an inspired writer in the New Testament, opened and enforced with corresponding fulness, clearness, and power. 1. The first branch of divine truth into which he was so deeply led is the Fall of man, with its attendant consequences of sin and death. 2. The second branch of divine truth into which he was so blessedly led is the Person, work, obedience, blood-shedding, death, resurrection and glorification of the Son of God, viewed in relationship to His Church and bride. 3. The third great branch of divine truth in which the eminent Apostle so blessedly shines, is sovereign grace in its justifying, sanctifying, and saving effects upon the Church of God. I do not mean to say that the Apostle lays down these three grand branches of divine truth with all the systematic accuracy of the philosopher; that they are divided and subdivided into so many consecutive clauses, like an Act of Parliament; or proved sentence by sentence, and line by line, like a scientific mathematical treatise. It never was the purpose of God to address the Scripture to man's intellect, but to his heart and conscience. As, then, these divine truths formed part and parcel of the Apostle's experience, and flowed into his soul out of the bosom of Christ, so they flowed out of his heart, and were written by his pen in the inspired record.

We shall find these three branches of divine truth—the Fall of man; the Person and work of the Son of God; and sovereign grace, with its blessed fruits and effects—if we have eyes to see and hearts to feel them, shining forth in the Words of the text. But I shall, with God's blessing, more especially call your attention to four points that seem to me to spring immediately out of the words before us.

I. First, what we are by nature. "And were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

II. Secondly, the riches of the mercy and the greatness of the love of God. "But God, who is rich in Mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins."

III. Thirdly, salvation by grace, which is the fruit and effect of this rich mercy and unspeakable love. "By grace ye are saved."

IV. Fourthly, the manifestation and operations of this grace in the persons of the saints of God, whereby, in consequence, they are "quicken together with Christ, raised up together with Him, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I. What a description does the Apostle give, in the early part of this chapter, of the state of man generally through the Fall! Such by nature are the saints of God, who, by being buried in the ruins of the Fall, resemble in all points their fellow-sinners and fellow-mortals. We know that God had eternal purposes of love and mercy towards them. But that does not interfere with their state and condition as involved in Adam's transgression. Whatever they were viewed eternally in union with the Son of God; whatever they will be in the accomplishment of God's purposes, when they will outshine the stars in glory, they fell in Adam to the same depth as all Adam's posterity that then were in his loins. And therefore the description, however vivid it may be of the state of man generally, applies with equal force to the elect of God; because, viewed in their relationship to Adam, their first parent, they fell as fully and as foully as all the rest. Now, what does the

inspired Apostle say of man generally, and of the saints of God, as viewed in their unregenerate condition?

i. His first declaration concerning them is, that they *are dead in trespasses and sins*. No language can go beyond the expression of "dead." A man may be in a swoon, but he is not dead; he may be asleep, but he is not dead; he may be paralysed hand and foot, but he is not dead; he may be dying, but he is not dead. As long as there is the faintest pulsation in the body, as long as there remains the feeblest spark of life, there is some power of motion, some respiration, some evidence of life still in the frame.

But when the stroke of death has taken effect, when body and soul are separated, and the vital current is congealed at the fountain head, how breathless, pulseless, motionless, the body lies! Is there any word, then, that can be used which more aptly describes the total inability of man in his fallen condition to raise up any spiritual movement Godward? No, man before God, as to any spiritual movement, is as helpless as the corpse in the coffin.

But as if that were not sufficient to describe the state of man before God, the Apostle uses a very emphatic expression, "*Dead in trespasses and sins.*" I hardly know how I can convey the thought as it springs up in my mind, but I will endeavour. Some months ago, in the grey dawn of a winter's morning, there was found on Hampstead Heath the body of a miserable suicide—it was lying upon the dry heath. That is one figure. Take another: walking by the sea-side, you come suddenly upon the body of a shipwrecked sailor, washed high and dry upon the sandy beach. In the one case the body was lying on the dry heath, in the other case upon the dry sand. Death is dreadful here, but not necessarily disgusting. But if you were to see a body, not lying upon the dry heath, nor upon the sand of the seashore, but sunk in a deep sewer, where every loathsome reptile and hideous creature swarming in a pool of corruption were crawling in and over it; or if this miserable corpse were buried in the deepest, foulest filth which imagination can conceive; that would be a different spectacle from seeing a corpse upon the heath, or the

dead body of a sailor upon the sand. Now, when the Apostle speaks of a sinner being *dead in trespasses and sins*, it seems to me to convey the idea of a dead body immersed in the foulest corruption, with hideous reptiles and myriads of loathsome monsters swarming over it. Such is man by nature and practice; not only *dead*, but *dead in trespasses and sins*; as far as any vital movement to God is concerned dead, but every sin as active, lively, and swarming upon the dead corpse as tadpoles in a pool.

ii. But the Apostle uses another expression; and of course he selects, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, those figures which convey to our mind the clearest ideas. He speaks of their *walking according to the course of this world*. Now, as a dead body cannot walk, the figure is changed to convey a lively impression. But looking at the figure as it stands, and viewing the dead in sin as walking according to the course of this world, what a description it is of what the world really is! It seems to me represented under this idea—a river flowing onwards, and every wave of that stream flowing away from God into an abyss of eternal misery and woe. There is not a drop in that river which is flowing to the throne of God; the whole course of that stream is flowing onward to eternal destruction. If such be the course of this world, whether pleasure or amusement, or even occupation and business, according to the same course the saints of God walk while they are in their state of unregeneracy.

iii. But the Apostle has not yet done with describing the state of man by the Fall. He adds another feature to the dark portrait, which seems to go beyond all yet traced by his powerful pen, "*according to the prince of the power of the air*, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." It seems to my mind as if Satan here were represented hovering in the air, there exercising some such dominion over men as the eagle, towering on her lofty eyrie, exercises over the feathered race, pursuing and hunting them to their destruction. He is "the prince and god of this world," and is represented here as an unclean spirit, brooding over the children of disobedience, and working in them his own malignity, rebellion, pride, and obduracy. Now, look for

yourself at fallen man as drawn by an inspired pen. Do not think that I exaggerate, misstate, or misrepresent God's solemn truth. I am merely holding up to your view the language of the Holy Spirit, and endeavouring as far as I can to cast a light upon it. Examine these expressions for yourselves; they are not my statements; I merely hold them up that you may look at them; weigh them carefully; weigh them separately; then put them together, and tell me whether I am exaggerating man's natural condition.

iv. I might, if time permitted, dwell on another feature of this vivid portraiture, the *carrying out into positive practice* the sins thus engendered or infused. "Among whom," says the Apostle, "we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Some of these desires were the more polluting pleasures of the flesh; others, the higher and more intellectual employment of the mind; but each and all alike alien to the life of God, and issuing in destruction. But I shall not detain you upon this part of our subject beyond just dwelling for a few moments upon what the Apostle in our text more particularly enforces upon our consciences, where he says, "and were *by nature* the children of wrath, even as others."

God's children, the saints of the Most High, never were, as regards their persons, under the penal wrath of God in the same way as those who are finally lost, because He loved them from eternity, and justified and accepted them in the person of His dear Son; as the Apostle says, "made us accepted in the Beloved." The Apostle therefore does not say they were hated of God, or lying under His penal or vindictive wrath; but "by nature," that is, viewed in their natural state and condition, viewed as buried in the ruins of the Fall, and simply with regard to that corrupt, depraved nature which they inherited as sprung from Adam's loins; in this sense, and this sense only, were they "children of wrath, even as others." Their principles, their motives, their practice, their ignorance of God, their unbelief, enmity, and general ungodliness, were as great if not greater

than in their fellow sinners, and these therefore exposed them to, and made them deserving of the wrath of God. In fact, the expression "children of wrath" is a Hebrew idiom. We find an almost similar expression (1 Sam. 26:16) where David, speaking to the men who guarded Saul so carelessly, said to them, "As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die (margin, "the sons of death"), because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed." The expression, therefore, "children of wrath," signifies not that they were liable to the penal wrath of God, to His eternal anger and fiery indignation: but that their former conduct and practices, their abominable sins and ungodly ways, were of such a nature as exposed them to, and made them worthy of that flaming displeasure that burns to the lowest hell; and it is this desert of theirs which so enhances the mercy of God that He did not give vent to His holy indignation, but in justly-deserved wrath remembered mercy, for His dear Son's sake. Which brings us to

II. Our second point, *The riches of the mercy of God, and the great love wherewith He loved His saints even when they were dead in sins.* I remove the comma which is found in our translation after "us." This we may do without scruple when the sense is improved thereby, for there are no points in the best and most ancient manuscripts. I therefore feel at liberty to remove the comma, and read the whole sentence as one continuous expression of the greatness of God's love. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins." Does not this enhance the love of God that He loved us even when we were dead in sins? This eternal love prompted, so to speak, mercy. Love regarded the persons, mercy regarded the sins of the elect; and the two combined to save them from hell, where sin would have carried them, into heaven where love would have them. But let us examine these two attributes of God separately; and first, *Mercy.*

i. *Mercy* is that peculiar attribute of God which was drawn out by the sin of man; for mercy, as a pure attribute, has respect only to sinners. Before man fell, mercy was an attribute that lay, so to speak, hidden in the bosom of God. Angels fell; mercy poured not

out itself from God's bosom to rescue them. Man fell; then mercy, which had been hidden in the bosom of God, first came forth into visible manifestation. We must ever bear in mind that all God's attributes are what is called "co-ordinate"; in other words, that all the perfections of God—what are commonly called His attributes—are alike infinite. He is, therefore, "rich in mercy," because infinite in mercy. With Him mercy is never exercised, as it may be in our case, at the expense of justice, nor is justice exercised at the expense of mercy. In our case, mercy often bespeaks weakness. The Queen, for instance, might show mercy to a criminal at the expense of justice. But in the instance of the infinite Jehovah, all His attributes being perfectly co-ordinate and perfectly equal, His mercy is as great as His justice, and His justice is as great as His mercy.

But again, in order experimentally to understand the riches of God's mercy, we must have a spiritual sight and sense of our need of that mercy. Men brand us sometimes with the title of "corruption preachers"; and if we speak a little of the depths of the Fall, and of what man is by nature as a sinner, this is termed "gloating over and preaching corruption." But I am bold to say this, that we never can really, truly, and experimentally enter into the riches of God's mercy until we are made deeply acquainted with our need of that mercy. We must go down into the depths, if we are to rise up to the heights. If we are to feel the balm of a Saviour's precious blood healing the festering sores of a guilty conscience, there must be guilt and wounds made in that conscience before the balm is applied, or its benefits realised. Slightly wounded, slightly healed; know little of man's corruption, know little of God's mercy; sink little into the depths of nature's ruin, rise little into the heights of grace's recovery; because he loves most who has most forgiven. Would we, therefore, enter, by living faith, into the riches of God's mercy, we must know deeply, painfully, and experimentally the depths of the Fall; and be it called corruption or not, it is the only way whereby a door is opened for the reception of God's salvation into our heart. The more we know of our own misery, the more we shall prize God's mercy; and the more we feel ourselves, from the workings of sin

and guilt, miserable creatures, and unworthy of the least notice from God, the more we shall prize His smile, the more we shall value His blessing, the more we shall extol His name, and the higher He will rise in our affections, when He manifests the riches of His mercy to our heart. It is easy enough to use a nick-name. This is the ready weapon of every ragged street boy. There may be those here who, themselves ignorant of soul trouble, throw scorn and contempt on the tried and tempted, the distressed and exercised saints of God; but their great Advocate will plead their cause; and you may have a reckoning at the last day to make for these things that you at present but little dream of. It is a grievous thing to rub salt into the wounds of a bleeding conscience; to strike the dying dead; to add grief and sorrow to those who are sinking already under apprehensions of eternal wrath.

ii. Not only, however, is God "rich in mercy," but *great in love*; for, indeed, who can tell the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of the love of God? But to enter, in some measure, into the love of God, we must see when, where, and how that love was manifested. Here I see the beauty of that passage, when we read it, as I have pointed out, as one sentence, "For His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." I was speaking of man's natural condition as imaged by the figure of a loathsome corpse lying in a sewer, all surrounded with corruption and filth. Now, is there anything in such an object to draw forth love? Must it not, viewed in itself, ever be a loathsome spectacle? Could you love such an object? Would not your eyes instinctively turn away with deep loathing, and fainting, staggering sickness, from such a sight? Now carry that thought, as the Apostle here describes it, into the love of God. That He should love a *saint* is nothing so marvellous; but that He should love a *sinner!*—there is the mystery. When we view the perfections of God, His infinite purity, spotless holiness, inflexible justice, tremendous majesty, eternal hatred against sin, and have some spiritual sight also of the natural loathsomeness of a sinner in His holy and pure eyes—then to see the love of God extending itself towards him as he lies dead in sin, we stand

amazed how the love of God, a Being so pure, a Being so infinitely and beyond all conception holy, should flow forth to objects so polluted. A knowledge, therefore, of sin, and of our death therein, a sight, sense, and feeling of our corruption, let men say what they may, is essential to our reception of the love of God. For if the love of God is shown to us when we are dead in sin, how can we understand that love? how rightly apprehend it? how enter into its lengths, breadths, depths, and heights, unless we have seen and felt ourselves to be objects naturally of God's detestation; and yet, to our joy and astonishment, found ourselves, on the contrary, the objects of this eternal love? It is only as we have our eyes opened, and our hearts touched to see and feel "the depths of sin that we wade and grope in," that we can enter into the riches of God's mercy, and admire with holy wonder that eternal love which could break forth through everything which is hateful to the pure nature of God, and fix itself in unalterable delight upon chosen sinners.

III. But I pass on to the next point which I proposed to bring before you; and that is so expressed as if the Apostle's heart were so full of it that he threw it in by way of overflowing parenthesis, "*By grace are ye saved.*" O the volumes of blessed truth that are couched in these few words, thrown in out of the Apostle's full heart as if to give a moment's vent to his love of salvation by grace! Mercy, love, and grace are all in the bosom of God toward His saints; and yet they differ from each other. But how? *Mercy* regards the criminal; *love* regards the object; *grace*, perhaps, is a blending of the two—the union of mercy and love. God loves the holy unfallen angels; *there* is an object of love in which there is no mixture of mercy; for having never sinned, mercy they do not need. Again. God showed no mercy to the fallen angels; there we have justice and wrath, without mercy; but in the case of the saints of God, the election of grace, we have not only mercy and love, but we have the conjoint attribute that, uniting mercy and love in one stream, flows onward to the Church, as the river of the water of life—the pure crystal river of grace. Grace means, as you well know, the pure favour of God, and, as such, is sovereign, distinguishing, free, and

superabounding. Every attribute of Jehovah is distinct, and yet so blended that the whole shine forth in one glorious effulgence. The rays of the sun united form one complete body of pure bright light; but the prism, or the rainbow, separates these rays into distinct colours. So the attributes of God are not confused though blended, and all shine forth in one pure bright glory. But this is the peculiar character of *grace*, that any intermixture of worth or worthiness in the object would destroy it. We have heard much, far too much lately, of a poison called strychnine—that deadly drug of which so small a portion as a grain is fatal to the human system. To use a comparison, here is a glass of pure sparkling wine, which, to a person exhausted or fainting, would be a refreshing cordial; but suppose some deadly poisoner were to introduce into that wine one grain of this fearful drug—which it were well for the human race had it never been discovered—the infusion of that one grain, or half a grain, would convert a healing cordial into a deadly draught. So the grace of God, which you may compare to pure sparkling wine—"the wine that cheereth God and man," infuse into the grace of God one grain of human merit, and you convert the cordial of a fainting sinner's heart into a deadly poison. For if the gospel require merit, we are damned by it as inevitably as by the law. This Luther felt when, racked and torn by the words, "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested," he cried out in the agony of his soul, "What, am I damned not only by the law, but damned by the gospel also!"

This pure, free, unadulterated grace is the joy of every soul that is able to receive it; for it comes as a blessed cordial when sinking and swooning under a sight and sense of the deserved wrath of God. When, then, the pure gospel of the grace of God comes as a cordial from the Most High, it lifts up his drooping head, revives his sinking soul, and pours oil and wine into his bleeding wounds. By this grace we are justified, pardoned, accepted, sanctified, and saved with an everlasting salvation. O glad tidings to perishing sinners! O blessed news to those who are sinking under a sense of guilt and misery, in whom the law of God is discharging its awful curse! When we get a view by faith, and a sweet taste of the pure grace of God, what a balm, what a

cordial, what a sweet reviving draught it is. It is this which makes us prize so highly, and exalt so gladly, the free grace of God; because it is so pure, so free, and so superabounding over all the aboundings of sin, guilt, filth, and folly. It never can be laid down too clearly, it never can be too much insisted on, that "by grace," and grace alone, "ye are saved." If free grace has reached your soul, it has saved your soul; if free grace has come into your heart, it has blessed you with an everlasting salvation, and you will live to prove it when your happy soul joins the throng of the blessed. If anything can lift up a drooping sinner, restore a backslider, break a hard or soften a stony heart; draw forth songs of praise and tears of contrition; produce repentance and godly sorrow for sin; a humble mind, and a tender conscience; it is a sweet experience of the superabounding grace of God. Can we then exalt it too much? Can we prize it too highly? Can we cleave to it too closely? No; in proportion as we feel our ruin and misery, we shall cleave to it with every desire of our soul; for it is all our salvation, as it is all our desire.

IV. But I pass on to our fourth and last point, which is, *the effects and fruits* of this grace, as they are brought forth into living manifestation.

The Apostle speaks of three things that spring out of the sovereign grace of God. 1. That God hath "quickened us together with Christ." 2. "Raised us up together." 3. "And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Observe the union with the Son of God. Is the soul quickened? It is "quickened together with Christ." Is the soul raised up? It is "raised up together with Christ." Does it sit in heavenly places? It sits there in and with Christ; He being the Head, from whom the body, the members, derive all their vital influence. Let us trace out these three blessings.

i. The first thing said here is, "hath *quickened* us together with Christ." To understand this we must take a view of the Lord Jesus Christ as He lay in the sepulchre. View Him, then, lying dead there; see His holy body preserved from the least taint of

corruption, but still a dead body. Now carry your thoughts onward to the operations of the Holy Spirit (for He was "quickened by the Spirit") and His own divine operations, because He raised up His own body. What is the first? It is the quickening, the entrance of life into the body, previous to its resurrection. With this quickening came virtually the quickening of all the elect of God; for they, being members of Christ's body, were virtually quickened by that quickening act, and at the same moment. It is true they were not all vitally quickened; we ourselves, for instance, were unborn. Eighteen hundred years have rolled away since the body of Christ was quickened in the sepulchre; but the virtual effect of that quickening reached all the election of grace, and will stretch down to the remotest period of time. Now, by virtue of this quickening, when the Holy Spirit comes forward for the execution of His purpose life enters into the soul. "You hath He quickened who were dead." With quickening comes living sensations, such as conviction of sin, guilt of conscience, the fear of God, the heart broken, the spirit of prayer, repentance unto life, in a word, all the first work of grace in the soul. As in the body of Christ, when quickened by the Holy Ghost, there were vital movements before that body left the sepulchre, so there are vital movements in the soul of a child of God under the quickening operations of God the Holy Ghost, before raised up and brought forth. He is quickened into life, and under that quickening sees, feels, trembles, cries, groans, begs, and sues for mercy; every faculty of his renewed mind is alive and open to the things of God. Never do we pray, read, hear, feel so much the power of eternal things as when the Lord by His Spirit and grace is first pleased to quicken us into this spiritual life. But no *resurrection* yet; the quickening precedes.

ii. But as, when the breath of the Holy Ghost, so to speak, quickened the body of Christ as it lay in the sepulchre, it was but a preparation for the raising of that dead body from the tomb, so the quickening operations of God the Holy Ghost in the heart of a child of God are but preparatory to his being raised up together with Christ. Christ's body did not lie in the tomb, though it was alive in the tomb; so those whom God has quickened and who

are still lying in the tomb of sin, misery, and wretchedness, but are sighing, suing, and begging for mercy at His hands, will certainly be brought out. Christ's body was not left there when it was quickened, neither will any of you that are quickened be left in your sin and misery, in your condemnation and guilt. The same divine operation that quickened you into spiritual life will bring you out of this state of concern and anxiety into the resurrection life of Christ, as was done in the case of His body when He rose out of the tomb.

Now, when the power of God is put forth in the soul; when mercy reaches the heart; when Christ is revealed, His word applied, and it comes forth out of the dark tomb in which it has lain, like Lazarus, bound with napkins, and yet alive; when the door of hope thus is set open, and the soul is raised up to believe, hope and love, then it is "raised up together with Christ." The resurrection of Christ was not merely the grand testimony that God put upon Him as His dear Son, for He was declared to be "The Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," but He was "raised also for our justification;" and we rose in Him if we believe on His name. All the elect of God rose with Him; for they are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." When He died they died; when He rose again they rose again; and as they rose virtually in the person of the Son of God when He rose triumphant from the tomb, so, when the Holy Ghost applies to the heart and conscience the benefits and blessings of His death and resurrection, He raises them up and brings them out of the dark sepulchre into the open light of a glorious gospel day. And this is being "raised up together with Christ."

iii. And now we come to a third blessing of which the Apostle speaks, in connection with the resurrection of Christ. Jesus did not tarry upon the earth; He ascended up where He was before, and took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But when He ascended up on high, all the election of grace ascended with Him. He did not leave His members behind upon earth, but He took them all virtually into heaven. And this is a pledge that they will one day be with Him in the realms of eternal bliss

because they have already ascended with Him, as the members of His mystical body.

But this, in experimental manifestation, is the lifting up of the affections, the raising up of the soul to sit together with Christ in heavenly places. Sin, death, hell, and Satan, with all the misery and wretchedness we have brought upon ourselves—to have them all under our feet, as Christ now reigns, having put all enemies under His feet—to enjoy this is to sit with Christ in heavenly places. One of the last acts that God usually does for the soul is the lifting it up thus to sit with Christ in the anticipation of eternal glory. To see death dethroned, hell destroyed, sin abolished, and a glorious immortality reserved for the saints of God; to enjoy this in the sweet anticipation and blessed foretastes, so as to be in heaven before we get there—this is to sit down with Christ in heavenly places, by virtue of His sitting down there "at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Now, see what benefits and blessings spring out of a union with the Son of God. Why did God quicken your soul? Because you tried to make yourself better? Because you were sick of sin and the world, and wanted to be a good man or a good woman? Away with such paltry ideas of the grace of God! Oh! to introduce such petty peddling into the gospel of Jesus Christ is to cast contempt on the Majesty of heaven and on the grand truths revealed in the Scripture, as with a ray of light. Why did He quicken you? Because you were a member of Christ. Why were you raised up to "a good hope through grace"? Why did mercy, peace, and pardon flow into your soul? Why were you brought out of misery and death into the light of God's countenance, and had a precious Christ revealed to your heart? Because in the day when the Son of God rose triumphant from the tomb, you, as a member of His mystical body, rose there and then with Him. Why are you sometimes privileged to have your affections on things above, attain any victory over sin, death, hell and the grave, find your enemies put under your feet, and look forward at times with a sweet anticipation of eternal joys? Because, as a member of Christ's mystical body, you have already ascended, and are

already sitting at the right hand of God with Christ, who is sitting as the head of His body there.

Oh! what beauty and blessedness shine forth in the gospel when we view it connected with the Person and work of the Son of God! Take the doctrines of grace isolated from the Person of Christ: they are scattered limbs; there is no beauty in them; but view the truths of the gospel, in connection with the Person and work of the Son of God—what a heavenly light, what a divine glory, is cast upon every truth connected with His sacred Person, atoning blood, finished work, and dying love! This is the way to receive the gospel: not as a thing of shreds and patches, a mere collection or scheme of certain doctrines floating up and down God's Word, as waifs and strays from a stranded ship; but as one harmonious gospel, full of grace, mercy, and truth, impregnated with divine blessedness, and all connected with, all springing out of, the Person of the God-man. How it seems to lift us up for a time, while the feeling lasts, above sin, misery, and wretchedness, to view our completeness in Christ, to see our interest in His finished work, to behold ourselves members of His mystical body—to triumph in His holy triumphs—to rejoice in His victories, and to ascend with Him above the din and stir of this dim spot that men call earth. As one might rise out of a London fog into a pure atmosphere, and bask on some mountain-top in the bright beams of the sun, so the dear saint of God, when he is privileged to read his title clear, see his name in the book of life, feel the love of God in his heart, and rejoice in Christ, is lifted up above the fog and smoke of this dim spot, and sitting with Christ in heavenly places, he feels a sweet victory over every foe, internal, external, and infernal. And there is no other way whereby we can get out of it. Like a man in the London fog, struggling on with fog in the east, west, north, south, fog and smoke all around; so it is whilst we are struggling onward with sin and self; north, south, east, and west, there is nothing but fog, fog, deep and dense. We must be raised out of it to the mountain-top, and this only can be by being lifted up by a sweet testimony of interest in the blood and love of the Son of God. This lifts up, this lifts out; this gives strength, and this alone will give

victory; and so far as we fall short of realizing these precious things, we grope for the wall like the blind, and stumble in desolate places like dead men. It is true that for the most part the saints of God only have a little of these blessed things from time to time, just brought in and taken away, but sufficient to taste their sweetness, to know their beauty, to see their glory, and therefore sufficient, whilst they last, to help them onward in their course, and keep them struggling on, till they reach that eternal glory.

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 discerner 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 RISING OF THE DAY STAR

Preached at Allington, near Devizes, on Lord's Day Afternoon,
August 9, 1840

"We have also a more sure Word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."
2 Peter 1:19

Many persons are of opinion that had they lived in the times of the apostles, had they seen what their eyes saw, had they witnessed the mighty miracles which Jesus wrought, had they heard the gracious words which dropped from His lips, they would, they must have believed in Him. But do we find that this was the case with hundreds and thousands who witnessed His miracles, and heard the words, which fell from His lips? Did not the eyes of multitudes gaze upon Him as He bled upon the cross; and did a sight of His body there agonizing move or melt their hearts? Did not this piteous sight rather inflame their minds with frenzy, and draw forth from their hearts the scoffing cry: "Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." "He saved others; Himself He cannot save?" So with us here present: had we seen the same sights, heard the same words, and witnessed the same miracles, we should have been as hard as they, as unbelieving as they, and as blaspheming as they, unless the Spirit of God had raised up faith and feeling in our souls.

In this chapter Peter tells us that his endeavour and desire was that those to whom he wrote might be able after his decease to have the things he set before them always in remembrance; and he tells them that he and his brother apostles "had not followed cunningly devised fables, when they made known unto them the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to Him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am

well-pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." That which Peter's ears heard, Peter could not doubt; and that which was commended to his conscience, he felt, knew, tasted, handled and enjoyed for himself. But though he might communicate to us a description of what he heard, he could not communicate to us the same faith, which he himself felt. He might assure us in the clearest terms of what he himself had experienced, but he had no power to convey into our hearts a similar experience, nor to raise up in our souls a similar faith to that which he enjoyed himself; and therefore he goes on to say, "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

What does he mean by saying, "We have a more sure Word of prophecy?" Does he mean to say that "the Word of prophecy" is more sure than the voice which he heard when he was with Christ in the mount? Does he intend thereby that the oracles of God, which we have received from our fathers are more sure and certain than the very voice of God which he heard with his outward ears when God the Father bare witness, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" Not more sure to **him**, for nothing could be more sure than that which his eyes saw, and that which his ears heard; but more sure to **us**; because however certain he was of what he heard, however strong was his faith, however indubitable was his evidence, he could not convey to us the same certainty which he had himself; he could not set before us the same sight; he could not present to our ears the same sounds; he could not raise up in our hearts the same faith; and therefore however sure and however certain the word was to his own mind which he heard when he was with Christ in the heavenly mount, yet being unable to convey to us the same evidence which he enjoyed himself, he adds, "We have a more sure Word of prophecy."

Now what does he mean by this "Word of prophecy?" Does he mean the mere prediction of future events, of which we have

such ample records in the Word of God? Does he intend to say that the predictions of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and so on, were more sure and more certain than "the voice which came from the excellent glory?" No; he does not mean by the word "prophecy" the mere prediction of future events; but he means that declaration of the mind of God, which is in the Scriptures of truth. The word "prophecy" signifies originally not a prediction of future events, but a speaking in behalf of God; so that a prophet is one, not so much who predicts future events, as one who speaks for God, who is the ambassador of God, the interpreter of God, the mouthpiece of God; and as God has been pleased to record His mind and will in the Scriptures of truth, it has come to pass that the Scriptures of truth have become the Word of prophecy.

But how do they become a **more sure** Word of prophecy? They only become a sure Word of prophecy when they are brought home and applied with power to the heart. Standing in the bare letter they have no power; as long as they are merely couched in so many letters and syllables they have no effect; but when the incarnate Word makes use of the written Word **for they both bear the same title** to manifest the truth of God, and brings it home with power to the soul, then, and then only, does it become "a sure Word of prophecy" to those whose hearts He opens, as He opened Lydia's, to receive it.

Now if we look at our text, we shall find marked down in it the successive steps of faith in the soul; and it will be my object in the following discourse, if the Lord shall enable me to speak aright, to trace them out. For you will observe that faith always exists in the living soul; and faith will never quit its abode until faith is turned into sight, and hope is changed into enjoyment. Therefore we read of strong faith and weak faith; and that the Lord is the author of faith and the finisher of faith; implying that in the very beginning of the divine life there is the implantation of faith, and in the very end of the divine life there is still the existence of faith, until that faith is turned into complete fruition; so that in this life we stand by faith, walk by faith, live by faith,

and everything which we receive we receive by faith. It is therefore incumbent on every one who would be mouth for God to trace out the successive steps of this work of faith in the soul, that the people of God may have some inward testimony that they are possessors of that living faith whereby the soul shall be saved.

Now the first step of faith is, "**a taking heed to the more sure Word of prophecy;** whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." This sure Word of prophecy is spoken of as "a light that shineth in a dark place." As I said before, this sure Word of prophecy is not the mere prediction of future events; but it is the general revelation of the mind of God in the Scriptures of truth; and therefore we read lower down that "no Word of prophecy is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:" implying this, that whatever God has recorded and revealed in His Word of truth is the common property of the children of God. It is not of any private interpretation; that is to say, it is the public property of the whole family of Jehovah. For instance, we read in **Ps 51** David's confession of sin; but David's confession of sin applies to every soul that is condemned on account of sin. So that when David says in that sweet Psalm, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin: against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," and so on; all this is of no private interpretation, as though none but David made these confessions, poured out these complaints, and sank with these heart-sinkings, but the interpretation, in the Spirit's hands, is common to the whole family of God who feel guilt, and is the public property of all living souls upon whose conscience guilt is charged by the Holy Ghost.

So when the Lord said to Joshua, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," it was a promise specially given to Joshua; it seemed to be confined to that individual; it appeared to be of private interpretation, as though Joshua and Joshua alone was

entitled to that promise. But we find the Apostle Paul bringing forward this promise as the general property of the whole church of God: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." **Heb 13:5** "He hath said." To whom? To Joshua; but in saying it to Joshua, He said it to the church of God; in giving Joshua the promise, He gave that promise to every soul that needed with Joshua His help, that feared with Joshua to be forsaken, that wanted with Joshua His sustaining hand; and therefore this private promise to Joshua was not of private interpretation, but when applied by the blessed Spirit, suits every living soul that is placed in similar circumstances with the individual to whom that promise was addressed.

Now this it is which makes the Scriptures such a wonderful book—that the feelings there described are the feelings of God's family; the experience there written is the experience of Christ's people; the trials there set forth are the trials of all the elect throughout the world; and the promises there made are the promises which "are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God," for the whole assembly and church of the First-born. This makes the Scriptures such a wonderful book—that when the Holy Spirit is pleased to open it up, He makes that to be ours personally and individually which is in the Word, and seals that with holy unction upon our hearts which we read in the Word of God as belonging to others.

No prophecy, then, of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, but the common property of the family of God; and "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" the Holy Ghost so influencing and working upon their minds as to make them bring forth out of their hearts that which should be suitable to the whole family of God. When Job, for instance, poured out his piteous complaints, he was speaking, though he might know it not, for the children of God to the remotest time. When Hezekiah on his sick bed vented the breathings and desires of his troubled heart, he was, unwittingly

perhaps to himself, expressing the wants and pining complaints of every languishing soul. When the bride in the Song of Solomon tells her love-tale, and whispers the affection of her heart into the ears of the Bridegroom, she was pouring forth the affectionate feelings of every soul brought to love Jesus. The Holy Ghost Himself moved all the sacred writers so to speak and write, that He might make the Word of God to be a treasure-house of consolation, the grand reservoir of holy truth, out of which He might take sometimes promises, sometimes rebukes, sometimes consolation and sometimes instruction, as He might see fit; according to the testimony which God Himself has given of the Scriptures, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Well, then, here is "the sure Word of prophecy;" that is, the mind of God revealed in the Scriptures of truth. This is compared to "a light shining in a dark place." This dark place is the heart of man—and a dark place it is; and the light shining in the dark place is when the Spirit of God pours His own heavenly light into the dark heart. The Spirit of God works by the Word of God. He makes use of the Scriptures of truth, by means of these blessed Scriptures to communicate light. There is no light in the Scriptures themselves: they cannot teach a man to profit, that being God's prerogative. I might compare the Scriptures to the moon; the moon has no light in herself, but she borrows all her light from the sun. Blot out the sun from the sky, and the moon would cease to shine.

Or I might compare the Scriptures to what James compares them **Jas 1:23**: "If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass." Here the Scriptures are compared to a mirror, or looking-glass. But light must shine upon the glass. Of what use is a looking-glass in a dark night? It reflects no image; it presents to you no likeness; you discern not your features therein; it might be nothing else but a naked board, as far as any reflection it gives of your face.

But let light come into the room, or let the sun rise and shine upon it, and your countenance is reflected therein. So with the Word of God; it is ineffectual until the Spirit shines upon it; and when He shines upon it, He casts at the same time a ray of light into your heart; and as He shines with this two-fold ray, first upon the Word and then into your soul, He reflects from the Word your very image, and you see yourself just as you are, clearly portrayed.

Now this is the light shining in a dark place—the light of God's truth shining into your dark hearts. This becomes a sure Word to you; faith is raised up in your heart to credit what God has revealed; the shining in of this light into the dark place causes you to believe; and you, believing in the light, which is thus come into your dark heart, receive the Word of prophecy as a sure Word.

Now sometimes this word "prophecy" signifies **the preached gospel 1Co 14:24**: "If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." So lower down he says, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all be comforted." Now from the effects, which the apostle here ascribes to prophecy, we find what this prophecy was. There was in some cases a discovery of the secrets of the heart, which is under preaching; according to those words in Hebrews, "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." How often have you, under the preaching of the Word, had your very heart turned out, your inmost feelings described, the secret workings of your mind brought to light, and you were forced to fall down and

acknowledge that God was in the man who so turned out your heart of a truth?

So again we find that prophecy is spoken of as **a way of instruction**. "For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may **learn**." Here was instruction communicated agreeably to that which is said of the Scriptures **2Ti 3:16**, that they are "for instruction in righteousness." "And that all may be comforted"—implying that the preached Word is for the consolation of God's people, the building them up on their most holy faith, the administration to them of comfort through the manifestation of Christ therein.

The first step of faith, then, is to believe in the light, which shines in darkness. That is, the Word of prophecy, the Word of inspiration, the Word spoken by the mouth of one of God's servants, or read in the Scriptures of truth, comes as a light into a dark heart, and shining as a light into this dark place, the conscience takes heed thereto. The first step of faith, then, is to "take heed to the sure Word of prophecy."

This "sure Word of prophecy," then, makes manifest the counsels of your heart, brings to light the secret workings of your hypocritical nature, tears away your false props, pulls down your lying refuges, stamps beggary and bankruptcy on all you are and have, writes **Tekel** on all your attainments, and makes you poor indeed. You may seek to resist the light, and fight against it, and try with all your might and main to oppose these powerful convictions in your conscience; but the light has shone into the dark place; and the light having thus shone has stamped an impression never to be erased; it has left its footsteps behind; it has engraved a record never by human hand to be blotted out, because it has come with discernment, with conviction, with power, with feeling, with divine authority; as the fingers of a man's hand wrote upon the plaster of the wall of Belshazzar's palace.

It is then from the shining in of the light into this dark place that the soul is brought to take heed. It never took heed before; all warnings previously were slighted; all reproofs previously fell upon a disobedient ear; all exhortations to flee from the wrath to come never sank into the heart; all preaching, however pleasing to the natural ear, left no weight with it, caused no impression, produced no conviction, wrought in the soul no sense of misery, guilt, helplessness and woe, because light had not shone into the dark place; but light shining into the dark place produces that conviction whereby a taking heed results as the necessary consequence. It is like a fish in whose jaws the hook has been entangled; it may struggle to get away, but the angler will draw it to land. It is like a wounded deer, into whose flank the arrow has been shot; it may seek to bound away with the herd; it may try to rub the arrow out of its side by getting amongst the trees of the park; but the arrow sticks; and as the arrow sticks the blood flows; and as the blood flows, the strength becomes exhausted; and as the strength becomes exhausted, the poor wounded deer sinks and drops in its place. It must take heed to the arrow, because the arrow is in its flank.

A living soul cannot but take heed. Shall not a sick man take heed to his sickness? Shall not a wounded man take heed to his wound? Shall not a man with a broken leg take heed to his fractured limb? He cannot but take heed. And why take heed? Because it is forced upon him, wrought in him. The painful feeling will cause attention; it is no matter of choice, it is no matter of free-will, it is no matter of uncertainty, whether he will take heed or not. He is compelled to take heed by the painful feeling, which has been produced. Most men are like a man in a consumption; they take no heed to their disease. "O, I have only a cough," they say; "when the spring comes, I shall soon get better. I have but a little pain in my side. When that is gone I shall soon get well." They take no heed to the real nature of their complaint, and so they drop into the grave. And why take they no heed? Because it has never been forced on them that they are sick; they are deluded, cheated, deceived by the very nature of the disease, and thus sink into the grave before they are aware. So it is with

thousands of professors. They are in a consumption; they have the plague in their very vitals; they have the disease in their very souls. But they know it not, and they go dancing down to the grave.

But to what does the living soul take heed? Why it takes heed to the "sure Word of prophecy"—to what it teaches, to what it reveals, to what it makes manifest; according to those words **Eph 5:13**, "Whatever doth make manifest is light;" and therefore it takes heed to what the light makes manifest. It begins then to take heed to what God has spoken; for instance, God has said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." It takes heed to that. God has said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It takes heed to that killing sentence. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It takes heed to that word of condemnation, which cuts off thousands. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It takes heed that "without faith it is impossible to please God." It takes heed to God's warnings, to the denunciations of His wrath against sin, to all that He has threatened to pour out upon the ungodly. It takes heed, also, to the workings of its own heart, to the base corruptions that spring up from the bottom of that deceitful deep, to the filthy passions of its depraved nature, to the suggestions of its own unbelieving mind, to the horrid thoughts that it sometimes has of God. It takes heed to its own impotency and helplessness, to its beggary and insolvency, to its inability to think or speak or do a single good thing, to the utter poverty of the creature, and to its thorough powerlessness spiritually to live unto or please God.

Again; taking heed to the "sure Word of prophecy;" it takes heed for the most part to all that God speaks **against** it, and cannot yet take heed to that which God in His Word **speaks for** it. Therefore when the soul in this state is brought under a heart-searching ministry, it takes heed to the path, which this heart-searching ministry casts up. It takes heed to the distinctions that are drawn betwixt a work of the flesh and the work of the Spirit. It takes heed to the evidences, which are insisted upon as

belonging to gracious souls. It takes heed to the nice distinctions, which an experimental minister of truth draws betwixt letter faith and spiritual faith. It takes heed to the narrow line which he traces out betwixt the righteous and the wicked, betwixt those that fear God and those that fear Him not. It takes heed to these things as a sure Word. It feels that it is not following "cunningly devised fables." It is no longer a matter of indifference whether it hears them or not; but it believes on the sure testimony of God that in these things is life or death. Many poor, tried, tempted souls are often questioning with themselves whether they have a grain of faith; and why are they questioning it? Because they cannot find in their hearts that which faith is said in the Word of God to perform. They cannot believe in Christ; they cannot receive the atonement; they cannot rejoice in Jesus with "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" they cannot triumph over the world; they cannot find the operation of that faith which works by love, and purifies the heart; and therefore, not being able to trace in their hearts the love, joy and peace which the Scriptures speak of as the fruits of faith, they write bitter things against themselves, and conclude that they have no faith.

Now if they had no faith they could not feel. Take away faith, and you take away feeling; take away belief in the sure Word of prophecy, and you take away a taking heed to the sure Word of prophecy. Why does the quickened soul take heed? Can it take heed without faith? The taking heed springs out of faith; it is the offspring of faith, the child of faith, the fruit of faith. If I were to tell you that between here and Devizes, or any other place I might choose to name, when you had got half way there was a precipice, and that you would be very likely to fall down this precipice unless you were very cautious in looking to your steps, if you did not believe my words you would go heedlessly on; but if you credited what I said, you would take heed to your steps; you would be saying every moment, "How far is it to the precipice? Is it in this direction? is it in that?" and you would be extremely anxious to know the exact spot where the precipice was. But why this extreme anxiety? Why this wary walking? Why

this taking heed? Because you believe what I tell you, that there is the precipice in the road.

How then can a soul take heed to its way, to its feelings, to its secret thoughts, to God's warnings, and to the work of grace that He is carrying on, unless it has faith? Had it no faith, it would be unfeeling, indifferent, careless, reckless, carnal, worldly, earthly-minded. But it is this inward root of faith, which produces these fruits of faith; and it is because it has faith in the sure Word of prophecy that it takes heed to the sure Word of prophecy. Do you not sometimes tremble when you sit under a minister whom you believe to be a man of God, with fear what your sentence is to be? and are you not afraid sometimes that this sentence should drop from his lips, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, but art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity?" And do you not dread sometimes lest this word should come from his mouth to your conscience, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him into outer darkness, that he may have his portion with the hypocrites?" What causes you thus to fear and tremble? What leads you to desire to be right? What makes you dread to be wrong? What induces you to cry to God to search and try your heart? What draws out your soul in breathings after His presence? Can unbelief do these things? Can you of yourself produce these feelings? Can the flesh bring forth these fruits? Can you at all times command this spirit of prayer and anxious desire in your soul?

Here, then, is the first step of faith—a taking heed to the sure Word of prophecy, because the sure Word of prophecy has been a light in a dark place. Now if you never felt that your heart was dark, if you never had light shining in that dark place, if you never had the Word of prophecy commended to your conscience as a sure Word, and if you never took heed to it, it is because you have no faith. But if light has shone, if darkness has been felt, if the Word of prophecy **that is, the preached Word** has been brought home to your conscience, and you have taken heed thereto by trying your own standing by it, by bringing your evidences to the light, that the light may shine upon them to see

whether they be of God—if you have experienced these things, you have faith, aye, true faith, the faith of God's elect, though it may be in your feelings as weak as a bruised reed, and as small as a grain of mustard seed.

But now we come to the second step of faith. "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, **until the day dawn.**" Why surely if a man is an unbeliever he cannot "do well;" and therefore the very expression, "ye **do well** that ye take heed," implies that a taking heed must be a spiritual gift; for nothing is good but that which is spiritual, and a man cannot do well until, as it is said in Isaiah **Isa 1:17**, he "learns to do well"—until he is instructed therein by the Holy Ghost; and he does **do well** when he acts under the spiritual operation of Him who worketh in him "to will and to do of His good pleasure." He does well then when he is but the passive clay in the hands of the heavenly Potter, who moulds him with His divine fingers. He does well when he listens to the voice of his only-wise Teacher; he does well when he acts in obedience to His dictates.

The second step, then, is "the day dawning." What is this dawning? A larger measure of light in the soul; and not merely a larger measure of light in the soul, but light to produce gladness. When we are abroad before the sun rises, the first thing that strikes our mind is the gradual increase of light. We find this spoken of in the Proverbs **Pro 4:18** where it is said, "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Well, this dawn is, I believe, **the general manifestation to the soul of the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ**, without any particular revelation of that mercy to ourselves. Whence does the light come which gladdens our eyes when we see the dawn? It comes from the sun. But can we see that glorious orb of day? Is he not yet concealed by the horizon? And yet the rays and beams of that glorious source of light and heat come over the atmosphere, and are refracted thereby; so that though we do not

see the sun itself, yet we see the rays and beams that issue out of it. So it is with respect to the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The only light that we enjoy by day comes from the sun; so the only rays of mercy ever felt in quickened souls beam forth from the Sun of Righteousness. But must our eyes see the Sun of Righteousness that they may drink in His beams? Is not the orb itself often concealed when its beams are manifest? Is not the sun itself unrisen at the very moment when we see the dawn of day? So it is with respect to the manifestation of the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ; that is, an encouragement is shed abroad in the heart, just as the rays of light are shed abroad in the sky; scattered gleams of light break forth upon the soul, by which it is seen that there is mercy with God that He may be feared; that there is an Almighty Saviour, and that there is mercy in the mind of God towards every one who believes in that Saviour.

These streaks of dawn in the sky bring indeed no personal assurance, no individual testimony of our own acceptance; but they shed abroad a sweet and blessed feeling that there is mercy to be found by every one that seeks it. It is not now all blackness of anger against sin; it is not one lowering sky of wrath, and wrath alone; it is not one dark midnight of justice, in which there is no beam whatever; but rays of light shoot across the dusky sky as the dawning day rises over creation, and they gild the soul with the scattered gleams of mercy. And yet at this time there is no individual assurance, no sure and certain testimony of the name being written in the book of life; but still there is such a general sense of God's mercy as encourages, strengthens, enlarges and comforts the soul.

Now this is an experience, which persons do not often describe. They say it must be either one or the other; it must be either despair or assurance. I say it is no such thing. There is a medium state of soul **I know the feeling well** in which the dark clouds of despair are banished, and yet the Sun of Righteousness has not risen. There is a state of soul in which it is encouraged to knock and pray, to seek and sue, to wait at the door-posts, to be on the

watch-tower looking out for light; to be found on its knees begging for mercy, and at times to be lifted up to believe that the messenger has left the palace with glad tidings in his hands, that the vision is for an appointed time, and though it tarry to wait for it. Now when your soul has got to this point, it has crossed the line, as Huntington somewhere says. The tail of the storm is now only upon it: the lightning has ceased to blaze, the thunder has ceased to roar; the rain still falls, the sky may still in a measure be lowering, but it is only the end of the storm; and the soul becomes settled down, waiting for some manifestation of God's individual grace and love. This is the second step in the actings of divine faith.

And now comes the third step, which is **the day star rising in the heart.** "Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in the heart." What is the day star? A bright luminous speck, different from the dawn. It stands by itself, a bright spot in the clear sky; it shines as the herald of the sun—the messenger, the sure token that he is about to rise. The day star was once hidden, as the sun is still beneath the horizon; but that bright star, that clear luminous spot, that sure harbinger of day, has arisen, and the sun will follow. This then is the third step of divine faith; and it springs out of **the application of some sweet promise, the dropping into the heart of some token of love from the fountain of love, a gentle whisper from Jesus to the soul encouraging it to wait:** not assurance yet; not certainty yet; the book of life with its fair leaves not unfolded yet; "Abba, Father," not shed abroad in the heart yet; love unto the Father of mercies not enjoyed in its fullest manifestation yet.

Well, but, say you, how does this differ from the state which you were just describing? It differs thus. When the day dawns it is a **general** light: you cannot say there is any **particular** spot brighter than the rest, but it is a general dawning of the light, akin to the general manifestation of the mercy of God in the word of truth. But the day star is a particular speck, a star in the east that attracts the eye, that draws to it observation; it is a bright luminous spot which shines by itself in the sky. Now here is all

the difference betwixt a general indistinct acquaintance with the mercy of God **I mean of course an experimental acquaintance** and a special promise, a particular sign, an individual token, which has dropped into the heart.

But you say, Does not the application of the promise always bring with it assurance? That must depend upon what the promise is. Suppose, for instance, this promise was applied with power to the soul "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out;" does that bring with it assurance? No, it merely encourages the soul to come, and that if it comes it shall not be cast out. Or take another passage. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" does that invitation bring assurance? No, it persuades the thirsty to come to the waters. Take another promise: "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" does that bring assurance? No, it is an invitation to the heavy laden to come to Jesus. But how does it then differ from the general sense of mercy? Why, in the special application of the promise. How does the day star differ from the dawn? In this way: it is in the midst of the bright sky, and yet is alone in the midst of the bright sky; it is surrounded by a halo of light, and yet it stands alone as a luminous spot in that clear light. Now so is the promise of God applied to the soul, the Word brought home to the heart with power. It is in the midst of the light because it stands up in the light of the mercy of God: but it is something more; it is a bright speck, a luminous spot in the heart which shines there in solitary beauty, distinct from, though surrounded by the light of the dawn.

If you ever had a promise of this kind applied to your soul, you have had the day star. And where does it arise? In the heart. O Peter, how ever could you have applied such a lever to overthrow all the interpreters of modern prophecy? This word "**arise in the heart**" cuts down at a single stroke all the interpretations of those who are looking for nothing else but the mere outward fulfilment of temporal prophecies. The day star is to arise in the heart, in the feelings, in the soul, in the spiritual conscience, in the new nature. It is to arise within a man, not without a man—to

beam spiritually, not to shine temporally—to be an earnest of everlasting happiness, not of earthly prosperity. And therefore this expression of the day star arising in the heart shows that it is a divine blessing put into the heart, which gives light to the heart, which stands up as a luminous spot in the heart, and therefore is a foretaste of salvation in the heart.

And now comes the fourth step, which is the Sun of **righteousness arising with healing in His wings**. This is more than the day star; it is brighter than the day star; it overwhelms the day star: it shines in its own clear light; it brings with it its own evidence; it is accompanied with its own sure and certain seal. And this is the witness of the Holy Spirit to the souls of God's people that they are born of God, the personal revelation of Christ, the individual manifestation of Jesus as the Bridegroom of the bride. The shining into the soul of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and the betrothing of the soul unto Himself, is the day of its espousals in a wedding tie never to be dissolved. This is the fourth and last step of faith; and then comes all the trial of faith, and all the struggle of faith, and all the embarrassments of faith, and all the difficulties of faith; as Hart says,

When the pardon is signed and the peace is procured,
'Tis then that the conflict begins.

That is, begins in its intensity. It has begun before, but now it begins to be a fight indeed. It was a skirmish before, just the light troops traversing and fighting at intervals; but then the heavy troops come into action, and the battle begins indeed.

These, then, are the different steps of faith: not that they can be always clearly traced out, but these are for the most part the four successive steps of faith in the soul—the same faith, wrought by the same power, given by the same God, working in the same way, but producing different effects.

Well, but say some, how can it produce different effects if it is the same faith? My eye—to which faith is compared, as when the

Lord says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"—my eye, to which faith is here compared, does it not see every object in the same way? But does it always see the same objects? I may see things most pleasant to my eye, and I may see things most painful to my eye. But do I see them in a different way? No, it is the same organ, but it looks on different objects. So faith sometimes sees painful things, distressing sights, unpleasant objects; and sometimes it sees blessed things, delightful prospects, Mount Pisgah views. It is the same faith, acting in the same way, but beholding different objects.

Faith is sometimes compared to tasting: "If so be ye have **tasted** that the Lord is gracious; .. **O taste,** and see that the Lord is good." But does my tongue always taste pleasant things? Is there no bitter medicine? no wormwood and gall? no unpleasant draught to be swallowed, as well as honey, milk and wine? Yet the same palate tastes the bitter and the sweet.

So also faith is compared to the **ear: "Hear,** and your soul shall live; Faith cometh by **hearing,** and hearing by the word of God." But does my ear always hear pleasant sounds? It may hear sweet music—it may hear most discordant notes; yet it is the same ear that hears both. So faith may hear the thunders of the law, or faith may hear the jubilee trumpet of the gospel: but it is the same faith, as it is the same ear.

Again, faith is sometimes compared to the **hand,** as when it is said, "Let him **take hold** of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me;" where faith is compared to a hand. But my hand may grasp a nettle, or my hand may touch swans down; how different are the sensations! yet it is the same hand that lays hold of each. And so faith may take hold of threatenings, rebukes and cutting reproofs; and faith may take hold of love, righteousness and atoning blood; yet it is the same faith taking hold of different objects.

By these familiar illustrations we may see that the province of faith is to see, to taste, to hear, to feel; and that it is the same

faith, though the objects of faith differ. Thus in these four successive steps it is the same faith that takes the first step, the second step, the third step, and the fourth step; but these steps are different, though it is the same limb that moves. I may walk, naturally, sometimes over smooth ground, sometimes over rough ground—sometimes in miry places, sometimes over the green turf. Do I want a different foot to walk on different ground? Do I want one kind of foot to walk on smooth ground, and another kind of foot to walk on rough ground? No, I walk with the same foot in both cases. So it is with faith. We walk by faith, and therefore faith will be affected, as my limbs are affected, according to the road by which I walk. If I travel in a very thorny road, my feet will be lame and sore; if I walk in a green grassy path, my feet will be in comparative ease and comfort. So faith walks sometimes in a rough and thorny path; but it is faith still. It sometimes walks in a pleasant path, in the garden of the Lord; it walks in liberty, as David speaks **Ps 119:45**, supported by Christ, and in the love and blood of Christ, but is still the same faith—for there is but "**one faith,**" as well as but "one Lord, one baptism." Faith, like its author, is not divided, but is one and the same.

Now some here present may have only got to the first step—light shining in darkness; just light enough to see and mourn over their darkness, just grace enough to feel their corruption, just fear of God enough to tremble at His Word. Well, these are taking heed; they cannot sit under dark ministers, they cannot herd with dead professors, but they are taking heed to "the sure Word of prophecy." They will come for miles to hear those men who speak with feeling and power to their hearts. They think no obstacle too great, no hindrances too numerous, to prevent them from hearing "the sure Word of prophecy." They are like Mary, who "pondered these things in her heart." They lay up the truths that they know and feel in their souls; as David says, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Thus they are brought to take heed, and ponder, and scrutinize, and weigh the path in which they are walking. This is the first step, and a painful step it is when the conscience is compelled to take heed to all that passes within, and all that passes without. Some of you

perhaps have got a step beyond this; you have been lifted up in your soul by a sense of God's love in giving His dear Son, and have been encouraged from time to time to hope in His Word, to trust in His goodness, to cast yourselves at His feet, and ask mercy from Him from whom alone mercy comes. But you are tried in your minds because you have never had a promise specially given you: you are exercised because there has been no Word spoken with power to your heart; and yet you have felt faith and hope working in your souls. Well, it will come by and by; the day star will arise in the appointed time.

There are those perhaps here who have had the Word of promise, the application of some scripture with power, some love token dropped into their hearts, some sweet testimony from God in their souls. Well, you have got the day star. And there may be one or two, or a few—I know not their number—who may have seen one of the days of the Son of Man, and had the glorious Sun of righteousness arising in their souls, with healing in His wings. These are, as long as it lasts, walking in the light of His countenance, exalting and praising Him to the utmost of their power, and the utmost stretch of their faculties.

But all and each have the same faith.
Let not the strong the weak despise;
Their faith, though small, is true.

It is all from the same source—a less or greater drop from the same fountain, a smaller or larger crumb from the same loaf. They are all of the same family, as the babe in its mother's arms is the brother or the sister of the eldest of the children. And the time shall come when they shall all see eye to eye. This shall be when the Lord brings again Zion. Then there shall be no difference. They shall all sit on the same throne, they shall all wear the same crown, all see the same God, be all conformed to the image of the same Lord, all see Him face to face, and all be filled with the same glory. It is the purpose of God that there shall be differences here, but when this world shall have passed away like a dream of the night, all distinctions shall cease. All

shall meet around their Father's throne, ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb.

THE RIVER OF LIFE AND THE TREES ON ITS BANKS

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road. London, on Tuesday Evening, August 12, 1851

"And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." Ezekiel 47:12

The last nine chapters of the prophet Ezekiel contain in them much that is very mysterious. You will recollect that "in the visions of God," the prophet is "brought into the land of Israel, and set on a very high mountain by which was as the frame of a city on the south." But besides this city, he is shewn by his heavenly Guide a temple, of which there is a most minute and particular description, his Conductor measuring its breadth, length, and proportions. Into these details it is not necessary now to enter. But a question at once arises, whether this portion of God's word is to be understood strictly literally, or strictly figuratively. Some, and perhaps the large majority, consider that the objects presented to Ezekiel in vision were merely symbols of spiritual and experimental things. Others attach to the various things, so minutely detailed, a literal signification, and believe that they will all be fulfilled in times still future.

Which of these two interpretations is the true one, I do not feel competent to decide; but I do not see that one necessarily excludes the other. Even if we admit the literal interpretation, **that** no more excludes the spiritual than the literal existence of the ancient temple and its divinely appointed furniture, as the ark and the candlestick, shut out their spiritual meaning. One thing at least is abundantly clear, that there is a striking connection between a portion of the vision that Ezekiel saw, and that which was revealed to holy John in the Revelation. For, in **Eze 47**, the

chapter from which the text is taken, a "river" is seen issuing out of the door of the house, and upon the banks of this river, trees growing whose fruit was for meat and their leaf for medicine. Now this is nearly identical with what holy John saw in **Re 22**, where in vision he was shewn "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." There is, however, a difference between the two descriptions, which in itself is sufficient to shew that they are to be figuratively understood, for were they to be literally fulfilled there could be no such discrepancy nor inconsistency. John saw but **one** tree, "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month;" but Ezekiel saw **trees**, numerous trees, "all trees," which bring forth not twelve manner of fruits, but new fruit according to their months.

In looking at the words before us, I will, with God's blessing, attempt to examine, in a spiritual and experimental light,

I.—**The River** which Ezekiel saw issuing from out of the threshold of the house eastward. And,

II.—**The Trees** which he saw growing on its banks, whose leaf never faded, and whose fruit was never consumed, the one supplying medicine for every disease, and the other food for every appetite. The Lord enable us to pluck this evening one or two of these medicinal leaves, and to eat some of this satisfying fruit.

I.—The prophet, then, was brought by his heavenly Guide unto the door of the house, and "beheld waters issuing out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar."

These "waters" are clearly identical with the "river" that John saw. But what did these "waters" and this "river" spiritually signify? **The eternal love of God** to the church, as flowing forth

in the manifestations of grace, mercy and truth. For John saw this "river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And what flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb but the river of everlasting love? for, "God is love;" and he says to the church, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." But as the church in her fallen condition is dead, therefore she must be quickened and made alive; it is then chiefly and specially a river of **life**; and this John expressly calls it, "a pure river of water of **life**, clear as crystal." Thus it betokens the communications of spiritual life to the souls of the elect. This river had, therefore, different degrees of depth and breadth.

This heavenly Guide went forth eastward with a line in his hand, and measuring a thousand cubits, brought the prophet through the waters: they were then up to the ankles. The course of this heavenly river and its degrees of depth and breadth seem to point to two different things: First, the gradual spread of the **outward** manifestation of grace in the gospel: and second, the degrees of the **inward** manifestation of grace in the soul. Thus, in the first promise that was given in Paradise to our fallen parents, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, was the first manifestation of pardoning grace. The river of eternal love first, then, rose to view: but in their development the waters were as yet shallow. They were but up to the ankles—a little rivulet. Thus also, in the first incomings of life into the soul, as well as in the experience of the love of God among many Christians, the waters are shallow; they do but bathe the ankles. But the divine Guide measured a thousand steps forward, and brought the prophet through the waters. They were then higher; **"they were to the knees."** The river of grace that had bathed the feet of Abel, Enoch, Noah, and the antediluvian saints, deepened and widened in the call of Abraham. The covenant promise "that in Him, and in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed," flowed up to the knees of the patriarchs, no longer a rill, but a brook.

And thus there are those in the divine life round whose feeble knees the river of grace flows and strengthens and "confirms"

them by its healing tide. But onward still the man with the line in his hand advances, and the waters are now to the loins. If "the ancles" denote the **antediluvian**, and "the knees" the **patriarchal** times, "the loins" may represent the **prophetical** period, when the outward manifestations of grace in a coming Messiah assumed a deeper, broader character. And, viewed experimentally also, the inward flow of life and love is in some up to the loins, bathing them with divine strength. If the ancles represent "babes," and the knees "the children" in whom the spirit of prayer is warm, the loins may typify "the young men" who "are strong and... have overcome the Wicked One." But the Guide still moves on, and now "the waters were risen, waters to swim in. a river that could not be passed over." And may not this aptly represent the days of Christ and his apostles—especially the mighty pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when the river of mercy, grace, and truth, the river of life and love became a river to swim in, and three thousand souls bathed in its stream in one day?

II.—But we will look, with God's blessing, a little more closely still at this "river." One important feature is its **source and origin**. This is "the sanctuary" as seen in the visions of Ezekiel: "Their waters, they issued out of the sanctuary." In John it is said to be "the throne of God and of the Lamb;" thus identifying the sanctuary with the throne of God and his dear Son.

There is something very significant in the word "**sanctuary**," as denoting the source whence these waters flow. I need not mention that it means the holy place, and was especially used of the tabernacle where God dwelt between the cherubims. God is holy; his name, his nature, is perfect holiness. Thus, these waters flow out of the bosom of that unspeakably holy Jehovah before whom the seraphs veil their faces, and cry, "Holy, holy is the Lord of Sabaoth." Though it is a pardoning love, flowing down to vile, unworthy, unholy sinners, yet it issues out of the holy bosom of a Triune Jehovah. But John saw it flow "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," signifying the certainty and perpetuity of its source, as well as its union with the mystery of the incarnation.

In Ezekiel it is therefore seen to flow down at the south side of the altar, pointing out its connection with the sacrifice and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. What so firm, so stable, so immovable as the throne of God? and what so gracious, so compassionate as the throne of the Lamb? The Lamb for sinners slain, the crucified Man of Sorrows, is set down with the Father in his throne, as he himself declares, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" **Re 3:21**. Out of this throne does this river take its source.

II.—But having looked at this "river" in its source, and seen a little of the increasing breadth and depth of the streams, we may now consider its **course**. "Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." To understand this, we must reflect a little upon the local situation of Jerusalem: for it was to Jerusalem that the prophet had been brought in the visions of God from Chebar in the land of Assyria. The Dead Sea lies to the east of Jerusalem, and the intervening country is a wild track of wilderness. Ezekiel, then, in vision saw the river flow eastward, and passing through the wilderness bury itself in the bottom of the Dead Sea, that well-known sulphurous lake; the ancient site of Sodom and Gomorrah. The river flows **eastward**. This seems to point to the future triumph of the gospel. Hitherto it has flowed **westward**, leaving the east to heathenism and Mahometanism; but the day will come when not only "the kings of Tarshish and the isles" **Europe and the West**, "but the kings of Sheba and Seba" **the monarchies of the East** "shall offer gifts."

But the waters flow **through the desert into the Dead Sea**. Can we find in all the word of God two more striking symbols of the human heart? Is not man's nature **a desert**, a ruined waste? Does anything good naturally grow there? Is it not wholly overrun with thistles, thorns, and briars? Is it susceptible of any cultivation? Can any human art, can any natural skill, make the wilderness blossom like the rose? Here false religion differs from

true. False religion admits to a certain extent that the heart is naturally a desert, but insists on the ability of man to cultivate it. It puts into his hand an unlimited assortment of agricultural implements, and bids him cultivate this absolutely barren soil—with about as much success as if he ploughed the Alps, or sowed the wilderness of Sinai. True religion teaches that the heart is a desert, and that no skill or industry of man can alter its nature; but that grace, and grace alone, brings forth in it and out of it the fruits of righteousness.

But the Holy Spirit employs another figure to set forth the nature of man, and to my mind a more expressive one could not well be chosen—I mean, **the Dead Sea**. You know what the Dead Sea is, and has been for centuries—a solemn and awful memorial of the judgments of God. Once there stood upon its site five flourishing cities—Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Bela. At the intercession of Lot, Bela **afterwards called Zoar** was spared: but on the four devoted cities the wrath of God fell. Fire and brimstone descended from heaven, burnt them up, with all their inhabitants, and turned that flourishing valley into a standing lake. What a figure of man's utter ruin! Man in his primitive state was like that well-watered vale, which for beauty and fertility was "as the garden of the Lord," in which Lot pitched his tent; but when Adam fell, that beautiful vale was turned into a salt and fetid lake. It is emphatically called the Dead Sea, as destitute in its waters of animal, and on its banks of vegetable life—apt image of the dead soul of man! And as the Dead Sea is said to exhale a fetid and poisonous vapour, so does the human heart ever exhale the noisome steam of sin.

IV.—But the river in taking its course through the wilderness, and into the Dead Sea, has to create a change in them. It has to make the wilderness blossom; to communicate life to that sea which is emphatically dead; for we read, "These waters issue out towards the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall

live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh" **Eze 47:8,9**. So when the river of God's grace, that "river of God which is full of water," flows into the human heart, it communicates fertility and fruitfulness to the barren desert, life and motion and health to the Dead Sea. What a wondrous change do the grace, mercy, and truth of God create in a sinner's heart! For want of this river, how much religion is there without root or fruit! As Berridge justly says,

No real goodness long can stand
Which planted is by human hand,
It dies as soon as born.

A man may plant, sow, weed and water; but the first breath of divine displeasure withers all the produce: and the first burning ray of the sun of temptation makes it like the grass on the housetop. But let the grace, mercy and love of God be felt in a sinner's heart: let, according to the promise, "waters break out in the wilderness and streams in the desert," then the Lord plants therein "the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree:" and all this, "that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it" **Isa 41:20**. Under this divine watering and planting alone are produced the fruits of the Spirit.

v.—But the river does not tarry in the desert, nor lavish all its waters there. It speeds on in its vivifying course to the Dead Sea. There too it makes a wondrous change. "Which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." I need hardly stop to prove that the Dead Sea is here spoken of, for no other sea lies to the east of Jerusalem, and two towns are specially named which stood on its banks, Engedi and Eneglaim, the former retaining almost its name to this day. The waters of this river are unspeakably salt and brackish, impregnated with sulphur, and covered with bitumen. But they are "healed" by the river of the sanctuary. They then become fresh and sweet. And what can heal

the salt and bitter waters of the human heart? Their tossing and heaving cannot make them fresh and sweet. Nay, as the waters of Jordan have for centuries run into the Dead Sea, and it is brackish still, so all counsels and resolutions, vows and promises may be poured into the heart of man' but they cannot sweeten its bitter waters. Pride, envy, lust, unbelief still reign. But the river of life "heals" the waters. The misery of sin, the curse of the law, remorse of conscience, enmity against God, dislike of his will and way—the bitter waters that make life a burden and death a terror—are healed by the streams that issue out of the sanctuary.

II.—But we turn back from viewing the Dead Sea into which this river pours its healing streams to look at the trees which the prophet in vision saw growing on its banks. "Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other" **Eze 47:7**. The object and use of these trees are described in the words of our text by the heavenly Guide. "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."

I.—Viewing the river as emblematic of the flowing forth of mercy, grace and truth, life, light, liberty and love, as revealed in the gospel, we must understand "the trees" on either bank as typical of blessings connected with the gospel. We may therefore consider the trees to represent the ordinances of God's house, what are commonly called 'means of grace.' I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour therefore to shew how these "trees" represent these ordinances and means.

You will observe that these "trees" grow on either side of the "river." They are therefore connected with the manifestation of grace in the gospel; they run as it were parallel with the gospel; and derive from it all their beauty, power and efficacy. Trees in hot countries were planted by the side of waters, for there only

could they flourish. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water" **Ps 1:3**. "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters" **Jer 17:8**. Thus, in the trees which the prophet saw; they stood on either bank, deriving from the river all their virtue and sap. Their roots spread themselves down to the flowing stream; their branches drooped over and inhaled the vapour and dew which rose up from it in the cool evening. The waters issuing out of the sanctuary flowed into their roots, imparting medicine to the leaves and nourishment to the fruit. It says expressly, "It shall bring forth new fruit, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary." So the ordinances of God's house, and what are called 'means of grace,' derive all their balm and all their food from their being watered by the pure river of water of life.

1. Look at the **word of God** itself. Is not the word of God a blessed ordinance whereby the soul is healed when sick and fed when languishing? "He sent his word and healed them." But what gives the word of God its balm and its food? This tree stands on the river brink; the waters of life flow through it into the leaves—the texts and passages that clothe its branches—and into the fruit that hangs upon the boughs. Salutary medicines are generally bitter. Such often are the leaves upon this tree. The soul needs reproofs, warnings, admonitions, as well as cordials and tonics. The roasted paschal lamb was to be eaten "with bitter herbs," and "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." But the soul needs also at times healing balm, when cut and wounded by sin and shame. The leaves in this tree—the promises and consolations—have then a healing efficacy. The **fruit** too—the truth as it is in Jesus, the declarations of mercy and peace, the revelation of grace and truth in the scriptures—derives all its food "because the waters issued out of the sanctuary." What is the word of God without life and feeling, without balm to the conscience or food to the soul?

2. Take again **prayer**. Separate prayer from the grace, mercy, love and truth of God—what is it? Unless the mercy and grace of God had been revealed in Jesus, there would have been no warrant for prayer. Devils pray not, for there is no promise of

mercy, no Redeemer provided for them. Prayer is a gift from above: "I will pour upon the house of David... the spirit of grace and of supplications." Grace and supplications go together. The river of life waters the roots of prayer; into its streams the branches dip; and by what is beautifully called in Job, "the scent of water," that is, the vaporous breath that bathes its leaves, does it spring forth and grow.

3. So the **preaching of the gospel** is a tree of life. Many can bless God for a preached gospel. It has been a tree of life to thousands and tens of thousands. But whence does the gospel derive its efficacy? Not from the eloquence of the pulpit, the learning of universities, or the wisdom of academies; but because it dips its roots into the river of life, and draws out thence sap and juice that make the fruit thereof to be for meat, and the leaf for medicine.

4. And what is **reading of the scriptures**? "The book of the law," said the Lord to Joshua, "shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night" **Jos 1:8**. "Search the scriptures," said the blessed Lord in the days of his flesh. The life of God in the soul is fed by the scripture. The word of God is indeed a tree of life, on which new fruit is ever growing, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. "I am the Lord that healeth thee." But it is only a tree of life as it stands on the bank of the river. We may read the Bible with the greatest regularity: we may have our morning portion, and our evening chapter allotted out with the greatest nicety. Nay, we may devote our life to the study and perusal of the Bible, and yet never pluck from it so much as a leaf or gather one ripe fruit. It is good to read the Bible: but that is not sufficient to make a Christian. The river of life must bathe the roots of our Bible reading, and then when wounded there will be a leaf to pluck, and when hungry food to eat.

5. So with **Christian conversation**. The communion of saints, the intercourse that God's people have with each other, the talking often one to another **as Malachi speaks** of the Lord's

goodness and mercy is a tree of life; but only so as it stands on the river bank, and dips its roots down into the stream. What is religious conversation, so called, but idle gossip, except it be impregnated with the grace and love of God? What is much that is called Christian conversation but mere slander, or gossiping news mongering about churches and ministers? Religious tea parties, anniversaries, and too often ministerial visits, what are they, for the most part? "Trees... twice dead, plucked up by the roots." With leaves all withered, and fruit all wizened, there they lie prostrate on the bank like a mouldering pollard willow. And the reason why religious conversation so often degenerates into slander, detraction and gossip is, because this so-called conversation is not a tree of life that stands upon the brink of this immortal river. But let Christian conversation and the intercourse of saints be a tree of life; let it dip its roots down into the love of God, and draw sap and vigour out of this living river, then it brings forth fruit for meat, and leaves for medicine.

6. So with the **ordinances of God's house**. How is baptism a tree of life, except as growing on the river bank, and dipping its roots down into the water of life? The baptismal pool does not make baptism a spiritual ordinance. In thousands of cases it is but a formal ceremony. But when it is impregnated with the life of God; when its roots are dipped into the streams of eternal love, then, as many have found, it bears fruit for meat, and leaf for medicine.

7. So with the **Lord's Supper**. Take away the grace, love, and mercy of God out of the Lord's Supper, and what is it? It is but an empty form. But let the ordinance of the Lord's Supper dip its roots into the love of God, then it bears fruit for meat, and leaf for medicine.

II.—But the prophet says of these trees: "**Their leaf shall never fade, and their fruit shall never be consumed.**" In Eastern countries trees soon fade, and the fruit is soon consumed, if they do not stand by the side of a river. They need to be constantly irrigated at their roots in order to maintain verdure of leaf and

perpetuity of fruit. Thus, it is said of these trees that "their leaf shall never fade, and their fruit never be consumed." In other words, their leaves shall ever be green, and their fruit shall ever grow. Now this is the beauty and blessedness of real religion, vital godliness, the genuine work of God upon the soul, that it never dies. All other religion fades, withers and decays. It has no stamina in it; there is no healthy verdure in the leaf; no beautiful fragrance in its flower; no sweetness or nourishment in the fruit.

III.—But the beauty of these trees of life is this, that **their leaf never withers**. In real religion, in the sweet teaching of the Holy Spirit, there is always something fresh, always something new, always something blessed. It is like our daily bread which the Lord bade his disciples ask for—"give us this day our daily bread." It never cloy, satiates, or disgusts. So with this blessed tree of life: the leaf never fades, but is always green, fresh and healing. The fruit, too, is never consumed; there is enough, and to spare; enough, and more than enough to supply all the wants of God's people, in all times, ages, and circumstances.

See how this runs through every means of grace! You come to hear the word of God. How cold your heart is! how dead and dry! how stupid and barren! But there is something said, which seems in a moment to touch, soften and melt it. What is this? A green leaf from the tree of life. Ah, here too is fruit that is never consumed. You may eat and eat again, and never be weary of eating.

So with prayer. What a burden prayer often is to a living soul! He goes to it without any feeling: but let him upon his knees have his heart softly touched by the Spirit of God; let his spirit be sweetly melted by a sight of Jesus: let him find anything like real access—what a blessedness there is then conveyed to the soul! what a reviving communicated! what strength imparted!

So with Christian conversation. Sometimes we seem afraid to meet a child of God—ashamed even to see him, feeling ourselves utterly unworthy even to speak to God's family. From this

disinclination of our carnal mind, if we see them at a distance we could almost turn down a street to avoid them: and if we do get into their company sometimes, we leave them with our hearts rather discouraged and cast down than refreshed. But let Christian conversation be touched with the grace and love of God; let heart be knit to heart in the sweet bonds of fellowship and love; let something be said that meets an echo in our bosom, something which finds its way into our breast, how sweet and blessed Christian conversation then becomes; and how it seems to strengthen, refresh, and comfort the soul.

So with the ordinances of God's house. What is Baptism; what is the Lord's Supper, except the Lord be there? Let the Lord be there, how fresh it is: every leaf that grows upon the tree of life is filled with verdure, and every particle of fruit that grows upon the boughs is meat—juicy, savoury, blessed meat to the soul.

IV.—But it is said to bring forth "**new fruit according to his months.**" There is always something new in the things of God. Here is a passage perhaps in the Word of God that we have read and read again and again without seeing or feeling anything in it; but all of a sudden there may come a blessed flash of light upon it; we now see something in it that we have never seen before, something exceedingly sweet and precious. It is now all new; it is received as new, felt as new, fed upon as new, relished as new. It seems as though we never saw anything in the passage before. So with prayer; so with hearing. You may perhaps have had your soul shut up in distress and bondage and misery for months; you could scarcely trace anything of the life of God in you. But under the preached word, it may have pleased God to drop something, which has come into your heart with warmth, and life, and feeling. O how new it is! It is as new as though it was never heard before: it seems as though the eyes were now first opened, to see new things, and the ears were opened to hear new things, and the heart opened to receive new things. The Lord thus fulfils that blessed promise, "He that sat upon the throne said. Behold, I make all things new! If any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

Now this distinguishes real religion, the work of the Spirit, from dead, dry, formal profession. There is nothing new, green, flesh in the religion of the flesh. That is all stale, like the mouldy bread, clouted shoes, and worn-out garments of the Gibeonites. They have trodden and trodden the shoe till they have worn it into holes; and then they clout it and cobble it with a piece of old leather. The bread has been so long in their vessel, that it has become dry and mouldy; and their clothes are ready to drop from their backs. Not so with the religion of the Spirit. The "preparation of the gospel of peace," is a shoe that never wears out, which wants no cobbling or clouting; the bread of life that comes down from heaven is like manna gathered day by day, always fresh and always reviving; and the robe of Christ's righteousness is never sullied or old.

v.—But, we may observe, that not only is the fruit for meat, but the **leaf is for medicine**. Now medicine is of various kinds. There is not only sweet medicine, though that is rare; but bitter. There is medicine, which heals, and there is medicine which racks and pains. There is the keen knife of the surgeon, and the blister of the apothecary; the sharp caustic and the swathing bandage. So with the leaves that grow upon the tree of life. Do not think that no leaf grows upon this tree but what heals wounds. There are bitter leaves as well as sweet; "myrrh and aloes" grew in the bride's garden as well as "calamus **i.e. the sweet cane** and cinnamon" **So 4:14**. You may come, for instance, to hear the word of God, and what may you get? Comfort? No: you are not in a fit state to receive comfort: you want reproof, and you get it, and go home with a wounded conscience and a pained, groaning heart. Something is said which cuts you to the quick. Well, is not that a leaf? Is that bad medicine that sends you groaning home with a cry in your soul, keeping you awake half the night rolling upon your bed, begging the Lord to search and try if you are a hypocrite? Has not that been for some good? Has it not been a medicine more suitable than a cordial? A cordial might intoxicate

and stupify the brain: but the latter leaf has wrought groans and sighs in the heart.

So in **reading the Word of God**. Perhaps you read for comfort: but you do not need comfort: you want a sharp reproof: you have got into a carnal state of mind: and what you want is, like a naughty child, not bread and jam for your supper, but to be shaken and well whipped. Remember, that there is a rod hung up in the spiritual nursery, and you will find the inventory of it in **Ps 89**. This you get. A sharp keen reproof enters your soul from God's word, that makes you tremble. Does not this do good? Does not this stir up prayer, and make you sigh and cry, and groan to the Lord to visit your soul with his presence and mercy?

So in **Christian conversation**. You often get reproof, you say, 'I fear after all I am nothing! O how spiritually-minded my friend is! What a deep, blessed experience he has! How he can speak of the goodness and mercy of God! And what a stupid, barren thing am I!' Has this conversation all been thrown away? Has it not been a leaf? aye, and a good leaf too, though a bitter one. And has not this leaf been medicine to purge away carnality, to stir you up, and make you seek a clearer manifestation of the mercy, goodness and love of God?

So with the **ordinances of God**, how they sometimes reprove us! A woman some time since joined our church. She was present at a baptism in this chapel last year; and what was said from the pulpit about the due qualifications of a candidate cut her to the very heart, and sent her groaning home. As she was crossing Fitzroy Square the Lord was pleased to speak a promise to her soul. Was not reproof and promise alike a leaf? Some who witnessed the same ordinance might have had consolation; she got reproof, and yet that reproof worked for her spiritual good; for it led afterwards on to the promise and a clearer manifestation. It is a great mistake to think the preaching of the gospel, or reading God's word, or Christian conversation is always to convey comfort. We are often so carnal that comfort to us would be little short of poison; it would drug us well-nigh to

death, and we should fall asleep under the bewitching influences of the' intoxicating draught. We want something to rouse, stir, condemn, pierce, wound, at times almost to slaughter, and send the soul with cries and groans to the throne. And such should be the gospel ministry. If it be a tree of life, it should bear fruit for meat, and leaf for medicine: there should be in it fruit as meat for God's people, that they might have sometimes a sweet and savoury meal under the truth, and sometimes get a leaf to heal a sore, or produce a blister.

These waters, we read, issued out of the sanctuary: the trees therefore that grow upon the river's banks are always laden with leaves and fruit. Their leaf never fails; their fruit is never consumed. Thus, whilst there is a church on earth, and a God in heaven; whilst there is a people to be saved, and a Saviour to save them, so long will these trees grow upon the river's bank, and so long will they bring forth fruit for meat, and leaf for medicine—and all for the people of God. Every means of grace, and every ordinance, is intended either to be for meat or for medicine. As, therefore, the love of God is an overflowing river, so long as this river flows, so long will the means of grace and the ordinances of God's house stand, flourish and bear fruit.

This is the grand source of all the encouragement, which a minister has to preach the gospel. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "My word shall not return unto me void." And how this, too, should encourage hearers to make use of every means of grace. We sometimes are backward in this matter. 'O,' it will be said sometimes, 'why need I go to chapel? I have so much to do this Tuesday evening. Have I not plenty of business to attend to? I have gone before, and I have got no good; I think I will stay at home to-night.' A man may go on indulging this slothful frame till he never goes to hear at all. Another may say, 'I have read the Word of God day after day, but I cannot get any comfort out of it: I do not seem to find anything in it that suits or blesses my soul. Why should I read it any more?' A third may say, 'I try to pray, but I get no answer; why need I pray any longer?' But so said the ungodly king when there was a famine in Samaria **2Ki 6:33** . A

fourth may say, 'I go amongst the people of God: I never get any good: I will have a little worldly society, and not go amongst those who profess religion.' And a fifth may say, 'I will not join a church: what are the ordinances? There is nothing saving in them: I may just as well be out of the church as in it.' What a slothful, Antinomian spirit a man may soon get into!

Bear in mind, then, that these means are of God's appointing: trees planted by his own hand on each side of the river: and their fruit and efficacy depend not upon man's appointment, but upon the appointment of God. Often when we break through the snare that I have been speaking of, leading us to slight or neglect them, we find there is a blessing couched in them. Sometimes when members of my church have called to see me, I have felt perhaps in my mind a kind of disinclination to their conversation, I am busy writing or reading, and do not want to be disturbed. But when they have come in, and sat down, and begun to talk, and my heart has felt a union with what they said, all the ice is thawed away, and I enjoy their company. Have you not felt the same? So sometimes in going to chapel, it has been dragging my body to the place, so cold and dead and lifeless, nay, feeling an aversion to the employment. I felt this lately once at home, so that I actually disliked the chapel, the people, and the preaching. But that evening I was favoured in my soul, and how differently did I leave the pulpit from going into it! I felt a love to the people and to the work, and was as comfortable as I was before just the contrary.

So in **secret prayer**. We would make every excuse to defer and put it off; yet when we are enabled at last to go to the throne, are we not sometimes graciously helped, feel a spirit of prayer, and enjoy access to pour out our hearts at the footstool of mercy? So with the other ordinances of God's house. There is in our wicked hearts a dreadful, I was going to say a damnable repugnance against them, a working up of the scum of that "carnal mind which is enmity against God." I do not say that all feel this. I was not born religious, as some are, who, from natural piety, seem to know little or nothing of the dreadful struggles of

the carnal mind against everything spiritual and heavenly. But when we are able by the grace of God to resist these devilish workings, and are enabled to wait upon the Lord in the ordinances of his house, a sweetness is sometimes diffused through them. Some set up the ordinances too much, others value them too little. Some make them the river, and others will hardly allow them to be the trees on its banks. They are not the river, but they stand on its brink, and are fed by its waters. Apart from the river, they are nothing: laved by its streams, their fruit is food, and their leaf is medicine.

Now this is a very different thing from setting up the ordinances of God's house, or the means of grace, as possessing an innate virtue. **That** is popery—attaching a sacramental grace necessarily to an ordinance, as if laying on of hands could convey the Holy Spirit, or sprinkling a child's face could regenerate the soul. Neither scripture nor common sense justify such religious jugglery. The trees in themselves would only wither and die were their roots not by the river. Thus we must always view the ordinances of God's house, and the means of grace in their connection with the appointment of God, and the love, mercy, and grace displayed in the Saviour. Then may we hope the preaching of the word will be blest; then may we hope that Christian conversation will be blest; that prayer at the throne of grace will be blest; that reading and searching the scriptures will be blest; and thus take sweet encouragement to believe that God, who has appointed his means, will bless them to our soul's edification and comfort.

THE ROAD TO CHRIST'S TABLE AND CHRIST'S THRONE

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, August 15, 1841, at Salem Chapel, Landport, Portsmouth

"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." Luke 22:28, 29, 30

Many persons profess to believe that in theory which they deny in practice. For instance all who call themselves Christians profess that we can only be saved by the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. But when we come to what that salvation is; when we come to explain in what manner that salvation takes effect, we find that the very persons who profess to believe that salvation is only through the blood and obedience of the Lamb, are mixing up human merit and creature exertions with it. So again, few who call themselves Christians would deny that the children of God should walk in the footsteps of Jesus; that he left us "an example" that we should follow his steps; that only so far as we follow him in the regeneration, only so far as we have the mind of Christ, and have his image stamped upon us, are we rightly called by his name. But when we come to define and minutely explain what it is to walk in the footsteps of Christ and what it is to have the mind, the spirit, and the image of Christ, we find that men differ as widely in opinion as to what these solemn realities are, almost as much as they differ from one another in stature, features, and complexion.

But every living soul will be taught sooner or later by the Holy Ghost, each in his measure to walk in Christ's footsteps. Whatever delusions it may be for a time wrapped up in, whatever gins, traps, or snares it may for a while be entangled with, whatever darkness of mind, unbelief of heart, carnality, worldliness, or confusion it may be for a season perplexed by,

every living soul will, sooner or later, be brought to walk as Jesus walked.

The words from which I hope to speak this evening, were addressed by the Lord of life and glory when he was taking his farewell of his mourning disciples. His heart seemed open at this special season to tell them the secrets that were lodged in his bosom—and he dropped most precious words of instruction and counsel, not merely for their benefit but for ours also; not merely for their edification, out for the edification of the whole church of God to whom the Scriptures should ever come. Not seeing fit at this moment to point out Judas especially, he addresses himself to his disciples as the twelve and says: "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."

We will the Lord enabling us, take up these words in the precise order in which they lie before us, desiring to handle them in such an experimental way as the blessed Spirit may direct us. The Lord of life and glory when he sojourned here below had temptations. We read **and a remarkable passage it is Heb 5:8** that "though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered!" nay, that so violent were his temptations, and so poignant his sufferings, that "in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." The whole of the Lord's life here below from the cradle to the cross was a life of temptation, trial, and suffering. He came into this world for the express purpose of suffering, it was a part of his mediatorial work; a holy body was prepared for him **Heb 10:5** that it might agonise and die; and a spotless soul, that it might be "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." **Mt 26:38**

1. The word "temptations" in the text applies not only to what is generally understood by the term temptations, that is bufferings

from Satan, assaults from the prince of darkness, but the word is sometimes used in the Scripture to signify trials. Thus it is said "God tempted Abraham;" **Ge 22:1** but he could not tempt Abraham in the way of bringing evil before him.—God is not the author of sin God forbid! He cannot tempt his people with evil: he cannot introduce sin into man's heart. The apostle James speaks most decisively on this point. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" **Jas 1:13** It is an awful error—a damnable doctrine, that God is the author of sin; and all the passages brought forward to prove it are misunderstood or perverted. "The evil," which God is said "to create," **Isa 45:7** and "to do" **Am 3:6** is not moral evil, but affliction and chiefly, as is evident from the context, the scourge of war. "I make peace, and create evil." He brings the olive branch, and he brings the sword. "Shall a trumpet" **the trumpet of war** "be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil **in a city, not in a man's heart, but the scourge of war, famine or disease in the streets** and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants, the prophets." But when and where did he reveal to them that either he created sin in the first instance, or ever now infuses it into man's heart? Such a doctrine could find no place in hell itself. The devils know too well that they were created pure and that the holy Jehovah did not make them what they now are. A doctrine so insulting to God, so blasphemous a lie, can only lodge in the corrupt understanding of heretics. When he tempted Abraham, he **tried** him, for that is the meaning of the words—put his faith love and obedience to the trial. So the Old Testament saints, of whom the world was not worthy, are said **Heb 11:37**, to have been "tempted," where from the connection it evidently means were "tried." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were **tempted, "tried" by persecutions to abandon their profession** were slain with the sword." And thus the word "temptations" in the text includes, I believe, not merely temptations—properly so called; that is temptations from Satan as the prince of darkness, but also what we understand more particularly by the word, "**trials.**"

The disciples, as followers of their Lord, had many trials to encounter—such as the scoffing and jeers of a persecuting world, as well as the opposition enmity and hatred of the professing church. The Scribes and Pharisees, who made up the bulk of the professing church in the time of the Lord, treated all who professed themselves his followers much as their descendants in modern times treat the true disciples of Jesus now—they put them out of the synagogue, and loaded their names with contempt and infamy. This heavy trial the disciples endured, and continued with Jesus partaking of his reproach. We read of the stoney ground hearers who receive the word with joy and endure for a while, but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, immediately they are offended and fall away. The disciples were the reverse of this. But some may go farther than the stoney ground hearers: they may resemble those of whom we read, **Joh 6**, who convinced by his miracles believed him to be the Messiah, and professed to follow him as his disciples, until he told them that unless they eat his flesh and drank his blood, they had no life in them. As long as he wrought miracles in feeding their bodies and healing their sicknesses, they followed him in spite of reproach and persecution; but when he came to set forth the mysteries of vital godliness, and the necessity of an experimental religion, "from that time they went back, and walked no more with him." **Joh 6:66** But the disciples weathered every storm—persecution without, and infidelity within, the malice of foes, and the treachery of false friends. They continued to stand by their Lord however hated, despised, and persecuted; they continued to hear their share of those outward trials with which he was loaded, their measure of that reproach which was heaped upon him, and to be hated of all men for his name's sake. Thus they continued with him in his temptations, not drawn aside by smiles, not driven aside by frowns, not terrified by the threatenings of the professing church stamping them as madmen, or antinomians, disciples of a glutton and a wine-bibber, not led away by their own self-righteous hearts, not beat back by the difficulties and trials of the way; but taught by that Spirit, which Peter was so blessedly strengthened by when he said, "Lord to

whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," they cleaved to their Lord in faith and affection, upheld by his power from falling away, **for "those whom the Father gave him he kept,"** Joh 17:12 and endured to the end.

But though the word "temptations" includes outward trials, yet it more specially refers to those of an inward nature.

Satan brought all his artillery to bear upon the Son of God. He was permitted to try him to the utmost. It was the purpose of God, that his well-beloved Son should be tempted like as we are; and if you are God's there has not a single temptation beset you, which did not beset the Lord of life and glory. Are we tempted sometimes to doubt a God of providence? The Lord Jesus was similarly tempted, when Satan said to him, "Command these stones to be made bread." Are we tempted to vain confidence and presumption? The Lord of life and glory was similarly tempted, when the prince of darkness said to him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence." Are we often tempted to disbelieve that we are the children of God, and exercised at times with distressing suspicions and fears lest we have only a profession of religion, without its experimental power in our hearts? Satan brought the same temptation against the Lord, when he said. "IF **thou be the Son of God:**" as Hart says. "O what an if was there!" Are we tempted to turn our backs upon the Lord for the sake of what the world offers? The Lord Jesus was similarly tempted when Satan said that he would give him all that he presented before his eyes when he took him upon the mountain top. Are we ever tempted to turn from the true God and worship idols? The Lord of life and glory was similarly tempted when Satan with his infernal pride, and cursed impudence proposed to the Son of God to worship him. The Son of God worship Satan? But some shall say, 'was Jesus tempted like as I am? How can that be? He was pure, spotless and holy; but I am full of corruption from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet. The Lord of life and glory had a perfect, unfallen nature, a holy human body, and a holy human soul, taken into union with Deity; but I have a fallen nature defiled in body and

polluted in soul. Can there be a resemblance in our temptations?' I would ask what is it in you that feels the burden of temptation when Satan injects his blasphemies into your mind? Have you not a principle within you which recoils with horror from the temptation, when he seeks to infuse into your mind his own infernal enmity and malice against God? Is there not a something in you which is grieved, **I was going to say** tortured by these fiery darts. Is it not the new nature? and is not that nature spotless and holy? Is it not born of God, and therefore as holy as God is holy? and pure as God is pure? Thus just in the same way as your pure and holy nature that is born of God is grieved and distressed by the fiery darts of Satan, so was the holy soul of the Lord of life and glory ten thousand times more grieved and tortured by the temptations of Satan presented before his pure and spotless mind. The disciples did not forsake their Lord, though so sorely buffeted with these temptations, nay more, they, according to the measure of their faith, partook of them individually and personally, suffering as well as sympathising with him, and wounded, though in a far less degree, by arrows from the same bow. And thus disciples now continue with Jesus in his temptations by suffering as members with their covenant head walking the greater part of them in a daily path of trouble and sorrow—daily tempted by Satan, by the world, and by their own evil hearts; day by day tempted to do everything from which their spiritual nature recoils; day by day tempted to do things which are hateful in the eyes of a pure God, and to them too when in their right mind.

But if those only are disciples who are exercised by temptations, and continue to endure them as fellow-sufferers with Christ what a two-edged sword is this to cut off thousands of presumptuous professors! What hundreds of professing people are there who never never groaned beneath temptation in their lives! what hundreds who fight with bitter sarcasm, and "their tongue as an arrow shot out," against the people of God who are exercised with temptations! What hundreds who would strip out of the Bible every line that speaks of temptations as lying in the path to glory! But this text, as a sharp two-edged sword, cuts off every

one professing to be a follower of Christ, who knows not temptations, and continues not with Jesus in his temptations.

2. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." For whom is this kingdom appointed? For the presumptuous, the proud, the hypocritical, and the self-righteous? no not for these." "I appoint unto **you** "—you that "have continued with me in my temptations;" you that are tempted and exercised: you that walk in the paths of tribulation; you that follow in the print of the footsteps of a suffering Jesus; you that know the painful exercises of temptation, and yet are strengthened with strength in your inner man, to "resist even unto blood, striving against sin" so as not to be carried away or overwhelmed by it. What kingdom is this? It is the same kingdom that the Father hath given to Jesus. "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Now what is the kingdom which God the Father appointed unto his dear Son? Is it to sit upon a throne like an earthly monarch? To wear a diadem, and carry a sceptre? "My kingdom," said Jesus, "is not of this world," **John 18:36** The kingdom of the Lord of life and glory was to make an end of sin, to abolish death, and destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; to reign spiritually in the hearts of his chosen; to be king and Lord in Sion, and to rule over the willing affections of his subjects; a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; a kingdom of grace set up by the Blessed Spirit in the heart; a spiritual kingdom which none can see or enter into but those that are born of the Spirit. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and consists in having a people to see him as he is, a people to glorify him, a people to love him, and a people for him to love. A kingdom cannot be the same to sovereign and subject, when it is of an earthly and temporal nature. Were the earthly monarch to impart his kingdom to his subjects, it would cease to be a kingdom, and become a republic. But not so with a spiritual kingdom. Jesus does not diminish his own grace by imparting it to his people, nor lessen his own joy by shedding it abroad in their hearts, nor sully his own glory by communicating of it to them. The sun has lost no light nor warmth by the countless millions of rays that have

issued from it since it was first created. Nor does the glorious Sun of righteousness lose the fulness that is in him by communicating of his grace and glory. In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, unexhausted and inexhaustible. Then this kingdom which he appoints to his tried and tempted disciples is the kingdom of grace in the heart; the kingdom of God in the soul; the presence of Jesus Within; the manifestation of that kingdom which is spoken of in Daniel **Da 2:44**, as set up on the ruins of all the other kingdoms, when it has broken them in pieces. Thus temptations prepare the way for the kingdom; temptations are the necessary and indispensable forerunners of the kingdom. Just as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands fell upon the feet of the image, and "brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold," "so do temptations, falling upon our standing in self, break to pieces that image of our idolatry, and make our pride, our wisdom, our strength, our holiness, our righteousness, and all our fleshly religion to "become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors." Thus temptations pave the way for the manifestation and "setting up of that internal kingdom which shall never be destroyed, but shall stand for ever and ever." Temptations, like a sharp lancet, let out the life blood of that awful presumption which has so inflated and puffed up the Calvinistic churches. Pressed down by temptations, the soul cries and groans that Jesus would himself say to these winds and waves, "Peace, be still." By these temptations, however, does the Lord of the temple, as with a whip of small cords, drive out the money-changers, and spoil their trafficking, by pouring out their money, and overthrowing their tables in the heart. We read, that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"—that is the kingdom of grace as experimentally revealed in the soul. There is no entering into it, so as to know it, see it, feel it, realise it, and experience the divine effects of it but through tribulation. Temptation and tribulation are not the kingdom, but they so lie in the road that there is no entering into the kingdom without passing through them. The mud and mire that lie in the road cannot be said to be the way, but they so lie in the way that he who travels by it must travel through them. Whatever high-

sounding words men may use about the liberty of the gospel, and however confident they may be of their standing in that liberty, their liberty is licentiousness and delusion, unless they have had the kingdom of God set up in their souls by the Holy Ghost. And if they have had the inward manifestation of that kingdom, they are acquainted with temptation. No untried, unexercised professor, then, ever knew anything about this inward kingdom of peace and joy in believing. His peace is that of the strong man armed who keeps the palace, and whose goods are in peace.

But again wherever this kingdom is set up it produces visible effects. Do they know then anything of this kingdom who are slaves to lust? Do they experience the power of this kingdom who are wrapped up in presumption, or engrossed with covetousness, or mixed up with dead professors? If a man has the kingdom of God manifested in him, he is more or less a new creature, It has separated him from a world lying dead in profession, and brought him into some measure of communion with the Lord of life and glory.

The subjects of this kingdom will be continually shot at from every quarter. The devil with all his infernal malice will vex and harass the souls of those who are partakers of this kingdom. Professing churches, having a name to live while dead before God, having a form of godliness whilst they inwardly and outwardly deny the power thereof, will shoot bitter arrows against all who are the subjects of this kingdom. Heady, notional Calvinists, with liberty on their tongue and bondage in their heart, conscience-seared Antinomians, easy slipshod formalists, all of every grade and class who hate and despise a feeling experimental religion, and every one in a profession who has a secret conviction that he knows nothing of divine teachings and manifestations, will bend their bow openly or secretly against those who continue with Jesus in his temptations, and to whom he appoints an internal kingdom of grace and power. Nay some of the keenest and most envenomed shafts are drawn from the quiver of a man's own infidel, unbelieving nature. But the Son of

God has **appointed** his tempted followers a kingdom, and it rests upon eternal decree and covenant faithfulness.

3. But there are two circumstances connected with the experimental possession of this kingdom. The first is an eating and drinking at Christ's table in his kingdom. The table of the Lord's supper is merely typical of this, merely a figure of the table here spoken of. This table seems to point out two things—the foretaste of bliss below, and the full enjoyment of glory above. As the kingdom of Christ begins below, and is consummated above, commences with grace and ends in glory, so the table at which the subjects of his kingdom eat and drink, is spread below and spread above. This table then, viewed as spread on earth, is a feast which he sets out for his friends, according to those words, "Eat O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly O beloved." And thus he says to his disciples: "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what the Lord doeth; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." **Joh 15:15**. This table is spread with every blessing that a poor, needy, naked soul can desire. There is blood to purge away sin; righteousness to justify us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; grace sufficient for all our necessities: strength for all our infirmities; power to help us in all our difficulties; glory provided that we may see his glory and be changed into the same image. But we must come to this table poor, hungry, needy, naked and distressed. We read **Lu 14:16** of a certain man who made a great supper and bade many. But who came to this feast? All the rich and possessed of property "with one consent began to make excuse." One had bought a piece of ground and wanted to see it, to examine its present state and capabilities of improvement. He had no mind to come. Another, a wealthy farmer, had just bought five yoke of oxen, and he wished to go and see whether they were worth the money and would suit his purpose. He prayed to be excused. A third had just taken a wife, and he could not leave her to come. Their tastes, desires and dispositions were not that way. Want and hunger had not bitten them nor sharpened their

appetite for the feast. And who came in to partake of the supper? The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind?

So it is spiritually. This table is spread for those who have an appetite; but this appetite is only produced by temptations. It is spiritually as it is naturally. Labour sharpens appetite. Thus those only that labour under powerful temptations, that toil and sweat by reason of the difficulties of the way, the straitness of the path, the ruggedness of the road, have an appetite for this heavenly table. It is the way-worn pilgrims only who want to feed upon the blood and love of the Lamb, to feast their souls upon his glorious righteousness, and have their hearts blessedly established in the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. Those only who are poor in spirit, who hunger and thirst after heavenly food, and whose longing souls cry out after the living God, really want to sit as excepted guests at the marriage table, clothed in the garments of imputed righteousness. Such as these who have been brought down to the starving point, cannot be satisfied, like the full-fed, with merely looking at the provisions of the gospel, as set forth in the promises of Scripture, but they want to feast upon them, so as to enjoy their sweetness, and derive solid nutriment and strength from them. The Lord's supper, to receive which many deem to be the turn and substance of all religion and almost a passport to heaven, is but a type and shadow of this spiritual feast. Though when received in faith, it is a blessed ordinance of God, it is but a feeble and imperfect figure of feeding at that table which is spiritually provided for the poor and needy. But there is a table spread above, as well as a table spread below, and the guests at the one are the only admitted guests at the other. The same food is set upon both tables, for the one is but the foretaste of the other. Love is the provision below, and love is the provision above. But here there are only drops and crumbs from the heavenly table, and these rarely and sparingly given; above, the full banquet is spread. Here sickness often spoils the appetite, and unbelief drops the food midway between the table and the mouth; there nothing intervenes to mar eternal and inexhaustible enjoyment. Men may talk about the joys of heaven and awfully delude

themselves by thinking they shall have a part in them; but none will sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, but the bride, the Lamb's wife **Re 19:7**, that has endured temptation, and come off more than conqueror, through him who loved her and gave himself for her.

4. But there is another promise annexed to continuing with Christ in his temptations. "And sit on **thrones**, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The word throne does not imply anything of an earthly nature, nor point to any temporal dignity. Much has been said, and many passages of Scripture have been brought forward to prove that the saints of Christ will possess an earthly kingdom, and sit on thrones of temporal power and authority. But what comfort could it give the living soul according to the views of those who thus literally interpret the unfulfilled prophecies, to sit upon an earthly throne? Would the prospect of some future earthly power and dignity satisfy the longing desires of the heart, make Christ precious, and take off the burden of sin, or bear the soul up under the storms and tempests of the present life? No; what the living soul desires is to sit in heavenly places in Christ, to lean his head upon Christ's bosom, and be favoured with sweet and holy communion with the Lord of life and glory.

These thrones, then, are not thrones of earthly dominion. Jesus says **Re 3:21**, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." From this promise of Jesus we learn two things. 1. That to sit on a throne, is not limited to the disciples who followed him whilst on earth. The promise is to him that overcomes. 2. We learn from it that this throne is not of an earthly, temporal nature. Does Jesus sit on such a throne now? Is it not a spiritual throne, a dominion of grace and glory? And as the table begins below, so does the throne begin below. On earth commences the foretaste of dominion, as well as the foretaste of joy.

Thus, when temptations have pressed hard upon the soul, when these temptations have whetted his appetite for spiritual food,

when the Holy Ghost has brought him as a guest to the spiritual banquet, and he sits at Christ's table eating and drinking spiritually of the flesh and blood of the Son of God, then he sits upon a throne, inheriting a measure of the glory which is hereafter to be revealed. He that conquers sin, denies self, overcomes the world, and resists Satan, sits spiritually on a throne, and, as he can only thus conquer in Christ's strength, he may be said to sit with Christ on his throne. Christ conquered through suffering, destroyed death by dying, abolished the law by undergoing its last penalty, dethroned Satan by being made a little lower than the angels, put an end to sin by bearing it in his own body on the tree, and overcame the world by being crucified by its princes and rulers. He conquered by weakness, and overcame by suffering. And thus his disciples by suffering with him reign with him, and sit upon his throne of grace here and glory hereafter, by continuing with him in his temptations, and by being delivered by his power out of them.

But they are said, in the text, to sit on a throne for a specific purpose—to judge the "twelve tribes of Israel."

This cannot be literally true. The genealogies of the twelve tribes are lost; their very names are now unknown. The ten tribes were carried away into captivity by Shalmaneser King of Assyria, **2Ki 17:23**, and never returned; and the two remaining tribes were dispersed, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, all over the world; so that the twelve tribes no longer exist literally and nationally. As, then, the table at which the disciples are fed is a spiritual feast, and the throne on which they sit is a spiritual throne, so must the persons whom they judge, and the judgment which they exercise be taken spiritually also.

And therefore these "twelve tribes of Israel" must signify the spiritual family of God; or the professing church of Christ here below. The twelve tribes of Israel seem to have some spiritual reference to the different experience of the people of God. All the children of God are not led in precisely the same path: and though there is a family resemblance in all, yet the features of

the countenance differ in each. Some are plunged at first into deep convictions and soul distress; others learn the evil of sin and their own state as sinners more slowly and gradually. Some have to wade through many sore temporal afflictions and troubles; others pass through life with a smaller measure of temporal trials. Some have a deep acquaintance with their own hearts, a sound judgment in truth, and a keen discernment of men and things, whilst others of the living family seem to know little of themselves, and less of others. Some are sweetly delivered by a blessed revelation of the Son of God, so as to bring them out fully into the blessedness of the gospel. Others are delivered less powerfully and clearly, and have much difficulty to make their calling and election sure. Some are blessed with strong faith and a large measure of filial confidence! others are well nigh consumed by doubts and fears all their lives. Some are pardoned at first, and their earliest days are their best; others receive their pardon late, and their last days are their brightest. Some are much preserved in a consistent walk all their days; and others so totter and reel, as to distress their own souls, and wound the cause of God. Some hear and receive the truth from their first outset; and others are brought to see and believe it only toward the close of their days. Some breathe forth their happy souls in the full triumph of faith; and others, who have seen the Sun of righteousness, die with a cloud resting upon their minds.

Thus, the people of God seem to be divided into tribes, for we do not find every individual in the church of God to have an experience peculiar to himself, but that there are classes into which the whole family may be divided; the experience of the individual being in its leading features the experience of the class. It is, then, these tribes of the spiritual Israel, these classes of the one great school, these families of the holy nation, these divisions of the grand army of the church militant, that the disciples of Christ were to judge. That is, those who have continued with Christ in his temptations, and have been raised from the dunghill to sit upon the throne, possess thereby a secret court of judgment, whereby they are able to pass a decision upon the experience of God's people. They have weights and scales into

which they put all professors, and thus sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. We must hear in mind that "all are not Israel which are of Israel;" and therefore, in judging the twelve tribes of Israel, they will distinguish between the spiritual seed of Abraham, and those that merely call themselves by his name. Their judgment is not final nor infallible, and consists more in discernment than in passing sentence, according to those words, "He that is spiritual judgeth **or discerneth**, margin, all things;" **1Co 2:15**. But in our day of universal philanthropy, every minister that stands up to distinguish between the living and the dead in Jerusalem, is wondered at for his singularity, and cried down for his bad and bitter spirit. But I believe that the work of a spiritually taught, and divinely commissioned minister is to do what the spirit here describes: "To sit judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" so to enter into the experience of the living family, and so to detect and lay bare all imitations and counterfeits, as to commend himself to every mans conscience in the sight of God. But this spirit of discernment, whereby he sits judging the twelve tribes of Israel, will bring with it a heavy reproach. If he will class together professors and living souls; if he will take into the arms of universal charity all who say they believe in Jesus Christ, and receive as brethren, without any doubt or scruple, all that hold the same doctrines, and are of "the same faith and order," he is praised and admired. But if he comes with the two-edged sword of the Spirit, and thrusts it up to the hilt in rotten hearts, if he speaks to a man's conscience, if he traces out the work of grace upon the soul, if he pulls down rotten props and vain expectations, he must endure what his master bore before him, to be called a devil, and **mad**, and suffer the reproach of men, and the scorn of the professing church.

It is not the tribes of the spiritual Israel, but the tribes of the professing Israel whose enmity and spleen is excited by the judgment he passes on them. He having passed through temptation, having continued with the Lord in his temptations, having received a measure of Christ's kingdom in his heart, being exalted to sit in some feeble measure with Christ on his throne, is enabled to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, by bringing men up

to the standard of experience, and to the teachings of the Holy Ghost in the heart. And therefore an experimental ministry will always bring with it a cross, will always be hated and opposed in every town and village into which it comes.

When a man once begins in the strength of the Lord to pull down the lofty professor, and exalt the humble and meek, to feed the hungry with good things, and send the rich empty away, when he boldly contends against all creature religion, and declares that he who dies without being taught by the Holy Ghost to know sin and salvation will die under the wrath of God, he will immediately be set down as a man of a bitter and censorious spirit. A thousand tongues and pens will rise up against him, and false rumours and reproaches will be launched against him from every side. But let him do the work of the Lord faithfully, and he will bring him safely through them all.

Now, friends, can we bear to be put up in the scale? If you have the right religion you need not fear to be weighed up. What tradesman is it that trembles when he sees the surveyors of weights and measures going round the town? Is it he who has honest weights upon his counter, or he whose measures are short and whose weights are light? Who fears the revenue cutter but the smuggler? who shrinks from the police but the thief? who trembles at the judge but the felon? So the dishonest in religion, whose own consciences, when not seared as with a hot iron, testify against them, may well tremble under a heart-searching ministry; may well turn away saying—'This man is too bitter and uncharitable in spirit for me to hear.' It is not his spirit that gives offence, but it is his discerning and firm finger pressing upon a rotten spot in your heart that makes you wince. But if God has made you honest and sincere before him, you are saying—Let my religion be weighed up; I know that one day I shall be put in the balance, and stand before the Judge of quick and dead. All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom I have to do. O let me be tried in this life, and not cast in the life to come. Let me have righteousness laid to the line and equity to the

plummet here, that "the trial of my faith may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

I will just recapitulate and run over a few particulars of the work which I have been endeavouring to trace out from the text. Let us bear in mind that the disciples at this period were very weak in faith. They had received a measure of divine teaching; they had experienced a measure of the Spirit's work in their hearts; but they had not been baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. That was reserved for the day of Pentecost. They knew, however temptation; they knew what it was to be hated by the world, to be cast out by the professing church, to be shot at by Satan, to be exercised and distressed in their own souls. They knew also what it was to receive some measure of Christ's kingdom into their hearts, for it was the grace and beauty of Christ which attracted their affections. "Lord to whom shall we go," said Peter for them all, "thou hast the words of eternal life."

We see here the path in which the redeemed walk. Let us try our standing by it. Has your religion then, friends, ever yet entailed upon you the hatred of the world? the scorn of the professing church? the malace of Satan? and the enmity of those who have a name to live while they are dead? Are you a people separate from the world? Is your name a butt for malace to shoot at? If not, you are not followers of the persecuted and despised Nazarene. If not, you know nothing of following in the footsteps of him who was despised and rejected of men, and whose name was a by-word among the people. But what know you of distressing temptations? Have you ever been tempted to infidelity,—to despair—to presumption—to everything hateful and horrible, and yet in the strength of the Lord God, have been enabled to fight and "resist even unto blood striving against sin?" The Lord has appointed for such a kingdom "I appoint unto you a kingdom." 'O,' says some poor tried soul, 'I want to get at this kingdom. I can follow you well enough when you talk of trials and temptations. I can go along with you well enough when you talk of the pantings of the soul after Christ—how the soul is exercised with fears of perishing—how one tosses upon the restless

midnight couch, panting and groaning that the Lord would reveal himself with power. And when you speak of hungering and thirsting after righteousness—crying to God from a burthened heart, under a distressing sense of guilt. I can go along with you in all this. But when you preach that there is a kingdom, and that that kingdom is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; I stop short at the outer door, I cannot get in. I stand knocking, but he opens not the palace. I stand in the cold, but he sends no message for me to come into his chamber. I cry and pray, but he seems deaf to all my intreaties.

Now look at the disciples. Even after the Lord had departed and given them the promise of a Comforter, had they not to wait till the day of Pentecost to be baptized by the Holy Ghost? But the manifestation of this kingdom is appointed, is decreed, is predestinated, is determined, unalterably and irreversibly determined. "I" said the Son of God, "I appoint unto you a kingdom." It is a part of my eternal decrees, a part of my irreversible council. I—the Son of God. I—of my own authority—of my own right "I appoint unto you a kingdom."

If then he has appointed a kingdom, the soul passing through temptation must wait until it is revealed; it must struggle on until it is endued with power from on high. It must wait on the Lord, sighing at his feet, crying unto him until he enables it to believe in his name, and say with an unwavering tongue, "My Lord and my God."

To you then that know temptation, that are exercised with trials, that are following after Jesus as the hope of your never dying souls—to you, as well as to the apostles, our Lord speaks. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, &c." To you that are not getting into a secure path, into a doctrinal rest, into antinomian sloth and presumption; that are not seated upon some lofty mountain where there is neither dew nor rain; that are not buried in the world, nor overwhelmed with pride; but are lying in poverty of spirit at Christ's feet, seeking after the drops of his atoning blood;

and determined with the apostle to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified," to you the Lord speaks, "I appoint unto you a kingdom." Now do I not, **to those I speak who are distressed in conscience**, do I not describe the longing desires of your souls, when I speak of an inward kingdom of grace as revealed and set up by the power of the Holy Ghost? You know that nothing but a revealed salvation will do for you. You have tried doctrines, and found that unless the Blessed Spirit sealed them upon your heart, they contained no power or savour. You have tried ordinances and though they are good in their place, you have found that in themselves they afforded no comfort. You have tried reading books and authors, and they have left you dark, and stupid, and dead. You have tried hearing ministers, and yet you often go away from preaching with a heart more cast down than when you entered the chapel. You have tried the good opinion of man, and found it to be a broken reed; you have tried your own heart, and found it treacherous; your own resolutions, and they have been overcome; your own strength, and found it weakness; your own nature, and found it rotten to the core. And therefore, being stripped and made poor, and needy and naked, you are sighing after a manifested Jesus—after the sweet visitations of his love to your soul. And as you are engaged in your daily employment, as you are driving the bolt into the ship, or standing behind the counter, or holding the stilts of the plough, or you of the other sex, plying the needle, or engaged in some household work, there is a secret prayer going up from the heart unto the Lord. There in an inward sighing, panting, crying of your heart after him "as the hart panteth after the water brooks." Then to you saith the Lord, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, to eat and drink at my table—to eat my flesh which is meat indeed, and drink my blood which is drink indeed." "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." O poor hungry soul, are you not longing for these spiritual delicacies? And you who have a spiritual appetite, are you not hungering after this heavenly banquet? Is not all insufficient but Jesus' blood, and grace and glory? But mark this, when you come to sit upon thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel; when you say 'this man's experience is defective, and, that man's experience is rotten';

when you declare that this man is nothing but a presumptuous hypocrite, and that man is bolstered up with a name to live while dead; when you tell the children of God that they must sink lower in the depths of humiliation, before they can sit upon Christ's throne, that they must have a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and a tender conscience, before Jesus will reveal himself to their souls; when you judge the twelve tribes of Israel by putting the plummet into their hearts, expect to be hated and despised of all men for Jesus' sake; expect to be harrassed by the devil, to be tempted by your own hearts, to be abhorred by the professing church.

But expect also to have the sweet enjoyments and heavenly consolations of Jesus, when he takes you away from men to converse with himself, and withdraws you from the noise of tongues, to reveal himself with glory and power in your soul.

THE SACRIFICE BOUND TO THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, June 6th, 1841, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

"God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Psalm 118:27

It is very sweet and blessed to trace in the Old Testament saints the same experience which God the Holy Ghost works in the hearts and consciences of the saints now; and I believe there is no one gracious feeling, whether it be in the depth of spiritual distress, or whether it be in the height of spiritual enjoyment, which we cannot find, if the Lord is pleased to give us light to see it, traced out in the experience of the Old Testament believers. In fact, it cannot be otherwise. There is but one God and Father of all; there is but one Lord, one faith, one Spirit; there is but one Teacher of the Church of God; and therefore all the saints in all ages have been taught the same lessons, and instructed by the blessed Spirit in the same divine mysteries. Now there seems to be one feature which is common to every saint in whatever stage of spiritual experience he may happen to be, and that is an absolute renunciation of self, and an absolute dependence upon the Lord to work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Let men talk about the wisdom of the creature, or boast of human righteousness, or human merit, or any other such vain figment, you will never find any of the Bible saints breathing forth any other language than a complete renunciation of the creature in all its bearings, and a simple hanging and dependence upon the Lord of life and glory to manifest Himself to them, to bless them, to teach them, and to lead them into all truth. Thus the experience of the saints stamps the lie upon the whole fiction of human merit, creature wisdom, and fleshly righteousness. Nor do I believe that any spiritual man ever came before a holy God to pour out the desires and breathings of his soul before Him, and to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ, who came in any other frame than a complete

renunciation of creature righteousness, wisdom, and strength, and a simple, sincere hanging and dependence upon God "to work in him that which is well-pleasing in His sight." "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

The text sets forth two apparently unconnected things—the showing of the light and the binding of the sacrifice. What these are, and how they are connected, we shall endeavour, with God's blessing this evening, to show.

I. The Psalmist was clearly possessed of light, for he says, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." He was evidently, then, possessed of light; and this light was in him as "the light of life." This light had shone into his heart; the rays and beams of divine truth had penetrated into his conscience. He carried about with him a light which had come from God; in this light he saw light, and in this light he discerned everything which the light manifested. Thus by this internal light he knew what was good and what was evil, what was sweet and what was bitter, what was true and what was false, what was spiritual and what was natural. He did not say, "This light came from creature exertion, this light was the product of my own wisdom, this light was nature transmuted by some action of my own will, and thus gradually rose into existence from long and assiduous cultivation." But he ascribes the whole of that light which he possessed unto God the Lord, as the sole author and the only giver of it. Now, if God the Lord has ever showed you and me the same light which He showed His servant of old, we carry about with us more or less of a solemn conviction that we have received this light from Him. There will, indeed, be many clouds of darkness to cover it; there will often be doubts and fears, hovering like mists and fogs over our souls, whether the light which we have received be from God or not. But in solemn moments when the Lord is pleased a little to revive His work; at times and seasons when He condescends to draw forth the affections of our hearts unto Himself, to bring us into His presence, to hide us in some measure in the hollow of His hand,

and give us access unto Himself—at such moments and seasons we carry about with us, in spite of all our unbelief, in spite of all the suggestions of the enemy, in spite of all doubts, fears, and suspicions that rise from the depths of the carnal mind, in spite of all these counter-workings and underminings we carry about with us at these times a solemn conviction that we have light, and that this light we have received from God. And why so? Because we can look back to a time when we walked in no such light, when we felt no such light, when everything spiritual and heavenly was dark to us, and we were dark to them.

If God the Lord, then, hath showed us light, He hath showed us light both with respect to Himself and with respect to ourselves. He hath showed us with respect to Himself who He is; He has stamped something of Himself upon our consciences; He has brought some testimony concerning Himself into our hearts; He has discovered something of His glorious character to our souls; and brought us, under the operations of the Holy Ghost, into His presence, there to receive communications of life out of Christ's inexhaustible fulness. Thus in this light we see and feel that we have to do with a heart-searching God; in this light we see and feel that we have to do with a sin-hating God; in this light we see and feel that we have to do with a God who will not be mocked nor trifled with; in this light, as He is pleased to reveal it to us, we see and feel that every secret of our heart, every working of our mind is open before Him; and in this light, so far as He is pleased to manifest it, we see what we are in His holy and pure eyes—a mass of sin, filth, and corruption, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without righteousness, without creature comeliness, without anything of which we can say that it is spiritually good.

Again, God the Lord showing us light hath showed us more or less of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. He has not only showed us what we are by nature, but He has in a measure condescended to show us what we are by grace; not merely brought into our hearts some acquaintance with Himself as a God of perfect justice, but He has also brought, more or less, into our

souls some acquaintance with Him as a God of mercy; and has thus brought us in some solemn measure to know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent; and thus to have the springing up of spiritual life more or less, each according to his measure, in our souls.

II. But if we look at the text, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light," it seems to be connected with the latter clause, "Bind the sacrifice." There is a connection betwixt the two clauses of this text. "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." He hath. And He hath showed us light in this way—that there is a binding of the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. This is the chief reason for which the light is given, the main object on which the light is cast, the hidden mystery which the light discovers. As Moses turned aside to see the great sight of a bush burning and not consumed; as Abraham on Mount Moriah lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, so the great object, to see which light is shown, is the sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar. What sacrifice is this which is bound to the horns of the altar? This sacrifice, primarily, no doubt, signifies the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered Himself as a propitiation for the sins of His people; who according to eternal decree and covenant engagements, yielded up Himself as a spotless sacrifice, that, by the offering of Himself once upon the cross, He might for ever put away the sins of the elect. Now this sacrifice is said in the text to be "bound unto the horns of the altar." The "horns of the altar" were four prominences or projections at each corner of the brazen altar, to which the victim was attached; and the very circumstance of the intended sacrifice being bound by cords to these horns of the altar shows that there was a repugnance in the victim to be there offered; that the struggling animal was bound by cords to the horns of the altar lest it should escape the knife, and burst away from the hands of the priests.

1. Thus, spiritually, the one great sacrifice, the Lord of life and glory, the God-man Mediator, was bound to the horns of the altar. There were certain covenant engagements, which indeed

He had freely and voluntarily undertaken, but which, being once entered into, bound Him to the horns of the altar. To take upon Him the seed of Abraham, to suffer, bleed, and die, and thus offer Himself a spotless sacrifice on the ever burning coals of Jehovah the Father's displeasure, was a great part of the solemn engagements of God the Son, according to those words, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book—the book of eternal decree—it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:5-7).

But again, not only was He bound by covenant engagements, but He was bound also with the strong, the equally strong ties of affection and love; and bound by these to the horns of the altar, bound to execute to the letter what He had undertaken, bound to go through that which He had covenanted, bound to fulfil the work which He had taken upon Himself in the solemn engagements of the Three-One God. But why was the victim bound? It implies that there was a repugnance, a shrinking, an inward horror which would fain drive it from the altar to which it was bound by these strong cords. So, in this great sacrifice of the Lord of life and glory, there were sufferings to be undergone, there was the cup of bitter anguish to be drunk, there were the solemn pangs of agony and horror under a sense of the wrath of God against sin to be endured, and by which He was well nigh overwhelmed when deep called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts, and all the waves and billows of divine vengeance rolled over His head; and therefore He says, "If it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me." Here was the shrinking of the Victim; here was His human nature borne down by the load of imputed guilt, and only held up from being utterly crushed and overwhelmed, by the divine nature supporting it. There was the shuddering of nature recoiling from the agonising death; there was the horror of soul shrinking from the wrath of the Father; there was the heavy burden of imputed guilt pressing the blood from His brow; and all these things centring and meeting together, so as to make the sacrifice to be, what it was, a sacrifice in every sense of the word. He was bound, then, to the

horns of the altar; bound by covenant engagement, bound by the strong affections of His soul; and yet bound there as a struggling sacrifice; that is, feeling those strugglings within which made Him three times groan forth the agonising cry, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." *There* was the shrinking of the victim. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." *There* were the cords that bound Him to the horns of the altar, the unextinguished coals of God's ever blazing wrath against sin, and bound there to bear that weight of wrath to the uttermost.

2. But there is another sense which these words will easily bear. We read that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise;" and, therefore, there is not merely the binding of the great sacrifice, the Lord of life and glory, the God-man Mediator—there is not merely the binding of Him to the horns of the altar as the one great atoning sacrifice, the alone propitiation for sin; but there is also, in a secondary and inferior sense, the binding of the broken and contrite spirit to the horns of that altar on which the Lord of life and glory bled and died. Now, if this is true, if "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," then he alone is bound to the horns of the altar whose heart is broken, whose spirit is contrite, whose soul is humbled, and who is feelingly laid at the foot of the cross. There is no binding of a whole, unbroken heart to the horns of the altar, *that* is no sacrifice. There is no binding of a light, trifling, proud, presumptuous self-confident spirit to the horns of the altar—*that* is no sacrifice. There is no binding of a speculative knowledge of doctrine as it stands in the letter, to the horns of the altar—*that* is no sacrifice. There is no binding of a heated imagination and a deluded heart to the horns of the altar—*that* is no sacrifice. The heart must be broken first and made contrite; it must be laid low, meekened and softened by the operation of God the Holy Ghost in it and upon it, before it can be spiritually bound to the cross of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, when you hear men or ministers setting forth the cross of Christ, and speaking of themselves as interested in that great sacrifice, and you see them light, trifling, boasting, presumptuous, proud, covetous, worldly—such men carry with them their own stamp, that they have a lie

in their right hand. They are not bound to the horns of the altar, because they are not bound there as a broken-hearted victim. They are not bound there by the cords that the Holy Ghost has wreathed round their soul; they are merely bound by the light withs which they themselves have twined round their own presumptuous hearts, by the cords of doctrine, or the bands of profession, to what they call the cross of Christ, but which is no more the cross on which the Lord of life and glory died, than the painted crucifix of a popish chapel.

But what cords are these by which the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit is bound to the horns of the altar? There is, first, the strong cord of *necessity*. By necessity I mean, felt necessity. I mean not necessity in the way of degree, but necessity in the way of inward experience. What binds a sinner to the cross of Jesus? One cord thrown round his tender conscience and broken heart is the strong cord of necessity; or rather, to speak more correctly, faith working through and with necessity that he cannot do without the cross, that his conscience is guilty and needs to be purged with the blood of sprinkling, that he is lost and needs to be saved, that he is afar off and needs to be brought near, that he is a ruined wretch who needs a manifestation of mercy to his trembling heart. And, therefore, around the tender conscience of a living soul, the strong cord of necessity is bound. As the apostle says, "Necessity is laid upon me," so necessity is laid upon the child of God to cleave to the cross, a strong conviction that from the cross alone comes the blood of sprinkling, which "speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."

But there is not only the strong cord of necessity; there is also the strong cord of *affection*, or rather, faith working by affection, as the apostle speaks, "faith which worketh by love." The real cord is faith, both in necessity and in affection, but I call these cords the cords of necessity and affection, for these are their prominent features, as experimentally felt. Where Christ is made in any measure experimentally known, He has gained the affections of the heart; He has, more or less, taken possession of

the soul; He has, in some degree, endeared Himself as a bleeding, agonising Saviour to every one to whom He has in any way discovered Himself; and, therefore, the strong tie of love and affection is more or less powerfully wreathed round the tender spirit and broken heart, and by that it is attached to the horns of the altar. His name is more or less as "ointment poured forth." There is a preciousness in His blood, there is a beauty in His Person, though more marred than the sons of men; there is that secret loveliness in Him which wins and attracts and draws out the tender affections of the soul; and thus this cord of love twined round the heart binds it to the horns of the altar, to keep it fast and firm to the cross of the Lord Jesus.

But as remarked before, the expression "Bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar," implies that the victim needed to be bound. Why was the victim bound literally? The knife was to be applied to the throat, pain was to be endured, blood was to be shed, life was to be yielded up; and, therefore, the victim naturally, literally, was bound to the horns of the altar that it might not escape—that it might not get away, but that it might bleed and die upon the spot. Now this implies spiritually and experimentally, that there is that which would drive us from the cross of Christ—that as the victim would gladly break away from the knife held out to its throat, that as it trembled and shrank from suffering and death, so there is in the children of God a struggling, a shrinking, a flying back from the suffering which is to be endured, an endeavouring to break away, if it were possible, from the cross to which they are attached. Who would not willingly escape convictions? Who would not evade the pangs of guilt? Who would willingly wade through seas of trouble? Who would groan and sigh under a body of sin and death? Who would smart under wounds that "stink and are corrupt because of his foolishness?" Who would have the leprosy break out in his forehead, and stand before God full of "wounds and bruises and putrifying sores?" Nature shrinks from it; the flesh abhors it: the carnal mind will have none of it. And, therefore, the strong cord of necessity is wreathed round the soul that it may not get away from the cross. Are we not continually, my friends, trying to find

out some smooth flowery path in which to walk? Are we not in various ways seeking to evade and escape from trouble, sorrow, and difficulty, and endeavouring to chalk out a pleasanter, easier road? Yes, continually. We want to get away from the cross, we would gladly find some easier path in which to walk; but conviction, guilt, fear, condemnation lying as a heavy load upon the conscience, bind us to the horns of the altar, as knowing that only so far as we are attached to that altar, do we derive any efficacy in our souls from the sacrifice that was once offered upon that altar. There is a case that occurs to gracious men sometimes. They have had a good experience; they have been favoured with some testimony from God to the pardon of their sins; they have had some visitation of God's love in their consciences. When the savour of this has been lost, and no fresh trials succeed, they often get into a smooth easy path. The Lord suffers them for a while to walk in this path, and they retain their past confidence, they stand in their old experience, and thus they secretly get away from the cross, holding now in the hand of nature what they once held in the hand of grace, maintaining in creature strength that which can only be really maintained by the Spirit of God in them. Thus by getting away from the cross in suffering, they get away from the cross in spiritual manifestation; and stand in the letter of their old experience, not in the sweet renewings of the Holy Ghost. But in thus getting from the cross they become light, trifling, frivolous, proud, presumptuous, worldly, covetous, high-minded. And why? Because they are not exercised in their souls, because they are not tried and tempted in their minds, because sin and guilt is no burden to them, and because the Lord suffers them for a while to walk in a way of their own devising. But he whom God is pleased to instruct by His blessed Spirit day by day never can long get away from the cross. His carnal nature shrinks from it, but the Lord so leads him into those paths which are connected with the cross of Christ that he is afraid, in his right mind, to get away from the cross, feeling that the moment he loses sight of the cross he falls into guilt and condemnation.

But further. He that is bound to the horns of the altar has many

sacrifices to make. He that will walk in the path which God has chosen for him will have to meet with every opposition to his walking therein. Infidelity, unbelief, rebellion, pevishness, impatience, the assaults of Satan as an angel of darkness, the delusions of Satan as an angel of light, false friends, secret or open foes, the flattery of professors, and often the frowns of God's children, the loss of worldly interests, the sacrifice of property—all these things are entailed upon him that will walk in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. They are all connected with the cross of Christ, and cannot be escaped by him who is bound to the horns of the altar. Nature, therefore, shrinks back. It finds the struggle too great; it feels the sacrifices of such a kind that it cannot consent that those sacrifices should be undergone. Well, here is the struggling of the victim; here is the endeavour on the part of the child of God to run away from the cross, to break the cord, and to escape from those things which are so painful to flesh and blood. But, "bind the sacrifice with cords;" yea, "even unto the horns of the altar." The broken heart, the contrite spirit, the tender conscience, are bound with such strong cords of necessity, and, at times, with such strong cords of affection, that however repugnant it be to the carnal mind, however strewn the road be with thorns, however the knife glitter at the throat, the soul is still bound to the horns of the altar, and from the horns of that altar it cannot get away.

3. Again, those things which the Spirit of God enables a man to do, are in Scripture sometimes called sacrifices. "That we may offer," we read, "spiritual *sacrifices* acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ." The apostle speaks of "receiving of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from the brethren at Philippi; an odour of a sweet smell; a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God;" (Philippians 4:18.) So he says to the Hebrew church: "But to do good and communicate, (that is, to the wants of God's people,) forget not; for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased;" (Hebrews 13:16.) Well, then, these spiritual sacrifices which a man offers unto God are bound also to the horns of the altar. They are not well-pleasing in the sight of God, except they are bound to the horns of the altar, so as to derive all their acceptance from the

altar. Our prayers are only acceptable to God, as they are offered through the cross of Jesus. Our praises and thanksgivings are only acceptable to God, as they are connected with the cross of Christ, and ascend to the Father through the propitiation of His dear Son. The ordinances of God's house are only acceptable to God as spiritual sacrifices when they are bound to the horns of the altar. Both the ordinances of the New Testament—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper—have been bound by the hands of God Himself to the horns of the altar; and no one either rightly went through the one, or rightly received the other, who had not been first spiritually bound by the same hand to the horns of the altar. Every act of liberality, every cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, every feeling of sympathy and affection, every kind word, every compassionate action shown to a brother; all and each are only acceptable to God as they ascend to Him through the mediation of His dear Son. And, therefore, every sacrifice of our own comfort, or of own advantage, of our own time, or of our own money, for the profit of God's children, is only a spiritual and acceptable sacrifice so far as it is bound to the horns of the altar, linked on to the cross of Jesus, and deriving all its fragrance and odour from its connection with the incense there offered by the Lord of life and glory.

But, from these sacrifices being bound to the horns of the altar, we gather that there is a repugnance, a struggling, a shrinking back, in the offering of them. To offer up carnal prayers is easy; to offer up spiritual prayers is difficult, nay, impossible, except so far as God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. To eat the bread and drink the wine with our mouth is easy; to eat the flesh of the Son of God is difficult, yea, impossible, except so far as it is spiritually revealed and made known to us, and faith is drawn out in our hearts to receive Christ as our soul-satisfying portion. To communicate to the wants of God's children in distress, merely from feelings of pity and compassion is easy; but to give unto them from feelings of love to Christ, and from a heart full of sympathy to them as members of Christ, is difficult, yea, impossible, except so far as the Lord is pleased to work that feeling in us. To be kind and compassionate and tender-hearted,

and to have bowels of mercy for the poor and needy, the tried and exercised and distressed of God's family, so as to weep with them that weep, and mourn with them that mourn, may be easy to those whose natural tears readily flow at the sight of suffering; but to sympathise with them spiritually, and bear them on our hearts before God, when the spectacle of woe is removed from our eyes, and the fire of natural compassion is burnt out, is impossible, except so far as the Lord works it in us. A man may make many sacrifices; but unless he is moved to make those sacrifices by some ties of affection to the cross of Christ, all such sacrifices fall short of any real value. A man may come before God, as he thinks sincerely; and yet, if he comes not through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, if his sacrifices are not bound to the horns of that altar, he has no spiritual access to the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. It was the solemn testimony of Jesus: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Thus, the Father only accepts His people's persons, as being bound to the horns of the altar by the eternal ties of electing love and covenant decree; and only so far accepts their words and works, as they are bound there by the Holy Ghost casting the cords of affection round their tender spirits and broken hearts.

But we may further observe that the words, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar," are spoken in the form of a precept. It is not merely a solemn declaration that the sacrifice is bound with cords to the horns of the altar, but it runs also in the way of positive injunction. It seems couched in this form, *first*, as though to remind, as it were, the Father of His covenant engagements. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." For we must recollect that this Psalm was penned some centuries, a thousand years at least, before the Son of God took flesh and "was made in the likeness of men." It seems also spoken as though the Church would remind the Holy Spirit that He should bind the great Sacrifice with cords, yea, "even unto the horns of the altar;" and strengthen and uphold Jesus in finishing the work which His Father gave Him to do. It seems also spoken in the way of supplication, that the same blessed Spirit would by His work of grace upon the heart, bind it

as a sacrifice to the horns of the altar, and keep it fast and firm by the cross of the Lord Jesus. And it seems addressed to the same heavenly Teacher, that He would graciously condescend to bind every word and work spoken and done in the name of the Lord to the horns of the altar, that it might be a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

Therefore, if we have any evidence that we are the Lord's, all that we spiritually are, and all that we spiritually have, is bound to the horns of the altar. Our persons, if we stand accepted before God, are bound with cords, the cords of electing love, and the cords of strong necessity, and the cords of spiritual affection to the horns of the altar. If the Lord has wrought upon us by the blessed Spirit, and made our consciences in some measure tender before Him; if He has given us anything like meekness, and humility, and godly fear; and broken our heart into any contrition and love, by this internal work He has bound us with cords to the horns of this altar. Then if this be the case, if we are bound, not only by covenant engagements in the councils of eternity, but also by spiritual ties in personal experience,—if we are bound with cords "even unto the horns of the altar," we shall drink a little into the spirit of Him who was first bound there. If He was bound there as a brokenhearted victim, we shall be bound there with a measure of His spirit. If He was bound there with filial fear working in His heart, and "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb. 5:7), we shall be bound there also in some measure with filial fear working in our hearts, with sighs and cries springing up out of our spirit unto Him who is able to save us from death eternal. Therefore no presumptuous confidence, no lightness in heavenly things, no towering aloft in head knowledge and vain notions; none of these things are consistent with cleaving to the cross of the Lord of life and glory. Where the soul is firmly bound to the horns of the altar with the strong cords which the Holy Ghost Himself has wreathed, there will be humility, there will be meekness, there will be simplicity and godly sincerity, there will be brokenness of spirit and contrition of heart, there will be an entrance by faith into the

kingdom of Christ, there will be a lying at the feet of Christ, and there will be an earnest desire to rest our heads upon His bosom. In such a spot God's people long to be; to the foot of that cross they, at times, intensely desire to come; on that face, more marred than the sons of men, they desire to look. If they are bound there, they will see the blood which there was shed; if they are bound there, they will see Him who was bound there before them; if they are bound there, they will look up in His countenance, and as they look upon His countenance, they will in a measure drink into His spirit. We may easily measure men's religion, then, by this test; not where they are in doctrine, not where they are in vain notions, not where they are in presumptuous confidence, not where they are in towering speculation; but where are they in brokenness of heart, tenderness of conscience, contrition of spirit, meekness of soul, godly fear, filial awe, and trembling reverence? Where is the mind of Christ visible in them? Where is the image of a suffering Lord stamped upon them? What has the altar done for them, or what has a sight of the altar done in them? It is indeed vain confidence to be always talking about Christ, and to know nothing of the Spirit of Christ. It is indeed vain talking to profess to know the cross of Christ, and never have any reflection of Christ's image in us. It is indeed the worst delusion to believe ourselves interested in the blood of the Lamb, without feeling the conscience not merely bedewed with that blood as cleansing it from all sin, but softened with that blood so as to be made meek and tender before God. And it is the worst of folly and the height of presumption to boast of ourselves as accepted children of God, when there is nothing of the image of a broken-hearted Lord stamped upon our soul, or visible in our demeanour.

Are you, then, a poor broken-hearted child of the living God? Is there any measure of the Spirit of Christ in you? Is there any faint resemblance of His meekness and holy image stamped upon you? Then you feel yourselves bound with cords to the horns of the altar. You feel the strong ties of necessity, and you feel the strong ties of affection binding you there. But with this you feel also that you are a struggling victim; that you would gladly

escape the troubles and trials that being bound to the horns of the altar brings upon you; you would gladly get into an easier path if you could; or if you dared, would willingly set up yourselves some altar made after the pattern of Damascus (2 Kings 16:10); and would gladly, like the Roman Catholic, worship with your body a material cross, instead of worshipping in your soul the adorable God-man who hung and bled there. You would gladly, if you could, step out of a self-loathing, tried, harassed, and tempted path, to get into the flowery meadow of doctrine and speculation, and there walk at ease without one pang in your conscience or one trial in your soul. But the Lord has said, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." You are bound to the horns of the altar. From those horns you cannot escape. You may fume, fret, and rebel against all or any of these cords, but you cannot break them. Aye, you may, in your strugglings, stretch to their utmost extent these cords; but they are too firmly fastened round your tender conscience, and too strongly wreathed round your broken heart for you to burst them. They would sooner cut your heart in two than you should break them, or escape from them. And in your right mind, you would not be otherwise than bound with cords to the horns of this altar. In your right mind, you want the cords tightened, and so to be drawn nearer and nearer unto it, and to have the blood that was shed upon it sprinkled upon your conscience. In your right mind, you want to see with the eye of faith the Victim that once lay bleeding and writhing there; and as you look upon Him, to drink into His image, and to feel the melting power and softening efficacy of that sight.

But then, connected with it, there are such trials, such temptations, and such sacrifices, that you, in your fits of rebellion or flesh-pleasing ease would at times as gladly get away as at others you would gladly get near. Vile wretches that we are, who would often prefer to serve the flesh and the world, and take our chance, as men speak, for eternity, than suffer trials and temptations as the followers of Christ! But it is our mercy that we can neither make nor unmake, do or undo, bind nor break any one cord of eternal love; but that, in spite of the creature God will

"fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power."

O, friends, may the Lord keep us from a vain presumptuous confidence. If there is one thing more to be dreaded in this day than another, it is being plastered over with untempered mortar, walking in a vain show, resting in the doctrines of grace without feeling the power of those doctrines in our heart, and trusting in the letter of the Word without feeling the spirit and power of truth in our souls. It is the peculiar danger of the Calvinistic churches; and is, I believe, the peculiar temptation to which the children of God are exposed in this metropolis, to get under a presumptuous ministry, and sit under those preachers who are high in the letter, but know little of the savoury operations and humbling teachings of God the Holy Ghost in their souls. Christ in the letter will suit a whole heart, but Christ in the Spirit can only suit a broken heart. Christ in the letter will stand very well with worldliness, pride, and covetousness; but Christ in the teachings of the Holy Ghost, formed in the heart the hope of glory, can only stand in a tender conscience and a contrite spirit. He will most surely humble every soul to whom He manifests Himself, and He will keep that soul more or less humble. He will bring it to the cross, and keep it at the cross; and as He keeps it near to Himself, He will stamp more or less of His own image upon it. Would you know, then, whether you are bound to the horns of the altar? What know you of these strong ties wreathed round your soul? What know you of anything of the preciousness and sweetness of Jesus in secret moments? What know you of coming to the Father through the application of His atoning blood? What know you of communion and sympathy with the Lord of life and glory? These are the marks to try our souls by, whether we have received Christ, whether we know Christ, whether He is really precious to our souls—what union and what communion we are seeking with Him as broken-hearted followers of Him, what we seek to know of Him as crucified for our sins, how much we desire to drink into His image, and how much we desire to be impressed with His Spirit, and how much we abhor and shrink from all knowledge and all doctrine and all confidence that is not connected with the cross as made

experimentally and feelingly known to our consciences. "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." Hath He showed us this light, that we are ruined, lost, guilty, polluted, filthy, and undone? "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." Hath He shown us the cross? Hath He shown us light in His light so as to catch any glimpse of mercy in the face of the Mediator? Then if He has shown us any of these things, He has bound us with cords, and these cords He has attached to the horns of the altar, that we may cleave to this altar as our propitiation to atone, our righteousness to justify (Rom. 5:9), our food to satisfy, and our pattern to walk by. And then we shall desire to abide by this altar, not merely for the pardon of our deep-dyed and aggravated sins, but also there to feel and be experimentally blessed with the work of the Holy Ghost, in renewing our spirits and reviving our souls. O that in all our approaches unto God, and in all our solemn dealings with Him, in what we are in the world, and in what we are in the Church of God, we might feel ourselves thus bound with these cords of love and bands of a man to the horns of the altar, that the world may be crucified unto us and we unto the world, and the life we live in the flesh may be a life by the faith of the Son of God. And O that we may not only live by the altar and in sight of the altar, but die in the sight of the altar, for he that dies in sight of the altar will rise one day to be with Him—with the King in His beauty, who though He once there suffered, is now risen and glorified. The sacrifice that is bound with cords to the altar below, and thus receives of the blood that falls upon his conscience from that altar, now stands before God accepted in the Beloved, and will surely rise with the risen Lord of life and glory; "for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him;" and "if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Yes, all such shall rise into a fruition of His eternal life, to see Him as He is, to enjoy His eternal presence, and to bathe in that river of pleasures which is at the right hand of God for evermore.

But to those vain presumptuous professors who live and die without having a broken heart bound with cords to the horns of

this altar, whatever they may talk about Christ, however they may prate and chatter about the doctrines of grace, this solemn sentence will drop from the judge of all, in that awful day when they stand before His throne: "Depart from Me, ye cursed; I never knew you. You professed to know Me, but I never knew you; depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." May the Lord raise up in our hearts a sweet testimony that He has more or less, each according to the measure of our faith, bound us with cords to the horns of the altar, and may He shed abroad in our souls a sweet love and affection to that altar; that in the sight of it we may live, and in the sight of it we may happily and peacefully die.

THE SAINT'S PATH TO ETERNAL GLORY

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, August 6, 1843

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10

Philosophers tell us that every ray of light which comes from the sun is divisible into seven distinct colours. And this they shew by a very simple experiment. They cause a single ray to pass through a glass instrument of a particular shape, called a prism, and then throwing it upon a white surface, the seven colours are at once distinctly perceptible. I think we may carry this illustration into divine things. Truth as it issues from the Sun of righteousness is pure and simple, but as it passes into the mind of man, and again issues out of it, it takes the various hues and colours of each man's mind. Thus, we see that different ministers, taught we believe of God, have different lines of preaching. Some are clear and powerful in doctrine; others, deep in experience; others, led to insist on a practical walk and conversation; yet all are taught "by the same Spirit," and led into a knowledge of the same grand truths.

Nor is this less evident even in the writers of the New Testament. Though all were taught of God, and though all they wrote was by divine inspiration, yet we can clearly see a difference in them. Thus, we see Paul, an ardent, uncompromising champion of distinguishing grace, never forgetting the awful lengths of sin to which he was allowed to go when he persecuted the church of God; and, therefore, standing up with zeal and ardour to contend for the free and sovereign grace of God. We see again John, who leaned upon his Master's bosom, and drank in large draughts of that love which dwelt without measure in the Son of God, breathing love in every line. His grand text is, "God is love"; and his whole soul seems to be imbued with the love of Christ which

passeth knowledge. We find James plain and practical, speaking strongly against the empty professors of his day, and contending that faith must have its accompanying works, in order to prove that it is the "faith of God's elect."

We see Jude searching, keen, and discriminating: drawing his sword boldly against the Antinomians that infested the church, those "spots in their feasts of charity;" yet contending "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and that the elect were "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." We find Peter carrying clear and decisive marks of having been in the furnace. We see the fiery ardour which once prompted him to draw his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, tamed and subdued; we see him breathing a spirit of love, his soul having been baptized in suffering; and he writes as one who in the furnace of affliction had been purged of the tin and dross which appeared once so conspicuously in him. And yet with all these differences, one and the same Spirit taught each and all, and one and the same gospel was preached in the power and love of it by each and all.

Peter, then, as one who had been in the furnace, closes his first epistle with this affectionate prayer: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." And as there may be some, perhaps many present, who may hear my voice tonight for the last time during this visit, I do not know that I can leave a better text for their consideration, if the Lord is pleased to bring it home to the heart, than the words I have just read.

I will then, with God's blessing, endeavour to take up the words in the order they lie before me.

I.—The first word which demands our attention is, "the God of all grace." The apostle by this expression leads the mind up to the Source of all mercy. He does not, as a finishing stroke to the truths he had been setting forth, as a practical guard lest the

doctrines of grace should be abused, exhort, by way of application, those to whom he was writing to use unceasing diligence, to cultivate active piety, and employ every exertion to maintain their Christian standing. He leaves nothing to the assiduity of the creature, but leads them up to "the God of all grace," as the only Source and Fountain of all spiritual strength. Nor is he contented with saying "the God of grace," but "the God of all grace." Everything, then, spiritually felt in the conscience; everything experimentally tasted, handled, and enjoyed; everything whereby we are separated from the world dead in sin: everything that saves the soul from the wrath to come, and brings it into the eternal enjoyment of a Three-One God is comprehended in the expression, "the God of all grace."

As the Lord leads his people into a knowledge of themselves, as he removes the veil of deceit from their heart, as he discovers to them more plainly the deep corruption that lurks and works in their bosom, he shews them more and more not only their need of grace, but opens up more and more to them what grace is. When the Lord first begins his work on the conscience, and brings us to know a measure of the truth, we are but learners in the school of grace. It is only after we have travelled some years in the way, and have had repeated discoveries of our baseness, and of God's superabounding mercy, that we begin to enter a little into what grace really is. We learn the words first, and the meaning of them afterwards. We usually receive the doctrine of grace as it stands in the letter of truth first; and then, as the Lord leads us, we get into the experience of grace in the power of it. Thus we gradually learn what grace is by feeling its complete suitability to our pressing wants.

When, for instance, we feel what numerous and aggravated sins we are daily and hourly committing, we want grace, and not merely grace, but "all grace," to pardon and blot them out. When we painfully feel how we daily backslide from God, and are perpetually roving after idols; how our hearts get entangled in the world, and how little our affections are fixed where Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, we need "all grace" to heal these

backslidings, and to bring the soul into the enjoyment of the mercy and love of God. And when we see what base returns we make to the Lord for all his kindness towards us; when our rebelliousness, fretfulness, impatience, and ingratitude are charged home upon the conscience, and we feel what wretches we are, how we have requited the Lord for all his goodness towards us, we experience our need of "all grace" to forgive such base ingratitude. When we can scarcely bear ourselves, as if none were so vile, none so filthy, none so black as we, we are brought to see and feel it must be "all grace" that can bear with us. So that we not only see the sweetness and suitability of grace, but a far greater sweetness and suitability in "all grace."

For we find that unless it were "all grace" we must perish after all: unless it were "all grace," after all we have tasted and known, felt, experienced, or realized, we must lie down in sorrow, because we are so continually sinning against grace that we must needs wear it out. As, suppose by way of illustration, a father might put into the hands of a friend, or a banker, a certain sum for his son: a certain, fixed, definite amount: so God had stored up in Christ a certain amount of mercy and grace for his children. I have no hesitation in saying, that had such been the case, such prodigal wretches are we, that long ago we should have drawn out and spent the whole stock, whatever might have been the amount; yea, had millions of grace, so to speak, been laid up in Christ, such improvident, reckless, and sinful wretches are we, that we should long ago have spent every farthing of it.

Therefore, he leads us not to look at grace only, however sweet and suitable; nor even to "all grace," though sweeter and more suitable still; but leads us up through and beyond grace to "the God of all grace." As though he might say, "Grace might be exhausted, and even 'all grace' might sooner or later be drained dry; but the 'God of all grace,' the same yesterday, today, and for ever, is an everflowing fountain." A tank may be exhausted, but a fountain is inexhaustible. So "the God of all grace" is "the fountain of living waters," ever flowing forth in streams of mercy, love, and compassion to his people in Christ. Nothing, then, less

than "the God of all grace," could suit such vile wretches as they feel themselves to be. None but "the God of all grace," could bear with them. None but he whose grace can never be exhausted, whose patience can never be worn out, whose lovingkindness can never be provoked beyond endurance: but who pardons all, loves through all, and is determined, in spite of all, to bring the objects of his love to the eternal enjoyment of himself—none but such a God as he who has revealed himself in the face, person, blood, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, could ever save such guilty and filthy wretches, as some of us see and feel ourselves to be.

II.—We have taken a glimpse at the Fountain, and we will now look at the streams. The first stream that flows out in the text, and prominently catches our eye, is,

Effectual calling: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." Calling is the first step in the divine life, the first stream of ever-flowing and overflowing grace that visits the heart: it is therefore put by the apostle at the head of all blessings. But what is calling? It implies a word spoken, in a similar though not in the same way as the Lord called Samuel, when he had laid himself down to sleep in the temple, and said, "Samuel, Samuel!" So the Lord calls his people. I do not mean to say that he addresses them with an audible voice: but he speaks his own word into their conscience with the same authority and power that called Samuel when he was lying asleep before the ark. The call aroused Samuel from sleep, as the spiritual call arouses the soul from the sleep of sin; the word is felt with power in the heart: the truth comes with authority into the conscience: spiritual life is communicated: and certain fruits and effects at once follow.

But what are these fruits and effects? The first effect is, to call us out of the world; for in the world we are till God is pleased to call us out of it. He calls us, then, out of the company of the world, out of its amusements, out of its sinful practices, and out of its no less sinful and sensual spirit. By communicating a new nature, and imparting light and life to the soul, he shews us what an evil

world it is; as the apostle says, "Who gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." In the world there is nothing to be seen and heard but "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" and God, touching our conscience with his finger, and raising up his fear in our hearts, calls us so effectually out of these lusts, that we can never again intermingle with any peace of conscience with it. Until this step is taken in living faith and godly fear, there is no manifested interest in the promise, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" **2Co 6:17,18**.

But God, in calling his people, does not merely call them out of the world dead in wickedness, but he calls them, sooner or later, out of the religious world, the world dead in profession. Not that, for the most part, we are immediately called out of this world within a world; for the Lord does not usually open our eyes at first to see the miserable deceit and hypocrisy of the great bulk of professors. In our ignorance, we think at first that every one who talks about conversion and regeneration is a child of God: and even our heart perhaps has flowed out with love and affection to some whom at the time we thought Christians, but whom we afterwards found to have neither part nor lot in the matter.

But after a time, as the Lord leads the soul into a deeper knowledge of itself, and into a spiritual acquaintance with the law and gospel; as his word of truth is felt with more power in our hearts, and he brings the soul into a more experimental knowledge of his kingdom of grace, we find no more communion with the great bulk of the religious world than with the profane world. We want the power, whilst they are satisfied with the form; we want realities, whilst they are contented with shadows; we want life, and a feeling experience of the love and goodness of God in the soul; they are satisfied with mere doctrines, as they stand in the letter of truth.

Again: We are often sad, and feel that none but the Lord can speak comfort; we are often cast down by sin, tried in our minds, and exercised in our souls; we feel at times heavy burdens, and suffer under painful and oozing wounds; but they are dead to all life and feeling, either of spiritual sorrow or joy; they are cheerful, easy, and light-hearted, and satisfied with a name to live. Sooner or later, therefore, we come out of the professing world, with as clear a call and as good a conscience as we came at first out of the world dead in trespasses and sins; and set our faces against hypocrisy and a lifeless profession, as much as against vice and open profanity.

But in calling us, first out of the profane, and then out of the professing world, God calls us to the experimental knowledge of certain blessed truths, which can only be spiritually known by the power of the Holy Ghost.

1. He calls us, first, to repent of our sins. "Repent, and believe the gospel," was the first proclamation that issued from the lips of incarnate Truth: and that same word is still spoken as the first call to the heart of all the subjects of God's kingdom. This call, not merely reaches their ears outwardly, for "many," in that sense, "are called." but its power reaches their heart, and they are brought to genuine repentance for sin. How many people there are who begin with religion, and leap over repentance! who adopt into their creed certain doctrines which they hear from the mouths of ministers or gather from books, and leap out of the world into the highest assurance, without ever passing through the "strait gate" and "narrow way!" But Christ has placed repentance as the first step into his kingdom: so that he who never knew what repentance unto life was, is not a partaker of the life of God in his soul. But wherever there is repentance as a fruit of the Spirit, there will be a sense and sight of sin, a knowledge of its dreadful evil, a feeling of guilt before a holy God, a mourning and grieving on account of it, and a deep sense of inward vileness before the eyes of Infinite Purity.

2. But God calls his people not merely to repentance, but to confession also. When the Spirit works repentance in the heart, it does not lie there dead and torpid; but it issues forth from the lips in genuine and honest confession. The spiritual penitent tells the Lord, with tears rolling down his cheeks, with sobs heaving from his bosom, with repeated expressions of condemnation, what a wretch he has been, how vilely he has behaved toward him, and what a base, horrible, and filthy creature he has been in his pure eyes. And this, not once or twice in his life, not once or twice a year, but continually as the Lord works a feeling of repentance in the heart, and brings it forth in godly confession, does he honestly tell him, **though he knows it all**, the sad tale of self-condemnation.

3. But the Lord calls his people not merely to confess, but also to forsake those sins of which they repent. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" **Pr 28:13**. There is a forsaking of evil, a turning away from idols, a leaving of broken cisterns, and a fleeing out of those sins which are laid upon the conscience. And this takes place, in a greater or less degree, when God chastises his people with inward rebukes for sin, and his frown is felt in the soul. There are many that act, as Bunyan speaks of the mother that calls her child a little slut and all sorts of names, and then the next moment falls to hugging and kissing it. Many who stand high in a profession speak of themselves as sinners, and profess to hate sin, yet the next moment plunge without a pang into the very iniquities of which they profess to have repented. But God's people, under the powerful teachings of the Spirit, not merely repent of and confess, but forsake too those sins that are laid upon their conscience, and cry unto the Lord to keep them from the power of evil.

4. The Lord, in calling his people, calls them also to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Repent, and believe the gospel," he says to them with power. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." He opens their eyes to see a crucified Jesus, and draws their hearts to come

unto him, as "mighty to save." He reveals to their understanding the Mediator between God and man, the great High Priest over the house of God, "Immanuel, God with us!" He brings into their souls a taste of his dying love, and a sight by faith of his atoning blood. Thus he enables them to believe in the Son of God, and to receive him into their hearts as all their salvation and all their desire.

5. He calls them too, to eye his only-begotten Son as a suffering Jesus; to look upon him whom they have pierced, and to mourn for him; to behold the evil of sin in the bleeding, agonizing Saviour; and thus to be melted down into godly sorrow, that their sins should have caused the sweat to issue from his sacred body, and the groans of agony to burst from his dying lips.

6. He calls them also to walk as becometh the gospel, to live consistently and uprightly, and to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things;" to exercise themselves to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man; and thus manifest that they are "living epistles, written not with ink," in the mere letter of truth, "but with the Spirit of the living God." He calls them also to walk in "his ordinances blameless," and not, under the pretext of greater spirituality, to despise any of them.

7. But, above all, he calls them "unto his eternal glory:" that when this short life has passed away, when "time shall be no longer" to them, they may see Jesus as he is in the realms of endless, day, may eternally partake of that bliss which is laid up for them at God's right hand, and behold and be partakers of Christ's glory.

III.—But the next step in the kingdom of grace laid down in the text, the next stream that issues out of the everflowing fountain of grace, is, suffering: "After that ye have suffered a while."

In calling his people, God calls them all to suffer. "Unto you," says the apostle, "it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" **Php 1:29**. "If so

be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" **Ro 8:17**.

Thus, after the Lord, by his special work on the conscience, has called us to repentance and confession of sin, as well as to faith in Jesus: after he has called us to godly sorrow; to live according to the precepts of the gospel: and to walk in the ordinances of his church; he then calls us to suffer for and with Christ. But we cannot "suffer according to the will of God," that is, in a gospel sense and from gospel motives, till the Lord enables us in some measure to look to him. The same Spirit, who calls the believer to walk in a path of suffering, strengthens and enables him to do so.

To suffer then aright, we must walk in the steps of the great Captain of our salvation, who "though a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." The Father in this sense spared not his only-begotten Son, but led him into the path of tribulation. If the Lord of the house, then, had to travel in this dark and gloomy path of suffering, can his disciples escape? If the Captain of our salvation was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" must not the common soldiers, who occupy the ranks of the spiritual army, be baptized into the same sufferings, and taste in their measure of that cup which he drank to the very dregs? Thus, every child of God is called, sooner or later, to "suffer with Christ;" and he that suffers not with Christ, will not reign with him **2Ti 2:12**. But the Lord, who sees what we are, as well as what we need, apportions out suffering to our several states and necessities. All certainly do not suffer in the same way, nor to the same extent, though all travel, in their measure, in that path. Paths of different length, and different depth and height, branch out, so to speak, of the great highway of tribulation, and in one or other of these paths all the redeemed must walk.

Thus, some of the Lord's people suffer more than others from the depths of their own dreadful nature being opened up to them with greater clearness and power; they are more distressed by painful

convictions, are more exercised with distressing doubts and fears, and spend most of their days in a gloomy desponding state.

Others, again, of God's people suffer more from Satan's fierce temptations; he is permitted to hurl his fiery darts with greater violence into their souls; and, as a roaring lion, he seeks to rend the very caul of their hearts. Others of the family of faith suffer more from the hidings of God's countenance; they have to mourn His absence whose presence they have felt and tasted to be their heaven. Others, more sensibly feel his chastening hand in their conscience. Others, again, suffer more from open persecution; the world is allowed to vent its spleen and malice more upon them; their friends or relations are more bitter against them; and thus their tribulation is more in the way of outward persecution than in those inward trials into which God leads others of his people. Again, others are more harassed by the workings of inward sin; more snares seem spread for their feet; they are more violently assailed by secret lusts, and feel the power of sin more sensibly raging for dominion in their carnal mind. But however the suffering may differ, all have to suffer, all have to pass through the furnace: for the Lord bringeth "the third part through the fire." All have to walk in the footsteps of a self-denying and crucified Jesus; all have painfully to feel what it is to be at times under the rod, and experience those chastisements of God, whereby they are proved to be sons, and not bastards.

IV.—But this suffering is for a while, "after that ye have suffered a while." It is only for a time that God's people suffer; though they suffer at different times of their pilgrimage, there are occasional remissions. There is a certain needful time for suffering to last, as there is a certain "needs be" for the suffering itself. And when they have suffered the time needful to purge away their tin and dross, God takes them out of the furnace:

V.—And this leads us to the fruits and consequences of this suffering, "After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

There is no Christian perfection, no divine establishment, no spiritual strength, no solid settlement, except by suffering. But after the soul has suffered, after it has felt God's chastising hand, the effect is to perfect, to establish, to strengthen, and to settle it. Let us look at these several points in their order.

1. "Make you perfect." What perfection does the Holy Ghost speak of here? Certainly not perfection in the flesh: that is but a wild dream of free-will and Arminianism. But perfection here and elsewhere means a being well-established and grounded in the faith, as we find the apostle speaking **Heb 5:14**, "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age **literally, as we read in the margin, "perfect"**, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Christian perfection does not then consist in perfection in the flesh, but in having arrived at maturity in the divine life, in being what I may call a Christian adult, or what the apostle terms, "a man in Christ." When Paul, therefore, says, "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect," he means being "no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," but favoured with a measure of Christian wisdom and strength. It is this Christian maturity, which is called in scripture, "perfection," and it is only obtained by suffering. It is only in the furnace that the tin and dross of pharisaic righteousness is purged away; and the soul comes out of the furnace "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use." The Lord of life and glory was made "perfect through sufferings;" and there is no other way whereby his followers are made spiritually perfect. Until a man is led into suffering, he does not know the truth in its sweetness. We are full of free-will, pride, presumption, and self-righteousness. But when the soul is baptized into suffering, it is in a measure established in the truth, strengthened in the things of God, and conformed to the image of Christ.

2. The next fruit and effect of suffering is, establishment. The soul by sufferings and deliverances becomes established in a sense of its own interest in divine things: it becomes more delivered from doubts and fears. Suffering makes a man

established in the truth, by causing him to feel and realize more of its power, sweetness, and unction in his heart. But till a man goes into the furnace, to have his fleshly wisdom, strength, and righteousness burnt off from him, there is no divine establishment of soul. He scarcely knows what he believes, and scarcely discerns the difference betwixt what God has taught him, and what he has learned from man: he is not brought to feel clearly and accurately the difference between form and power, substance and shadow, letter and spirit. But when afflictions and troubles come upon him, he becomes not merely established in his judgment in a knowledge of the letter of truth, but established in his soul by an experience of it.

3. The third fruit and effect of suffering mentioned in the text is, strength. Until a man goes into the furnace of affliction and suffering, to have his own fleshly strength burnt out, he is never divinely strengthened in his soul.

Having, therefore, as yet a measure of creature strength, he does not need the strength of Christ to be "made perfect in weakness." But when he has been in the furnace, and suffered awhile, and found his own strength like tow before the flame, and feels utterly unable to resist sin and Satan unless God is pleased to strengthen him with strength in his "inner man," he comes to the Lord as a poor needy supplicant for a measure of divine strength. He is no more looking to the flesh, no more going down to Egypt and Assyria, and leaning on a reed that runs into the hand, and pierces it; but is brought, in a measure of believing simplicity, to look to the Lord to perfect strength in his weakness.

4. The fourth and last fruit of suffering mentioned in the text is, divine settlement. This intimates a freedom from wandering here and there, and wavering to and fro, from being "driven with the wind and tossed," as James speaks **Jas 1:6**, "like a wave of the sea." By suffering a man becomes settled into a solemn conviction of the character of Jehovah as revealed in the scripture, and in a measure made experimentally manifest in his conscience. He is settled in the belief of an "everlasting covenant,

ordered in all things and sure:" in the persuasion that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose;" in the firm conviction that everything comes to pass according to God's eternal purpose: and are all tending to the good of the church, and to God's eternal glory. His soul, too, is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the creature; into the conviction that the world is but a shadow, and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped; that of all things sin is most to be dreaded, and the favour of God above all things most to be coveted; that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and him crucified; that all things are passing away, and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity. Thus he becomes settled in a knowledge of the truth, and his soul remains at anchor, looking to the Lord to preserve him here, and bring him in peace and safety to his eternal home.

These are the fruits of suffering. They are not to be learnt by reading them in the word of God, or by hearing ministers preach about them; nor are they to be obtained from books, or from any source, but the teaching of the Spirit of God in the soul. Where God then teaches, he "teaches to profit;" he writes his truth with "the point of a diamond" on the heart, and engraves them as "with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever."

But if you took at the form in which the text is couched, you will perceive that the apostle, in using these words, utters them not so much as an exhortation, as a prayer offered up to God in their behalf; for he knew well that the God of all grace could alone do all these things for them. He speaks as an "elder;" and while writing to the people of God, his whole soul and affections seem warmed towards them: he therefore lifts up his heart unto the Lord, and beseeches "the God of all grace" to do this blessed work on their conscience, and to make them "perfect, to stablish, strengthen, and settle them."

We see then here, my friends, the path in which God leads his people. All we have and are, everything we know and feel, comes from "the God of all grace." We have nothing spiritually good in ourselves; all therefore that we have is the free gift of his hand, and comes from the everflowing Fountain of mercy and truth. It will be our mercy then, as the Lord may enable us, to be ever looking to him, not looking to books, not looking to ministers; these are only instruments, and in themselves but poor instruments. The soul must look through all and above all to "the God of all grace." Since I have been in Town this visit, hundreds perhaps may have heard my voice, but you must not look to me, or any man to teach and bless your soul. The Lord enable you to look to him alone as "the God of all grace," to seek him in secret, to pour out your hearts before him, and to call on his blessed name, that he would lead your souls into a knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus." The Lord enable you to examine every truth as it is brought before you by the light of God's Spirit in your heart, to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."

And however deeply some here may feel the vileness of their hearts, remember this, my friends, there is "the God of all grace" to go to. If you feel yourselves the vilest of sinners, he suits you the more as "the God of all grace." If you feel dark, stupid, and barren, it is the greater reason that you should call on "the God of all grace" to revive your drooping soul. If any here have lost past enjoyments, and are now "walking in darkness" that may be felt, it is the more reason they should seek "the God of all grace," that he may supply their wants out of Christ's fulness, as the covenant head. Yea, whatever trials, perplexities, and temptations may harass your soul, it is only to open the way for "the God of all grace" to appear. In whatever affliction you may be, it will be your wisdom, as it will be your mercy, to be looking up unto him, that he may comfort your soul; and, turning from man, as Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, commit your case to him.

Remember this then, if "the God of all grace" has indeed "called you unto his eternal glory"—if he has indeed touched your heart

with his blessed finger—remember you will have to walk, from beginning to end, in a path of suffering: for the whole path, more or less, is a path of tribulation. And, while walking in this path, and suffering from sin, Satan, the world, and the evil of your own heart, it is only to lead you up more unto "the God of all grace:" it is only that God may, in his own time, "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." And when your soul has passed through these trials, you will see God's hand in all praise him for all, and will perceive how good it was for you to have been afflicted, and to have walked in this painful path: that having suffered with Christ Jesus, you might sit down with him in his eternal glory!

May "the God of all grace," then who hath called some of you to "his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." And into his blessed hands, with sincere desires for your spiritual welfare, do I desire now and ever to commit both you and myself.

The Salted Sacrifice

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Oct. 26, 1862

"For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Mark 9:49, 50

In endeavouring to ascertain the mind and meaning of the blessed Spirit in the word of truth, it is very desirable, and in some cases absolutely indispensable, to consider what is commonly called the context; that is, what precedes and what follows the text. For want of attending to this rule, men have sometimes sadly misunderstood and misapplied the word of God. To explain more clearly my meaning, I will give you two instances of this misapplication. Writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle says, "Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." (2 Cor. 12:16.) I have sometimes heard that passage interpreted as if the apostle really meant that he was crafty, and that he had actually caught them with guile; from which this most unwarrantable inference has been drawn that craft in religion is occasionally allowable, so that if you cannot catch people by fair means you may do it by foul. Now nothing can be further than such a meaning or such an inference from the mind of the Spirit, and nothing more contrary both to the Spirit and practice of the apostle. The words that he there uses are not meant to express his own spirit or conduct, but are put by him into the mouth of an objector. His object in writing as he does to the Corinthians in that and the preceding chapter was to show how disinterested he had been in all his conduct towards them; that he neither had nor would be "burdensome to them," for he sought not theirs, but them, not their gifts, but their graces, not their money but their souls. But he introduces an objector. Well, be it so, I did not burden you. Let it be granted that I acted so far, disinterestedly. But was there no ulterior object in all this, no secret craft in all

my apparent disinterestedness so as to catch you by guile, as if I would do by another what I would not do myself? This objection he at once answers: "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?" (2 Cor. 12:17, 18.) By thus appealing to the conduct of Titus and a brother he repels the accusation of having caught them by guile, for he would not craftily employ others to do what he would not do openly himself. When we thus look at the context, we see in a moment how wrong is the interpretation that Paul actually used craft, and caught the Corinthians with guile and deception.

Now let me give you another instance of a similar misinterpretation of a passage from not considering the context. The apostle, writing to the Corinthians, says, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Cor 10:32.) I have heard this passage applied to the lukewarm, neutral ministry of the day, as if it meant that a man might so preach as to give offence "neither to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God," and that such preaching as offends nobody was by it condemned as destitute of all point and all faithfulness. Now, if we look at the context, we shall see that the apostle is not speaking about preaching at all, but of Christian walk and conduct, especially in eating or not eating meats offered to idols. He therefore says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence;" put not a stumbling block in the way of anyone; "neither to the Jews"—put no stumbling block in their way; "nor to the Gentiles"—put no stumbling block in their way; "nor to the church of God"—put no stumbling block in its way. I might name other instances, but I have said enough to show how from not taking a view of the context, men may totally misunderstand and sadly misapply the word of truth.

But you may say, perhaps, "You are talking about connection, but what connection has all this with the words of your text?" I will show you. Did not the text strike you, when I gave it out, as

having something strange and mysterious in it? Being "salted with fire," and the sacrifice being "salted with salt"—was there not something to you in the very sound of the words that appeared extraordinary and difficult of comprehension? Well, perhaps it may help us to understand the meaning of this difficult and mysterious text if we look shortly at the context, trace the connection, so as to gather up some consistent idea of our Lord's meaning, for he speaks here. And it will be our wisdom and mercy if we can not only understand but give heed to his words of grace and truth, for surely no man ever spake like this man.

In the preceding verses, then, the Lord had been speaking of matters of offence, that is, stumbling blocks, over which we might fall into evil: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." (Mark 9:43.) The hand here is used typically and figuratively of an instrument of evil, whether of violence, or theft, or any other sin which may be perpetrated by it. If, then, says the Lord, thy hand be to thee a minister of evil, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. The Lord does not mean that we are to lay our hand literally down upon a block or chop it off with axe or hatchet; but that we are to do that violence to our sins, to our inclinations, to our tempers, and to our lusts, as we should do literally to our hand if we were to cut it off at a stroke. So, "if thy foot offend thee," be to thee a cause of stumbling—and the foot here signifies those deviations from the straight and narrow path, whether into unbelief or into error, or any other departure from the way of truth and righteousness to which we are prone—"if thy foot offend thee," do what? "Cut it off." Do to it as to the hand: "It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." Then comes the solemn iteration, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "And if thine eye"—that inlet to evil, whether to covetousness, as in the case of Achan, or sinful lusts, as in the case of David;—if thine eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out—not literally. If you could tear

it out and trample it under foot, as so much "vile jelly," as one of our poets calls it, that would not pluck out the lust which is seated far beyond our reach, and would still exist in all its vigour, making to itself an eye of imagination when the eye of sense was gone. No, the Lord does not bid us injure the eye, which can read the word of truth and guide us upon errands of mercy and love, as well as be an inlet to evil. He would have us spare the eye, but not spare the lust which is in the eye, but do it as much violence as you would do to the literal eye if you tore it from the socket. "It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." Then again comes for the third time that solemn iteration, which someone has well called "an emphasis of terror:" "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." What worm but the worm of a guilty conscience that ever feeds upon the never-dying soul? What fire but the eternal fire of God's displeasure, which no remorse will ever quench? Now come the words of our text: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." What is the connection between these words and those which I have just been explaining? I believe this. The worm is a type of corruption, as feeding upon it; the fire is a representation of the anger of God, who is a consuming fire. From this corruption you must be preserved by salt; from this fire you must be delivered by being salted with fire. If you die in your sins, unsalted, unseasoned, the undying worm of remorse, bred from your corruptions, will ever gnaw your guilty conscience. Unless salted with fire, you will not be preserved from that corruption which is in the world through lust, and which, if not delivered from it, would plunge body and soul into the lake of fire.

But not only must you be salted, but your *sacrifices* also. Every sacrifice, to be acceptable with God, must be salted with salt. Following up this connection, our Lord then says, "Salt is good:" but he adds a solemn caveat that even when salted the salt may not be permanent; and then where is the remedy? "If the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?" He then closes the whole with a gracious exhortation: "Have salt in

yourselves, and have peace one with another."

In endeavouring to open up the mind and meaning of our blessed Lord here, as I have thus simply sketched it, I shall,

I.—*First*, show you, from his own words, *the goodness of salt*. "Salt is good," and in *what* that *goodness* consists.

II.—*Secondly*, *the salting of the sacrificer*: "Every one shall be salted with fire."

III.—*Thirdly*, *the salting of the sacrifice*: "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

IV.—*Fourthly*, *the case assumed*: "If the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?"

V.—*Lastly*, *the exhortation*: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

I.—The goodness of salt: "Salt is good." How is salt good? Literally and figuratively, naturally and spiritually. We will look at both the cases in which we have assumed the goodness of salt.

i. Why is salt good literally? What is the salient point, the most prominent feature of its goodness? It is an efficient *preservative from corruption*. There is a tendency in everything here below to decay. Life, whether vegetable or animal, is ever tending towards death. It seems like a law impressed upon every living thing, that as soon as born it hastens to die; and with death immediately begins corruption. In spring, how green the leaf! but when death touches the stalk, and it drops from the autumnal bough, how soon reduced to rottenness and dust! How active and energetic are body and soul of man in a state of health and strength. But let death strike the fatal dart, how corruption at once lays hold of the human frame, and the stouter and stronger the body the quicker and more immediate its effects. Thus there is a natural tendency to corruption in everything here below, for nothing

seems to escape the gnawing tooth of time. Dissolution, decay, and corruption press hard upon life, and unceasingly dog its every footstep. But there is an antidote against corruption, and that is *salt*. To illustrate this, let me bring before you two or three familiar instances:—

1. First cast your eyes over that wide-spread ocean, which covers perhaps nearly three-fourths of this globe. What would it be without salt? A seething mass of corruption. But God has well and thoroughly salted it, and has thus preserved it from being what else it would be—a mass of putrid water, spreading desolation over the earth.

2. Our very bodies as now constituted must have salt in them, or even life itself would not keep them from corruption. "Salt in our bodies?" say you; "what do you mean by that? Have we salt in our flesh?" Let me give you two simple proofs of it. When the harvestman is engaged in the field, reaping the corn or loading the wain, how salty are the drops of sweat which fall like so many beads from his manly brow! When the poor widow sits beside her husband's corpse, how briny the tears that roll down her cheek! Are these not plain evidences that we must have salt in our bodies, salt in our blood, or why are sweat and tears so salty which are formed out of the blood? Yes, the very salt in our bodies, which he who made us has put into us, keeps them from corruption.

3. But I will give you one more proof of which perhaps you have never heard. There was a punishment formerly inflicted upon criminals in Holland of this nature. When condemned to death, the prisoner was taken back to his cell, and debarred of all salt to his food. Not a single grain was allowed to enter into anything which he ate or drank. What was the consequence? In a short time worms bred in his inside, and he miserably perished by a slow and lingering death, every part of his body full of corruption.

4. But take the familiar instance of preserving meat. Is not that preserved from corruption by salt? Salted meat is familiar to us

all as arrested from corruption by the entrance of salt into every part and pore.

Now look at this in a spiritual sense. Unless we have something rubbed as it were into us to preserve the soul from corruption, will it not perish in its lusts, and be thus for ever unfit to enter into the glorious presence of a holy God? How good, then, must salt be in a spiritual sense to preserve our souls from becoming here and hereafter a loathsome mass of corruption and putrefaction! I shall show you by and by how the Lord uses fire instead of salt thus to save and purify the soul. But take this first as the leading idea of salt, that it is an antidote against corruption. I may observe here that in a figure it is always well to catch the leading idea, as that not only enables us to see the mind and meaning of the Spirit prominently therein, but casts also a ray of light on secondary and subsidiary meanings.

ii. But salt is good in another sense: *it gives savour and flavour* to our daily food. Job asks, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" (Job. 6:6.) From the banquet of kings to the poor widow's cold potato, salt is on the table: food would be flavourless without it. In the interior of Africa salt is extremely scarce—so scarce that you may almost buy a slave for a handful of it. Children there will run for miles after the traveller for a few grains of salt, which if they get they will suck with as much relish as children here the richest confections made from sugar. In this sense, perhaps, the Lord said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13), meaning thereby that by them was the earth not only preserved from corruption, but even by their presence upon it was made to have flavour and savour before God, and thus be acceptable before him.

iii. But take another idea of the figure, closely indeed allied to the first, viz., *health*. I have shown you before that the presence of salt in our bodies is indispensable to a state of health, and that the absence of it engenders disease and death. What salt is to the body that grace is to the soul. "Have salt in yourselves," the Lord

says in our text, that is, "have the grace of God in your hearts"; for without this there is neither life nor health. So holy John, writing to his well-beloved Gaius, breathes for him this prayer: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 2.) But without grace there can be neither soul health nor soul prosperity.

iv. But take now another meaning of the emblem, which is more especially a Scriptural one, that of *perpetuity*. We read in the Scripture sometimes of a "covenant of salt." "Ought ye not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons, by a "covenant of salt?" (2 Chron. 13:5.) And again, "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute forever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee." (Numbers 18:19.) A covenant of salt signifies a covenant which never can be broken, for as salt is a natural preservation from corruption, it became an emblem of perpetuity and lasting endurance.

v. But I must name one more meaning of the figure salt. It is an emblem of *friendship and peace*. As such, even to this day in Oriental climes, salt becomes, when eaten between two parties, a token of friendship; and I understand that the wild Arab will never plunder or ill use the traveller with whom he has eaten salt. I have read a remarkable anecdote to illustrate this. A robber once broke into the palace of a prince, and having collected a very large booty was on the point of carrying it away, when he struck his foot against something on the ground. Stooping in the dark to touch it, and then tasting his fingers, he found it was a lump of salt. He was so struck with having eaten salt in the house of his victim, that at once he fled away, leaving all his booty behind. Salt thus being an emblem of peace, our Lord said in the text, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

II.—Now let us carry these leading ideas of salt into that part of

our subject which we proposed to consider in the second place; I mean *the salting of the sacrificer*; "Every one shall be salted with fire."

i. I showed you in my introduction, that there must be an operation of God's grace upon our heart to preserve us from the fire that is not quenched, and that this was by salting the soul with fire; the fire being used in the hands of the Spirit to produce that spiritual effect which I have explained to you salt sets forth in emblem and figure. The soul has to be preserved from corruption—from the worm that dieth not; to have savour and flavour before the Lord; to be made and kept healthy and prosperous; to enjoy a perpetuity of God's favour; and to be blessed with his friendship and peace. Now that these blessings may be brought about, it must be salted and that by fire. Let us now then view the various ways, for there are more than one, by which it is thus salted.

1. There is, for instance, *the law*, which the Scripture calls a fiery law. "The Lord came from Sinai; from his right hand went a fiery law for them." (Deut. 23:2.) We know that when it was given, Mount Sinai "was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire" (Exodus 19:18); and again, "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire." (Deut. 4:12.) But why is it called "a *fiery* law?" Because therein is manifested the eternal indignation of God, who is a consuming fire. But it is a fiery law, not only in its first manifestation, but in its application to the conscience, for it burns up and consumes all creature righteousness, the wood, hay, and stubble of all human merit. But it also sets fire to our corruptions, making them blaze up and burn with greater strength and fury, as the apostle found: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." (Rom. 7:5, 8.) For these three reasons, its manifestation, its application, and its conflagration, the law may well be called "a fiery law."

But the question may arise, How is the soul salted by the law? In this way. By its application it is preserved from perishing in the corruption of sin or the corruption of self-righteousness, for the fire it kindles acts in the soul as salt does literally in the body, or as used to preserve meats from spoiling. It delivers the soul from the corruptions of the world; it burns up all creature righteousness, wisdom, and strength, and thus instrumentally preserves it from sinking under the wrath of God, either as laden with all the guilt and weight of a nature corrupt to the very core, or as clothed in a righteousness which he can never accept, as stained and dyed with all our native filth and folly. The law indeed does not sanctify the heart nor purge the conscience, but instrumentally it salts the soul from perishing in its corruptions. It also gives savour and flavour to a man's prayers and conversation; communicates a healthy appetite for the food of the gospel; is a needful preliminary for a knowledge of the everlasting covenant; and leads the way into a state of peace and friendship with God.

2. But take another way in which the sacrificer is salted with fire. There is *the fiery trial* of which Peter speaks: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." (1 Pet. 5:12.) The "fiery trial," then, is not a strange thing which happens only to a few of the Lord's family, but is more or less the appointed lot of all. Do we not hear the Lord saying to his Zion: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction?" (Isa. 48:10.) All, then, that are chosen must pass through the furnace of affliction, and all know experimentally the fiery trial, for by it they are made "partakers of Christ's sufferings." But this is indispensable in order to be partakers of his glory. "If so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17.) Thus they suffer with him, "that when his glory shall be revealed they may be glad also with exceeding joy." But this suffering with and for Christ in the furnace of affliction salts the soul; preserves it from corruption; communicates health; gives it savour and flavour; is a token of interest in the everlasting covenant: and is a seal of

friendship and peace with God.

3. But there is another fire with which you must be salted—*the fire of temptation*. Temptation is to the corruptions of the heart what fire is to stubble. Sin lies quiet in our carnal mind till temptation comes to set it on fire. There is not a single sin ever uttered by the lips or perpetrated by the hand of man which does not lie deeply hidden in the recesses of our fallen nature; but they do not stir into activity until temptation draws them forth. Well then did the Lord bid his disciples pray: "Lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13); and again, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke 22:40); for temptation is to our corrupt nature as the spark to gunpowder. Have you not found this sad truth, how easily by it are the corruptions of our wretched heart on fire, in enmity, rebellion, unbelief, infidelity, and every kind of daring and dreadful iniquity which I shall forbear to name?

But the question may well arise, How can this fire of temptation salt the sacrificer? Why, in temptation we learn what sin is, its dreadful nature, its aggravated character, its fearful workings, its mad, its desperate upheavings against the Majesty of heaven, and what we are or should be were we left wholly in its hands. The pungent salt of temptation enters into the smarting pores of our conscience, salting it as with fire, and making it sore and tender. By the workings of this tender conscience under temptation we are delivered from becoming a prey to corruption either of sin or of self-righteousness; life and power are put into our prayers; savour and flavour into our words and works; and a clear separation made between faith and unbelief—the strength of the creature and the strength of the Lord—what we are by nature and what we are by grace.

4. But *the word of God* also is compared to fire. "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord?" (Jer. 23:29.) So the Lord speaking of his word which he would send forth after his resurrection, says, "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?" The word of the Lord is compared to fire, as being quick and piercing, penetrating into men's hearts and

consciences. It is therefore said by the apostle to be "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." (Heb. 4:12.) Of Joseph also when in prison we read that "the word of the Lord tried him." (Psa. 105:19.) The word of truth when applied to the heart with divine power tries the family of God, whether they be right or wrong, whether they possess the fear of God or not. It is thus sometimes as "a burning fire shut up in their bones" (Jer. 20:9), salting them to the very depth of their conscience, and trying every part of the experience to the very quick. But by this fire the child of God is well salted, for by it he is preserved from corruption in doctrine, experience, lip, or life. By it also he is made acceptable to the family of God, for there is in his conversation a savour and a flavour which a salting fire alone can communicate. By it, too, health is communicated, for the word of salvation brings with it health and cure; and by the power of the word in the promises he also enters into the blessedness of a covenant of salt, and finds peace and friendship with God.

5. But there is one more fire of which I must speak, as salting the sacrificer, and that is the most blessed salt which can enter into his soul—*the love of God* shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. This comes down from heaven into the soul, as the fire fell upon the brazen altar, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices when Solomon dedicated the temple (2 Chron. 7:1); or as the blessed Spirit came down upon the apostles when they were baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire on the day of Pentecost. No fire that salts the soul can be compared to this for power and efficacy, for it inflames every holy, tender, and gracious affection, lifts up the heart to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, and, whilst it enkindles every affectionate desire of the bosom, burns as in a holy flame of jealousy against everything that God abhors. Thus the apostle, speaking of the effects of godly sorrow for sin, says, "Yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge" it wrought in you. (2 Cor. 7:11.) Does not this fire of love and sorrow, love to God and sorrow for sin, well salt the child of grace? Speaking of the outcast babe in Ezekiel, the Lord

says, "Thou wast not salted at all." No, for "none eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee." (Ezekiel 16:4,.5.) But the Lord of his infinite grace and boundless compassion, salts the babe of grace when he spreads his skirt over it.

We have seen, then, how by these different fires the child of God is salted, and we have also seen how by means of them he is preserved from the corruption that is in the world through lust; from the corruption of his own hypocritical heart; and from corruption in doctrine, in experience, and in practice: for none of these corruptions can live in the fire either of wrath or love. For "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13): and as nothing carnal, hypocritical, or self-righteous can stand the flame, the believer comes out of them all like gold tried in the fire—his dross and tin purged away "by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning." (Isai. 4:4.)

ii. But I showed you also that salt gave *savour and favour* to the most tasteless food; in fact, that food could not be tasty or relishable without it. So it is with God's people: it is by the fire with which they are salted that there is a savour and flavour communicated to them, which cannot be obtained by any other means. What substitute can you find for salt to make your food wholesome and savoury? What substitute can you find for grace, especially grace tried in the fire, to flavour your soul and make it savoury to God and man? I shall show you this more at large when I come to the salting of the sacrifice. I am now showing the salting of the sacrificer; for we are to offer *ourselves* living sacrifices unto God as well as our offerings, and both we and they are only acceptable as salted with this salt, to give us savour and flavour at his altar.

iii. But salt, I before intimated, was an emblem of a *covenant*, and that one of *perpetual endurance*. The Lord has made a covenant with his dear Son on behalf of this people, and this is a covenant of perpetuity, never to be broken, but to endure for ever and ever. But this covenant has "bonds" into which we are to be brought. "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I

will bring you into the bond of the covenant." (Ezek. 20:37.) This is eating the king's salt, or being "salted with the salt of the palace" (Ezra 4:14); for when in the East parties ate salt together, it was a token of a covenant between them. Thus in India it was a common phrase among the Sepoys, or soldiers of the old Indian army, that "they had eaten the Company's salt," and were thus bound to be faithful to their engagements. When, then, we taste the fire we are salted with the King's salt, and are thus brought into the bond of the covenant.

iv. But this covenant is also a covenant of *peace*. "My covenant with him was of life and peace" (Matt. 2:5); and thus, by eating the salt of the covenant, he is brought into a state of reconciliation, by which he obtains peace and amity with God. We read of "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and this covenant is a covenant of peace; for peace is the fruit of it, peace the substance of it, and peace the blessed effect of it.

III.—But now, to come to our next point, not only is the sacrificer to be salted with fire, but *the sacrifice also is to be salted with salt*. Are not these the Lord's own words, "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt?" There is an allusion here to the command of God given by Moses, that with all their offering they should offer salt. (Lev. 2:15.) There was an express prohibition of two things to be offered under the law—leaven and honey, at least, in the offerings which were made by fire (Lev. 2:11); and no doubt there was a spiritual significancy in this prohibition, for "leaven" typically signifies malice and wickedness as well as hypocrisy; and "honey" is a symbol of sin and sinful pleasures. Neither, then, of these was to be offered in any offering of the Lord made by fire, though honey might be offered among the first fruits; but salt never was to be lacking. I have already shown you the typical and figurative meaning of salt—that it preserves from corruption; gives food savour and flavour; is an emblem of a perpetual covenant; and is a figure of amity and peace. With salt, then, as emblematic of these fruits of the Spirit, was every sacrifice to be seasoned. But now let us look at the various sacrifices which the salted sacrificer

has to offer.

i. Which is the first? *Himself*. Does not the apostle say, "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?" (Rom. 12:1.) But in presenting his body, the sacrificer has to present with it his soul; for he might give his body to be burned and yet unless there were love in his heart it would profit him nothing. (1 Cor. 13:3.) It is to be also "a living sacrifice," that it may be "holy and acceptable unto God;" and if it be a living sacrifice, there must surely be life in the soul of the sacrificer. When, then, and how does he present this living sacrifice? When he sacrifices his lusts, his passions, his inclinations, his darling projects, and all his most cherished schemes of worldly happiness and pleasure, and lays them down at Christ's feet as immolated, so to speak, by his own hand. The grace, which enables him to make these sacrifices, salts them, puts savour into them, preserves them from the stench of self, and makes them acceptable to God. Here we trace the connection between the salted sacrificer and the salted sacrifice. The Lord says, "If thine eye, or thy hand, or thy foot offend thee, cut it off." "But, Lord," you say, "can I make such a sacrifice? Can I sacrifice my hand, or my foot, or my eye, or," to come to things more intelligible, "my darling lusts? Can I sacrifice my fond inclinations, my ambitious projects, my darling schemes of rising in the world, and all that my carnal heart desires, and all this with my own hand? Must I do with them, and to them all as thou biddest me,—cut them off and cast them from me? I cannot do it. It is a task beyond my power." But when the sacrificer has been salted with fire; when he knows something of a fiery law burning up his creature righteousness; something of the fiery trial that separates the dross from the tin; something of the fire of temptation inflaming all the combustible material of his carnal mind; something of the fire of God's word trying him to the very quick; and, above all, something of the love of God descending from heaven as a holy fire into his bosom, then he can make the sacrifice, yes, any sacrifice. We see, therefore, that the sacrificer cannot offer the sacrifice until he himself has been salted with

fire; for, till then, he has neither will nor power. But his being salted with fire enables him to offer the sacrifice; for the fire purifies him from the corruptions of self, and endues him with spiritual strength.

But there is one point which I wish here most particularly to insist upon, lest my meaning be misapprehended. The *ground* of acceptance is one thing; the *state* of acceptance is another. The *ground* of acceptance is the blood and righteousness of the Son of God; the *state* of acceptance is sanctification by the work of the Holy Ghost. These two things are brought together by the apostle, "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.) It is an indispensable preliminary to all spiritual worship, that the person of the worshipper must be accepted before the offering can be acceptable. The worshipper is accepted as being washed in the blood and clothed in the obedience of the Son of God; that is his real, his only ground of acceptance. But when he comes as a sacrificer, the spiritual worshipper must not only be accepted as standing in the blood and obedience of Jesus, but he must have that work of God upon his heart whereby he stands before him as a priest to offer sacrifice. The apostle, therefore, says of the saints of God that they are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5.) But in order to be priests, they themselves must be salted with fire, and thereby consecrated to the service of God, as was Aaron, when the blood of the bullock offered as a burnt sacrifice unto the Lord was put upon the tip of his right ear, and the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot. He was thus consecrated by blood; and when Moses took of the anointing oil, a type of the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, he was consecrated also by oil. So now by blood and oil is the sacrificer consecrated—the blood of the Lamb, and the unction of the Holy Ghost. This, then, is the reason why the Lord salts the sacrificer, that when he comes before the throne with a sacrifice, he may not offer strange fire nor stand before the Lord a profane wretch, without any spiritual offering in his hand, or

any spiritual desire in his heart, which is in the sight of God no better than offering swine's blood upon his altar, or having broth of abominable things in his vessel. (Isa. 65:4, 66:3.) But he is to come before the Lord not only washed in the blood and clothed in the obedience of Christ, but as a spiritual worshipper, for the Father seeketh such to worship him; and if he be a spiritual worshipper, he must have been divinely made so as having been salted with fire. Now, then, he comes before the Lord with his first acceptable sacrifice, which is *himself*. Does not the apostle say, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:20.) Do not both belong to him? Are they not his? Can you call them your own? Then when you give them to the Lord you must still say with David, "Of thine own have we given thee, for all is thine own." (1 Chron. 29:14, 16.) Have you never been able to do this, to present your body and soul before the Lord as a sacrifice that he would take you and make you what he would have you to be? First present yourself and then present your offering. But do we not see now more clearly the necessity of being salted with fire, and of the sacrifice being salted with salt, that you may offer an acceptable offering? For a man may present before God a sacrifice, and that sacrifice not be accepted, as not salted. The Lord gave a special charge to the children of Israel, to which I have before alluded, that salt was never to be lacking from the offering. "Every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." (Lev. 2:13.) A man may offer a sacrifice without salt. How many ministers have left the church of England and gone over to Popery! They have made, in so doing, the greatest possible sacrifices—sacrifices, perhaps, of which you are little aware, but which I well know, as having personally known in former days some of the men and something of their position—men of learning, amiability, family, and every prospect before them in life. Great was their sacrifice, but we should deny our firmest convictions if we believed that they or it were salted with salt. How many young women again of rank and family, in the prime of life, with bright prospects before them, courted, and

admired by the world, and possessed of everything which could please and gratify the female heart, have given all up and gone into a nunnery, there to endure the most humiliating privations, to be for ever shut up in solitude and poverty, undergoing the severest penances and a daily course of most mortifying discipline. Are not these great sacrifices? But, alas! with all this there was no salt. It was not the grace of God nor the operations of his Spirit upon their heart which made them do this. But the sacrifice was not the less; nay, indeed, greater to the flesh, for there was no grace to support them under it. I have brought forward these two instances to show how persons may offer themselves in sacrifice, but the whole be unacceptable to God, and one to which they were no more led by the operation of the Holy Spirit than the king of Moab was, when he took his eldest son and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. So you also, in your narrow sphere and without their sacrifices, may do many things as you think for the Lord, but if the salt be lacking, they are tasteless, unacceptable, unaccepted. But having been yourself, by the power of God's grace, salted with fire, then you may offer a spiritual sacrifice. As the apostle speaks, "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

2. What, then, is the next sacrifice after you have offered yourself, laid body, soul, property, prospects, all you are, all you have at his feet, for the Lord to do with you as seemeth good in his sight? *A broken heart*; for a broken heart is God's sacrifice. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." (Psalm 51:17.) But the Lord enables you to offer it by salting you with fire. The law; the fiery trial; temptation; his word; and especially his love revealed to the soul, produce brokenness, contrition, humility, lay the soul low at his feet; and this brokenness of heart is a spiritual sacrifice; it is salted with salt, for the grace of God is in it to season it and make it acceptable.

3. *Prayer*, again, and *praise* are spiritual sacrifices for they are the "calves of our lips" which we render unto God. (Hosea 14:2.) To these sacrifices we have a reference in the prophet Isaiah, where, speaking of the sons of the stranger, the Lord says, "Even

them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." (Isai. 56:7.) But that they may be accepted upon God's altar they must be salted with salt. How many prayers are offered up publicly and privately that never spring out of a broken heart, a contrite spirit, or a humble mind; are never salted by the Spirit's operation, and therefore not acceptable before God; for the salt is lacking from the offering; and the salt being lacking, it is not preserved from corruption; it is not seasoned or flavoured; has no part or lot in a covenant of perpetuity and peace; and lacking all these things, is not acceptable to God or to his people.

4. Your *conversation* with the saints of God must be also seasoned with salt to be a spiritual sacrifice. "Let your speech," says the apostle, "be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." How tasteless, how flavourless, how unprofitable, how unacceptable to a spiritual mind is the conversation of most professors of religion in our day! Of old, when "those that feared the Lord spake often one to another, the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him." (Mal. 3:16.) But would the Lord hearken and hear the conversation in our day, or write it down in a book of remembrance? We should be ashamed, I believe, many of us to read it ourselves were it written down faithfully. Conversation to be profitable should be seasoned with salt; then it will be "good to the use of edifying and will minister grace unto the hearers." (Ephes. 4:29.) Without this it will be "a corrupt communication." But if the sacrificer is not well salted with fire, salt will be lacking from his conversation. What flavour is there in an unsalted tongue? Soft indeed it may be, pappy, and pulpy; but how soon tainted unless salt be well rubbed into its pores. An unsalted tongue ministers death, not life, barrenness and condemnation, not fruitfulness and grace. Rather hold your tongue in the company of God's people than be to them a minister of barrenness and death. But how many great religious professors can talk readily upon carnal topics and worldly

subjects, and anything and everything but God and his Christ or the work of grace on the heart.

5. The *preaching of the word*, the ministry of the Gospel, is also a spiritual sacrifice; and many a man has sacrificed his comforts, his health and strength, and his very life to the ministry, made himself prematurely old, and brought upon himself disease and suffering which have shortened his days by the arduous labours and anxieties connected with holding forth the word of life. But his tongue, too, must be seasoned with salt, or it will not minister grace to the hearers; will have neither savour nor flavour, neither power nor pungency, neither force nor faithfulness; will neither rightly divide the word of truth, nor take forth the precious from the vile. But the salted tongue can only move as influenced by a salted heart. The minister, therefore, must be salted with fire, know something of the fiery trial, be exercised with temptation, feel the power of God's word in his conscience and something of the love of God, that he, in offering the sacrifice, in preaching the Person, the work, the blood, the righteousness, the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, may bring these heavenly truths before the people well seasoned with salt.

6. *Gifts and acts of liberality* to God's people—these are also spiritual sacrifices. The apostle speaks highly of them, when writing to the Philippians, he says, "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." (Phil. 4:18.) But why were their gifts a sacrifice "acceptable, well-pleasing to God?" It was not the greatness of the amount, but it was because grace was in the givers, and being sent to Paul under the influence of love, they were seasoned with salt. It was this which made them acceptable. Men may give large sums of money away—and I speak to the praise of many in saying what a vast amount is now being raised for the suffering operatives of the north. I confess that I much admire the benevolence and liberality all through the land which has thus been called forth. Still, all of it may not be a salted sacrifice. Apart from a natural feeling of benevolence and compassion to the sufferers under what we may well call this

national calamity, may not other springs move the outstretched hand? I would not discredit so good a work; but to make it a sacrifice acceptable to God it must be salted with grace, and not be done through ostentation or the force of example. I am daily receiving contributions from gracious individuals and the collected liberality of churches and congregations for our famishing brethren, which I am distributing amongst them: and what is thus given in the fear of God, with an eye to his glory and from love to his people will be viewed by him as a spiritual sacrifice, seasoned with salt. So that whether a man do much or little—and some can do nothing in aiding the saints of God—it is a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God when it springs from spiritual motives, and is salted with the salt of his grace.

IV.—But we now come to a case which the Lord *assumes as possible*: "*If the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?*"

i. The Lord assumes the case here that the salt may have lost its saltness—lost everything which makes its valuable; and I have read that this is the case sometimes in Eastern countries. I think it is Maundrell, or some old traveller in the East, who gives an account of his once coming to what appeared to be a mass of rock salt. He naturally stretched forth his hand to take a piece, but, when he tasted it, all the saltness was gone: it had been washed out by the deluging rains which in those climates fall at certain seasons from the skies. The substance and appearance remained the same; but the reality, the savour, all that made it salt, was gone. I have also read of a similar instance in the salt lakes of those countries. When the lake becomes partially dry in the summer, it leaves a crust of salt upon the shore. Upon this the summer rains fall, washing out all the saline particles, but not injuring its outward look. It has thus all the appearance of salt, but none of the reality. This being a common phenomenon in those climates, the Lord assumes it as a case spiritually in the visible Church of God, and asks a very pregnant question: "*If the salt has lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?*" Observation and experience abundantly show us that the saint of

God for a time may lose his saltness. Being salted with the King's salt, and this being a covenant of life and peace, he cannot altogether lose it, but he may lose much, very much of its savour. There may be a few particles of salt left, enough to save him, but not enough to make him savoury either to God or man. We frequently see this in old professors, who in times past seemed to show the possession of salt; but what with worldly cares, family anxieties, the hurry and flurry of business, the lapse of time, the want of gracious revivals, the growth in them is not in grace, but in covetousness and in worldly mindedness, and the deadness natural to advancing years, they at last sink into the spot of which the Lord here speaks—they lose their saltness. Is not that a deplorable case that your last days should be your worst; that your carnality should be so great and your spirituality so little as to cause considerable doubt in those who fear God whether you possess the grace of God at all? And is it not lamentable that the sacrifices you offer, or pretend to offer, before God should be unacceptable, because they have lost their saltness? There was a time with you, perhaps, when you had some brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit before God: your heart is hard enough and careless now. There was a time when you could make sacrifices, give up anything for the Lord's sake: now you can scarcely make any sacrifice at all; scarcely squeeze out half-a-crown, though your pocket is full of them, for a poor child of God. There was a time when your prayers went out of a feeling, believing, warm heart: now they are cold and wandering, and there scarcely seems to be any life or power in them. There was a time when you met the family of God, and your heart burnt within you when you talked of the precious things of Christ; and now you can meet them, and your conversation be as carnal as that of any worldling. There was a time when you could praise the Lord with joyful lips; and now not one word of praise swells your note. There was a time when you could give liberally out of your poverty; and now you are so screwed up as to be hardly able to part with sixpence out of your wealth. Your salt has lost its savour; and though it preserves its appearance, yet, like the rock salt that Maundrell touched and tasted, it has lost all that made it really valuable. Does conscience smite you at all under the

strokes which I am dealing at it? Are you sensible that you have lost your saltiness? that you are not as in times past, and that if you possess the grace of God at all, it is at a very low ebb in your soul?

Well, now, the Lord asks the question, "If the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it?" There is something to my mind very expressive in the way in which the Lord puts the question. The Lord does not say, "wherewith shall *I* season it," or "wherewith shall it be seasoned:" but "wherewith will ye season it." How will *you* bring back the saltiness? *You* cannot do it; but the Lord can do it for you, if it be his holy will. But how does he bring it back? How does he re-season the salt? How did he give the soul it in the first instance when he salted the sacrificer? *By the fire*. Then he puts you back into the fire to give you back the salt. Don't you see the blacksmith do something like, if not exactly, this? Here is a piece of rusty iron, an old hoop, or a horse-shoe picked out of the dust: he can make it new; and you know how he does it. He puts it into the fire, brings it to a white heat, hammers it well upon the anvil; why, it comes out brand new. Don't you know that the very best rifles which are manufactured are made out of old stub nails grubbed out of the mud of the London Streets? So the Lord can re-fire as well as refine his people's graces. To revert to our figure, he can put them into the furnace of affliction, and in that fire he can salt them over again. This is the way whereby the Lord usually restores the saltiness which is lost. Temptation, the fiery trial, his word cutting them to the very quick, salts them again; and when thus put into the furnace, once more his love descends as a holy fire into their heart, and they are salted as with fresh salt; or, to change the figure, they renew their youth like the eagle. What a mercy it is that, partially, if not fully, the salt can be restored, because I have pointed out that salt was an emblem of a perpetual covenant as well as of amity and peace; for the saint of God, having been once salted, surely cannot lose all his saltiness, and so be cast out of all acceptance with God, as the priest would reject the meat offering brought to him by the worshipper which had no salt upon it. If he could lose the grace of God, he must go

where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Gifts, usefulness, a state and standing in the Church, knowledge, profession, and a name to live may all come to an end; but the grace of God in the heart of a saint is unperishing, imperishable.

V.—But we are now perhaps prepared to listen to the *exhortation* which fell from our Lord's lips: "*Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*"

1. *That* is the grand thing. Have salt in yourselves. Look to yourselves. Don't be spending all your eyesight, and all your hearing, and all the energy of your body and soul upon others, forgetting and neglecting what much more deeply concerns you, *your own* salvation and the knowledge of it. Look to yourselves. People go about trying to convert the world who never were converted themselves. Don't you fall into that error. Have salt in yourselves. Look at your own heart and see what salt you have there. The Lord, you see, bids his people look in the first instance to themselves, and examine themselves how matters really stand with them before his heart-searching eye.

But what is it to have salt *in themselves*? The grace of God in their heart; for salt is an emblem of grace. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt;" for as I have shown, grace preserves the soul from perishing in the corruption of the flesh. It is by grace we are "made partakers of the divine nature, and thus escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. 1:4.) This salt of God's grace is to be upon their heart to make it right before him; upon their lips, that their conversation may be becoming the gospel, and their speech seasoned with salt; and in their lives, that their walk may be salted, their feet be salted, their hands salted, and every member of their body be salted, so as to be preserved from every corrupt communication, and every evil and corrupt way. I speak unto you in his name, my hearers, this day, "Have salt in yourselves." As a church, have salt in yourselves, that you may be preserved from corruption; for the church that loses its salt will soon only be fit for the dunghill. As a congregation, meeting together for the worship of

God, to call upon his holy name in spirit and in truth, and to hear his word faithfully preached, have salt in yourselves, lest the Lord come and remove the candlestick out of its place. Yea, to all here present who desire to fear his name and to tremble at his word, I say have salt in yourselves, that you may have the comfort of God's presence and blessing upon a dying bed, and when the body drops into the grave may enter into the joy of the Lord.

2. But the Lord also added, "Have *peace* one with another." Salt, we know, was the emblem of peace. So the Lord bade his disciples have salt in themselves, and eat salt with one another. But this peace, like every other gospel fruit, must be salted with salt. It must be, therefore, peace on a right footing, peace on a gospel bottom, for there may be peace where there is no salt. Is there not a crying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace?" We have too much of this false peace both with God and man. As a heap of stones will lie together very comfortably, so there may be false peace and false union among people and in churches where the stillness of death reigns. But as a sacrifice without the salt was unacceptable, so a false peace or a peace without salt is of no avail to assure the heart or to walk comfortably with the family of God. Grace in the heart, peace in the conscience, and peace with the brethren, these are choice blessings. Can I do better than leave the words ringing in your ears, "Have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another?"

Salvation and Sanctification, in Present Grace and Future Glory

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 10, 1861

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess 2:13, 14

Of all the doctrines revealed in the inspired page, not one has called forth so general and so violent a storm of opposition as that of *election*. The very word excites in some minds a shrinking horror, where it does not provoke absolute scorn. "How unjust, how unfair, how partial, how contrary to all our preconceived notions of the universal goodness, mercy, and love of our great Benefactor, Father, and Friend, would it be if he had chosen some of the human race unto salvation, and passed by the rest! What a cruel tyrant such a doctrine makes God to be! How it tends to foster presumption in some who may deem themselves special favourites of heaven, and to engender despair in others who may fear themselves predestinated to hell! Sooner, then, than believe so horrid a doctrine as this I would throw the Bible away, and embrace infidelity itself." This is but a sample, and a small sample, of the angry speeches which have been hurled against a doctrine that, in spite of all such reasonings and all such objections, is written as with a ray of light in the word of truth, from the opening page of Genesis to the closing page of Revelation. I feel sorry even to quote such hostile and unbecoming language as has just escaped my lips, and would not have done so but to show how the carnal mind of unregenerate man, using all its reasoning powers to overthrow the truth of God, has thus vented itself in idle rage against a doctrine which it so thoroughly abhors, but which it can no more move from its place than the spray of the sea can sweep away the rock against which it angrily beats. For after all that can be said or done, after

man has spoken out to the full his bitterest words and vented to his heart's content his angriest expressions we must still come to this point at last, whether men receive the doctrine or not,—Is election a truth revealed in God's inspired book? Do we receive the Bible as a revelation of the mind and will of God? Do we believe that every part and portion of it was inspired by the Holy Ghost? Do we accept it as the rule of our faith; as the only standard of right and wrong; as the only means which God has given us whereby to know himself, "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" If such be our belief, if such our creed, then whether the doctrine of election be level with our natural conceptions or not, whether it be agreeable or not to our preconceived opinions, we must not set up our reasoning faculties against the inspired word of God; for if we do so, we act in diametrical opposition to our own creed, and pull down with our left hand what we have built up with our right. We say and unsay; deny what we assert, and assert what we deny; lay a foundation and stumble over it; profess to believe the Bible, and then set it up as a target for our infidel arrows. This is Colenso in another shape. This doing and undoing is contrary, then, not only to real religion but to sound reasoning, and convicts us not only of sin but of folly. If, then, we call ourselves Christians and believers of the Bible, we must not presume to bring the enmity and objections of our carnal mind against any one doctrine revealed in it, whether we like it or not; for in so doing we are madly fighting not so much against the doctrine itself as against the sovereign Majesty of heaven, with whose authority it comes invested to the children of men.

But though I am compelled to speak thus, I know well that we never will or can receive God's truth until he makes us willing in the day of his power. But when he has once convinced us by his Spirit and grace of our fallen condition by nature; when he has once opened up to us the depths of the fall, and cut to pieces all our vain hopes of salvation by the works of the law; and especially when he has bowed our mind to receive his word of truth as written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and has given us a taste of its sweetness and blessedness, then all these

cavils drop off our minds as the withered leaves drop off in autumn from the wind-rocked trees, and then the question arises in the mind not whether God has an elect people or not, for that point is settled beyond all controversy by the witness of the spirit in the word without and by the echo of our own conscience within; but whether *we* belong to that happy number; whether *our* names are in the book of life; and whether *we* are amongst "the brethren beloved of the Lord," whom God from the beginning "hath chosen unto salvation."

I shall, therefore, with God's help and blessing, endeavour this morning to bring before you some of the signs, marks, and gracious evidences which the Holy Ghost has revealed in our text by the pen of Paul, that you may compare with them what you hope the Lord has done for your soul, and thus gather up, if it be his will, some sweet consolation or some blessed encouragement to believe that you have a personal interest in God's electing love. In doing this, I shall, as the Lord may enable, show,

I.—*First, that the Lord has from the beginning chosen those whom he has loved unto salvation.*

II.—*Secondly, the means as well as the evidences whereby he visibly manifests this choice: that he "calls them by the gospel."*

III.—*Thirdly, what are the fruits and effects of this divine choice and heavenly calling: "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."*

IV.—*Fourthly, what is the ultimate issue and blessed result for all the elect of God: "the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

I.—If you look at the connection of the passage before us with the previous context, you will find that the apostle is speaking of some very awful characters, whose state, case, condition, and end he denounces in some of the strongest language that ever fell from his pen. He is speaking of "a mystery of iniquity," which

was already working even in his day; and which, though restrained for a time, he declares would eventually break out in a most awful manner under the guidance and headship of one whom he calls "that Wicked," or, as he is sometimes termed, "the Man of sin."

i. It is not, however, my intention to dwell upon this part of the subject, except to point out one or two features in it which have a special bearing upon our text.

1. *First*, then, observe that the coming of this Wicked one was to be "after the *working of Satan*, with all power and signs and *lying wonders*." In this, therefore, as in every other mischief, Satan would be the prime agent, the head and chief; and he would work upon the minds of men with all his hellish power and craft, so that even "signs and lying wonders" would strengthen and enforce all his schemes.

2. Observe, *secondly*, that this was to be "with all *deceivableness of unrighteousness*." Deceit and ungodliness would stamp all their words and actions; and this "deceivableness" would be as much in self-deceit as in deceiving others; for the "unrighteousness" with which it would be accompanied would blind their eyes, harden their heart, and sear their conscience, till all distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, was utterly lost.

3. Observe, *thirdly*, their *end*, that they would "*perish*," and that without remedy; for all this deceivableness of unrighteousness would be carried out in, and carried out by "them that perish."

4. Observe, *fourthly*, a point which I particularly wish to impress upon your conscience, the ultimate *reason* of their ruin and perdition; "because they *received not the love of the truth*, that they might be saved."

5. One more remark, however, I cannot help adding, which is to point out the *consequences* of their not receiving the love of the truth, that "for this cause *God shall send them strong delusion*,

that they should believe a lie that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Let us not, then, charge God with injustice in their condemnation. The sin was theirs. They believed not the truth; they closed their eyes and hardened their hearts against it and all the evidence of it; they had pleasure in unrighteousness; they deliberately preferred their sins, and took such delight in them that they would not part with them. "Is God then unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" as the apostle elsewhere asks. (Rom. 3:5.) Is he unjust in sending them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, when they wilfully reject his truth? Was it not equitable in him to do so, seeing that they deliberately chose sin rather than the service of God, and had pleasure in unrighteousness?

ii. Taking occasion, then, from considering the awful case and condemnation of those who were thus righteously left to fill up the measure of their iniquities, he casts his eyes of love and affection upon his Thessalonian brethren, to whom he appears to have been singularly attached, and who seem to have loved him almost as much as he loved them. In his first epistle to that church he had already written to them: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 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. 1:2, 3, 4, 5.) In a similar way, his heart being warmed with the recollection of their faith and hope and love when he was with them, and by the good report brought to him when absent from them, that "their faith grew exceedingly, and the love of every one of them all toward each other abounded" (2 Thess. 1:3), he pours out his thankful heart in praise unto God from the firm persuasion he had in his bosom that God had from the beginning chosen them to salvation.

But what *proof* had he of this? What made him say in his first

epistle, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God?" And why should he speak with equal confidence of them in our text? The reason why I shall have more fully to unfold under my second head. I shall now, therefore, only briefly intimate that it was because "his gospel had come unto them not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

We stand precisely upon the same spot with him and them. If we are partakers of the same divine calling; if we have felt the power of the same gospel; and if we are possessed of the same faith working in our bosom which wrought in them, of the same hope which supported them, and of the same love which warmed their breast, we stand, so to speak, upon precisely the same footing with them. We may indeed and certainly do possess less faith, hope, and love than they enjoyed, for ours is a dark and gloomy day, and they were perhaps, as a church, more favoured with those graces of the Spirit than any of the apostolic churches; but there can only be one faith, one hope, and one love, whether strong or weak, little or much. So far, then, as the Lord has called us by his gospel, and made it the power of God unto our salvation; so far as we know anything feelingly and experimentally of "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," we have scriptural evidences as good if not as great as theirs, as certain if not as clear, that "God has from the beginning chosen us to salvation." We have no other means of knowing our election. We cannot mount up to heaven to read our names enrolled in the book of life. No bright angel or burning seraph comes on flying pinions, as to Daniel, to say to us, "O man, greatly beloved," "fear not, peace be unto thee." (Daniel 9:21, 23; 10:19.) We hear no voice speaking in the sky, such as sounded forth when our Lord rose out of Jordan's flowing stream. We have no supernatural revelation by dreams, or Urim, or prophets of our union with Christ in ancient covenant ties. Such favours have indeed been vouchsafed to some of the sons of light, but God has not promised them to us, nor dare we expect them. We have then to look within, to the evidences that God has given us there; and if we can find the marks of divine life in our

bosom, it is a reflection, so to speak, of the book of life held up before our eyes from the throne of God—a transcript from the ancient roll in which the names of the elect were written.

iii. I pass on now then to a fuller and closer consideration of the first branch of our text.

1. Observe first from it that God has "*from the beginning*" chosen his people unto salvation. From what beginning? From the beginning surely of his eternal purposes of love and mercy toward them. This choice of God did not then begin with their natural creation, nor did it commence with their spiritual calling; but was a choice in the eternal mind of God from the beginning of all time. We read in the word of truth of two beginnings: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Gen. 1:1.) *There was the beginning of time; there was the first stone laid of that arch which sprang as by divine command out of eternity, and on which the whole creation rests, with all its marvellous unfoldings of wisdom and power.* Again we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1.) In the beginning, then, or "from the beginning," when God created the heaven and the earth; in the beginning and from the beginning, when "the Word was with God and the Word was God," there was a choice made of a people unto salvation; for they were "chosen in Christ," as the apostle speaks: "According as *he has chosen us in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. 1:4.) In that beginning, then, when the Son of God stood up as the covenant Head and glorious Surety and Representative of his people; in that beginning of which we can form no conception, but which we believe because God has so revealed it in his word of truth; in that beginning, of which the Lord Jesus speaks under the name of "Wisdom" in the Proverbs: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was" (Prov. 8:22, 23); in that beginning of his eternal purposes of grace, mercy, and truth, when the Son of God was set up as his people's Representative, they were chosen, all and individually chosen in him, and that

"unto salvation." Thus they were not chosen merely to certain privileges which might be forfeited; to certain means of grace which might be neglected or abused; to certain conditions of faith and obedience from which they might fall; but they were chosen in the Person of the Son of God unto eternal salvation. I wish you particularly to observe this; for election being a truth so plainly revealed that none can deny it in some form or other, occasion has been taken by many men to explain away what they will not receive, and to undermine what they cannot overthrow. They allow then of an election; but they say it is either *national*, as is in the case of the Jews; or to *privileges* and means of grace, as in Christian churches; or on *conditions* of obedience, and a fore-view of faith and repentance, as in the case of individuals. Those three sorts of election they will admit of; but an election sovereign, absolute, unconditional; an election unto salvation, indefectible and indefeasible; a salvation firmly secured in a covenant Head, and therefore unalterably safe in him from being ever lost or forfeited; such an election as this, which takes the whole matter of salvation out of the hands of man and puts it wholly into the hands of God, yea, lodges it firm and fast in the very heart of the Redeemer; an election so glorious to God and so suitable to man, they utterly reject and abhor.

2. But O how much is comprehended in that expressive word *"salvation,"* and of being *"chosen* unto salvation." What a clear, bright, and glorious light it casts upon the infinite foreknowledge and ineffable wisdom as well as sovereign grace of Jehovah! We see from the words, as with a ray from heaven, that there was a foreview in the mind of God of the fall of man with all its awful consequences; that his all-seeing eye and fore-planning heart viewed from the beginning the crash, the wreck, the miserable havoc which the disobedience of Adam would entail on man, the last and best creation of his hands; the utter prostration of the Church of God in and under the ruins of his transgression; and the millions of sins with all their dreadful results which through the breach thus made would rush into, and but for his gracious prevision and provision would utterly overwhelm the souls and bodies of the elect. All this scene of misery and woe, of sin in its

birth and sin in its consequences—all this "mystery of iniquity" from the door of paradise down to the very gates of hell—all, all was foreseen by the omniscient eye, and all fore-provided for by the infinite wisdom and superabounding grace of the great and glorious I AM. See, then, and as you see admire the blessed truth, that unless God had chosen his people unto salvation and fixed their state by absolute decree, they would, they must all have been utterly lost. Man may rebel against the doctrine of election, but had this choice not been, as I have just declared, absolute, and had not every provision been previously made in "a Covenant, ordered in all things and sure," none, no, none of Adam's race would have reached the heavenly shore. Such are the demands of infinite Justice; such the claims of a broken Law; such the wrath of God against transgressors; such the purity of his holy nature, that, without the intervention of a Mediator, and without "the blood of the everlasting Covenant" (Heb. 13:20), salvation could not have been devised or accomplished. And looking at the state and condition into which the Adam transgression has reduced all this ruined race, such, I may well add, is the number of their enemies; such the strength of sin; such the craft of Satan; such the power of evil in their wretched hearts; and, to say no more, such the obstacles which obstruct every step of their path to the heavenly city, that unless God had from the beginning chosen them in the Person of his dear Son unto salvation, so as certainly to carry them through all the storms of time and land them safe in eternal glory, none, none even of the elect themselves, could have been saved, but all, all would have perished by the way in spite of their election. Our pride, our ignorance, our self-righteousness, our enmity to God's ways and word, may reel against all this, and muster objection after objection, and argument after argument, against a doctrine which takes salvation out of our hands, and makes it wholly of the Lord. (Jonah 2:9.) But both from Scripture and experience I feel certain in my own mind that we can have no right and scriptural view of what the fall of man really was in all its miserable consequences; we can have no proper sight or feeling sense of the wreck and ruin which sin has wrought in the whole human race, and the utter helplessness of man to deliver himself

from that fallen condition, if we deny, despise, or reject a salvation that is wholly of God. Nay, I will go a step further and say that unless we see, feel, believe, and admire the grace, wisdom, and mercy of God in choosing his people unto such a salvation as this, *that* salvation can never have reached our heart; for I am well convinced that if salvation comes with power to the soul it makes us feel that if God himself had not chosen us to salvation, such is the power of sin and such the helplessness of the creature, that neither we nor a single individual of the children of men could be saved. When, then, we are thus taught and led by the Spirit into all truth, instead of regarding election as arbitrary or unjust, or viewing God as a cruel tyrant because he has chosen a certain portion of the human race and left the rest to fill up the measure of their iniquities, we rather adore his wisdom, admire his grace, and say with the Church, "Thy counsels of old are mercy and truth." (Isai. 25:1.) We rather bless him that he should have chosen his people, and us, we hope, amongst them unto salvation. Standing upon this ground, we see him by faith in the beginning, before the foundations of the earth were laid, viewing creation about to arise, and foreseeing the entrance of sin to mar not only creation, but that work above all others in which he took a special delight—man formed after his own image, fixedly and unalterably determining that where sin should abound, there grace should much more abound.

3. But this question often arises in the bosom of the child of God, and may even now be springing up in yours, "Who and what am I?" He sees in the Scriptures that God has chosen a people unto salvation; and he is deeply convinced that unless he belongs to that number he never will, never can be saved. But now the thought springs up in his breast; the anxious question rises to his lips, "What evidence have I of my personal interest in this sovereign choice? I see," he says, "and most firmly believe that God has an elect people; I see how highly favoured and blessed that people is. 'Happy art thou, O Israel,' he says, in spirit if not in words, 'Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord?'" (Deut. 33:29.) "I am well convinced," he adds, "that they, and

they only, will reach the heavenly shore. But who and what am *I*?" Am I one of the elect? Where are *my* evidences? Where *my* tokens for good? Where, O where can *I* find substantial marks of grace to assure me that *I*, even I have a part and lot in this important matter? What reason have I to believe that in the beginning God fixed his love upon me; that he gave me to his only begotten Son in ancient councils; that by virtue of this eternal choice and everlasting love, the incarnate Son of God bore my sins in his own body upon the tree, and washed me from all my iniquities in his atoning blood?" Now this anxious inquiry which may even now be moving in your heart, causing the sigh to arise to your lips and the tear to start to your eye, leads me to

II.—My *second* point, viz., to show that there are *certain marks and evidences* given us in the word of truth of an interest in this choice unto salvation. By comparing, then, these marks of grace with what we believe the Lord has done for our soul, we may, with his help and blessing, arrive at a happy assurance, or a sweet persuasion, or, at least, a comfortable hope, that though the gift may seem too great for us, the mercy too plenteous, yet that the Lord has chosen us to salvation, and granted us some sensible evidence of it by putting us in possession of the grace of life. The evidence given here by the apostle is, "*Calling,*" and that calling effected by what he calls "our gospel," that is, the gospel which he and his fellow apostles preached: "*Whereunto he called you by our gospel.*"

Let me, then, open these points as clearly as I can, if not as fully as I could wish, for your edification demands clearness, if my time forbid fulness, that you who have been called by grace and know the gospel in your heart, may read your evidences in the light of the scripture and of divine teaching.

1. First, then let me speak of *calling*. We are bidden by Peter to make our calling and election sure: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting

kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1:10, 11.) We see, therefore, that the two are closely connected. We cannot make our election sure unless we first make sure our calling; for though election is the cause of calling, calling is the only evidence of election. But what means the apostle by bidding us "make our election *sure*?" Is it not already so? If God has from the beginning chosen us to salvation, is not that choice as sure as God himself could make it? and if he has truly and effectually called us by his grace, is not that calling as sure also as the election itself? It does not mean, therefore, making them sure to God, or sure in themselves, but sure *unto us*; in other words, we are bidden to give diligence to obtain in our own breast a certain and blessed assurance that we, even we, have most certainly been both chosen and called. We have, first, then, "to make our *calling* sure," that is, to ourselves; and this we do when, by the shining in of God upon his own work in the heart, we come to some assurance in our own breast that we have been called by his effectual grace. Would we then know the truth of our election, so as to make it sure in our own consciences, we must give diligent heed to examine well our calling; for if that be sure, the election is sure also; for the one hangs upon, and is the certain fruit of the other.

1. But to cast a clearer light upon this point, let me carefully distinguish first between a calling which is not saving and a calling which is. Our gracious Lord says, "Many be called but few chosen" (Matt. 20:16); and we find the Holy Spirit also speaking of old in words of solemn import: "Because I have called, and ye refused" (Prov. 1:24.) Thus we see that there is a calling which is not the fruit of election, and which may be refused. This calling cannot be made sure; for it is general, and belongs to all to whom the word comes; as the apostle says, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel, for Esaias saith, Lord who hath believed our report?" He then adds: "But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Rom. 10:18.) This call, then, is to the ear not to the heart; the outward sound of the gospel in the letter, not its inward voice in the spirit.

2. But I must distinguish also in effectual calling between being called by the law and being called *by the gospel*; for the apostle says, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel." The law, properly speaking, does not call, and yet has a powerful hand in our calling. When the Lord first begins his work of grace upon our heart we are ignorant both of the sound and the power of the gospel; nor do we know usually what it is even in the bare letter of truth. At any rate, it has not reached our heart as a joyful sound, for though we may be diligent readers or even students of the New Testament, we may be and usually are, from various circumstances, enveloped in the densest ignorance of the doctrine which it teaches, of the grace which it reveals, and of the glory which it promises. The law, then, is that ministration with which we have first to make a close acquaintance. Moses speaks from Sinai before Christ speaks from Zion. To convince of sin is the first work of the Spirit upon the heart. "And when he is come he will reprove [margin "convince,"] the world of sin." (John 16:8.) Guilt of conscience, then, and consequent distress of mind under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, are among the first evidences of a divine change being begun. So it was with the publican in the temple: so it was with those who were pricked (or rather "pierced") in their heart under Peter's first sermon. The gospel at this time is at a distance from us. We have not yet been made willing in the day of Christ's power, nor have we heard his voice or seen his glory. Until then the law speaks, our conscience is not so heavily laden with the weight of guilt as to feel the need of atoning blood; nor are we so stripped of every rag of creature righteousness as to feel we require the justifying obedience of God's dear Son to screen us from the wrath of the Almighty. The first work, then, of grace is to kill rather than to make alive; to wound rather than to heal; to bring down rather than to lift up; to reveal the law rather than the gospel. For "balm is useless to the unfeeling." Salvation with all its superabounding grace is but an empty sound to those who have never felt themselves cut off from all help or all hope. So, in a sense, there is a calling under and through if not by the law, in the first teaching and operations of the Spirit of God, bringing the soul under its condemnation as

a ministration of death. But when the law has done its office, and the sinner is slain by its killing power, then there comes to his aid and deliverance, what the apostle speaks of here, the calling by the gospel. When the gospel utters its melodious voice; when pardon is proclaimed through the sacrifice of Jesus; when peace reaches the heart through atoning blood revealed to the conscience; when the glad tidings of salvation by grace are no longer a mere sound in the letter, but are made the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; when heavenly light shines into the mind; when divine power attends the word to the soul; when faith is raised up, hope casts its anchor within the veil, and the love of God is shed abroad, then, and there is the calling of which the apostle here speaks—a calling by the gospel. If you doubt my words, I would appeal to your own conscience, if you know anything of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Did the law ever give you any hope of salvation? Did the fear of death or hell ever impart any consolation to your wounded spirit? Did you ever read your name in the book of life when you were under the schoolmaster Moses, especially when you felt his angry rod, coming down again and again upon your sore back? Does not the apostle say, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21); and again, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20.) If this be so, then no man under the law ever

"Read his title clear
To mansions in the skies."

No one under conviction of sin and distress of conscience, from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law, could ever say he had a good hope in the mercy of God, for mercy has neither name nor place in the bosom of the law. It is a ministration of death, and therefore can never communicate life; a ministration of condemnation, and therefore can never reveal justification; a ministration of wrath, and can therefore neither manifest nor communicate pardon and peace.

This, then, is the reason why the apostle speaks of "calling by the gospel" as its peculiar and distinctive blessing; for the gospel sounds an invitation to those who are under the law, and therefore calls them from death to life, as being a ministration of life; from condemnation to justification, as being a ministration of righteousness; from guilt and wrath, bondage and terror to pardon and peace, as being a revelation of salvation through the atoning blood of the Son of God. When, therefore, the sound of the gospel trumpet, like the silver trumpet on the great day of Jubilee, reaches the ears and heart of the captive exile, he hasteneth that he may be loosed. (Isai. 51:14.) The scene now changes; the storms of God's wrath blow over; the day-star appears in the dawning morn of the gospel day, "a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. 23:4), until the Sun of righteousness in due time rises with healing on his wings. As, then, the gospel is thus made the power of God unto salvation, the soul is enabled to listen to, and embrace it as a joyful sound. Now just in proportion as faith receives it, hope anchors in it and love embraces it, is evidence given of our being from the beginning chosen unto salvation.

III.—But I now pass on to show from our text that there are certain *fruits and effects* wrought in the soul by a divine power when it is thus called by the gospel to salvation, and to a knowledge of it. And I think it very necessary to examine ourselves by these fruits and effects, so as to make diligent search and earnest inquiry how far we have been put into a spiritual and experimental possession of them, and how far we can at present realise their presence and their power. It is easy to say, "I believe the gospel; I believe in Jesus Christ; I have heard the truth now for many years, nay more, I have made a long and consistent profession of my personal knowledge of it; I am surprised, therefore that you doubt my religion. What do you mean by casting any suspicion upon me or upon it, for I have none myself?" But if you do not doubt for yourself, will you not let others doubt for you? Self-confidence is not always a proof of safety; nor does offence at the bare suggestion of examination always prove its non-necessity. None profess greater indignation

at being suspected of cheating than those who habitually use short weights and measures; but all their bluster does not prevent the weights and measures being examined by the lawful inspector and condemned. So a man may have no doubt of his own religion and be very angry with those who suspect it, and yet, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, be very lacking in those evidences which God has given of his being from the beginning chosen unto salvation.

Two gracious evidences are here given us of a personal interest in this eternal choice. One is "sanctification of the Spirit," the other "belief of the truth." Those two fruits and results of God's eternal choice of his people, as seen in the light of the Spirit, overturn, in a moment, many of the cavilling arguments which are brought against the doctrine of election, and to which I have already referred. Some, for instance, say "that is a licentious doctrine; that men may consider they are 'elect,' and then abandon themselves to the commission of every crime; that if a man can only believe he is chosen of God and certain of going to heaven, there is not any iniquity in which he may not freely indulge, without the least fear of God's anger now, or of eternal punishment hereafter." Now the language of the Holy Ghost here gives the lie to all such vain objections of the carnal mind—to all such ill-founded, angry cavillings against the truth of God. It lays down two divine marks as brought forth in the heart, lips, and life of the saints of the Most High, and reveals, as with a ray of heavenly light, the divine truth that if any are chosen to salvation, they are not chosen to live in sin, nor chosen that they may abandon themselves to all manner of iniquity; but that the same omnipotent and irreversible Will, and the same eternal decree which fixed their standing in Christ Jesus the Lord, and chose them to salvation from the beginning in him, determined also the work of grace upon their heart; that there should be given unto them "the sanctification of the Spirit," to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and that there should be wrought in them "the belief of the truth," with all its liberating, sanctifying effects. We will examine these two evidences of an interest in the electing love of God separately, as

it is of the deepest importance that we should understand them clearly and realise them experimentally.

i. I shall consider, first, therefore, "*the sanctification of the Spirit.*"

1. Observe, first, the peculiar force of the word "*through*;" it is "*through* sanctification of the Spirit." All the elect of God must therefore pass through sanctification. It is a path not merely *into* which, but *through* which—through the whole length of which they must, pass; so that, as there is no salvation from the curse of the law except *through* the blood and obedience of the Son of God, so there is no salvation from the inward defilement and inordinate power of sin except through the sanctification of the Spirit. The Bride must stand not only washed in Christ's blood and arrayed in Christ's righteousness that she may lift up her head without sin or shame in the presence of Jehovah; but she must be a partaker also of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Christ's righteousness is her wedding dress, arrayed in which he says to her, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." This is her title and her warrant to heavenly bliss; but she needs an inward meetness, for she must have a queenly heart as well as a queenly robe. The two are beautifully brought together in those words of the Psalmist: "The king's daughter is all-glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold." (Psalm 45:13.) She is "all-glorious within," as well as "clothed with wrought gold." The Spirit clothes her outwardly when he brings near and puts upon her the wedding dress; and the same Spirit gives her her inward glory when he sanctifies her by his special grace. Thus Christ not only "loved the Church and gave himself for it," but also "sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church"—glorious without and glorious within, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" to mar her outward beauty, and to be also "holy and without blemish," so as not to mar her inward glory. Sanctification, therefore, is as indispensable unto salvation as justification. "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.) Heaven is a holy place. Its enjoyments and employments are all holy. "Holy holy, holy is the LORD of hosts," is the eternal cry of created angels and ransomed spirits. There must be, therefore, a sacred meetness for this holy employment and spiritual enjoyment communicated to the soul before it can be fitted for those habitations into which nothing that defiles can ever enter. How glorious must be that place of which we read, "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. 22:4, 5.) That they may thus see his face and ever serve him in the beauty of holiness was eternally provided for in the covenant of grace. In the same wondrous scheme of eternal love which contrived their salvation, provision was made for the Holy Ghost to sanctify by his indwelling power, influence, and operations the elect of God, and thus qualify and fit them for those heavenly mansions which were prepared for them. He being a divine Person in the Godhead, and as such taking a part in the covenant of grace, engaged, with a foreview of the depths of the fall, to regenerate them, to give them a new heart and a new spirit, to take possession of their soul, and fill them with every holy grace and every heavenly fruit. He thus pledged himself to breathe into them in their time-state an element of holiness in which they might hereafter eternally swim as in an ocean of purity and love, and without which heaven itself would be to them but a hell. He did not undertake to sanctify their carnal mind their Adam nature, but to breathe into them a new spirit, a spirit of perfect holiness, capable of expanding into heights and depths of purity and love beyond all conception or description.

ii. But our present business is with his divine operations in their time-state.

1. Thus he first sanctifies *their understanding* by casting a holy light into their mind to understand spiritual things. Of this the

apostle speaks where he begs God to give unto the Ephesians the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened." (Ephes: 1:17, 18.) This communicates a spiritual capacity to understand spiritual things, as the Lord "opened the understanding" of his disciples "that they might understand the scriptures." (Luke 24:45.) By these spiritual eyes, the enlightened saint sees the Person of the Son of God, beholds his finished work upon the cross, views his atoning blood, his justifying obedience, his dying love. This is the "anointing which teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." By this "we know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. 2:12.) By this the veil of unbelief and ignorance is taken off the heart, and with open face we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18.) Thus the glorious things of God become revealed and adapted to the spiritual capacity of the child of grace, so that he is at home and in his element in the sweet enjoyment of them. Have you not found sometimes, as you read the Scripture, that a ray of divine light seemed to shine upon the sacred page, and you felt it so blessedly to illuminate your mind, and so raise up faith to believe the divine testimony, that you could say with Jeremiah, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart?" With it came also a tasting that the Lord was gracious, so that you could say that the word of God was sweeter to you than "honey and the honeycomb." Sometimes when, as your mind was enlightened by a ray of spiritual light, you have seen the glorious doctrine of a Triune God, and admired and adored with holy wonder the divine mystery of the Trinity. At another time, illuminated by the same Spirit, you may have seen by faith the glorious mystery of the Person of the Son of God—seen the eternal Son in the bosom of the Father; then traced him coming down from heaven to earth; seen him take flesh in the womb of the Virgin; viewed him lying as an infant in Bethlehem's lowly manger; witnessed his miracles, heard his words, followed him to the garden and to the cross, and seen him laid in the silent tomb. Then you have seen him issue from the tomb, and ascend to the Father, to be the great high priest over the house of God. Have you not seen these things as

if unfolded to your view in the sacred page, and as you saw you admired and wondered? Now in all this the Holy Spirit was sanctifying your understanding, illuminating your mind with heavenly light, and bringing eternal things with power into your soul.

2. But he not only illuminates the mind; he also *softens the heart* and melts the spirit by communicating *gracious sensations*. For he not only gives light to enlighten the mind, but communicates life, and feeling, warmth and tenderness to soften and melt and, as it were, spiritualise the soul; to water it as with holy dew; to fertilise it with heavenly anointings; to enrich it with gracious influences; to animate it with divine motion; to mould it after the image of Christ; and breathe into its inmost depths the very spirit and mind of Jesus. This gracious work upon the heart constitutes the grand distinguishing difference between the dry, cold, intellectual moonlight of those who are only in the letter, and the warm, heavenly sunlight of those who are blessedly in the Spirit. This renewing power, this regenerating influence, this fertilising, quickening operation of the Holy Ghost on the soul, whereby he creates it anew in Christ Jesus, and adorns it inwardly and outwardly with every gracious and holy fruit, will ever distinguish "the sanctification of the Spirit," which is the fruit of eternal choice, from that dry, intellectual knowledge in the head of a professor, which leaves him with no more grace in his heart than was possessed by a Balaam and an Ahithophel.

3. By this gracious work upon the heart, the Holy Spirit also gives *spiritual affections*, and thus enables the believer to fulfil the precept, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:2, 3.) He thus sanctifies the affections, fixes them on things above, and fills the soul as with the very breath of heaven. Light, life, and love—light in the understanding, life in the soul, love in the heart; is not this "sanctification of the Spirit?"

iii. But there is another heavenly fruit which God in our text is said to impart, that forms a further blessed evidence of an

interest in this electing love—namely, a "*belief of the truth.*" Let me endeavour to lay this before you as a necessary evidence of your being chosen unto salvation.

The truth of God is revealed in the Scriptures, and can only be received by faith. If, then, we believe it not, we have no manifest interest in it. But if we believe it, we have so far an evidence in our favour. But to put this evidence more clearly before you, let me point out two distinguishing features which ever accompany a *belief of the truth*; for the truth of God has two precious properties when applied to the soul by a divine power.

1. The first is to *make free*, according to the Lord's own testimony, "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.*" (John 8:31, 32.) We by nature and practice are bond slaves to sin and Satan. We are the sport of the Prince of the power of the air, who takes us captive at his will. We are held down also by many hurtful lusts; or, if free from gross sin, are bond slaves to pride, covetousness, or self-righteousness. Perhaps some idol is set up in the chambers of imagery, which defiles all the inner man; or some snare of Satan entangles our feet, and we are slaves to sin, without power to liberate ourselves from this cruel slavery. We groan under it, as the children of Israel under their burdens, but, like them, cannot deliver ourselves. But sooner or later the truth comes to our aid; the truth as it is in Jesus flies to the rescue of God's oppressed family; the blessed Spirit opens it up and seals it upon the heart with a divine power. As, then, under his gracious influences they believe the truth and feel its power and savour in their heart, a liberating influence is communicated; their fetters and shackles are loosened; the bondage of sin and Satan, and the power and strength of evil are sensibly broken, and a measure of holy freedom is enjoyed. Look at this point in the light of your own experience—your surest testimony next to the word of God. Were you not in bondage under the law, and feared that its curse and torment was the beginning of eternal woe? How were you delivered? How were you brought out from under that cruel schoolmaster? By some

application of God's truth to your heart; by some manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ; or by the discovery of the gospel by the power of God to your soul. There is no other way of getting from under the bondage of the law but by the application of the gospel, and by believing what the gospel reveals. As the truth came, then, to your heart as the very word of the living God, power came with it to believe; faith was raised up to credit the testimony; and as faith began to credit the truth of God and receive it in hope and love, there was a sensible loosening of the bonds; and then the chains and fetters dropped off of themselves. It is with the soul as it was with Peter in prison: when the angel came, and a light shined in the prison, and the angel's words fell upon his ears, "the chains fell from off his hands." There remained nothing then to bar his exit; for "the iron gate that leadeth unto the city opened to them of its own accord." (Acts 12:7-10.) So whatever chains or fetters may hold the soul; let the angel of mercy come; let the message of salvation be revealed, the chains of unbelief drop off, the iron gate of hardness gives way, and the truth makes the soul blessedly free.

But take another case. Not having a clear view of the gospel, of its fulness and freeness, you might have been kept in hard bondage for years by legality or ignorance. Hoping and endeavouring to be what God never meant his people to be—perfectly free from all the workings of corruption, you were held down in bondage and condemnation from feeling so much of your own inward sinfulness. When you were entangled in an evil, despair seized hold of you, and all without and within was darkness, confusion, and bondage. But how were you delivered? I cannot enlarge upon this point, as my time is nearly gone; but I may briefly ask, Was it not by the word of truth—by the gospel? by seeing and believing that salvation was a finished work? by seeing and feeling that those for whom Jesus died are freely justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses?

2. But now look at the "belief of the truth" under another form, as

affording an evidence of interest in God's eternal choice—truth in its *sanctifying influence*. Our blessed Lord thus prayed to his heavenly Father on behalf of his disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John 17:17.) Truth sanctifies. Error hardens the heart; leads to presumption; takes the soul away from the light of God's countenance; draws it aside from under the testimony of his word; and leaves it to wander, as if without a guide, in the midst of confusion, and frequently to fall headlong into the open ditch of evil. But truth not merely softens and liberates the heart from the power of sin, but has a most blessed, sanctifying power and influence upon the soul. If ever the truth of God reached your conscience, it communicated a sanctifying influence to your spirit; it raised up a warm and affectionate love to everything which that truth reveals. Wherever the love of the truth is received, it separates from the world, influences the heart and life, and is attended with every good word and work. Thus to believe the truth not merely liberates the soul from the bondage of the law, with all its guilt and condemnation, but sanctifies the heart to the worship and service of God. Spirituality of mind is thereby communicated; communion with God is sought and sometimes enjoyed; deliverance from evil that it may not grieve us is earnestly desired; and the time longed for when sin shall no more pollute the conscience, or separate between God and the soul.

Now can you find any print of these two gracious marks on your soul? Have you any reason to believe that the Spirit of God has ever come into your soul to sanctify it and communicate those gracious influences, whereby the heart is drawn up into the enjoyment of heavenly blessings? Has the truth of God ever come home with unction, savour, and power, so as sensibly to deliver you from the influence of sin and sanctify you to the service of God? Your answer, perhaps, is, "Well, I scarcely know what reply to give to your questions. I hope I feel at times holy influences, spiritual desires, gracious affections but O, taking me in general, I find so much coldness, darkness, and death; my heart is so evil, my nature so corrupt, and every member of the old man so utterly foul, and often so alive and active toward everything that

is evil, that when I closely examine myself by such marks and evidences, such is the opposition within, and such the conflict between the old man, and the new, that I scarcely know what answer to give about myself as to who or whereabouts I am." If it were not so, there would be no conflict. Sanctification is not a progressive work, nor does the Holy Spirit sanctify the members of the old man, so as to make them holy. The old man remains, what he ever was, in all his integrity. No change takes place in the corrupt flesh: it is ever corrupt, and will be so to the very grave's mouth. It is the "new spirit" of God's own creation in which holiness dwells, for it is the very workmanship of God. With this light upon it, you can now perhaps see through the mists which so often blind your eyes. Do you not at times see and feel that there is that in your soul which nothing but the power of God could have wrought? that there are or have been there felt and experienced holy sensations, spiritual affections, heavenly desires, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, hope in his mercy, love to his name, renunciation of self, and with all this that sweet spirituality of mind which is life and peace? There are times, then, when these mists and fogs are dispersed by the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and then you can read what God has done upon your heart. Were it not so, we must sink down into despair. But under these renewals of God's goodness and mercy, intimations of his favour, whispering of his love and grace, and gracious revivings of the work of the Spirit, hope springs up in the bosom, and with hope faith embraces once more the Lord the Lamb, and love again cleaves to him with purpose of heart.

It is, then, from these gracious evidences, that there is from time to time gathered up any real testimony that God has "from the beginning chosen us to salvation." We may well wonder at the mystery, how God should have chosen such sinful creatures, not merely such mere atoms and specks in creation, but such polluted worms of earth in whom to magnify the riches of his grace. But after all our wonder, we must still come to this point, which helps us to make diligent search: "If not chosen, what is my state and case? I must either be chosen and saved, or passed over and lost. It is with me, then, heaven or hell, salvation or

damnation. It is, therefore, a most important matter, to come to some decision whether God has chosen me to salvation. If not who am I and where am I and what will be my awful condition when I come to lie upon my death-bed?" So we cannot blink the inquiry, nor leave it a matter of conjecture, but from time to time anxiously long to come to some clear decision whether God has chosen us or not, because upon that turns the question whether we shall be for ever with Jesus, or with the lost in the abyss of eternal woe.

IV.—But passing to our last point, we are called in it to look away from the fleeting things of time and sense, to see what is the *ultimate issue* and blessed result of this election of God and of this work of the Spirit upon the heart: "*To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

1. There is a glory which our Lord has as *one with the Father* and the Holy Ghost, in *one undivided Essence*. But that is not the glory here spoken of.

2. There is also a glory which our blessed Lord has as *the eternal Son* of the Father, of which John speaks so clearly: "And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." But that is not the glory here spoken of.

3. There is also a glory which he has as *Immanuel, God with us*. But that is not the glory spoken of in the text. For none of these three kinds of glory can his people possess. They may and can see them; but they cannot *partake* of them; for the intrinsic perfections of Jesus as God are not communicable to man. The finite can never become infinite; humanity can never become Deity nor a creature possess the omnipotence and omniscience of the Creator.

4. But there is a glory which the Lord Jesus does give to his people, and of which they can partake. Our blessed Lord, therefore, said to his heavenly Father, in his intercessory prayer for his disciples, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." (John 17:22.)

This glory is that of perfect conformity to his own glorified humanity, as we read: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. 3:21.) This glory is given in grace, for grace is glory begun; and springs from a believing view of him: "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 consummation of this glory is reserved for a future state, when the Church will be "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;" when she will be perfectly conformed in body and soul to his glorious image, will see him face to face, and enjoy the bliss of his presence without a veil between. God is essentially invisible. The Deity, therefore, of the Son of God cannot be seen even in eternity as it is in itself; but it will shine through his glorified humanity in all its uncreated splendour. To see this glory and be a partaker of it, is the happiness of heaven. Our gracious Lord, therefore, said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24.) Nothing short of the revelation and communication of this glory could satisfy the heart of God; and nothing short of the partaking of this glory can satisfy the heart of man. Heaven short of this would be no heaven to his soul. Not to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; to have no view of the glory of an incarnate God; not to be conformed to his glorious image, so as to be perfectly holy both in body and soul—were these things denied, there would be no heaven at all for the redeemed among the children of men. But God, in giving the saints heaven as their happy home, gave them with it an eternal weight of glory. He has designed that all whom he has chosen unto salvation should reach the heavenly shore; that none should suffer shipwreck by the way; that sin should not be their ruin; that Satan should not succeed in any of his devices against their eternal safety; but that every member of the mystical body of Christ should be for ever with their glorious Head in the realms of bliss, to behold and be partakers of the glory which shall be revealed when he comes

and all his saints with him. It is the prospect of this glory which animates the Christian in all his battles against sin, and encourages him never to quit the field until victory crown the strife. It nerves his heart in all the troubles and trials of this mortal state, still to press forward to win this immortal prize, that he may safely reach that land where tears are wiped from off all faces; and where the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost will be seen and enjoyed through the glorified humanity of Jesus without a cloud to dim its rays, or intercept its eternal lustre.

SALVATION WORKED OUT WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

Preached on Thursday Evening, July 6th, 1843, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:12, 13

There are certain texts in the Word of God which the advocates of free will make frequent use of in order to prop up their own cause, and as weapons against the truth of God. And I believe that God, for His own wise purposes, has revealed such texts in the blessed Scripture that "He may take the wise in their own craftiness," and that those who wilfully close their eyes and stop their ears against the truth may find the Word of God to be "a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block" (Rom. 11:8, 9), that "they may fall, and be snared, and be taken" (Isa. 8:15). And thus the gospel, whilst it becomes to the elect of God a "savour of life unto life," is made to those "who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Pet. 2:8), "a savour of death unto death."

The text, or rather the first clause of it, which I have just read is one of those which Arminians make great use of in the support of their cause. But I hope I shall be able to show, if the Lord enable me and give me a door of utterance, that it is full of sound gospel truth, and that it is not, as they suppose, one which favours their self-righteous scheme, but contains a sweet and experimental description of the work of God the Holy Ghost in the hearts and consciences of God's people. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

We find in the text mention made of "salvation," and this "salvation" the Philippians are called upon "to work out with fear

and trembling." What salvation is this? It cannot be the everlasting salvation of the soul, for God in His Word has most plainly declared that *that* is already accomplished. "Who *hath saved* us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). And again, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 11:14). The Lord Himself, with expiring breath, declared, "It is finished," and said in His last solemn prayer to His Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). It is very clear, then that the "salvation" spoken of in the text is not the salvation from the wrath to come, is not that work whereby the elect of God are redeemed from all iniquity, and will all be brought to enjoy hereafter an everlasting "weight of glory." It is not of such salvation that the text speaks. For man cannot "work out" *that*; it has been already accomplished by the finished work of the Son of God. Sin has been eternally put away by the sacrifice of Christ, and there can be no adding to and no taking from that work of which Jesus Himself said, "It is finished."

The salvation then in the text is an *internal*, an *experimental* salvation; not the salvation wrought by Christ upon the cross *for* the elect, but a salvation wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost *in* the hearts of those that believe. And to this conclusion we are led by that part of our text where it is expressly said, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

In order, then, to get at the spiritual meaning of the exhortation, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," we must connect it with the following verse—"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Thus this "working out" is only a working out of that which God works in; and, as God must work *in* before we can work *out*, I shall, with God's blessing, look a little at what is said in the second clause of the text before I enter into the meaning and suitability of the exhortation: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

It is God, then, that works in the soul "both to will and to do of His good pleasure;" nor have we any will nor have we any power, except as God is pleased to work both will and power in our souls; and this is a truth which every child of God is brought experimentally to know and feel.

I. Now when the Lord begins to work in a vessel of mercy to will and to do of His good pleasure, in order that he may work out that which God works in, He teaches him three things.

1. He works in him *a sense of felt sinfulness*. By displaying to the soul His holy law, by opening up the real nature of sin, and by laying guilt as a heavy burden upon the conscience, God works in every quickened soul a sense of felt sinfulness; and if a man has never had wrought in his soul by the power of God a sense of felt sinfulness, so as to open up to him something of the horrible nature of sin, and to sink him down into guilt and trouble on account of his vileness before God, he has yet to take the first step in vital godliness.

2. But with this sense of felt sinfulness, God working in the soul by the blessed Spirit, works also *a sense of felt ruin*. It is not merely a sense of felt sinfulness and guilt lying upon the conscience that is opened up by a sight of God's holy law, but, accompanying it, there is a sense of felt ruin; that we are lost and undone; and that nothing but the wrath of God and the damnation of hell will be our lot, unless God Himself stretch forth His hand to save us from our justly merited doom.

3. And with this, God that "works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure," works also *a sense of felt helplessness*; He teaches us not only that we are utterly ruined and undone, but also that we are completely helpless to save our own souls, and deliver them from that judgment of which we stand in dread.

Now if a man has never had God to work in him these three things—felt sinfulness, felt ruin, and felt helplessness, he can

know nothing of what it is to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling." But wherever God works in a man "to will and to do of His good pleasure," he begins to "work out" just in proportion as God works in. Does God, for instance, work in his soul a sense of felt *sinfulness*? He works out, so to speak, that sense of felt *sinfulness* in groans and sighs and confessions before God. Does God again work in his soul a sense of felt *ruin*? He works out experimentally, the Holy Ghost enabling him, this sense of felt *ruin* in cries and lamentations on account of his lost and ruined state. And does God work in him a sense of felt *helplessness*? He works out this very sense of felt *helplessness* by sinking down under it as a heavy burden, and complaining into the ears of the Lord how helpless and how impotent he is to think a good thought, say a good word, or perform a good action.

But the text speaks of "salvation." Now salvation implies a being saved from those things which if we lived and died in them would be our ruin. The term "salvation," in this experimental sense, does not mean therefore only those manifestations and revelations in which salvation as an enjoyed reality pre-eminently consists; but it includes also that whole work of God upon the conscience whereby we are saved from those things which if we continued in them would be our ruin.

For instance, before the Lord is pleased to quicken the soul, it is walking, for the most part, either in open profanity, or else in a form of self-righteousness. Now the very feelings which I have been describing of felt *sinfulness*, felt *ruin*, and felt *helplessness* that God works in the soul, are all to save it from those sins in which it was buried, or from that self-righteousness in which it was wrapped up. As God, then, works this sense of felt *sinfulness*, felt *ruin*, and felt *helplessness* in the conscience, the living soul works out, so to speak, of those things in which it was buried. If it were open sin, it works out of and away from those daring iniquities in which it was wallowing; if it were Pharisaism, it works out of that self-righteousness in which it was wrapped up; and if, as it occurs in some cases, it had a name to live while it was dead, if there was a form of godliness whilst it denied the

power, as God works condemnation in the conscience, it works out of that empty profession of religion, and comes out of that mask into the scrutiny and under the heart-searching eye of God as a consuming fire.

II. But this branch of internal salvation having been effectually wrought in, and experimentally wrought out, another branch follows—that, in fact, in which salvation chiefly consists. As the Lord, then, works in the soul "to will and to do of His good pleasure," He works in the heart *light*, "whereby we see light in God's light." He that "teacheth to profit" casts a secret light into the heart, and in that light we see "the truth as it is in Jesus." A sacred light shines upon the page of God's truth; and that sacred light is reflected, as it were, out of the page of God's truth into the heart. And that is the first time we have any knowledge of the way of salvation, the first glimpse that the soul gets that there can be any escape from the wrath to come.

When light, then, is thus cast into the soul by the operation of the Spirit through the Word of God, it sees that there is a Jesus at God's right hand, a divine Mediator betwixt God and man. In the beams of this heavenly light the soul sees that the Son of God has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and that those who stand interested in His finished work stand complete in Him.

Now as this is opened up to the soul, God working in it to will to be saved in this blessed way, and working in it also power to receive the truth in the love of it, as God thus works in the soul to will and to do, it begins to "work out" that which God works in. Does the Lord, then, work light in the soul, in order that heavenly light may be an experimental salvation from darkness? The soul, thus enlightened, works out toward that light which it dimly descries. As a man in a mine, who has lost his way, and sees some beams of the sun shining at the door of the mine, works his way towards the light which he sees, because he knows that that is the only way of escape; so when the Spirit of God works in the soul a divine light, it works onward and upward towards that light which it sees as its only door of escape from darkness that is felt.

But with this light He also works *faith* in the heart whereby it receives the truth as it is in Jesus. The Holy Ghost holds up before the eyes a crucified Christ, and bringing the savour of His name like the ointment poured forth into the heart, enables it to believe in Him unto life eternal. And as this faith is wrought in, the soul exercises it, and thus works out this branch of salvation, and works with it upon its Author and Finisher.

III. And this leads us on to see a little what the Holy Ghost means by the expression, "Work out your own salvation *with fear and trembling.*" How are "fear and trembling" connected with this experimental working out of salvation? They are connected with it in this way. The "fear" which the apostle speaks of here is that "fear of the Lord," which is "the beginning of wisdom," that "fountain of life" which causes a man "to depart from the snares of death." Now as God works in the soul "to will and to do of His good pleasure," everything that He does for it is weighed up in the conscience by this *fear* which is implanted by God. And as it is weighed up by this godly fear, the soul, in working out its own salvation, works it out "with fear;" that is, everything that God does for the soul is so weighed up in the balances of a tender conscience, and is so examined, step by step, by the light of godly fear, that the salvation itself is thus worked out "with fear," fear being that which ever accompanies God's work in the conscience.

1. For instance, does God work in the soul a sense of felt *sinfulness*? The soul working out this feeling which God has worked in works it out with fear. "Is it," says the soul, "the real teaching of God that I am now experiencing? Does this guilt which is upon my conscience come from God's hand in my heart? Do the convictions under which I labour proceed from the Lord? Do the tears that flow down my cheek spring from a really broken heart? Do the sobs that heave from my bosom proceed from this circumstance, that God has touched my conscience with His finger? Or is it the sorrow of the world that worketh death? Is it the remorse of Judas? Is it the repentance of Ahab? Is it the tears

of Esau?" And thus, as the soul is conscious under these teachings that sin lies as a weight and a burden, it still works out that which God works in with godly fear, lest upon this point it be deceived. So again with respect to the sense of felt *ruin*. A man under the teachings of the Spirit knows that he is utterly lost unless God is pleased to save him. But then it comes to this point in a tender conscience—"Is it of God? Do my feelings proceed from Him? Is it His own hand that works this sense of ruin and misery in my conscience? Or are my eyes only *naturally* opened? Is my conscience merely naturally wrought upon? Are these fears such as reprobates are exercised with? May I not have all this, and sink into hell at last?" And thus a sense of self-ruin is worked out with godly fear, and examined whether it proceed from the teaching of God in the soul, or whether it be the mere offspring of nature. And so with respect to felt *helplessness*. The soul, under these divine teachings, knows that it is utterly helpless to save itself from the wrath to come. It hears from the pulpit, from the mouths of experimental ministers, that all God's children feel their helplessness. But then the question arises, "Does my felt helplessness spring from divine teachings, or have I learnt it as a doctrine from the mouth of man? Have I got it from books, have I gathered it from ministers, or does it spring from the real work of the Spirit?" And thus this sense of felt helplessness, which is a part of salvation, is worked out in the soul with fear.

2. So also, with respect to divine *light*. The soul has seen light in God's light, and a blessed ray has been shed at times on the page of God's Word. The complete atonement which Jesus has made by the offering of His blood, and the perfection of His righteousness have been reflected into the heart and the conscience, so as to melt the soul with a sense of mercy. But then there comes the working out of this salvation which God works in; and the soul, under the sensations of godly fear and trembling awe, begins to look at this light which has come into the heart; and it speaks in this way: "There is such a thing as walking in the light of one's own fire. Is mine that light? There is such a thing as having light without life. Is mine of that kind? There is such a thing as the barren moonlight of speculation, a

knowledge of the doctrines, and a wayside hearer's joy in them. Am I under that delusion?" Thus the very light which God Himself gives is worked out with fear; the summoning it up, and bringing it under God's own heart-searching eye, that it may know whether it come from Him, or be merely a delusion of nature.

3. And so when the Lord gives *faith* in Christ, and brings into the soul a sense of His dying love, atoning blood, finished work, and justifying righteousness, there is still this question arising from time to time in the heart—especially after the first sweetness has gone away, and the first enjoyment passed off from the soul (and this is working out salvation with fear and trembling): "Are these feelings from God? Is my faith the faith of God's elect? How does it differ from the presumption of hypocrites? Does it stand in the wisdom of man, or does it stand in the power of God? Am I am sure that this faith which I have felt in times past was God's work in my conscience? Am I sure that it came from God Himself into my heart?" And thus this very *faith*, which is a branch of salvation, is worked out with fear lest the soul be deceived in this important matter.

4. So also if God has ever *heard our prayers*, if we have gone to Him in deep soul trouble, and the Lord has answered our petitions, and so have at the time been certain that the answer came from God—(and this is also a branch of salvation), yet often afterwards the soul is brought to ask, "Did it come from God? Am I certain that I prayed in the Spirit? Am I quite sure it was an answer from God Himself?" It is worked out with fear lest the soul be deceived in this matter, or lest God have merely answered the prayer as a God of providence, and not as a God of grace.

5. And thus with respect to every *testimony* that the child of God receives, every *manifestation* with which he is favoured, every *promise* applied to his heart with power, every *season of hearing* the word with sweetness, every time that the Lord *blesses his soul* and makes it to be a watered garden, sooner or later he is brought to work out all this with fear, lest it be only a delusion of the flesh, not the genuine work and witness of God the Holy

Ghost in his heart.

IV. But besides this "fear," we read also of "trembling." Now what is this "trembling?" I believe it to be what we read of in Hebrews 12:28: "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with *reverence* and godly fear." It is the trembling Moses felt when he said, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" which Isaiah experienced when he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone;" which Daniel knew when his "comeliness was turned into corruption." This is a holy trembling, not the trembling of a slave, but the reverence of a son; not the trembling that proceeds from manifested wrath, but the trembling that proceeds from a sense of God's majesty and holiness.

The soul then that works out its own salvation with "trembling," works it out as in the immediate presence of God, as penetrated with a holy reverence of His great majesty, and as brought under the all-seeing eye of Jehovah Himself. But O, how few there are who are brought to bring their religion day by day, and sometimes hour by hour, before God Himself! How easy it is for a man to take up his religion without any sense of God's heart-searching eye! and how few there are who know what it is to cry unto God to make their heart right before Him, and, like Hezekiah in the temple, to be daily spreading before the Lord the secrets of their heart.

O, if men were taught of the Spirit to bring their religion more before God and less before man, we should have much less profession and much more possession, and those who are really born of God would shine forth more conspicuously as the saints of the Most High.

The soul then works out its salvation, not merely "with fear" lest it should be deceived, but also with "trembling" or holy reverence, as in the immediate presence of God, knowing that no self-deception can stand before Him. It is deeply conscious that no hypocrisy, no presumption, no self-righteousness, no self-delusion can ever abide one look of His eye, or one touch of His

finger. And thus it is brought to work out its salvation "with trembling," knowing that God will not be mocked.

V. And this leads us to examine more closely the expression, "*work out.*" How is a vessel of mercy to "work out his own salvation?" It is not by what are called "good works" that this salvation is wrought out. The Holy Ghost is not speaking of good works here; He is speaking of salvation; and that an experimental, internal salvation. How then is this *working* carried on? It is carried on by bringing, so to speak, into exercise that which God works in the conscience. Does God, for instance, work in the soul faith? Then faith works out as God works it in. Does faith in its first actings lay hold of God's justice in a holy law? Then there is a working out of this faith in the law, when the soul fears and trembles before God. And does God work faith in Christ? This faith which God works in works out upon Christ's blood and righteousness. Does God work a good hope through grace that it may be an anchor sure and steadfast within the veil? The soul works out, and works with this hope as God communicates it. And does God in any measure work love in the heart? There is a working out of that love as God works it in; a going up to Him who gives it, a flowing forth in that very channel whence it came in.

This is the way that the Lord teaches His people, and works living feelings into living consciences; and when they are wrought there they do not lie in the soul as stones in the street, dead and motionless. They are not so much inert matter, but they are pregnant with life and warmth, sense and motion, and ebb and flow as the Spirit moves upon them. It is so even naturally. If we have any feelings naturally, those feelings will work out. Are we afflicted naturally in our minds? There will be some working out of that affliction. Do we rejoice in the success of some plan? There will be some working out of that joy; there will be some telling of it to a friend, some emotions of countenance, some joyous expressions whereby that feeling which is within us is worked out. So it is in religion. If God works trouble in a man's soul, he will work out that trouble by complaining of it to God. If God works

prayer in a man's heart, he will work out that prayer by pouring it into the ears of the Most High. If God works reproof and rebuke, so that His frowns are sensibly felt and feared, there will be a working out of that reproof and rebuke by honest confession and acknowledgment of sin. Does God work brokenness of heart, contrition, and godly sorrow? There will be the working of it out in secret tears. Does He display His goodness and mercy? There will be the working out of praise by its freely flowing out of the heart as God works it in. Does He work in the soul any faith in Jesus? There is a flowing forth of this faith toward Him and upon Him. Does He work in the soul any love towards the Lord? There is a flowing forth unto, and a working out of this love upon His Person, blood, and righteousness. And does He work in the soul to love His children, does He lay them on our heart, and give us a sweet union and knitting to them? There is a working out of this, not merely in those acts of kindness which we may do them, but also in the secret flowing forth of affection to them when they are not present with us.

VI. Now to know something of this heart and conscience work, is to work out our own salvation; and it is in his experimental working out of this that a man is brought to know what salvation is. It is indeed most true that God's people are saved eternally by Christ's finished work, and it is most certain that we cannot contribute one jot or tittle to our own salvation. But when we come to the reception of this salvation into the heart in all its blessed richness, divine efficacy, and heavenly fruits; when we come to salvation as a thing experimentally wrought out in the conscience, and lodged by the hand of God in the soul, then this working of it out comes into exercise; and no man ever knew anything of an internal work of God upon his conscience who was not more or less acquainted with the working out of that salvation which God worked in. It is in this that the real experimental teaching of God in the conscience differs from a dead profession. An empty, dead profession rests upon the letter of truth. It receives certain doctrines revealed in God's Word, and those doctrines it receives, not in the power of them, not in the experience of them, but simply as they are in the letter of the

Word. There is in it no working in by God "to will and to do of His good pleasure," and therefore there is no working out of salvation as an experimental reality. None but God's people under the teachings of the Spirit know what it is thus to "work out their own salvation." And all who work out their own salvation will work it out "with fear and trembling." For when a man is taught by God to know what he is; when he feels what a deceitful heart he carries in his bosom; when the various snares, temptations, and corruptions by which he is daily encompassed are opened up to him; when he knows and feels what a ruined wretch he is in self, then he begins to fear and tremble lest he should be damned at the last. He cannot go recklessly and carelessly on without "making straight paths for his feet," without "examining himself whether he be in the faith." A child of God cannot run heedlessly and thoughtlessly on without "proving his own work," without examining whether God is dealing with his conscience or not. And whenever a man's dreadfully deceitful heart is opened up to him; whenever the hollowness of an empty profession is unmasked; whenever he sees hundreds and thousands having a name to live while they are dead; whenever he feels how strait is the path, and how narrow is the way, and how few there are that find it; whenever he is brought to see how easily a man is deceived, and how certainly he must be deceived unless God teach him in a special manner;—whenever a man is brought to this point, to see what a rare thing, what a sacred thing, and what a spiritual thing religion is, that God Himself is the Author and Finisher of it in the conscience, and that a man has no more religion than God is pleased to give him, and cannot work a single grain of it in his own soul; when a man stands on this solemn ground, and begins to work out that which God works in, it will always be "with fear and trembling;" it will always be with some "fear" lest he be deceived, until God assures him by His own blessed lips that he is not deluded; and it will always be "with trembling," as knowing that he stands in the immediate presence of God, and under His heart-searching eye.

Now when a man works in this way, and gets at salvation by this path, he gets at it in a way that no man can dispute him out of.

When God has worked in a man "to will," and not only worked in him "to will," but also worked in him "to do;" when He has made him willing to flee from the wrath to come; willing to be saved by the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of Jesus; willing to be saved by sovereign grace as a sinner undone without hope, and glad to be saved in whatever way God is pleased to save him; willing to pass through the fire, willing to undergo affliction, willing to walk in the strait and narrow path, willing to take up the cross and follow Jesus, willing to bear all the troubles which may come upon him, willing to endure all the slanders which may be heaped upon his name; willing to be what God makes him, and willing to have what God gives him; when God has made him willing to be nothing, and to have nothing but as God makes him the one, and gives him the other: and besides working in him "to will," has worked in him "to do," worked in him faith to believe, hope whereby he anchors in the finished work of Christ, and love whereby he cleaves to Him with purpose of heart; when all this has been "with fear and trembling," not rushing heedlessly on in daring presumption, not buoyed up by the good opinion of others, not running down the stream of popularity, not taking up his religion from ministers and books, but by a real, genuine work of the Holy Ghost in the conscience; I say, when he has thus worked out with fear and trembling what God has worked in, he has got at salvation; at salvation from wrath to come; at salvation from the power of sin; at salvation from an empty profession; at salvation from a form of godliness; at salvation from the flesh, from the delusions of Satan, from the blindness and ignorance of his own heart; he has got at a salvation which is God's salvation, because God has worked in him to will and to do of His good pleasure.

VII. And this last expression shows us that we cannot chalk out any particular path, because though God works in all His people to will, and though He works in all His people to do, yet still it is "of His good pleasure." Some for instance are a longer and some a shorter time in finding the way; some sink very far into convictions, and others do not go so deep into soul trouble; some are more favoured with blessed manifestations of Jesus, and

others have them faint and feeble. We poor dependent creatures can only work out just as God works in. But He will so work in all "to will," and He will so work in all "to do," that they shall all work out their own salvation, and they shall all work it out with fear and trembling. And they will find their fear and trembling to be the most blessed helpers that God could give them in this work; for they become afterwards established in the "truth as it is in Jesus," just in proportion to their fear, and just in proportion to their trembling.

Now if this be the case; if this be a description, a feeble description I admit, of the way in which a soul is taught of God, what are we to say of people who learn their religion, without this process being carried on in their souls? Can we believe that they know anything experimentally of the matter who have never known anything of this work in their consciences? Thus, in God's mysterious ways, those who may think themselves perfectly right and have no doubt nor fear upon the subject, may find themselves one day perfectly wrong; and those who are exercised with doubts and fears, burdens, temptations, and sorrows, and all these things have made their consciences tender, and have brought them more into the light and life of God's guiding Spirit, will find that though they have walked in a dark, a trying and mysterious path, it has been to them a safe and a blessed path, and at last they will "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

The Saviour of Israel

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, on Tuesday Evening, July 20, 1847

"Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Psalm 35:3

If we take the Scriptures as our authority (and upon what authority can we depend but the inspired word of the living God?) in what a fearful state is mankind at large! When we compare what man now is with what man was when he came forth from the hand of his Creator; when we contrast his degraded condition with that primeval purity, innocency, and uprightness, in which he stood as created in the image of God—O, how awfully fallen, O, how deeply sunk, man is! And yet one feature of man's ruined state is, his complete ignorance of the depths of the fall. Though the sinful child of a sinful parent—though under the curse of an avenging law—though an enemy to God and godliness—though passing rapidly down the broad road that leads to eternal destruction, he knows it not. The veil of ignorance and blindness is upon his heart, and he is, as the Scripture speaks, "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him." (Eph. 4:18.) God hath poured upon him the spirit of slumber; therefore, he cannot see, nor know, nor feel who he is, nor what he is, nor where he is going. Language cannot describe the awful state in which man is. But, through mercy, infinite mercy, there is "a remnant according to the election of grace," who are made deeply and sensibly to see, to know, and to feel their ruined and lost condition; into whose hearts the blessed Spirit puts a sigh and cry that they may know God's great salvation; and whom the same blessed Spirit, who first convinced them of their ruined state and implanted that cry in their souls, eventually brings to a happy enjoyment of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Such, and such alone, can and do feelingly use the words of our text, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

It is a mercy for the children of God that the saints in all ages

have been similarly taught and led; and thus they find their experience traced out in the word of God, as with a ray of light, by the unerring finger of inspiration. How many of the Lord's exercised family can breathe forth this very prayer, as though it were written especially for them! And how it seems to concentrate into one focus the language and desires of all the Lord's deeply tried and exercised children, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

Two things, I think, we may observe connected with, and flowing out of our text. *First, in what way God is the salvation of his people; and secondly, the cry that is breathed out of the soul, imploring the Lord to shew them that he is their salvation.*

I.—Salvation implies a lost and ruined condition, out of which salvation brings them. It presupposes, by the very word itself, a lost, ruined, and undone state. None, therefore, can feelingly and experimentally use the words, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," except those who, by a divine work upon their conscience, are brought to know and feel their lost, ruined and undone condition. On the lips of any other, it is mockery and hypocrisy.

But in what sense is God, the triune Jehovah of Israel, the salvation of his people? The God of Israel is a Three-One God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and each of these three Persons in one glorious and undivided Godhead, is the salvation of the people of God.

1. *God the Father* is the salvation of the elect. The fall did not take God unawares. It was not an accident that broke in upon the divine economy—some unexpected and unlooked for event that threw heaven into consternation. It was a part of God's eternal purpose. He designed, in his own eternal mind, that the fall should take place; and though we, with our poor finite intellect, are lost in the contemplation of this amazing fact; though when we look at the ruin of thousands and tens of thousands through the fall, we stand aghast; and when we look down, as it were,

into the awful gulph into which thousands and millions have been precipitated by Adam's transgression, we recoil from the sight, and our palsied minds seem struck with horror; yet, on the other hand, when we can view the fall as drawing forth and manifesting the glory of God in making known salvation by the blood of the Lamb, and in bringing to light mercy and grace, those divine attributes which otherwise must have been hidden for ever in the bosom of God from created eyes; when too, we can see that the ungodly are justly punished for their sins—that justice must be magnified as well as mercy,—and we ourselves (for that is the chief point after all) have some testimony that our names are written in the book of life; when we see the glory of God thus reigning supreme over man's ruin and misery—then, though our finite intellect cannot sound this great deep, yet we stand upon the brink of it with holy awe and trembling adoration, knowing that whatever God does must be in infinite wisdom and for the manifestation of his own eternal glory.

The fall, then, as I have just hinted, did not take God by surprise; but fore-viewing it, and designing in his own eternal mind and will to permit that the fall should take place, he chose a people in Christ, the Son of his love, that they might be saved by him with an everlasting salvation. And this, be it remarked, does not make God the author of sin; God forbid. The fall took place by divine permission, but not by divine agency. God decreed to allow it; but did not decree to execute it. In the same way as he decreed the death of Christ to take place, and decreed it should be by the cross, executing his own holy counsels by allowing men to execute their own wicked purposes; so he decreed the fall to take place, permitting Satan to tempt, and permitting man to be tempted. If any consider I am here going beyond, or speaking contrary to, the word of God, let them consider that Scripture which to my mind conclusively settles the whole question, "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.) Two things are here distinctly stated by the Holy Ghost—God's "counsel and foreknowledge," and man's "wickedness." Christ was "delivered" by God's "determinate"

decree; and yet "the hands" that executed that decree were "wicked." Yet God's "counsel and foreknowledge" did not make their hands "wicked;" nor did their "wicked hands" mar God's "counsel and foreknowledge."

2. But *Jehovah the Son* is also, in a more special way, the salvation of his people. And when, with believing eyes, we can view God the Son as the eternal salvation of all whom the Father gave unto him—when we can see him, by the eye of faith, coming down into this lower world, taking our nature into union with his own divine Person; when, by faith, we can accompany the Man of Sorrows into the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, or behold him groaning, bleeding, and dying on the cross, an object of ignominy and shame, and believe that in this way, and this alone, salvation could be wrought out, O, what a view it gives us of the demerit and awful nature of sin, that nothing short of the incarnation of God's only begotten Son, nothing short of such a tremendous sacrifice could put away sin, and bring the elect back unto God! On the one hand, as we take a glance at the suffering and dying Lamb of God, how it shows us the awful and abominable nature of sin; and, on the other hand, when we can see by the eye of faith what that work is, by whom that work was wrought out, and how glorious and efficacious that work must be which the Son of God, equal with the Father in glory and majesty, undertook and went through to the uttermost,—how it exalts salvation in our eyes! Thus a believing sight of the Lord Jesus hanging upon Calvary's tree, not only on the one hand shows us the awful nature of sin, but on the other, how full, how complete, how glorious, and how effectual must that salvation be of which the expiring Son of God could say, "It is finished!"

3. But again, *God the Spirit*, also, has a part, a glorious and blessed part, in this great work of salvation. It is he, and he alone, who makes us feel our guilty, lost, and undone condition. It is he, and he alone, who wounds and pierces our heart with conviction, who opens up the depths of the fall, brings to light the evils of our nature, and makes us sigh and lament beneath the load of guilt upon the conscience; and gives us not only to feel

the burden of sin, but puts into our hearts a groan and a cry after God's salvation to be made manifest to our heart. It is he, and he alone, who unfolds to our eyes who the Lord is, who reveals Christ in the heart, who sprinkles his blood upon the conscience, who manifests his justifying righteousness, who gives us eyes to see his glorious Person, and shed abroad his dying love in the soul.

So that God the Father, in his eternal choice; God the Son, in what he did and suffered according to his covenant engagements here below: and God the Spirit, in his work of grace upon the heart—all these Three Persons of the Three-One Jehovah, are equally engaged in this great, glorious, blessed, and effectual salvation.

II.—But we pass on to consider the experimental portion of our text. This is the point upon which I love chiefly to dwell. This seems to be the line of things that I am able to handle with most life and feeling in my soul. Not that I do not love the doctrines of grace; not that they are not sweet and precious to my heart; not that they are not the foundation of my hope; not that they are not as important, and should be preached as well as the experience that is based upon them; but the Lord seems to have given me (if he has entrusted me with any line at all) to enter into and describe the various things of experience that are connected with, and spring out of the work of grace upon the soul, rather than set forth and open up doctrinal truth. I come now, therefore, to the part in which I feel myself most at home—the experimental dealings and teachings of the Spirit in the soul, in leading us to sigh and cry after an experimental knowledge of this salvation, and making it known to our hearts.

i. *"Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."* Who are the persons that can feelingly and believably utter this cry? Not those who are seeking to establish their own righteousness; not those who are contended with a graceless profession; not those whom the doctrines of grace in the letter can satisfy. But God's own exercised family, whose conscience the blessed Spirit has

ploughed up with the keen shear of conviction; and whom he has brought to feel and know that nothing short of God's manifested salvation will bring one moment's peace or comfort into their drooping hearts. The very words, then, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," imply that the persons who use them are inwardly exercised about their lost and ruined state; who feel deeply, daily feel, that they are ruined wretches; who know, painfully know, that in their flesh dwelleth no good thing. Being, therefore, convinced of sin, pierced with conviction, and exercised with eternal things laid as a weight upon their conscience, they are brought to this point as a solemn reality fixed and fastened within—as a weighty matter which will work sometimes day and night in their bosom—as an eternal, unalterable truth, by which they must live or die, stand or fall, that nothing can bring peace into their souls except God himself revealing this salvation to them by speaking it unto them by his own lips, and coming into their hearts by his presence, power, light, life, liberty, and love, as their God and Saviour.

1. Now, if this be the case, it cuts off effectually all *salvation by works*. Salvation by works is, what we all at first ignorantly seek after; and it needs a special work of God upon our souls to crush this self-righteousness of which our hearts are full; this "going about" with the Jews of old, "to establish our own righteousness," and looking to be saved by the works of the law. To expect, or endeavour to be saved by our own works is in fact, saying, 'I am my own salvation; I need not Christ; I myself am amply sufficient for myself; mine own arm shall save me.' Before, then, we can cry unto God, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," we must be killed to a covenant of works; we must be effectually slaughtered as to deriving any hope from any goodness or worth of our own.

2. Again. We must be convinced that *all our righteousness, inward as well as outward, are as filthy rags*; not only must our *external* works be cut off in the matter of salvation, but anything *inward* whereby we seek to establish a righteousness acceptable in the sight of heaven. All schemes, therefore, of fleshly holiness; of purifying our hearts by legal endeavours and motives; of

becoming perfect in the flesh, and rooting out the very being of sin—all this *inward* leaven in which the religion of thousands consists, must be put away out of our houses. (Exod 12:15.) And not only so, but all hopes grounded upon reformation of life, of doing something to gain God's favour, and bringing forth something whereby we may please the Almighty; all mere reliance upon doctrines in the head without a feeling power of God's salvation in the soul; all rest upon the opinion of man, all hoping from the esteem of the creature—in a word, all looking for salvation from any other quarter than the Lord himself, must be entirely and effectually cut off. Now, who shall fully declare, who shall aptly and adequately describe the various trials and exercises that are carried on in the court of conscience before the soul is effectually cut off from all hope of salvation except in the manifestation of that salvation from the mouth of God himself? How much lurking self-righteousness has to be hunted out of its secret corners! how much fleshly holiness has to be put to the rout! how much self-dependence, self-conceit, self-esteem, in all their various shapes and forms! How all these dunghill gods need to be dragged from their homes, and slaughtered, as Elijah slew the priests of Baal at the brook Kishon! Yes; all these delusive hopes and deceitful expectations need to be slaughtered, and their very lifeblood let out, before we are brought in real soul feeling to be convinced of this one point—that nothing but the manifestation of God's salvation from God's own lips, can bring pardon, peace, comfort, and joy, into our hearts.

3. But besides this, we need to have *our eyes illuminated by the Holy Ghost*; as the Apostle says, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." We need to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened from above, to see *where* and *in whom* salvation is. We may long for it, and be groping after it; but, through the want of a divinely enlightened understanding, we may all the time "grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes." We may be long stumbling upon the dark mountains, and wander here and there in desolate places, not knowing where salvation is, nor whence it comes. We need, therefore, that the blessed Spirit should enlighten our eyes by

showing us *where* salvation is, and *who* is the salvation of God's people—that salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ, through his atoning blood and glorious righteousness; that salvation was wrought out by the Son of God in our nature; and that the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost alone, can apply that salvation and make it experimentally known, felt, and enjoyed in our heart.

4. Again. We need that the blessed Spirit, who makes us know and feel our wretched condition, who opens our blind eyes to see where salvation is, in whom it centres, and from whom it comes—we need that the same blessed Spirit should also raise up in our souls *an earnest longing* after this salvation to be made manifest in our consciences; not only to bring us poor and needy to the footstool of mercy, and lay us in ruins, in our feelings at the foot of the cross, but to raise up in us those earnest desires, those ardent longings, those unceasing cries, those heavenly pantings, which so plainly and undeniably bespeak the work of grace commenced in the soul.

5. Again. We need that the blessed Spirit should not only plant in our breast, in the first instance, these earnest pantings and longings after God's salvation; but that he should also *keep up the cry* which he himself had planted there, should carry on his own work in the soul, should fill our mouth with arguments and our heart with desires, and draw forth from time to time the longings and pantings which he himself has planted.

6. Again. We need the same blessed Spirit, who is all in all as the Teacher of the church of God, to bring this salvation near, to apply it to our hearts, reveal it in our conscience, and seal it with a heavenly testimony, and soft, melting, overpowering influence within, so as to give us to enjoy that sweet peace which passeth all understanding by shedding abroad the love of God in our souls.

Thus, we need the God of our salvation to be all in all *to* us, and all in all *in* us. We cannot dispense with one Person in the sacred Trinity, nor can we dispense with the work of each sacred Person.

We want the Father, and to know the Father, as having chosen us in Christ before all worlds. We want the Son, and to know the Son, as having loved us and given himself for us. And we want the Spirit, and to know the work of the blessed Spirit, that only the Divine Teacher, to bring salvation home, and seal it with his own heavenly witness upon our soul.

ii. But when the Psalmist breathed forth the cry, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," it surely implied there were things from which he desired to be saved. For instance,

1. When a man is exercised as to his eternal state, the grand desire of his soul is, to be saved from "*the wrath to come.*" He feels, he knows, that unless the Lord Jesus died for him, and unless the blessed Spirit is pleased to make the blood of Christ known in his conscience, hell will swallow him up. Being exercised, then, as to his eternal state, and fearing lest hell should be his eternal portion, his longing desire is to have salvation made so manifest in his heart, and brought with such divine power into his soul, that the flames of hell may be extinguished for him, and he may be brought, as it were, from the very gates of hell into the enjoyment of heaven below. In this state, therefore, when deeply exercised, he will cry and sigh and beg of the Lord to say unto him, "I am thy salvation."

2. But again. He may be, as many are, exercised, deeply exercised, with *doubts and fears* as to his standing before God. He cannot altogether abandon the hope that God has begun the work of grace upon his soul, or that he has done something for him. There have been times and seasons when the things of God were very precious to his heart; but doubts and fears may arise, and do arise, from time to time, in his soul, whether he is altogether right in the sight of God; whether there may not be something altogether wrong at the bottom—something peculiar, whereby he is deceiving himself. And the blessed Spirit having made his heart honest, planted the fear of God there, given him godly sincerity, and shown him the danger, the fearful danger of being deceived—he comes before the Lord in all the simplicity of

a little child, and says, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Nothing, Lord, can save me but a word from thy lips. If thou wilt but be pleased to say unto me, "I am thy salvation"—I have saved thee from the wrath to come—I have set my love upon thee—Lord, it will be enough; but nothing short of this will bring into my soul that peace and consolation which I want to experience there.'

3. Again. The Lord's people are, from time to time deeply exercised with the *power of sin*. They not only feel the *guilt* of sin by the blessed Spirit laying sin upon their conscience, but they are also from time to time deeply exercised with its *power*. They find such ungodly lusts, they feel such horrid evils; the corruptions of their hearts are laid so naked and bare, and they find in themselves such a headlong propensity to all wickedness; they feel sin so strong, and themselves so weak—that nothing short of God's salvation made manifest in their conscience, they are well assured, can save them from the power of sin. O how many of the Lord's people are tempted with sin morning, noon, and night! How many evils, horrid evils, are opening, as it were, their jaws, in their carnal mind, to swallow them up outright! Wherever they go, wherever they turn, gins, traps, baits seem lying on every side, strewed thickly in their path. They feel too so helpless, and so inwardly sensible, that nothing but the almighty power of God can hold them as they walk in this dangerous path—a path strewed with snares on every hand, that they are made to cry to the Lord, "Hold thou me up." "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation;" for nothing short of God's salvation, in its freeness, in its fulness, in its divine manifestation, and in its sin-subduing, lust-killing influence, can save them from the power of sin.

4. Again. The Lord's people are a *tempted people*. Satan is ever waiting at their gate, constantly suggesting every hateful and unbecoming thought, perpetually inflaming the rebellion and enmity of their carnal mind, and continually plaguing, harassing, and besieging them in a thousand forms. Can they repel him? Can they beat back this monster of the awful den? Can they say

to him, 'Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?' Can they beat back this leviathan, who "esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood?" They cannot, they feel they cannot. They know that nothing but the voice of Jesus, who "through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," inwardly speaking with power to their souls, can beat back the lion of the bottomless pit. When, then, they are thus sorely tempted by Satan, how they long to hear the Lord say, "I am thy salvation!" One whisper, one soft word from the lips of his gracious Majesty, can and will put every temptation to flight.

5. But again. Many of the Lord's people are deeply exercised with *the fear of death*. When their evidences are beclouded; when darkness broods over their mind; when the Tempter is present, and the Comforter absent, they sink down sometimes almost into feelings of despair. These know and feel that none can disarm the monster of his sting, none speak peace to their souls in the gloomy hour, take them through the dark valley, and land them safe on the happy shore, but the Lord who has passed through it before them. They want him, therefore, to whisper in their souls, "I am thy salvation;" and then, like aged Simeon, they will be able to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes hath seen thy salvation."

iii. But the salvation that God's people want is a *daily* salvation, and sometimes an *hourly* salvation. And herein the Lord's exercised family are distinguished from all others. They cannot be satisfied with looking back through a long vista of years upon something which, in times past, they hoped was a visit from the Lord, and rest secure upon that; as though having their title-deeds safe in a chest at home, no present manifestations of the Lord's mercy and love to their souls were needed *now*. How many do we see in this wretched state! They can speak of something they experienced some ten or twenty years ago; but what has been their *intervening* experience? What exercises, trials, temptations, inward tribulations have been since felt? What battles have they been engaged in? what victories gained? what

conquests achieved? What sweet deliverances? What powerful application of God's word to their soul? What bright testimonies from the Lord of life and glory? Their religion is like a sluggish pool; and the green weeds of carnality and sin have, for the most part, overspread that sluggish pool of a lifeless profession. But the Lord will not leave his dear people here. To keep water sweet, it must be perpetually running; and to keep the life of God up in the soul, there must be continual exercises. This is the reason why the Lord's people have so many conflicts, trials, painful exercises, sharp sorrows, and deep temptations,—to keep them alive unto God; to bring them out of, and to keep them out of that slothful, sluggish, wretched state of carnal security and dead assurance in which so many seem to have fallen asleep—fallen asleep like the sailor upon the top of the mast, not knowing what a fearful gulph is boiling up below. The Lord, therefore, "trieth the righteous." He will not suffer his people to be at ease in Zion; to be settled on their lees, and get into a wretched Moabitish state. He, therefore, sends afflictions upon them, tribulations, and trials, and allows Satan to tempt and harass them. And under these feelings the blessed Spirit, from time to time, raises up in them this sigh and cry, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." 'None but thyself, Lord, can save me; nothing short of thy voice can whisper peace to my conscience; nothing short of thy blood can speak away guilt from lying as a heavy burden upon my heart; nothing short of thy love shed abroad by the Holy Ghost can make my soul happy in thyself.'

Thus the Lord's people are kept alive in their souls by their various exercises, trials, and afflictions. They are thus kept from falling into that carnal ease, that wretched security, in which the church seems for the most part to have fallen asleep, the Lord taking care still to leave in the midst of professing Zion "a poor and afflicted people," who shall call upon his name. Thus day after day, as it brings its trials, will also bring, as the blessed Spirit raises it up, this sigh and cry, and desire of the heart—"Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Speak it not to my judgment, speak it not to my memory, speak it not to my understanding, but speak it into my soul—my poor, tried,

tempted soul; my exercised and cast-down soul; my hungering, panting, longing, crying, and groaning soul; my dejected, depressed, and burdened soul.' *There* the malady lies, *there* the trials are felt, *there* distress is experienced, *there* the battle-field of conflict is; and therefore nothing short of the voice of God himself speaking *there*, can communicate that peace which our hearts, from time to time, are in quest of.

If we could be satisfied with seeing salvation in the word, or with a well-informed judgment in the things of God, there would be no cry in our hearts, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." If we could rest upon the good opinions of men, or upon ordinances, church membership, coming to chapel, family prayer, and a thousand other things, we should not be crying, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." But when all these things are felt, painfully felt, to be "a bed too short, a covering too narrow" (Isa. 28:20); and when the wrath of God pierces through these mantles, wimples, veils, and hoods, and comes into the sinner's conscience; when thus all things are open and naked before the eye of him with whom he has to do, and he lies a guilty, needy, naked sinner before the footstool of mercy—nothing short of God himself coming into the soul with divine power, and manifesting blood, righteousness, and love, can raise up that solid consolation, that true peace, that "joy unspeakable and full of glory," which the soul longs after. What reason, then, have we to thank God for sending us trials, exercising our souls, laying affliction upon our loins, suffering Satan to tempt, distress, and harass our minds, that we may not be at ease in Zion and settled upon our lees! And what a mercy it is for the Lord, from time to time, to be raising up in our hearts dissatisfaction with everything short of himself—dissatisfaction with everything connected with the things of time and sense, with everything that springs from the creature, with sin in all its shapes and forms—dissatisfaction with everything that does not come from the mouth of God himself into our soul! And what a mercy it is to be blessed, from time to time, with some sweet and soft word from the God of salvation; and to hear his "still small voice" speaking to the soul, and saying, 'Fear not, I am thy salvation. I have saved thee with

an everlasting salvation. I have laid down my precious life for thee.' "Fear not for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Isa. 43:1, 2.) What a mercy to have such inward testimonies that the Lord himself is our salvation! that God the Father chose us in Christ before all worlds, that God the Son laid down his precious life for us, and that God the blessed Spirit has begun and is carrying on that saving work of grace upon our souls which will end in our salvation and in God's own eternal glory!

There may be, and doubtless are, those here who are amply satisfied with something short of this. But if so, O what is your standing? What evidence is there that God is dealing with your souls, that the blessed Spirit is at work upon your consciences? If you can be satisfied with anything short of God himself as your salvation coming into your soul, fatal mark, fatal mark! If you can be satisfied with a name to live, wretched state, wretched state! If you can be satisfied with the doctrine of salvation, without knowing the sweet manifestation of it to your own soul, state equally wretched! Or are you resting in doubts and fears, in corruption, in the workings of your evil nature, in those temptations which the children of God are daily subject to? Both extremes are alike dangerous. To rest in corruptions and the evils of our nature felt and known, and to rest in dry doctrines and dead assurance, are extremes equally removed from the strait and narrow path. But hereby the strait and narrow path is known, as God has revealed it—to be either, from the bottom of our heart, sighing, crying, and longing that God would manifest his precious salvation; or to be walking, from time to time, in the light of it, enjoying its sweetness, and having the blessed Spirit communicating the power of salvation to our souls, and making it near, dear, and precious to our hearts.

But O, what encouragement the word of God affords to every poor, dejected, cast-down sinner, who is crying, from the bottom

of his heart, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." This cry was raised up in the soul of David, by the Holy Ghost; and the same blessed Spirit is raising up that cry in your heart. Will he who has raised up that cry, who is from time to time drawing forth that cry, and who has made you feel how blessed and suitable that salvation is—will he, can he, leave his own work unaccomplished? To have raised up the desire, and not to grant that desire? when the Lord says, "the desire of the righteous shall be granted;" to have drawn forth the cry, and not to hear that cry? when God promises to hear and answer prayer; to give a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, which the Lord has pronounced blessed? and then to say, "Depart, ye cursed"—it would be high treason against the Majesty of heaven to believe that the Lord the Spirit, who began the work, would not carry it on. It would be a flat denial of the truth of God from first to last, to believe that God's poor, needy, trusting family, can be put to shame. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Blessed are all they that wait upon the Lord." Those who hope in his mercy shall find, to their soul's joy, that their hope shall not be disappointed, nor themselves put to shame.

The Secret of the Lord is with Them that Fear Him

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 4, 1844

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Psalm 25:14

There is no truth more offensive to the carnal mind, nor one more sweet to those taught of God than this—that true religion is of a spiritual and supernatural character. That God should dwell in man; that the blessed Spirit should condescend to be our teacher; that we know nothing except through this divine tuition; that all saving faith stands wholly and solely in the power of God; and that there is no true religion independent of the inward work and witness of God the Spirit in the conscience—such a creed as this may well raise up all the scorn of the natural mind. But take away the Spirit's work, and what is left? Nothing but a dead carcass of forms. There can be but two kinds of religion—the one outward, and the other inward; the one natural, and the other spiritual; one that stands in forms and ceremonies, and the other that stands in the communications of mercy, grace, and truth out of the fulness of Jesus. So that if a man deny the inward teachings of the Spirit of God to be the sum and substance of religion, he has no other refuge but Popery; and, to be thoroughly consistent, he should declare himself a Papist at once; for there is no real stopping-place between vital religion wrought in the heart and conscience by the power of God the Spirit, and that which stands in external forms, rites, and ceremonies.

But it is the especial privilege of God's people, and when enjoyed it is the very comfort of their souls, that all vital godliness is wrought in their hearts by the power of God. They are well convinced that they have no more religion, and no less religion, than is brought into their conscience with divine power. To have a measure of this heavenly teaching, and to live under the enjoyment of it, constitutes all the happiness that a child of God

can really feel here below. He learns this, not only from the presence of it when divinely communicated, but also from its absence when these blessed communications are withdrawn and suspended.

In the text we find the Holy Ghost speaking of "a *secret*." We need not wonder, therefore, that vital godliness is known but to a few. If it is "a secret," it is evident it is not understood and known by all; the very essence of a secret being that it is confined to a few. And if there be a secret in religion (and such the Holy Ghost declares there is), it shows that vital godliness is confined to those only to whom the secret is made known by the power of God.

But if we look at the text, we shall see there are certain characters spoken of to whom this secret is discovered, and a promise also is made to those characters with whom the secret is. Thus, if God enable, we may take up the text in three leading divisions, and show who the characters are that "fear the Lord"—how "the secret is with them"—and what a promise the Lord has made to such, "he will shew them his covenant."

I.—How much *fear* is spoken of in the word of God! But in order to understand what the Holy Ghost means by the term, which he so frequently employs, "the fear of God," we must bear in mind that there are two distinct kinds of fear. There is a servile fear which dwells in the carnal mind, and which devils, reprobates, and hypocrites may experience; as we read, "the devils also believe and tremble." (James 2:19.) Thus "Felix trembled," when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." (Acts 24:25.) And the mariners on board with Jonah "feared the Lord exceedingly" (Jonah 1:16), so that they offered sacrifices, and made vows. This is the fear of which we read, 1 John 4:18; "Perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love." And it is the same fear which the Apostle Paul speaks of Rom. 8:15; "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." This then is a servile fear, that has its dwelling in the carnal mind; and

was manifested in Adam, when he hid himself from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden; in Cain, when his countenance fell as being the murderer of his brother Abel; and which discovered itself also in Saul, in Ahab, in Herod, and in other characters of whom we read in the word of God.

But "the fear" to which so many blessings are annexed, and which is spoken of in the text, is the filial fear that dwells in the new man of grace raised up by the Spirit of God, and is the sole privilege, the alone portion of those whom God has chosen in Christ, and made to be heirs of his glory. This filial fear is a new covenant blessing; as we read, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. 32:40.) It is also a grace of the Spirit. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. 12:28.) And it is the beginning of wisdom. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Ps. 111:10.) It being the first grace in point of exercise that the Spirit of God draws forth in the conscience.

How many blessings are promised to and connected with this filial fear! For instance, we read, "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him." (Ps. 33:18.) "The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him." (Ps. 34:9.) "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord." (Ps. 112:1.) "The Lord will fulfil the desire of them that fear him." (Ps. 145:19.) In fact, you can scarcely find any blessing of the highest nature, which is not more or less connected with the fear of God. And so far from this filial fear of the Lord being checked, much less cast out by divine manifestations, and by the shedding abroad of the love of God, it is only heightened thereby. The "fear of the Lord," that begins at the quickening of the soul into divine life, deepens with every fresh teaching, and is increased by every fresh communication. Being a member of the new man, it is nurtured by the food wherewith the new man is fed; and thus, as we make progress in the divine life, so far from this fear being weakened, it becomes more deepened and strengthened. Thus it is not only compatible

with, but ever accompanies consolation and enjoyment; as we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Acts 9:31.) How these two things are brought together—"the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost;" and it is spoken of as the highest attainment of the church, when she is blessed with these two graces at the same time in lively exercise. Nay, more, however high in filial confidence the soul may rise, fear will always rise with it. True confidence is strengthened just as filial fear is deepened; for we read, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence." (Prov. 14:26.) So that so far from confidence, assurance, and enjoyment weakening fear, they only strengthen it. Let the soul rise to the highest point of divine consolation, fear will rise equally, I might say, increasingly with it. For the more we spiritually know of the character of God, the more will godly fear of his great majesty be experienced in the soul. Wherever, then, you find in yourself, or others, confidence, or what is called assurance, and do not see the fear of God accompanying it, be sure that such confidence does not spring from the inward teaching of God the Spirit in the soul. For the fear of God, so far from being weakened, much less annihilated or cast out by true confidence and the genuine consolations of God the Spirit, is only deepened and heightened thereby. Apply this test when you hear persons speaking of their assurance; it will unmask a good many.

But this "fear of God" must have its foundation in some spiritual and experimental discovery of God. We cannot fear God until we know him; and we cannot know God until in some measure he reveals himself with power to our conscience. This, then, is the beginning of all true religion; this is the foundation of all vital godliness; this is the starting-place from which every living soul begins to run the race set before him—an inward discovery of the character of God by the revelation of the Holy Ghost through the Scriptures. This makes a deep, solid, abiding, eternal impression on the soul; for until the Spirit of God shows unto us and gives us to know something of the holy, spiritual, pure character of God, we cannot have any knowledge of him; and if we know him not, it

is impossible for us to fear him.

But wherever the fear of the Lord is in the conscience, there will be fruits flowing out of it. We judge of a tree by the fruits it brings forth; and we judge of the extent of spiritual teaching by the effects manifested. If, then, the fear of the Lord be in our hearts, there will be certain effects and fruits flowing out of that fear. There will be, as this fear is in exercise, an abhorrence of evil, deadness to the world, separation in heart and spirit from those who are immersed in it: a desire to please God, and a fear to offend him; a living as under his immediate eye; there will be the workings of a tender conscience in our bosom; a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; a flowing out of godly simplicity and sincerity, and an earnest desire to live and die under the immediate teachings and testimony of God in our conscience.

There are indeed many of the people of God who cannot rise in strong faith, nor feel an assurance that all their sins are pardoned; they cannot cry, "Abba Father," with an inward spirit of adoption; and yet know something spiritually and experimentally of the fear of God working in their conscience. This is quite distinct from the servile fear that they had in the days of their flesh, and quite distinct from the ebbings and flowings of natural conscience, and the workings of that slavish spirit which drove them in times past from the sins they committed into some faint and short-lived repentance. Those confessions and amendments were the mere ebbings and flowings of nature; hence there were no abidings in them. But where the fear of the Lord is, it is "a treasure;" (Isa. 32:6), therefore not easily spent; something abiding in the heart, like a fountain, which is perpetually casting out its waters in living streams.

II.—But we pass on to consider—for this is the main drift of the text—What "the secret of the Lord" is, which is said "to be with them that fear him." What do we understand by the expression "*secret!*" It something not revealed, nor made known to everybody; something locked up and concealed from the

majority, and discovered only to a favoured few. All the inward teachings, leadings, guidings, and dealings of God the Spirit upon the conscience, are therefore included in the word, "the secret of the Lord;" for all these inward leadings and teachings are "hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes." So that, with all their profession, they know nothing of the secret operation of God the Spirit in the conscience; their religion stands in forms and ceremonies, in rites and observances; it does not stand in the inward teachings of God the Spirit.

1. One part of "the secret of the Lord" is to shew *the very being of a God*. "He that cometh to God," we read, "must believe that he is." (Heb. 11:6.) We cannot believe in the very being of a God, (at least such a God as the Scripture represents—a holy Jehovah, who compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways,) until it is shown to us by the Spirit's teaching. So that all men in a state of nature are Atheists; nay, all professors, devoid of the Spirit are the same. I do not say they are so doctrinally, but they are so practically; for until the Lord does in some measure spiritually make himself known to the conscience, all men actually live without God in the world. But when the Lord does shine into the conscience, (for the "entrance of his words giveth light,") we begin to feel that there is a God; that we are in his hand; that his eyes searcheth all our ways; that go where we will he still accompanies us; that we cannot hide ourselves from his all-searching eye: and that he is such a God as the scriptures represent, who "will not clear the guilty," but is just, righteous, and pure, and hateth sin with perfect abhorrence. It is a great thing to have this spiritual knowledge wrought in the conscience. O how much sin would this keep a man from! What a check to a light and frivolous disposition! What a bridle to a gossiping tongue! What a principle to bring out of the world! What a power to overcome the spirit of covetousness! What a maul upon the head of pride! What a turning out of doors of that base hypocrisy that our hearts are so full of! To carry about with us an abiding, inward feeling, "Thou God seest me!" and feel ourselves living under his eye, looking down unto us, searching out our heart, and continually spying out all our ways, what a fountain of spiritual uprightness!

2. *The Lord's providential dealings with us* is a part also of "the secret" which is "with those that fear him." What a mercy it is to see the Lord's hand stretched out for us in a way of providence! Some people affect to despise the providential dealings of God. But, as some one has justly observed, such as see him only as the God of grace see but the half of his countenance. We must see and feel him as a God of providence also to see the full face of Jehovah. How sweet it is to trace the Lord's hand in providence; to look back on the chequered path that he has led us by; to see how his hand has been with us for good; what difficulties he has brought us through; in what straits he has appeared; how in things most trying he has wrought deliverance; and how he has sustained us to the present hour. Thus to trace out his dealings with us, is a main part of "the secret of the Lord" which is "with them that fear him." Some persons may laugh and jeer at the Lord's dealings in providence; but all this is little else than the mere spawn of a man's atheistical, infidel heart, that is continually denying him to be the God of providence as well as the God of grace. How sweet are providential favours when they come stamped with this inscription, "This is from the Lord!" How precious every temporal mercy becomes—our very food, lodging, and clothing! How sweet is the least thing when it comes down to us as from God's hands! A man cannot know the sweetness of his daily bread till he sees that God gives it to him; nor the blessedness of any providential dealing till he can say, "God has done this for me, and given that to me." When a man sees the providence of God stamped on every action of life, it casts a glory, beauty, and sweetness over every day of his life. Thus to see the Lord's hand is indeed a main part of "the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear him."

3. *A sense of the Lord's presence.* O this is indeed a part of the secret which is with them that fear his name. The Lord's presence! Who but the Lord's people know anything of that solemn feeling which that presence creates, and which Jacob expressed, when he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. 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.) What solemn feelings are produced in the mind under a sense of God's presence! How the Lord's presence turns night into day, makes every crooked thing straight, and every rough place plain! How it banishes all the gloom, melancholy, and despondency which hang over the soul! How it clears up every difficulty; and like the shining sun it drives away the damps and darkness of the night. If there is one thing to be coveted more than another, it is, that the Lord's presence might be more felt in our hearts; for it is "the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear him" to shew to them and make them to feel his blessed presence.

4. *The favour, the goodness, and the graciousness of the Lord* brought with power into the conscience, is another part of "the secret which is with them that fear him." It is a secret, because it is only known to a few. It is a secret, because it is carried on in private between God and the soul. It is a secret, because never known till God the Spirit unfolds the mystery. It is this which makes the secret so mysterious and peculiar, that God's grace and favour should be given to such vile, filthy, polluted, unworthy, and unclean wretches, as every child of God knows and feels himself to be. It may indeed well astonish such that favour should be shewn them, that mercy should ever reach them, and that there should be any communication of it to visit and water their souls.

5. *Communion with the Lord*, so as to be able to talk to him, and find some access to his presence, is another part of "the secret which is with them that fear the Lord." What a different thing this is from mere wordy prayers! A man may fall upon his knees, utter words and sound words too, and be engaged for a long time in his devotions, and yet have no communion with God. And he may be lying on his bed, sitting in his chair, or engaged in his daily occupation, and in a moment his heart may be caught up into communion with the Lord. But one five minutes' (shall I say one minute's, for these seasons do not last very long) communion with the Lord is better than being on our knees the whole day, supposing we could kneel so long, merely uttering

words without a sense of inward fellowship with the Lord of life and glory. It is through this communion with the Lord that heavenly blessings are bestowed. By communion with the Lord we drink into his Spirit, learn his mind, know his will, taste his goodness, and receive of his fulness. And only so far as we are brought into communion with the Lord is there any communication of spiritual blessings to the soul. Sometimes it is with us as though a wall were built up betwixt us and the Lord: we pray, but the voice never seems to reach the heavenly ear; there is no answer communicated; there is no seeing him, no getting near him, no pouring out of the heart before him; still less is there a receiving any communication from him. But when the soul is brought near to the Lord, these barriers are broken down, these walls fall, a measure of communion with him is enjoyed; and then there is a receiving out of his fulness, a communication out of him who filleth all in all; a divine reception of his truth into the heart. So that by five minutes' communion with the Lord, we learn more, know more, receive more, feel more, and experience more than by a thousand years of merely studying the Scriptures, or praying to the Lord without his teaching and testimony. But this is a secret known only to those who fear God; and they at times are privileged and indulged with it.

6. The *power of truth made known in the conscience* is a part also of the secret which is with them that fear the Lord. What a powerful thing truth is, when it drops into the soul! The mere utterance of it is nothing. The most solemn truths are no more to me than the mere blowing of such a storm as we had last night, unless it is dropped with divine power into the heart and conscience. But truth, when it is accompanied with a divine power, fills the heart, enriches the soul, drives out all error and falsehood, and lifts up the soul Godward. This is a secret which those know only who fear God. There is a great talk about religion in our day: well nigh every one is religious. But as to the inward operations and teachings of God the Spirit, whereby light, life, and power, are brought out of Christ's fulness into the heart, this still remains a secret. This cannot be got at by human exertions; this cannot be attained so easily as a nominal

profession; this is still confined to those who fear God, and they sometimes feel so blessed a power in the truth as it is in Jesus, that they can live by it and die by it.

7. *Communications out of Christ*—such as faith, hope, love, meekness, patience—every good gift and every perfect gift—to receive them into a soft heart; to know their working through a divine operation on the soul, this, too, is a branch of that secret which is known only to those that fear God. They know they cannot produce these things themselves, and yet they know the power of vital godliness consists in them. But to their astonishment the Lord does sometimes work in them that which they could not possibly work in themselves; and thus they find that a life of faith is a secret which they could not get at till the Lord himself was pleased to reveal it, and seal it with divine power in their conscience.

8. But just so far as we are led into an acquaintance with this secret, will it have a powerful effect upon us; and one will be, to *bring us into union with those who are taught the same divine lessons*, and bring us out from those who are not so taught. If any with whom this secret is, are wrapped up in dead churches, there will be an aching void felt; they will want to have the secret which they feel traced out from the pulpit; but there is no word to meet their case. They want to trace something of it, too, in the members of the church of which they form a part; but they do not find that in their case, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." This inward want, sooner or later, brings them out of dead churches, from under dead ministers, and away from dead professors; and brings them into personal union and communion with the people who are taught by the Spirit of God. And though they may still have (as we know we all have had) great prejudices, and even at times strong enmity, working against the peculiar people; and perhaps have to make great sacrifices, so that they hardly know what to do or say; yet when they are brought into union and communion with the spiritual family, it so overpowers every adverse feeling, that it makes them willing to take up the cross, and endure the shame,

that they may live and die with the people of the living God. And thus we find the secret of spiritual communion with the people of God, and learn that the same secret is known to them which is known also to us; and thus there is a blessed fellowship and sweet participation in the consciousness of the same secret being with one another. What a union this creates, what love this kindles, what sweet emotions this produces in the bosom—to enjoy communion with Christ, and communion with the people of Christ! This is worth all the dead fellowship, all the vain esteem, and all the honours that the world can bestow—to be brought into a measure of divine communion with the Lord of life and glory, and into communion with the people of God—this secret is with them that fear God, and is worth a thousand worlds.

Now, you will observe that the text says, "The secret of the Lord *is* with them that fear him." It speaks of it in the present tense, as something now known, felt, and enjoyed. It is not future, but present. So that if we have any evidence that we fear the Lord, we shall find something of this secret in our consciences. We may doubt and fear at times whether we know it aright; for our unbelieving heart ever breeds doubts and fears, and our desponding minds will ever put forth the spawn of despondency. Satan too will thrust in his fiery darts, and a thousand objections will shoot through the mind. But this does not destroy the reality of it; this will not throw down the Lord's building, nor injure the foundation. However the house may be rocked by the storm, or beaten by the winds, it stands fast for ever, because it is founded upon a rock.

You who fear God, do you not find at times something of this secret? Would you go back to a dead profession in which perhaps you were wrapt up for years, when you tried to reform your habits, break off your bad practices, become religious; and yet all the time were unacquainted with the secret, and knew not the inward teachings of God the Spirit? Then there were no communications of light and life, no breathings and longings after the Lord, no desire to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection. You rested upon something external of your own to

save your soul. But when the Lord mercifully and graciously took you in hand, he battered down this proud natural religion, and laid it low in the dust, and by working powerfully in your conscience raised up his fear in your soul. Then you found something of which you were before completely ignorant; and since that time you have found spiritual religion, vital godliness, to consist in the inward teachings and leadings God the Spirit. You find now there is a secret in these things. If you speak of it to your relations, they do not understand you; if you talk of it to those who are called "pious people," they cannot make you out; they think you are some mysterious being, whose religion they cannot fathom. But if you go into the company of God's people, and converse with them on spiritual matters, they know what you mean; and when you hear your experience described from the pulpit, and traced out in a hymn, or some experimental book, you feel a sweet going out of soul toward it; and you say, "If the man or book knew all that was passing in my heart, they could not describe my feelings more completely." This is to know something of the secret of the Lord—to have a secret and inward religion wrought with power in the conscience; and this is God's gift and God's work, and will shine when time shall be no more. If a man deny and scorn this, he had better go on to Rome; for if he has not those inward teachings and leadings of God the Spirit, he has no more true religion than if he were wedded to all the abominations of Popery.

III.—But we find a promise also in the text, and that you will observe runs in the future tense. "He *will* shew them his covenant." The Holy Ghost has changed the tense here. "The secret of the Lord" (that is *present* possession) "*is* with them that fear him; and he *will* shew them" (that is something *future*), "his covenant." This shews, that while all the people of God, who fear his name, have the secret with them, that is, a measure of the secret, yet all the people of God have not the covenant revealed to them at the same time with the secret. The "secret" is in the present tense; the "showing of the covenant" is in the future. It is very sweet to see how the Holy Ghost has discriminated between these blessings. If, for instance, it had run thus, "the secret of

the Lord is with them that fear him, and he shews to them his covenant," some doubting, desponding child of God might say, "How can I be one of those that fear God? for it says, God shows to them his covenant, and he has not shewn it to me yet." But being put in the future tense, "he will show to them his covenant," it takes the form of a promise, and so is just adapted and sweetly suited to their wants. The more we see what is the language of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures, the more we shall admire it. Men need not talk of improving the Scriptures; let them take what the Holy Ghost has delivered; for the more we are led into an experience of the truth, the more we shall admire the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in the way whereby he has revealed it.

But what is this covenant that the Lord will shew those that fear him? It is the covenant that "stands fast for evermore;" the everlasting covenant of grace, which stands in the Person, love, blood, and work of the Son of God; the covenant made by a Triune Jehovah, on behalf of the elect, before the world was.

Those, then, who cavil at this covenant, who deny there is such a thing, who abhor the doctrines that flow out of it, who resist and rebel against sovereign election, discriminating grace, particular redemption by the blood of Jesus, and justification by his imputed righteousness, cannot, we know very well, be among the people that fear God, for if they feared God he would shew to them his covenant. And if the Lord shewed to them this covenant, this everlasting covenant, they would not call it "everlasting nonsense." If ever they had been shewn election, and had felt its weight and power, if they had ever known it as a blessed part of the covenant, they would not kick at it, nor call it a damnable doctrine. If ever they had seen Christ's righteousness, or the beauty and grandeur of those covenant engagements, whereby the church stood justified in Christ from all eternity, they would not call imputed righteousness "imputed nonsense." So that no man, kicking and rebelling against the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, which was all David's salvation and all his desire (and I am sure if God be our teacher, it will be all our salvation and all our desire)—no man kicking and rebelling

against this covenant, we may be sure, can fear God; for if he did, God would show it him; and I am sure if God ever shewed it to him, he would convince him of its truth, reality, and blessedness.

This covenant God shews to his people. And how deeply they need it to be shown to them! For what are they? Always fluctuating and vacillating, ever ebbing and flowing, perpetually tossed up and down. We want something that will stand. If we look at the workings of our minds, they are scarcely ever the same; sometimes up, and sometimes down; sometimes cheered, and sometimes discouraged; sometimes tried, and sometimes comforted; sometimes tempted, and sometimes delivered; sometimes in the dark, and sometimes in the light. As far as we are concerned, we pass through perpetual changes. Thus we prove we fear God; those who fear him not, know no changes; but those who fear him, are like the tide of the Thames, perpetually ebbing and flowing, and going backwards and forwards. We want, then, something which shall not ebb and flow as we do; we want something permanent, on which our feet may stand, and be planted there for eternity.

The Lord, then, shews to them that fear him his covenant: he shews to them how stable it is; that it stands fast for ever and ever; that it endureth, like himself, unchanging, and unchangeable, because it stands in his own eternal counsels, and is founded upon the engagements, love, blood, and work of his dear Son. The Lord shews them that fear him, that this covenant standeth for evermore, and that they have an interest in it. What a suitable foundation for a poor tottering heart! The Lord in shewing this covenant unto them that fear him, shews there that it is all of grace, and therefore meets all their unworthiness, and superabounds over all the aboundings of their sin; that it is more than a match for their aggravated iniquities, and will land them safe in glory, because God has determined to bring them there. Nothing but a covenant of grace can suit a poor exercised soul, who knows his helplessness and worthlessness; and the Lord shews this to them that fear him.

He shows them, also, that his covenant abideth for ever; that

there is "no variableness, nor a shadow of turning" in it; that a vessel of mercy is not a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow; and that whatever stripes he brings upon his back, whatever painful feelings he gets into by the Lord's chastening, these things do not cast him out of the covenant which standeth sure. As we read Psalm 89:30-35, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David."

As the Lord the Spirit, then, shows them this covenant, and brings it with power into their hearts, it becomes all their salvation and all their desire. To live by it, and under the enjoyment of it; to have it more opened up, and to have fresh discoveries of it, to feel its sweetness, and live in the blessedness of it;—this forms the leading desire of the soul. So that so far from rebelling against the covenant of peace, we want to have it more blessedly and powerfully revealed in the heart and conscience.

These, then, are the blessings which the Lord will show unto them that fear him. And what a mercy it is to be amongst those so taught and so led! But two characters will fight against these truths: those who know nothing beyond a servile fear, and those who know nothing but rash presumption and vain-confidence.

There are some in a profession of religion who have nothing beyond a servile fear; they have no divine teachings, but feel the workings of natural conscience, and the ebbings and flowings of fleshly conviction. But there is no promise for such; we know not what the Lord may do for them, but there is no promise for the workings of natural conviction, and the ebbings and flowings of servile fear. A man may have all the convictions of the damned, and yet be damned after all; he may have all the fears of Judas,

and yet go where Judas is, unto "his own place."

Again. There is no promise made to those who are presumptuous and vain-confident, who rashly and recklessly rush into the solemn things of God. But the promise is to the poor, the needy, the exercised family of God, who by divine life, divine grace, divine leading and teaching, know something of spiritual fear, whose consciences have been made alive and tender before the Lord. To these it is promised, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

The Lord in mercy deepen this fear wherever it is implanted, and show us that where this fear is, there every mercy is connected with it; that those in whose hearts he has caused it to spring up, he will lead safely on, till at length he brings them to see him as he is, and to sit down with him in glory.

THE SEED OF ISRAEL, JUSTIFIED IN CHRIST

Preached at Zion Baptist Chapel, Bedworth on Wednesday evening, March 31st, 1847

"Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD, shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" Isa.45:24,25

The Scripture abounds with testimonies to the essential deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these testimonies are expressed, as for instance: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb.1:8). "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim.3:16). There we have the express testimony of the Holy Ghost to the essential divinity, and eternal Godhead, of the Lord Jesus Christ; but there are other testimonies of the Scripture, rather implied than expressed, as, for instance, all those passages that speak of certain acts peculiar to the Godhead ascribe these to the Lord Jesus Christ, such as the act of creation: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." "Upholding all things by the word of his power." The Lord told his disciples that to him were committed all things in heaven and earth.

Again, passages in the Old Testament which speak of Jehovah, are quoted in the New Testament as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus our text, in the connection, we find certain things said of "the LORD," that is Jehovah, the word being printed in capitals, certain things are said of "the LORD," which, in the New Testament, are applied to Jesus Christ. For instance, the 23rd verse, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." We find the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, quotes this testimony as

referring to the Lord Jesus Christ: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (chap.2:9-11). We find the apostle Paul quoting, also, the same testimony in the Epistle to the Romans: "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (chap.14:11). He having said, in the preceding verse, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." So, again, with respect to the words before us, "In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." We find the apostle Paul quoting these words in the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, referring to Jesus Christ: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (verses 30,31).

Thus we have the testimony of the inspired apostle Paul, that the words before us are applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." In considering these verses, I shall, as the Lord shall enable me, I. First, Speak of the solemn determination and declaration of Jehovah, that, "In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

II. Secondly, The result and fruit of this solemn determination and declaration of Jehovah, "Even to him shall men come," saying, "surely in the LORD have I righteousness and strength."

III. Thirdly, The fate of those that are incensed against Jesus Christ, who are not of the seed of Israel, therefore not justified, and never shall glory in him: "And all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."

I. The solemn determination and declaration of Jehovah, that, "In the LORD Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." The Lord, here, has clearly determined who it is, and who it is alone, that shall be justified. Who it is, and who it is alone, that shall glory in the Lord, he has not left this matter to chance, nor the will of man, nor of flesh; he has declared by his own lips of unerring truth, that it is the seed of Israel only who shall be justified in the Lord, and shall glory in his name. Who are we to understand by the seed of Israel? The apostle tells us, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." (Rom.9:6) It is not professing Israel that come in for the blessing; but those chosen out of professing Israel; the objects of God's electing choice, eternal love, and distinguished favour: these only are justified in the Lord; and these, and these only will be brought in God's time and way to glory in him, and him alone.

But how comes it to pass, that the seed of Israel are said only to be justified in the Lord? Because they never can be justified by anything in self. How can God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, look on sin? He cannot! What can God accept, in the matter of justification, except that which is pure, spotless, and undefiled? Man being a fallen creature, a depraved monster of iniquity, every thought, every imagination, every word, and every action is tainted throughout with inherent and indwelling sin. How can man with his present nature approach Jehovah, gain access to, or bring before him a righteousness that will satisfy the demand of infinite justice, and be acceptable to a God of spotless holiness and unimpeachable veracity? How can he bring before Jehovah, as the Jehovah of Israel, such a righteousness that God can be well pleased with? Man being such a depraved creature, such a vile wretch, so utterly sunk in filth, carnality and wickedness, that unless God provide a way of justification, independent of the creature, there could be no justification; therefore no salvation. God cannot save man consistent with his holy law and righteous attributes, without his being righteous; without his having a righteousness with which his holy and pure eyes are well pleased.

If God had not been pleased in his infinite mind to have devised such a plan, and in his own time and way executed what he had devised, that all the seed of Israel should be justified in the Lord, not a seed would have been saved, but the whole human race must have perished in the flames of eternal perdition, under the wrath of him who is a consuming fire: but there is a seed of Israel, an elect remnant, a blessed seed, loved of God, and chosen from all eternity in the Son of his love. He has determined that, in the Lord, all this seed shall be justified, that they shall stand complete in Jesus; that his obedience shall be theirs; that there shall not be found a flaw, a spot, a wrinkle, or speck upon them, because they stand clothed in the spotless obedience of the God-man.

The very expression, "In the LORD," requires some explanation; we may gather several things therefrom: First, The seed of Israel is in eternal union with the Lord, the God-man Mediator. If you observe, the text declares, the seed of Israel is justified "in the LORD," not by the Lord, though they are so justified by the Lord, and through the Lord, yet it is "in the LORD," leading up our thoughts and fixing our eyes on that eternal union, which existed before all worlds, whereby the church had her standing in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by virtue of this eternal union; it is through this unalterable standing in him, she finds she stands acquitted and accepted in the beloved, as the Word declares, justified in him, his obedience being imputed to her, all that he has, has been sovereignly computed and put to her account, just the same way that a wife has possession of what is her husband's, coming into possession of his name and property, taking all that he has; so the church, by eternal union to her Covenant Head, has all that his loving heart can bestow; all he has is truly hers, as we read, "All things are your's... And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor.3:21 and 23).

But the words, "in the LORD," admit of farther meaning, they imply, also, belief in the Lord. It is by faith in Jesus that we are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by

the law of Moses. (Acts 13:39) The seed of Israel is not only justified in the Lord, by virtue of eternal union with him, but is justified, also, by faith in his name, by believing him to be the true God and eternal life: by receiving him as the gift of God; having a living faith flowing out towards him, whereby he is embraced in the heart and conscience, revealed, made known, and set up in the soul as the hope of glory: not only so, but the words, "in the LORD," lead our minds and thoughts into communion with him. Thus the soul is not only justified by eternal union, but by faith in his name; that from this faith flows communion with him, the sweet refreshings of his presence, and the flowings in of his eternal love, the sprinkling of his atoning blood, the manifestation, and revelation of his glorious spotless righteousness. In this sense, by virtue of eternal union to him, by virtue of living faith, by virtue of sweet communion flowing out of this into their heart, all the seed of Israel are justified in the Lord. What a complete answer to all law charges; how it sets the sinner free from every accusation that can be brought against him. As Paul says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died" (Rom.8:34).

As though it were a sufficient answer for all, when this glorious truth is received into the heart, under the direction of the Spirit of God, the soul enjoys a measure of Christ's sweetness, glory, and power; then it is, and then alone, he has a taste of real happiness, solid enjoyment, and true peace. It is God's eternal purpose, that the seed of Israel shall not only be justified in the Lord, acquitted from all charge, and stand complete in him, but that they should, also, glory in the Lord. In order that the seed of Israel should glory in the Lord, it is absolutely necessary that they should cease to glory in self. By nature, we are all prone to glory in self, few but what love to glory through that cursed principle of self-esteem and self-exaltation. Nothing but the mighty power of God can put down those cursed principles. We are prone to this pride, and it is strengthened and matured in a fallen sinner's heart. It is the work of the Spirit in the sinner's conscience to pour contempt on all the pride of man, to open up the depth of the fall, to bring to light all his hidden corruptions, to

unbosom and lay bare all the evils of his heart, to upturn the deep corruptions of his fallen nature before his astonished eyes, that he may learn with true humility of soul, brokenness of heart, and contrition of spirit before God, to loathe and abhor himself in dust and ashes, as a monster of iniquity. If a man has not been taught by the strong hand of God in his soul to abhor, loathe, and cry out against himself as one of the vilest wretches that crawls on God's earth, he has never learned to glory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to his soul a sense of his love, unfolds a sight of his glory before his astonished eyes, and a measure of his love and blood is received into the soul, he is brought to look out of himself, and from all he has, to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Lord," he says, "I never dare rely on any one thing or glory therein, only in thee."

II. This leads me to the second branch of our subject, to shew in what way the seed of Israel is brought and justified experimentally in the Lord, and to glory in him. It seems to me they are appointed to trust in the Lord: "Even to him shall men come." Who are these men? Are they not men of the seed of Israel; regenerated men and women; redeemed of the Lord, regenerated by the Holy Ghost, and made alive to God, by his special teaching in the conscience? These men belong to the seed of Israel, God's own blessed, redeemed, regenerated family. Now the Lord's solemn declaration, and determination is, "To him," that is the Lord Jesus Christ, "shall men come." It does not rest in the will of the creature. It is God's solemn determination, his eternal declaration, that all the seed of Israel shall be justified in the Lord, and shall glory in him. It is, also, God's solemn, unalterable declaration, that "to him shall men come." It does not rest, therefore, in the will of the creature: it hangs wholly and solely on the sovereign determination of God himself.

How does he bring it about? By a special work of grace in the heart. How do these men come? Under the teaching, drawing, and leading of the blessed Spirit of God in their soul. Where does the blessed Spirit find them? Does he find them willing to come,

willing to leave all those things that men, by nature, love, and to which they cleave? No! It must be the special work of God himself in the heart and conscience, to bring about this solemn declaration: "To him shall men come." He brings it about by shewing us plainly, in ourselves, we are lost. Until a man feels in himself lost and undone, he will never come to Jesus Christ: for he is the Saviour of the lost. Until we feel lost he is no Saviour to us. When we feel lost, cut up by God's holy law, all our righteousness opened up as filthy rags, see no way of escape from the horrible pit; and the Lord is pleased to open up to us the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, his atoning blood, his perfect obedience, his justifying righteousness, and dying love; laying these things with some degree of sweetness and power on the soul, we come.

Why do we come? Because the blessed Spirit works in us to will and do of his good pleasure; he enables us to come, under his blessed teachings, leadings, and actings. In what character do we come? "Even to him shall men come." Under what character do we come? As having any goodness, any righteousness, or holiness, of our own? If we come with any goodness, holiness, piety, or religion of our own, we do not come aright; the Lord will not receive this, look upon, or accept it at our hands. We must come, having no righteousness of our own; all our righteousness opened to our eyes, and laid on our conscience as filthy rags. We must come guilty; with the burden of guilt on our conscience that we cannot remove; guilt enough to sink our souls to hell. We must come, feeling the burden of our transgressions; that we have exceeded, that our sins are innumerable as the stars in the sky, that they are of an aggravated nature, and nothing short of God's mercy can pardon such wretches. We must come persuaded, and feeling that none else in heaven and earth can do our souls good. We must come as Esther, when she went to the king: "If I perish, I perish" (chap.4:16). I must go to him if I die. This is the state of those who come, not having anything to lay before him; they come receiving out of his fulness that which he is pleased to bestow.

The Lord's people come to him tempted with a thousand doubts and fears, whether they shall be accepted by him; whether such a holy, righteous, and blessed Jesus can cast an eye of pity on them: if they were better, holier, or to amend their lives; to present something worthy of his acceptance; they think then they might be received: but to go to him, full of everything hateful in his holy and pure eyes, nature seems to revolt from it; yet they are compelled by the necessity of the case, having nowhere else to go, no one else to look to.

They come to him because he is their only hope, the only resource for guilty, sin-burdened souls. They come to him also sorely tempted; feeling the power of sin working in them continually. They come, feeling the aboundings of iniquity in their carnal minds, the vilest lusts, and filthiest corruptions. They come, assaulted by Satan's blasphemies poured into their carnal minds, with all sorts of wicked thoughts against God and godliness, all vile suggestions, with their heart and mind at times full of confusion, nothing in themselves but misery and wretchedness, yet they come, and they see and feel, as the Lord is pleased to open up to their view, such a suitability, a sweetness, sanctifying, glorifying, and creative grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they feel if he will but receive them, look on, and smile on their souls; if he will but whisper some soft word of encouragement in their heart, thus: Fear not, I have loved thee. "Fear not I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine," (Isa.43:1) they feel, in a moment, every crooked thing made straight, and every rough place plain. Their hearts rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. They come, not merely compelled to come through the necessities of their case, not merely with a heavy load of guilt; they come, seeing in him riches unspeakable; these riches, unspeakable, are exactly adapted to all their wants. Their eyes are illuminated by the Spirit of God; they see in him beauty unspeakable, a suitability they cannot describe, yet felt in every corner of their heart. These come to him, feeling he alone can do their souls spiritual good.

How do they come? With cries, groans, and tears rolling down

their cheeks; heart-breaking sobs gushing from their breasts. They come to him pleading with him his own promise. They come to him by night and by day as he is pleased to work these supplications in their souls. They come to him fixing their eyes on him, feeling well nigh spent, that he will be pleased to apply his smile in their behalf to their souls, that he will be pleased to manifest his presence, shed abroad his love in their heart, and assure them they are eternally his. Now, if you find these things going on in your soul, you have a scriptural testimony that you belong to the seed of Israel, of whom it is said, "In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

There may be those here, who cannot believe they are justified in the Lord; they have not the assurance of faith to believe their sins are pardoned, that they stand complete in Christ by faith; neither can they glory in him. Now, I may have some poor soul here who has not seen or enjoyed these refreshing communications of Christ, that lead the soul to glory in his name. Have we not a scriptural evidence in this one feature, they come to him? Does not the Lord say none come to him except the Father draw him? Is not this like what Peter says: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" (1 Pet.2:4)? This is the Spirit's work in the conscience of a sinner, no man ever has, ever will come, except he is drawn of God, made willing in the day of his power; and does not the Lord Jesus Christ say, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37)? Does he not say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt.11:28)? How encouraging these promises, these invitations are to all poor sin-burdened creatures, who are feelingly encouraged, invited, and sometimes enabled to come to him, to lay themselves at his feet, to wrestle with him, and supplicate his majesty, to pour out their hearts before him, telling him with tears, sighs, fervent groans, and heartbreaking sobs, that nothing but his love can satisfy them, and nothing but his blood purge their conscience. His love brings heaven into their souls.

Depend upon it, empty professors of religion know nothing in their souls feelingly, of coming to the Lord in this way. It is peculiar to the quickened family of God, wrought in their hearts by the power of his Spirit. The fulfilment of this gracious word, from God's own lips, of unerring truth, "Even to him shall men come," and then, when they have come, the Lord is pleased to draw them nearer to himself, to bless their soul with some discoveries of his goodness, mercy, and love. Then they can say, "In the LORD have I righteousness, and strength." Here we have three steps: First, God's solemn declaration, his unalterable determination, that "in the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." The second step, the result and fruit of this solemn determination on the part of God, that they shall come unto him; and the third step, springing out of that, is the language which they are enabled, as the Lord gives it into their hearts, to take into their lips, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength."

None can say this, except those that come to him; none can say this, except those into whose hearts he has spoken it, to whose soul the Lord has appeared, to whom he has afforded, a manifestation of his grace and favour, "In the LORD," surely, shall one say, "have I righteousness and strength." That one whom the Lord himself has been pleased thus to teach, the Lord draws, surely, it is God's "Amen!" his eternal verity. These people, whom the Lord thus leads, draws, and teaches, shall say in the Spirit, in the assurance of faith, as the Lord enables them, "In the Lord alone have I, guilty, wretched, miserable, fallen, wicked, vile, I, righteousness and strength."

Now, no man will be able to say, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength," until he has seen a complete end of his own misery, his trials, his temptations, and perplexities; a man shall have to wait there, before he can say, feelingly say, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength." So, again, if we are so conceited, have such lofty ideas of ourselves, are such self-righteous Pharisees, so unwilling to part with our own supposed goodness, depend upon it, that where the grace of God

in the heart is in exercise, there will be such deep discoveries in the man that he will loathe himself, such a thorough turning over and up, that he shall see what a creature he is in the eyes of a holy God; then, before he can feelingly say "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength," he must be led to see all his own righteousness is as filthy rags, that he can trample it under his feet with a solemn determination to look on, and rest only in the Lord, saying, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength."

Nothing is more easy, nothing more common than for men to talk of being justified in Christ, they use boasting language, that in the Lord they have this righteousness; yet, if we look at their lives, and watch their conversation, how little is seen of godly sorrow for sin, how little they know of brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, how little do we see in them of a deep acquaintance with the corruptions of nature, what little slight appearance of holy awe, or tendency even to godly fear; there is little fruit, very little desire to produce fruit: it is evident there is very little circumspection in their walk: they are not living as under the eye of him who searches the heart and trieth the reins. These fruits of the Spirit always appear where there is a work of grace in the soul.

A man may say "in the LORD, I have righteousness;" but he must give me better evidence than saying it, else we are not bound to take that man at his word. We may rest assured he cannot say feelingly, and experimentally, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength," till he is put out of conceit of his own. When, by the eye of faith, he sees a glory and beauty in Jesus as made over to him, by the hand of a good and living faith, the blessed Spirit is pleased to engage our soul, to bring into our heart some sweet discoveries of his perfect obedience, and in the language of living faith, then we say "In the LORD have I righteousness." Depend upon this, we can do nothing, can have righteousness in no other, and from no other source, that will do our souls any good. But suppose a person says, I have righteousness and strength in the Lord; as long as he has any strength of his own, he will never have any strength in the Lord, for the strength of

Jesus is made perfect in our weakness. Therefore, it implies, that the individual that uses these words aright has all his strength completely brought into weakness. Oh, what a painful lesson we have to learn, in order to find all our strength is weakness.

There was a time when some of us thought we had strength, and could resist Satan, and overcome the world; endure persecution, bear the reproach of man, mortify and keep down pride, and the evils of our heart. Have we found ourselves able to carry out this fancied strength? Have we been able to accomplish this resolution? What has been our experience in this matter? That we have discovered more and more our own weakness; that we cannot stand against one temptation. The least gust blows us down: our besetting lusts, our vile passions, and the wicked desires of our hearts, so inveigle our eyes and thoughts, so intertwine themselves round our affections, that we are gone in a moment, except God himself holds us up. Have we not found we have no power to believe, hope, love, pray or bring forth any one spiritual act, except God himself so far work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure?

Thus we learn our weakness, not doctrinally, or in our judgment; but surely and experimentally feeling ourselves the very weakest of the weak, so we are taught to feel ourselves the very vilest of the vile. There is a growing acquaintance with these things; as the Lord leads a man deeper down into the knowledge of his corruptions it makes him more and more out of conceit with his righteous, pious, holy self, the more the Lord leads a man into the knowledge of temptation, his besetting sin, the power of his corruptions, the workings of his vile nature; in all this work, he knows and learns more deeply, and painfully, what a poor, helpless, weak, powerless wretch he is; and, as the Lord is pleased to unfold before his eyes, the strength, power, and fulness lodged in Jesus Christ; draws him, leads him, brings him, encourages him, and enables him to come to this fulness, pleading with the Lord to make his strength perfect in his weakness; by the hand of faith he draws supplies out of that fulness which is in Jesus Christ; he learns in the Lord that he not

only has righteousness but strength.

I believe we learn in the Lord we have righteousness, before we learn that in the Lord we have strength. We learn our vileness before our weakness; our sinfulness before our emptiness. We learn we are lost, utterly lost, before we learn we cannot stand against sin; that truly our heart is as weak as water. As the Lord enables the soul to look to Jesus, hang on his name, his fame, his Word, his promise, from time to time, his blessed strength is communicated, breathed into his soul; so the Lord works in him to will and do of his good pleasure; then the poor worm Jacob threshes the mountains, beats the hills, and makes them fly before him as chaff.

When the Lord strengthens him, he can stand against temptation, overcome sin, bear persecution, subdue the evils of his heart, and fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. When the Lord leaves him, he is like Samson with his locks cut, sinks into all evil, and feels the helplessness of his fallen nature. Whatever he might have felt before; whatever light, power, and love may have flowed into his soul, let the Lord remove his gracious presence, and the strong man sinks down into a babe; and he that in the strength of the Lord could thresh the mountains, falls down before the Lord as weak and helpless as a little child. Thus the Lord teaches us even painfully, and solemnly, that in him alone have we righteousness and strength. Thus he teaches us to look to him, hang on him, centre all the hope of our soul in him alone, who is mighty to save; who is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

III. But there are those that have different thoughts concerning Jesus. We have read, for all who are incensed against him they shall be ashamed. Thirdly, the fate of those who are incensed against Christ. Let us just look at the solemn determination and declaration of God. That there is a seed, an elect seed, called the seed of Israel, of whom God has said that in the Lord they shall be justified, acquitted from all law charges, and presented before God without spot or blemish, or any such thing. God has said, "In

the LORD [alone] shall all the seed ... glory." If they boast, rejoice, pray, or speak, it shall be in him; all that they have or are comes from, and centres in him. They come by prayer, supplication, ardent cries, longing desires, and fervent pleadings; they come to him to satisfy the desire of their soul, that he would love them, bless them, and speak to their heart. Such as these he enables to say, in the Lord have I, poor I, lost I, guilty I, righteousness and strength.

Then there are those characters who are very different: there are those that see no beauty in Jesus that they should desire him, they feel no need of him, never see his suitability, never stimulated with his love, never behold his glory, taste of his favour, or enjoy his presence; on the contrary, their heart is filled with infernal enmity against him, and all that are his. Of these, we read, without exception, they shall be ashamed. As far as we are brought, by the Spirit's strong hand in our soul, to look to, and come to Jesus, and at times feel him precious, just so far we have the mind of Christ, just so far God's thoughts are our thoughts, and his ways our ways. Here, while we are cast into the mould of God, what God says is pleasing to us, and what we do is pleasing to God, there is a union and communion between God and the believing soul who is brought to look to Jesus, feel him precious, glory in him, and in him alone.

But there are others, who are rebels to God and godliness, who are even incensed against him: their infernal pride and devilish enmity of their carnal mind is stirred up by the very thing that is sweet and suitable to God's redeemed family. Many are incensed against him because he is God; against his deity, because he is the eternal God. It seems to stir up the infernal enmity of some because they cannot bear that Jesus should be Jehovah. They are incensed against him because he is God over all, blessed for ever. They "shall be ashamed." Some are incensed at his sovereignty: because he died for the sheep and not for the goats; because he laid down his life for his friends, and not for his enemies. It is true, they dare not altogether use their blasphemous, scurrilous language against him; but they are incensed against those that

contend for these discriminating doctrines of God's grace.

Others are incensed against him because he will be glorified in the hearts of his willing people; because he will not suffer their righteousness to stand on a level with his own: that he will not accept of creature righteousness; but hold it open, all mangled and marred before the eyes of angels. Others are incensed against him because he does not take into glory their marred, mangled, and filthy rags; others because he will shed abroad his love in the hearts of, and will manifest himself unto the sheep of his pasture, as he does not unto the world. When the Lord's people hear speak of the manifestation of the love of Christ to the souls of sinners, they are not incensed against it; they long for it themselves, and think those people happy that have it, and covet more of these smiles, and long to drink of the same cup. Those enemies that are incensed against him cannot bear to hear the Lord Jesus Christ visits these souls with the sprinklings of his blood, and the smiles of his love shed abroad in their heart: these discriminating favours, these tender mercies, these gifts that he sends, stir up the enmity of their ungodly heart.

The work of grace in the soul is so humbling in its teaching, whereby it makes the creature nothing, brings to nought and stains the pride of all human righteousness, that they are incensed against it. He relieves himself by speaking a word in secret against the poor and needy. Another is incensed against him because he thus deals with the heart and conscience of those that fear his name. How many are incensed against the ordinance of baptism? It stirs up the mind, because the Lord Jesus Christ appointed this way as his ordinance. Those, then, that despise it, despise him; those that are incensed against it, are incensed against him. All that I can say is, it provokes the enmity of their carnal mind, that, whatever men may say, he will be justified in the hearts of them that believe; that he will take whom he pleases, leave whom he pleases, save whom he pleases, will work in the heart of his own people when and where he pleases.

This incenses many that cannot bear the sovereign dealing of the

Lord Jesus Christ. All that are incensed against him shall be ashamed and confounded with confusion of face, and everlasting contempt, when God bids them depart from his presence as evil doers; the Lord Jesus Christ will say, "I never knew you: depart from me" (Matt.7:23). All those shall then be ashamed, because they have been incensed against him. Thus we see what a difference there is between those the Lord leads, and brings to fear and love his great name, and those that are left under natural, infernal, and bitter enmity.

There is a people the Lord loves: these people he has determined shall be justified in him; none shall be able to say anything against them; he has acquitted them, none shall find anything to bring to their charge when they stand before the bar of his righteous judgment; the Lord has determined they shall glory in the Lord all the day long; all their boast, joy, thanksgiving, they shall say, and they speak from the feelings of their heart, is in the Lord, and in him alone. The Lord leads these people; he has special dealings in their conscience; they come to Jesus, and receive these favours at his almighty hand, when he pleases to bestow them; then they say, and then only, in this glorious Jesus, this God-man, Immanuel, God with us, have I righteousness and strength. Others, who on account of these things, proud professors, are incensed against him they may cover their enmity with great swelling words; but, in their hearts, they have enmity against this Man of Sorrows, they have an infernal dislike against his people and his ways; against his teaching and his readings in the hearts of his saints, their infernal enmity is ever going out.

The same God that has declared, "In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," the same lip of unerring truth, has declared, that all, without exception, however great, noble or dignified, religious, or irreligious, professors or profane; the Lord God Almighty has declared, with the lips of unerring truth, that, "All that are incensed against him shall be ashamed" and put to eternal confusion. The question is, on which side you stand? Whether incensed against him, hating, despising, abhorring him, or going out in tender affection towards him.

Whether God's Spirit, by his almighty grace, and power has mercifully set us on the other side of the line, brought us to come to him, to believe on his name, to look to him, to know him in the power of his resurrection, and to glory in him?

I have only mentioned these different classes and characters; there are some, perhaps, who are just beginning to learn their need of Christ, in whose heart and conscience there are some convictions, to whom he is just beginning to reveal himself, not having clear views of Jesus, or the sweet manifestations of his love to their souls, yet have enough sin working in them to put them out of conceit of themselves; others have deeper discoveries of the evils of their heart, are brought to loathe themselves, on account of their corruptions, and their sin before God, in their heart, through the blessed Spirit's teaching, are brought to Jesus, some Scriptures are opened up, some sudden coming in of the Lord their righteousness, seeing a precious suitability in Jesus to all their wants, coming to him sometimes by night and sometimes by day, sometimes in earnest desires of soul, sometimes in cries, sighs, and longings, sometimes in groanings, sobbings, and broken and contrite hearts.

There may be here, others who have come: he has received them, blessed their souls, shone into their hearts, and given them some testimonies that they are his, eternally his; they can say, and only say, as the Lord enables them, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength;" this humbles them, and makes them little, low in their own eyes, and makes Jesus precious to their souls. So the others, doubtless, those who are incensed against him, dare not show their enmity, their thoughts are full of enmity, they cannot see any beauty in him, they despise him secretly; but all whom the Lord teaches, he brings to Jesus, they believe and trust in Jesus, these belong to the seed of Israel. Some have weak faith, some stronger. Some well nigh eaten up with doubts and fears, tried and tempted all day long; yet, with all their labouring, sighing, seeking, groaning, and humbling, they come to the Lord of life and glory, feeling

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

These seed of Israel, the Lord, in due time, will remove all their doubts and fears, comfort their troubled conscience, and enable them to boast and glory in the Lord, and on him alone depend. As far as the Lord teaches us, this will be more or less our daily experience, being nothing in ourselves, feeling our weakness, helplessness, and wretchedness. The Lord enables us to come, looking to Jesus Christ, that we may receive out of his fulness. None of these will be sent empty away.

The Lord will bestow grace and mercy; he has all treasures of mercy for those that see and feel their need. He has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Woe to those incensed against him, that cover over their enmity with swelling words, with lying tales, who despise his ordinances, his people, and his ways. Woe to those who whet their tongue like a sword, utter swelling words against the Lord Jesus Christ; who bend their arrows in their quiver that they may shoot against the Lord's tried and tempted people. Woe to those who exalt the creature, set up man's goodness, and man's free will, instead of the righteousness of Christ. Woe to all those who are incensed against him, however covered up and hiding their enmity. The same lips, of unerring truth, that said, "All the seed of Israel shall be justified," has also said, "All that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."

Seeds of Light and Gladness

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 15, 1849

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Psalm 97:11

True religion is not learnt in a day; in most cases, it is the slow growth of years. In grace, as well as in nature, the most lasting and solid materials are usually of the slowest growth. It takes twenty-five years to build up the body of a man; it takes near double that time to build up his mind. A gourd grows and withers in a night: the oak, the monarch of the forest, is the slow growth of a century. And thus, where there is a solid, substantial growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it is, generally speaking, the fruit of years of trials, temptations, and corresponding mercies, favours, and blessings.

We may find, perhaps, this train of thought not altogether unconnected with the words before us; which as they consist of two clauses, I shall, as the Lord may enable me, endeavour to open up this morning, by shewing,

First.—How *light* is sown for the *righteous*.

Secondly.—How *gladness* is sown for the *upright in heart*.

I.—We have a certain character set before us in the words of our text, who is called in the *first* clause, "*the righteous*;" and, in the *second*, "*the upright in heart*." It will be my business, therefore, before we proceed any further, to describe, as the Lord may enable me, who this character is; for all depends upon that; it is the base on which the whole superstructure stands; it is the hinge and pivot upon which the whole text turns. A mistake here is fatal throughout. Personal preaching I abhor; discriminating preaching I love. We cannot have too little of the one; we cannot

have too much of the other. Individuals we should never desire to bear in mind, but characters we cannot bear in mind too much; for by describing character we enter into the very secret thoughts of God's people; and by unfolding, as the Lord may give light, their experience, we have a witness in the hearts of those who know the truth, that they are possessed of those divine marks which show that their names are in the book of life.

The word of God describes the children of the Most High under various names. They are called, sometimes, children of God, heirs of God, saints, brethren, temples of the Holy Ghost; but perhaps there is scarcely any title more frequently used, especially in the Old Testament, than that before us, "the righteous."

What, then, is meant by this word "*righteous*?" Who is the character described thereby? We may say, then, that in order to be righteous a man must be possessed of three qualifications. He must *first*, be righteous by the *imputed obedience* of the Lord Jesus Christ put to his account. He must, *secondly*, be righteous by the *implantation* of a righteous principle; and *thirdly*, he must be righteous by the *bringing forth* of this righteous principle in godly acts, in his life, conduct, and conversation. So that we may say, a person is righteous in three points of view. He is so by righteousness imputed, righteousness imparted, and righteousness manifested. And if a man is not a partaker of these three distinct kinds of righteousness—if all three do not meet in the same individual—if he is not a partaker of imputed righteousness, he is not such a character as God himself in his holy word has called righteous.

I shall not dwell this morning upon the *imputed righteousness* which is put to his account, though it is the foundation of the whole, as it is not closely connected with my text; but shall confine myself chiefly to the second qualification, whereby a man is accounted righteous, as being made a partaker of *imparted* righteousness; for we shall find it is for him as righteous in this sense that "light is sown."

Now this righteousness, as described in the word of God, stands in various things. Thus, it stands in *light*; as we read, "Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. 2:9.) It stands in *life*; "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1.) It stands in *power*; "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." It stands in *divine teaching*; for "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." (Isa. 54:13.) It stands in the *fear of God*; "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. 32:40.) It stands in *faith*; for those who are made partakers of this righteousness, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It stands in *hope*, as an "anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." (Heb. 6:19.) It stands in *love*; "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema-maranatha." (1 Cor. 16:22.) It stands in the *leadings* of the Spirit; for "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14.) It stands in *simplicity* and *godly sincerity*, in *righteousness* and *true holiness*. In a word, it stands in the *work of the Spirit* upon the soul. Therefore all these qualifications—light, life, and power; the fear of God; faith, hope, and love; righteousness and true holiness; sincerity, and godly simplicity—all meet in the same individual; and so far as they meet in the same bosom, and a man is made a partaker of them by the power of God, so far, and so far only, is he inwardly a righteous man.

Now we read in our text that light is sown for such. There is to my mind something very sweet and expressive in the figure; which I may observe is one of the simplest in nature. The casting of seed into the ground, and out of that seed a crop springing up, is a figure common to every country, and familiar to every understanding.

When, then, the blessed Spirit declares that "Light is sown for the righteous," he means that *seeds* of light are sown for them, which in time spring up and bear a produce.

But what is there couched in the figure? Let us examine it a little more minutely, and look into it a little more closely. Before seed

is cast into ground, there must be a preparation. The soil in its natural state is not fit to receive seed. It must undergo a certain process whereby it is brought into a state suitable to receive it. In other words, there must be a seed-bed in which it must be sown, in order that it may germinate and send down a root. But, there is another thing equally necessary, which is, that the seed when sown must be covered up in the soil; for only as far as it is thus covered up and concealed, does it germinate, grow, or bring forth a crop.

Let us bear these two ideas in mind, because they are the two leading characteristics of the figure.

i. *First*, then, there must be a *preparation*; the soil must be made fit for the seeds of light to be sown in it. This we may see in various ways. For instance,

There are certain *providential leadings*. And there is scarcely any child of God who is not more or less acquainted with them. These providential leadings are often of the greatest importance as it concerns spiritual things. Nay, I may add further, that some of the most important events of our life were connected with apparently the most trivial incidents. The most important event of my life was my going to Ireland in 1826, when a young man at Oxford; I call it the most important event of my life, because it was in 1827, now twenty-two years ago, that eternal things were first laid upon my mind, that I was made to know myself as a poor, lost sinner, and a spirit of grace and supplication poured out upon my soul. I may have had doubts and fears since as to the reality of the work of grace upon my soul; but I have never doubted, and never shall doubt that if I possess grace in my heart, it was then first implanted. That important event, connected as it is with my standing before you at this moment preaching the word of life, depended upon a very simple incident. It was this. A gentleman sleeping at Oxford, instead of going off early the next morning, remained two or three hours later. That circumstance gave me an interview with him, which resulted in my going to Ireland. Upon that simple incident, then, of a

gentleman staying a few hours in a town, hinged the whole work of grace in my heart. I may mention another thing, which may excite a smile, that the foundation of my present ministry turned upon the death of a horse. When I was first a clergyman, I used to ride backward and forward to my parish from the University; but my horse dying, and it not being convenient to buy another, I was induced to go and reside in that parish. And it was during several years that I lived there in separation and privacy, that the foundation of my present ministry was laid in the exercises of mind I then experienced. It was then I began to speak to the people of God of trials and exercises; and to trace out the difference between the teachings of God and the teachings of man. I merely mention these circumstances to shew how the most important events (for what can be so important to us as the things of God?) may depend upon apparently minute circumstances.

Now when we are in these circumstances, we have no light upon them; but light is sown in the circumstances. When I went to Ireland, I had no idea that the Lord meant there to visit my soul with his grace; I went merely from carnal motives; but light was sown in that circumstance, and has since sprung up. When my horse died, it was a trouble to me; but light was sown in that circumstance, to bring me more into an acquaintance with the inward workings of my heart, and lay the foundation of an experimental ministry. You may have experienced a similar thing. You may have gone up a street, and there met a person; and that meeting have turned out an important event in your life. You may have changed your residence, and that change may have led to most important consequences. These are *providential leadings*. Light is sown in them; seeds of light, which are as different when they have sprung up as the blade from the seed. They are sown in the bed, covered with darkness, concealed by the soil; yet they spring up and bear a crop of light.

Or, you may have had providential *afflictions*, been laid upon a bed of sickness, and this may have been made a great blessing to you. Many of the Lord's people can say with me—that it has been

in sickness the Lord has exercised their minds—in sickness the Lord has brought his word with sweetness and power to their souls—in sickness the Lord tried their religion to its very foundation; that it was then he put them into the sieve, and riddled away their chaff and dust. In the affliction we saw no light sown; it incapacitated us from business, made us a burden to ourselves and our families, entailed expense, and brought pain and sorrow; yet the seeds of light were sown in that affliction, and it sprung up in God's own time to bear a blessed crop.

Or, we may experience a providential *mercy* as well as a providential affliction. The Lord may turn our captivity in temporal things, and open a door in providence for relief in worldly circumstances. Something may turn up from a casual meeting with a stranger, some debt become paid, some friendship gained, some new acquaintance formed, some change of life connected with this providential event. In these providential mercies seeds of light are sown, which spring up and bear a crop.

Now we are as passive in the matter as the very soil in which the seeds are sown. But by these providential dealings and leadings, whether afflictions or mercies, a *preparation* is made for the seeds of light to be sown. Providential dealings are often as the ploughing, the furrowing, the removal of the weeds, the preparing a bed for the seeds to fall in. Nay more, when the seeds are sown in providential circumstances, in affliction, or mercy, they are covered and concealed in the soil, yet in due time spring up and bear a crop.

But there are not only providential leadings, afflictions, and mercies in which light is sown; there are also *spiritual* dealings, and in these more especially light is sown for the righteous. For instance;

1. When the Lord first begins the work of grace upon the soul he usually pierces the heart with deep *convictions of sin*; and thus makes us to feel what poor, lost, undone wretches we are. Now in these he is sowing seeds of light. This conviction is to issue in conversion, this guilt in pardon, this sorrow in joy, this trouble in

eternal praise and glory. At the time we cannot see it; yet the seeds of light are sown in the heart in these convictions, in this sorrow, in this grief, in this trouble; they lie indeed for a season buried as it were beneath the clods of darkness and unbelief; but in due time, as we shall shew presently, this light springs up.

2. Again, in the various *temptations* that our soul is exercised with, light is sown. We never learn the truth so well as when we learn it in the way of temptation. But when these temptations first come upon us, we know not their end; I remember well, when infidelity, blasphemy, obscenity, and all manner of dreadful temptations first seized me, having never heard or read of such things, I did not know what the issue would be.

But what do we learn by these things, say, by the workings of infidelity, so painful and perplexing to many souls? We learn what faith is. How? Because infidelity smothers and suffocates all false faith; false faith cannot live in it; it is so strong, so powerful, it chokes, smothers, or suffocates all false faith. We are brought then to this point, that nothing but the faith of God's own giving and communicating can stand in the soul beneath the withering breath of infidelity. So with blasphemous suggestions, vile thoughts, dreadful imaginations, what Hart justly calls, 'the very masterpieces of hell;' by painful experience I know what that blessed man meant. But what do these things for us? Why, instrumentally they pull to pieces all our creature holiness; they shew us what we are; they take the deep covering off our heart, and let in the light of day upon these recesses and dens of our fallen nature, that we may see in every lurking cell some hideous monster, some poisoned fountain flowing forth in filthy streams, and thus abhor ourselves for the abominations that we see are ever ready to rush forth and swallow up the soul.

3. In *an acquaintance with the evils of our own heart*; its hypocrisy, deceitfulness, pride, selfishness, worldliness, carnality, covetousness, and all the dreadful workings of a depraved nature—light is sown. What! Is light sown in all these things? Yes. Is there not naturally a great distinction between the seed and

the seed-bed? What similarity can you find betwixt the wheat cast into the ground, and the earth that receives it? What is the earth but a dark, lumpish, lazy clod; never rising beyond its earthly nature? and yet, in that lumpish clod, in that black soil, grain grows, food is produced. So, as every child of God feels, we have a hard, lumpish nature—a stupid unfeeling heart; yet in that soil the seeds of light are sown. I mean, that in the very acquaintance we have with our fallen nature, and the evils of our depraved heart, the seeds of light are sown, which will one day spring up to the praise and glory of God.

4. And so, in the *various exercises, troubles, afflictions, griefs, and sorrows* of a spiritual kind that the Lord's people experience—seeds of light are sown in them. The man who is unacquainted with trials, temptations, the workings of an evil nature, the fiery darts of Satan, the hidings of God's countenance, the various sorrows that the Lord's people are for the most part tried with—go where you will, be in what congregation you may, you will find him to be only a light, frothy, and superficial professor. It is a certain truth that only so far as we are exercised by trials, temptations, and afflictions we come into real heartfelt religion.

ii. But we pass on to show *how* light is sown for them. Hitherto I have been speaking rather of the *preparation* to receive the seeds of light; but we now come to the springing up of light, in the germination, the striking forth of the root, the coming up of the blade, and its growth into ear.

The seeds of light, then, are sown in the very first teachings and dealings of God with the soul; in the very first cry for mercy; in the very first pang of conviction; in the very first heartfelt prayer; in the very first sincere desire; but so covered up, so concealed, so buried, as not to be seen; and yet all the time taking root downwards, and pushing a blade upwards. And here is the difference, as the Lord himself has described it, between those who bring forth fruit, and those who do not. These latter, "because they had no root, withered away." But where the Lord has sown in the heart of the righteous—in troubles, afflictions,

temptations, griefs, and sorrows—the seeds of light, a crop will come up. The root will bury itself deeper, take firmer and stronger hold; and after a time will spring up, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

To carry out the proof of this, look at the Lord's *providential* leadings. When the first providential leading took place, the seeds of light were sown in darkness; but by and by light began to spring up, and the hand of God began to appear more manifestly. You were brought through a leading in providence to sit under a certain minister, to read a certain book, to hear a certain sermon, to peruse a certain portion of God's word. Now, as grace began to work, the seeds of light began to spring up; you began to see why God placed you in that village, why you went down that street, why you came under that ministry, or met with that individual; light began gradually to spring up, and cast itself over the providential circumstance, just as the blade springs up, and casts its shadow over the ground. You begin to see now clearly the hand of God in your change of situation, in your leaving that town or village, in coming to that house, reading that book, hearing that minister, or opening that chapter. Now you can see the hand of God was in it. Here is light springing up; light sown in the very providential dispensation, now springing up and casting its blessed light on that circumstance. I see now why I went to Ireland, while a carnal young man at Oxford; I view now the hand of God in it; light shines upon that providential circumstance; and, though dark then, it is clear now.

Or, perhaps you were reduced in circumstances, brought into temporal trouble, and through that providential difficulty were introduced to some friend or acquaintance, put into another situation of life, got into another family, met with a fellow-servant, or in some way or other—for all these circumstances differ in every case—light began to spring up upon that providential circumstance. Or, you were laid on a sick bed, and were murmuring at being taken from your business, at becoming an expense to your family, and a burden to yourself; yet the end was a solid spiritual blessing to your soul. Light now sprang up,

and fell on that providential affliction.

By this the children of God are distinguished; and this is what we should be doing—watching the hand of God. Why, if we lived like Christians, we should scarce speak to a person, or leave our door, without praying and watching, or mentally lifting up our hearts that the hand of God might be with us. We should be waiting for and watching the hand of God all through the day; and tracing out his providential leadings and guidings in every event of our life. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." (Psalm 107:43.)

But more particularly in *spiritual things* do we see light sown.

1. You have perhaps in times past experienced very painful and powerful *convictions of sin*. Now what could you see when passing through these powerful convictions? Heaven, glory, bliss, salvation at the end? No: hell, wrath, terror, damnation. And yet the seeds of light, glory, bliss, and immortality were sown in these troubles. You have sown in tears, to reap in joy; sown in conviction, to reap in conversion. When light comes, we begin to see something of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which we should not otherwise have seen, how it cleanses from all sin; and when there is some application of that precious blood to the conscience, the seeds of light are seen to have been sown in that very conviction that made the soul cry for mercy.

2. So with *temptation*. When temptation comes upon a child of God, does he see that he is to be established in faith thereby? that thereby he is to have brighter views of the Lord Jesus Christ? that he is to stand more rooted and grounded in his finished work? No more than when the oak is trembling to its very base under the storm, it can see that those very storms are giving it a deeper root in the soil. But when the Lord is pleased to open up the riches of his glorious Person, dying love, justifying righteousness, covenant characters and offices, then we see how these temptations have prepared our souls for the reception of the Lord Jesus Christ in all those covenant characters and offices.

For what do I know of precious blood but through a guilty conscience? What do I know of covering righteousness, but through a naked and trembling soul? What do I know of dying love but by feeling my heart wretched without it? What do I know of the suitability, tenderness, and compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ except so far as I am brought by temptations and trials into circumstances to need him in all his covenant characters, divine offices, and blessed relations? So that light is sown in these very temptations; and when light beams into the soul to show me the mercy of Jesus, his preciousness, his blood, his righteousness, his love, his suitability; and faith is drawn out to lay hold of him in all his covenant characters and relationships, how the light that shines in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word that speaks of him, is seen to be sown in the temptation through which instrumentally he becomes endeared to the soul.

So with all our afflictions, exercises, sorrows, and griefs. Are not all overruled in a most wonderful way to teach us more what we are, to unloose us from the creature, separate us from the world, and bring us nearer and nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ? How in all these things light is sown! and yet such is the nature of it, that though thus sown, we can only see it as light springs up. Thus the light springs up out of the very circumstance in which it is sown. How blessed this is! Whatever circumstances may arise, however painful, however perplexing, however opposed to the natural feelings of the heart; or whatever we may pass through in our minds—still to believe that side by side with every trouble God sows the seeds of light; how this should reconcile us to all our afflictions and difficulties! Afflictions and light are sown together; and as the affliction spreads and grows, so light spreads and grows, till at last it is clearly seen rising up out of the dark clods, and by and by bears a crop, till the whole harvest of light covers the dark soil, and strangles the afflictions which once seemed as if they would strangle it.

Wherever, then, there is imparted righteousness, and the soul is possessed of light, life, and power; the fear of God; faith, hope, and love; sincerity and godly simplicity—there are the seeds of

light sown. It may be in some cases long before it springs up. It is in nature as in grace. Some seeds spring up soon. Mustard and cress spring up in a day; the cone of a fir tree may be two years before it germinates. Months and months may roll over our heads before a blade of light is produced, and years more before the ear is ripened, and the harvest gathered in. But if we are righteous, with every circumstance, and especially with every painful circumstance, the seeds of light are sown; and our wisdom and mercy is to be watching it, looking out for it, just as the farmer after his seed is sown takes his walk, and asks, 'Is the blade springing up? Shall I have a crop?' So the righteous will ask, 'Is there good coming from my affliction? Is light springing up? Is the morning approaching? Is the sun rising? Is there a blessed, holy light springing forth upon these painful circumstances that my soul has passed through?' The man that thus waits, and thus watches, shall not wait nor watch in vain; but will soon have to say, 'Thanks be to God, light is come at last! Blessings be upon his name, I can see a mercy coming out of the ground.' And if it be a mercy, if it be a blessing, it will grow and grow and grow till a crop is seen by our eyes, and all who have eyes to discern the ways and works of the Lord.

II.—Our time is nearly gone, and therefore I cannot dwell so long upon our second clause, which in fact is closely connected with it, and show how "gladness" is sown for "the upright in heart." You may say, how do these characters differ? I do not know that they do differ, or at least, not widely; but the one seems to be rather an explanation of the other. It seems to be added lest there should be any mistake who the righteous was; lest persons who produce only outward fruits of righteousness should say it was for them; therefore it is added, "for the upright *in heart*." A man may be very upright in life and conversation, who has no uprightness of heart; therefore the Holy Spirit seems to have put his mark upon it thus, "upright in heart." Now if a man is not upright in heart, it matters very little how far he is upright in conduct. I dare say one of the most upright men in Jerusalem was the pharisee who went into the temple. I have no doubt he paid tithes of anise, mint, and cummin to the last sprig; or, if he

weighed them, to the very turn of the scale within half a grain. Yet was he withal a whited sepulchre, an abomination in the sight of God, a stench in his nostrils, a smoke that burnt all day. And perhaps, the most crooked creature in all the town was his fellow sinner, who could only smite upon his breast, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He was a publican; and you know they were noted for their corrupt dealings; and hated by the Jews for covetousness and extortion, as the farmers-general of taxes. Here we have, we will suppose, side by side, two characters—the most righteous man in Jerusalem, and the most crooked as far as regards outward things. I do not say he was crooked after he was called by grace. When the Lord put that cry into his soul, it made him upright in heart; and I venture to say, afterwards he was upright in life.

But let us just mention a few particulars which seem to point out the man who is upright in heart.

1. A man who is upright in heart cannot mock God; every body else can mock him by false prayers. Presumptuous, superficial professors can mock God by saying one thing and meaning another. A man cannot do this who is upright in heart.

2. Another mark is, that he cannot take to himself any thing but what God is pleased to communicate by a divine power to his soul; for the uprightness of his heart forbids this. This is a grand distinction betwixt the truly spiritually taught child of God, and a mere carnal professor. The one can take nothing except what God himself is pleased to apply with divine power to his soul: the other can take everything. Because he reads in the Bible about Christ, and the things of God, he can take them with a daring hand, and claim them as his own: but time will prove him to be nothing but a thief and a robber. This being the case, the upright in heart will continually be the last in the race: for they can only speak as the Lord is pleased from time to time to bless their souls with his manifested mercy and love. When these favours are withheld, they cannot press forward, and take them: their uprightness of heart forbids it.

3. Again, as the upright in heart are upright before God, so are they upright before man. They cannot take every professor by the hand, and say, 'my dear brother this, and my dear sister that,' upon a mere profession of religion. They cannot fawn on any one; they dare not give flattering titles to man. They may give offence—they will give offence; for no man can be faithful—in the pulpit, or out of the pulpit—by acts or words, without giving offence, and bringing down persecution. But the upright in heart cannot act deceitfully; there is a principle within them that forbids them to lie; they are upright in heart, and must be honest in life.

Take these three marks, and see whether you can find them in you. If you are made upright in heart, you cannot mock God; but you will have godly simplicity and sincerity as in the presence and before the eyes of a heart-searching Lord. Can you find that in you? Can you take any blessing or mercy, and call it your own, except so far as God is pleased to speak and apply it with divine power to your soul? If you cannot, then you are one of those who may be said to be upright in heart. Have you a principle in your heart that cannot flatter; that you would sooner in your right mind die than deceive any one; that you must be faithful wherever you go, so far as power is given to you? You do not wish to give unnecessary offence; you would rather be silent: but if you must speak, you must be faithful. Can you find these marks in you? I might add more; but these three may be remembered. Take them home, and see if you can lay them side by side with anything in your souls.

Now gladness is sown for these. What does that imply? That they are for the most part a sorrowful people; because if gladness is to be sown for them, it is very plain that they are not usually glad. Their uprightness of heart makes them sad; for they see what a God they have to do with, that cannot be mocked. They feel too that they are such poor filthy, loathsome, leprous creatures. And, if they are upright in life, they will have many persecutions; the opposition of wife, husband, parents, children, ministers, friends, and relations. All will be in arms against them; and this keeps

them from gladness of heart. Their very uprightness brings them many trials, because they cannot pass things lightly by. They see evil in this, and sin in that; something wrong here and something wrong there, so as to keep their minds pretty well exercised all the day long. This keeps them from gladness; and makes them for the most part "a poor and afflicted people."

An upright man cannot enter into things which others can to deliver themselves. If a man without conscience be in business, he can do things to deliver himself; he can borrow money with little expectation to repay it; he can make promises, 'Send me this, and I will pay you next week!' when he knows the next week will bring no provision for the debt to be paid, or the bill to be taken up. He can enter too into trades and businesses of anything but a godly nature; and thus do many things to deliver himself, which a child of God cannot. Many things such an one dare not touch; and therefore for the most part is kept down in a state of poverty and difficulty; and all connected with his uprightness in heart. If he were not upright in heart, how many painful things he would be delivered from! but being upright in heart, he has little else but troubles and trials. Yet in his heaviest burdens, and in his greatest troubles, there is gladness sown. Just as light was sown in darkness, so is gladness sown in sorrow.

Now gladness is sown in these very things, because he is brought by uprightness of heart to confess, mourn, grieve over, and forsake sin; and when the Lord is pleased to speak joy and peace to his soul, gladness springs up. Gladness is also sown by the very circumstance that he is upright in heart, so that he cannot mock God. So with respect to his not being able to take any blessing, or any mercy, except what God give to him. When he hears others speak of their sweet enjoyment of Christ and the promises of the great manifestations they have received, of their Gospel liberty—these things often trouble and burden his mind. Why? Because he is upright in heart, and can take nothing but what God brings with divine power into his soul. Therefore he is troubled and sorrowful; but gladness is sown in the very trouble he has about these things; and by and by it will spring up to the

joy of his soul. So also in his dealing with his fellow-men; he cannot lie, deceive, and cheat. And though he is brought into providential trouble often thereby, he knows he cannot mock God; that he must not put his hand to wrong courses; God sees all, and can bring out of all. So he continues in his worldly difficulties and troubles, and under the weight of trying circumstances, simply because he cannot and will not deliver himself. He is like Daniel. He might have delivered himself. 'Why need Daniel,' some would have said, 'make such a display of his religion? Why did he not shut his door, and pray upon his bed? Why need he open his window?' He might have saved his life thereby; but he felt it was necessary to make an open confession, and to show that he believed in the God of Israel. That brought trouble upon him; but when God delivered him out of the lion's den, was there not gladness? And was not that gladness sown in the very circumstance of being cast into the lion's den? If he had not been upright in heart, he would have saved himself the lion's den; but he would also have saved himself the deliverance from the lion's den, and the gladness it brought to him.

So that gladness is sown for the upright in heart in all their troubles, afflictions, castings down, sorrows, and exercises. There is gladness lodged at the root of all. The seeds of gladness were sown in sorrow; but when it springs up, it is true gladness; the joy which "the stranger intermeddleth not with;" the "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Are you in trouble, sorrow, and darkness now? Light is sown in them. The seeds of light are in the trouble, in the affliction, in the temptation, in the perplexity; and you shall see light upon it; it will spring up in due time. O these seeds of light! How sweet it is to have some of the seeds of light in the soul! And the seeds of gladness and joy! Sweet smiles and heavenly favours; And for whom? "The upright in heart." That is the character. Not great towering professors, but the upright in heart. These are the persons for whom the blessing is designed; and every one in this congregation who can come in with these two characters, "the righteous," and "the upright in heart," light and gladness are sown for them, and in due time they will bless and praise God for

his wisdom, goodness, and love.

THE SENDING OUT OF LIGHT AND TRUTH

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, September 19th, 1841, at Allington, near Devizes

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles." Psalm 43:3

There is a very strong and striking resemblance between natural life and spiritual life—a resemblance so strong and striking that God has chosen the one to be a figure of the other. What spiritual life is we cannot, whilst in this tabernacle, really understand. We may know the feeling of it—and he that knows not the feeling of it is devoid of it—but to know what it really is, so as to enter into its true nature, is beyond our comprehension in this time state. Thus we find the Holy Ghost speaking by the mouth of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes: "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" (Ecc. 9:5). That the child does grow in the womb we know, but how it grows we know not. So that the blessed Spirit works in the heart we know, but how He works we are ignorant. And we find the Lord Himself declaring the same solemn truth, when He said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The way, then, in which the Spirit acts is a secret hidden from us. It may be revealed hereafter, or it may be of such a nature as will be eternally incomprehensible to finite intelligences. But though we know not the way in which the Spirit acts, His blessed effects are known to all who have the unspeakable mercy to experience them. For this one thing is certain, that wherever there has been the communication of spiritual life to the soul, there will be certain emotions, certain feelings, certain actings, which are the fruits and effects of the work of the Spirit in the heart; so that he

who is destitute of these feelings, of these emotions and of these actings, manifests that he is destitute of the cause of them—namely, destitute of the Spirit of God as a Spirit of life and power in his soul.

The same thing is true of natural life as of spiritual life. We know not what natural life is. It is a mystery hidden from the human understanding. All that we see and understand is that there are certain results and fruits of natural life; and all that we know is, that where these effects are present, natural life is present, and where these effects are absent, natural life is absent. It is then only between these effects and fruits of natural and spiritual life that a comparison can take place, and such a comparison we find in the Scriptures of truth.

If we look, then, at the various acts of natural life, we shall see that they bear a resemblance to the acts of spiritual life. For instance: one act of natural life is *to breathe*: so one act of supernatural life is to breathe spiritually. We find this set forth in Ezek. 37:9, where the prophet speaks to the wind and says, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live:" showing a resemblance between natural breath and spiritual breath. And there is a resemblance in this particular—that we breathe naturally an element which comes into us; something foreign to us, and yet something indispensable to our existence. So the spiritual breath of the soul consists in the life of God breathed into a vessel of mercy out of the fulness of Jesus Christ. The lungs have no air in themselves; air must come into them, in order that they may fulfil that office which they are appointed to fulfil: and so the creature has no spiritual breath in itself, but spiritual breath must come into the soul out of the fulness of the Son of God, that it may believe, hope, and love.

Again, another fruit and effect of natural life is to *move* and *walk*. Thus it is spiritually. As there is a movement of natural life, so is there a movement of spiritual life; and this movement of spiritual life is the acting of living faith in the soul, the going forth of

fervent desires after God, the approaching His mercy-seat with access, the embracing His truth with affection, and the walking in the light of God's countenance and the life of God's favour.

Again, in the natural life there is, at times, the keen sensation of *hunger*. The absence of hunger shows the presence of disease. And thus in the spiritual life we have spiritual hunger; and the absence of spiritual hunger after the bread of God shows the presence of disease, that is, that the soul though alive is sickly. In the natural life there is also, at times, a *thirst*—one of the most painful sensations that the body can experience, and the gratification of which is indispensable to the continuance of life. So spiritually there is a thirsting after God, a thirsting after His manifested presence and after the testimonies of His covenant love, a thirst of such a nature that it must be gratified by some manifestation of the mercy and love of God, or the soul feels as if it must perish eternally.

But we find that though much of the presence and healthiness of life, naturally, consists in hungering and receiving food, and in thirsting and receiving drink, yet that these are not incessant nor perpetual. There are certain seasons for the natural body to be nourished by food and yet the nutriment which is received at these distinct seasons serves to keep up all the strength of the body. A man is not always eating naturally, neither is a man always eating spiritually. There are certain seasons in which natural food is given; and so, spiritually, there are certain seasons (and these often at long intervals—far longer than those for natural food) when spiritual food is communicated. And as, when the prophet had eaten twice of the cake baken on the coals, and had drunk twice of the cruse of water at his head (1 Kings 19:5-8), he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights; so, when the Lord has supplied His own blessed nutriment to the soul, it goes in the strength of that food as many days and as many nights as the Lord sees fit to appoint.

But what I chiefly aim at is this: to show how the children of God, in the absence of fresh manifestations, are still maintained alive

by the food they have already received, and are inwardly strengthened by it to cry unto the Lord, and groan out their wants to Him, and seek supplies and communications out of Christ's fulness to their souls. If we look at the experience of God's saints, we shall find that the greater part of them are more in a hungering than in a banqueting state; more in a state of desire than in a state of satisfaction; and more seeking after the manifestations of God's mercy and love to their souls than feeding upon these manifestations as revealing in them the love and blood of the Lamb. And yet the life which vents itself in these hungerings and thirstings is maintained by communications of the Spirit, and is the secret fruit of former nutriment, which the blessed Spirit employs to strengthen them to seek and cry.

We find the Psalmist in this state of soul, whilst he was breathing forth his heart in the psalm from which the text is taken. He was cast down with trouble. "Judge me, O God," he begins, "and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For Thou art the God of my strength." He was suffering under trouble of mind from the opposition which he had to encounter from ungodly and deceitful men. This, however, was but a small source of his trouble. There was a deeper and more poignant grief than that. "Why," he says, "dost Thou cast me off?" When the Lord supports the soul under persecution, opposition, and enmity, it is easily endurable; but when the Lord hides His face, when He does not vouchsafe His help, when, in addition to the soul being trodden under foot by the deceitful and unjust man, God Himself seems to cast it off as a vessel in which He has no pleasure, it is that which adds poignancy to the wound, it is that which rubs salt into the sore. Satan, too, seeing his opportunity, thrust sore at him that he might fall. "Why," says he, "go I mourning *because of the oppression of the enemy?*" So that when David penned this psalm, he seems to have been labouring under a three-fold trial: persecuted and opposed by his enemies—cast off in his feelings by God—and oppressed by Satan. And as labouring under this three-fold trial, he pours his soul in this cry: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy

hill, and to Thy tabernacles."

I. David, when he poured forth these words, must have had three distinct lessons of divine teaching written upon his soul; and every one that feels the same desires that David felt, and is enabled to pour forth the same breathings that David poured forth, must first have had the same three lessons written by the Holy Spirit in his heart. The *first* was, a deep sense of his darkness, blindness, ignorance, and folly. If he had not felt this, he would not have cried to the Lord to "send out His light and His truth." The *second* lesson which the Holy Ghost had taught him, before he was enabled to pour forth these desires, was, to know the Source and Fountain whence light and truth were to come; for had he not known the source whence light and truth were to come, he never would have gone to the Lord, and asked Him to send out His light and His truth into his soul. And the *third* lesson of the blessed Spirit's teaching in his heart was to kindle these desires, and enable him to pour them out into the bosom of God.

Now a man may feel darkness in his soul, and yet not know where to get light. And this is generally the case with a man under the first teachings of the Holy Ghost. But another shall have gone a step further, and have been taught by divine illumination the Source and Fountain of spiritual life, and yet not have the power in his soul to breathe out his petitions and desires into the bosom of God. And therefore the third thing is necessary, viz., to receive a Spirit of grace and supplications into our souls, whereby we are enabled to pour our heart unto God, and to breathe forth the desires of our soul into His bosom.

1. Having, then, these three distinct and yet blended feelings working in his soul, David gives them vent in this earnest cry, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." His soul wanted light. And what made him want light, but a deep inward feeling of his own blindness and darkness? O how a living soul often goes day-by-day mourning under a sense of darkness! How unable are we to realise any one branch of God's truth, when our soul is in this midnight state! How impossible it is for us to find

our way to the mercy-seat, whilst we are thus groping for the wall like the blind, and groping as if we had no eyes! What a cloud of darkness, too, rests upon every part of God's Word, hiding every promise, spreading a thick mist over every invitation, and making the Scriptures to be to us as a sealed book!

Now when a soul is labouring and struggling under this Egyptian darkness, this midnight of the heart, it is often unable to breathe forth a cry for light, the mercy-seat being quite hidden from view. It is then where Job was of old, when he complained, "O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him" (Job 23:3, 8, 9). But when these clouds a little break, and the blessed Spirit begins to operate in the soul as a Spirit of supplication, the quickened vessel of mercy breathes out these desires of his heart into the ear of God. "O send out Thy light." "*Thy* light;" none other will suffice. "*Thy* light;" none other can dispel the darkness. "*Thy* light;" none other can guide my feet into the way of peace. That, I believe, is the deep-rooted conviction of every living soul. He cannot walk in the light of the sparks of his own kindling; he cannot, in these dark seasons, walk in the light of past experience; he cannot walk in the light of other men's judgment; he cannot walk in the light of the doctrines of grace, as he has received them into his understanding; he cannot walk by the *ignis fatuus*, the will-o'-the-wisp that gleams from the bog of his own corruptions; nor by the meteor glare of some wild delusion. The light which he feels he must have, is light communicated, and breathed into his soul out of the fulness of Jesus Christ; and he has a deep-rooted conviction, amounting to a thorough certainty, that only so far as divine light, supernatural light, is breathed into his soul, and shed abroad in his heart out of the fulness of the Son of God, can he see a single step of the way, perceive any beauty or glory in Jesus, discern his own interest in the everlasting covenant, or move one foot forward in the narrow path that leads unto eternal

life.

"O *send* out Thy light." He desired that light might be sent out. That is, that there might be a communication of it. The soul walking in darkness, and enabled under that darkness to pant and cry after light, is not satisfied with the conviction, however deep, that with God is light. The thirsty man is not satisfied with knowing that there is water in the well; nor the man who has lost his way in a mine, with knowing that there is light in the sun. One faint ray gleaming through a chink were worth to him a thousand suns, blazing, unseen by him, in the sky. And thus the benighted saint cannot rest in the bare knowledge that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," but his sigh and cry is that this light may be sent out of the fulness of the Godhead into his soul, so as to shed abroad an inward light in his heart whereby he may see the truth of God; whereby he may see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whereby he may see his name written in the book of life, and clearly discern his interest in the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" whereby he may see Jesus, and in seeing Jesus see his own eternal union with Jesus, and in seeing his own eternal union with Jesus may enjoy sweet communion with Him, so as to feel His presence in his soul, and have His glory revealed and manifested to his heart.

2. But David wanted something more than light. He says,—"*O send out Thy light and Thy truth.*" The Word of God is pure truth, and the blessed Spirit enlightens the understanding of Christ's people to know, and quickens their consciences to feel that "the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6). What wonderful things does God sometimes show us in His Word! How our eyes sometimes seem to be anointed with eye-salve "to behold wondrous things out of God's law!" (Ps. 119:18). Sometimes in reading a chapter of God's Word we see such beauty, such fulness, such sweetness, such glory in it, that it seems, as it were, to fill our very hearts. And what our souls want (I am sure my soul wants it, and it is my frequent cry to the Lord in secret that I may feel it) is to have this blessed truth taken out of the

Word of God, and applied to and sealed upon our hearts by the Spirit of God. I want no new revelation. Day by day I seem more satisfied of this, and more established in it—that all saving truth is in the Word of God. I seek no visions, I desire no dreams, I want no airy speculations; but when my heart is brought to lie at the footstool of mercy, this seems to be the panting and breathing of my soul—to know experimentally and spiritually the blessed truths that my eyes see in the Word of God, to have them opened up to my understanding, brought into my heart, grafted into my soul, applied to my conscience, and revealed with such supernatural and heavenly power that the truth as it is in Jesus may be in me a solemn and saving reality, that it may bring with it such a divine blessing as to fill me with grace, enlarge my heart into the enjoyment of the gospel, gird up my loins with spiritual strength, give and increase faith, communicate and encourage hope, shed abroad and draw forth love, and fill me with joy and peace in believing. I want truth to be my sword as well as my shield, my food to live by and my strength to die by, my spiritual nutriment here and my eternal enjoyment hereafter.

And I find this to be in me an increasing thing—I have never felt it more sensibly than for the last three months—to discard everything but the simple truth of God, only longing and crying unto the Lord to have His simple truth brought into my heart and sealed on my conscience by the Holy Ghost. Then I can join, and often have joined with the Psalmist in this prayer—if not in the very express words, in their spirit and meaning—"Send out Thy light and Thy truth," that is, that truth which I see in Thy Scriptures, that truth which is saving, which is savoury, which is profitable, which is sweet, which is humbling, which melts the soul at the foot of the cross, and conforms it to the image of Jesus Christ.

3. But we want this truth "*sent out.*" That is, not merely to see certain truths in the Word of God, and be content with seeing them there; but to have these truths "sent out" of the Word of God, and brought into our soul with such divine power and heavenly sweetness as to be ratified, and as it were riveted there by the hand of God Himself. Our minds, friends (at least, mine

is), are open to the vilest gusts of infidelity. I find these assaults from my own evil heart, or from the prince of darkness (for I cannot often tell from which of these two quarters they arise) continually lying hard at me; and sometimes these gusts of infidelity seem as though they would sweep away, not only all the truth of God out of my soul, but would sweep away the truth of God itself.

In such seasons, and when blown upon by such gusts, a man is brought to feel this—that truth in God's Word is not sufficient. He wants an inward evidence such as none but the Spirit of God can supply. He wants a divine authority persuading him with invincible power that the Bible is a revelation from God, an inspired declaration of the mind and will of God. And therefore he wants truth to be taken out of God's Word, and lodged in his soul. He finds that doctrines, however true they are, however good and Scriptural, as long as they are merely stored in his brain, afford no solid comfort, and bring into his soul no real satisfaction; but when they are lodged in his heart, and brought with divine efficacy into his conscience, they have a solid effect on him, bring into his mind stability, lift him up out of the things of time and sense, draw forth his spiritual affections, endear Christ, make His blood precious and His righteousness inestimably prized. But if the soul knew nothing of these conflicts, if it had not to pass through these exercises and temptations, it would be satisfied, readily satisfied, as thousands are, with merely seeing truth in the Word of God; but having these storms and tempests to go through, they blow away everything except the sealed and applied truth of God; and thus the soul that is exposed to these gusts is brought to sigh and cry unto the Lord that He Himself would rivet His own truth with His own divine power in the conscience.

But what was "the truth" which David sought to know, and realize its inward power by its being sent out of the fulness of the Godhead? Doubtless, the very same truth that saints are crying to be sent out now; and this can be nothing less than "the truth as it is in Jesus;" the truth of His blood as atoning for sin, the

truth of His righteousness as justifying us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; the truth of personal and everlasting deliverance from all curse and condemnation, that truth whereby the soul is made free, according to those words, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;" the truth whereby the affections are separated from the things of time and sense, and fixed on the realities of eternity; in a word, to know Jesus Himself, by His own sweet revelation, for He is "the way, THE TRUTH, and the life," and that He may be Himself enjoyed in our soul as the sum and substance of truth.

Every living soul, then, that is acquainted with its own darkness, its own unbelief, its own helplessness in spiritual things, and has been brought by a work of grace to sigh and cry after God, will, at times, as the Lord the Spirit works upon it, unite with the Psalmist and say, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth."

II. But David wanted this light and this truth to perform a specific purpose; to do a certain work; and therefore he adds, "Let them lead me." As a feeling of darkness made him desire the entrance of light; as a sense of his own treacherous, deceitful, and hypocritical heart made him want a communication of truth; so a conviction of his inability to direct himself a single step of the way made him cry out unto the Lord that He would send out this light and this truth to *lead him*. "Let them *lead* me." That is, let light be on one side and truth on the other: let them hold up my wavering footsteps, let them support my tottering limbs; or let light go before me to show me the way in which I am to walk; and let truth support me in the way that I may walk in the path upon which light is cast. A living man cannot, in his right mind, bear the idea of standing still—that is to say, standing still so as to have no spiritual work going on within; and still less can he bear the idea of going backward. He wants to go forward. He is often dissatisfied with his state; he feels how little he knows; he is well certified of the shallowness of his attainments in the divine life, as well as of the ignorance and the blindness that are in him: and therefore, labouring under the feeling of his own

shortcomings for the past, his helplessness for the present, and his ignorance for the future, he wants to go forward wholly and solely in the strength of the Lord, to be led, guided, directed, kept, not by the wisdom and power of the creature, but by the supernatural entrance of light and truth into his soul. The mercy-seat is continually covered with clouds: God hideth Himself, and he cannot behold Him: the truth seems obscured so that he cannot realise it. He often cannot find his way to Christ; he cannot perceive the path of life, nor whether his feet are in that path. He sees so few marks of grace in his soul, and feels so powerfully the workings of sin and corruption; he finds so few things for him, and so many things against him, that he often staggers, and is perplexed in his mind, and seems almost to come to a feeling in his heart that he is destitute of the grace of God altogether, that the secret of the Lord is not with him, but that he is a hypocrite in Zion, who has never had even the beginning of wisdom communicated to his soul.

When thus harassed and perplexed, he will at times and seasons, as his heart is made soft, cry out with fervency and importunity, as a beggar that will not take a denial, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." As though he would say, "Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness. I know I must go astray, if Thou dost not condescend to guide me. I have been betrayed a thousand times when I have trusted my own heart; I have been entangled in my base lusts; I have been puffed up by presumption; I have been carried away by hypocrisy and pride; I have been drawn aside into the world; I have never taken a single step aright when left to myself; and therefore feeling, how unable I am to guide myself a single step of the way, I come unto Thee, and ask Thee to 'send out Thy light and Thy truth,' that they may 'lead me,' for I am utterly unable to lead myself."

Now, to be brought here, is to be brought into the feeling of a child that is unable to walk except its parent holds it up; into the state of a traveller in an unknown country, who is unable to find his way except he has a guide; into the condition of a defenceless wife, who is unable to protect herself from assaults and violence,

and looks to her husband to interpose in her behalf. And are not these the very characters that the church of Christ sustains—a little child—a pilgrim—and a wife? and to be brought into these states of experience, is to be an heir of the promises which are yea and amen in Christ.

III. But David, in desiring to be led, wished to arrive at a certain place; his eye was fixed on a certain spot. The desires of his soul were to the "holy hill" and to God's "tabernacles." He was not resting in past experiences, mark you. He was not taking the present feelings of his soul as evidences, and resting on them as such. He was not where many are who say, "Because I pray, because I desire, because I hunger and thirst after God, therefore I am a child of God." But the hungering and thirsting and desiring and panting of his soul were towards a certain object, after a certain spot; and till he came there, he could not rest satisfied; and yet was unable to find his way thither except so far as light and truth led him and brought him.

He could not, then, dispense with light and truth for a single step of his road. He did not say, as a man might to a guide whom he had asked to show him the way to a town, "I thank you for your kindness, but the town is in sight; I will trouble you no further;" but he wanted light and truth—those blessed handmaids—to guide him every step of the way, not to leave him for a single moment, but to bring him thoroughly into that spot to which his eyes turned, and towards which every desire of his soul centred.

1. And what was that spot? "Let them bring me unto *Thy holy hill.*" What is this "holy hill" to which the soul of David longed to be brought? We read of it in the second psalm, where the Lord says, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The "holy hill," then, of which David here speaks is the "holy hill of Zion," upon which God the Father hath set His dear Son, that He might be King and Lord there, that He might there sit "as a Prince upon His throne, and the counsel of peace be between them both," where Jesus sits enthroned in glory, having grace in His hand to communicate to His poor and needy family.

Light and truth, then, David desired to be sent into his heart, that by them he might be brought unto this holy hill, and there enjoy sweet communion with the Lord Jesus. Depend upon it, friends, that whenever the Holy Spirit has quickened a man's soul into spiritual life, He will make him pant after an inward knowledge of Jesus. The blessed Spirit will never suffer a living soul to rest short of the Son of God as made experimentally known in the conscience; and made known there as a living Jesus, as a suffering Lord, as a bleeding Lamb, as "a High Priest, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," and as such, breathing into the soul which He brings to His footstool a measure of that holiness which dwells inexhaustibly in Him. No reckless Antinomian ever wanted to come to the holy hill. The hill on which he stands is the barren hill of presumption. He never longed in his soul, nor cried to a heart-searching God to bring him to the holy hill of Zion. He has no new nature whereby he thirsts after a holy God; he has no spiritual principle whereby he pants to know a pure and spotless Jesus. Sin is too sweet to his carnal mind for him to long to have it mortified and crucified in Him; he rolls it too much as a sweet morsel under his tongue, he is too madly in love with his darling lusts, to bring them to Jesus that He may slay them there. He brings no broken heart nor contrite spirit for a sacrifice unto the Lord; for if he can only get something to vamp him up in delusion and presumption, that he may have a name to live, and still retain his darling lusts, may still have his eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, he is well satisfied.

But the element of a soul that is born of God is to know a Holy Three-One Jehovah, a Holy Father, a Holy Son, and a Holy Spirit; and so to be brought near unto this holy Jesus as to receive a measure of His Spirit, to drink into His image, and to be conformed in some degree to His likeness. Whatever base sins I find in my heart (and I sometimes think that a more unclean, polluted wretch scarcely ever walked on God's earth), I know that, when God the Spirit works on the soul, there are breathings after a Holy Jesus. I cannot take my sins and my corruptions and

my base lusts unto God; I must leave them at the foot of the mount, as Abraham left the ass and the young men when he went up to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Our vile corruptions, our base desires, and our carnal mind must be left at the foot of the mount, if we would go up to the top of the hill, there to have communion with Jesus. And sure am I that, wherever sin is indulged, wherever the base appetites of our carnal nature are greedily plunged into, be it in thought or imagination—not to speak of word or action—it bars and shuts out all access to a holy God; it effectually excludes all communion with a broken-hearted and suffering Jesus. Therefore he who has not been taught this lesson—to trample at times on his base appetites and filthy lusts—knows nothing of what it is to live under the Spirit's blessed operation. But the desire of a living soul is to come to the holy hill, there to enjoy sweet communion with the holy Jesus; there to have his base lusts crucified by the Lord of life and glory: and glad would he be (as I at times have felt) never to be tempted or troubled by those sensual workings again. Aye, he would, if he could, live as holy as God is holy, and as pure as God is pure. But when he comes down from the mount, he returns, as on another occasion Abraham did, "to his place," and finds, again and again, the workings of that base nature, which make him sigh and groan.

2. Connected with this "holy hill of Zion," there were God's "*tabernacles.*" "Bring me to Thy holy hill, and *to Thy tabernacles.*" The temple erected by Solomon in Jerusalem, and the tabernacle set up by Moses in the wilderness, were but types of the true temple, the Lord of life and glory. The Lord Himself said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"—speaking of His own body. All the beauty and glory of the temple were, therefore, figurative; they typified and shadowed forth the glory of Immanuel, for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." God the Son has taken to Himself a body, according to those words in the fortieth Psalm, as quoted by Paul (Heb. 10:5): "A body hast Thou prepared Me"—a holy body, a sinless, spotless body; according to those words: "Therefore that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," and not only

a holy body, but united to it a holy, spotless soul. "He shall see of the travail of His *soul*, and be satisfied." "*My soul* is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). This holy body, as united with a holy soul, the two forming His spotless human nature, the Son of God took into union with Himself, and thus became the God-man, Immanuel, God with us. It is this glorious mystery of godliness that a living soul pants to know. We cannot approach pure Godhead, we cannot understand it, it is a mystery too high and too deep for us; for who, "by searching, can find out God?" "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11:7, 8). But when God would make Himself known to the children of men, He made Himself known by His only-begotten Son, the second Person in the glorious Godhead, taking into union with Himself the flesh and blood of the children; and thus we can, so far as the Lord gives us faith, approach to an invisible God through the visible God-man; as John says: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And, therefore, when Philip said to Him (John 14:8), "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" And why, but because as He says in another place (John 10:30), "I and My Father are one."

The desire, then, of every living soul (I am sure it is my desire when the Lord is pleased to work it in my heart) is to be led by the Spirit of God into an acquaintance with the God-man, to behold the glory of God in Jesus Christ; to see the Godhead shining through the manhood, and yet to see the manhood veiling and yet deriving glory from the Godhead; and thus to come to Jesus as a High Priest that is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him; to feel nearness of access to the Father by approaching Him through the Son of His love; and thus to enjoy sweet communion with Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God making Himself known by taking

our flesh and blood into union with Himself.

In this blessed God-man then do all the affections of the renewed soul centre, to Him do the eyes of the living family look for the manifestation of the pardon of their sins, to this glorious Law-fulfiller does every travailing sinner turn, that he may catch, by the Holy Ghost opening his eyes, a glimpse of this God-man, and in seeing Him may see himself justified in Him. And thus in the longing desires of his soul, and the breathing forth of his heart, it is that he comes to the holy hill, and to God's tabernacles. Not to worship an unknown God—not to worship the God of creation, nor the God of providence, nor the God of his own carnal imagination, but to worship God in the tabernacle, that is, to worship God as giving the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now the Psalmist felt as every quickened soul feels—that he could not come to this holy hill, that he could not be brought into any acquaintance with these tabernacles, except light and truth were sent out of God's sanctuary into his heart, to lead him and to bring him there. And thus, if we look at the experience of God's saints, we shall find that these two things are, day by day, more or less working in them, first, a feeling of their own ignorance, darkness, blindness, and sinfulness, causing them to moan, and sigh, and cry unto God; and secondly, coupled with this, the panting cry that light might come into their soul to disperse this darkness, that truth might be shed abroad in their hearts to make them free indeed, and that they, by seeing this light and feeling this truth, might be led every step, kept every moment, guided every inch; and thus surrounded by light and encompassed by truth might be led in this mysterious path unto God's holy hill, there to find the solemn realities of a Saviour's love and blood, there to enjoy sweet communion with the Three-One God, there to know that God dwelleth with man of a truth, there to feel that God has a tabernacle, and in having a tabernacle has taken up His abode with man, and by taking up His abode with man condescends to take up His abode in their hearts, and to manifest Himself unto them as He does not manifest Himself unto the

world.

Every living soul is more or less here. It is an experience which accords with the teaching of the Holy Spirit in every soul into which He has breathed life. Some branches of Christian experience all the family of God are not as yet led into: there are depths into which God does not see fit to plunge all His redeemed; there are heights up to which He does not see fit as yet to lead all His ransomed. But the experience which I have been attempting to describe this morning, and of which I may venture to say that the Psalms, that manual of experience, are full, He communicates to each in his measure of all His ransomed family. There are many things in experience which only occur at distant intervals, under peculiar trials and temptations, but this branch which I have been endeavouring to unfold this morning is a matter more or less of daily experience in the heart of every one whom the Spirit has quickened into a spiritual and supernatural life. The very panting of the soul after the enjoyment of these things implies a relish for and a foretaste of them. Such shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of the Lord's house. But as certainly as the hungry soul shall be satisfied with good things, so he that lives and dies without knowing what it is to have light and truth sent into his soul, whereby he is led and brought unto the holy hill, there to know a holy God; and dies without being brought into some acquaintance with the tabernacles of God, so as to feel that God dwells with men of a truth; he that lives and dies without the vital knowledge of these things in his soul, will die in his sins, and where God is he will never come.

The Sentence of Death in Ourselves

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Feb. 17, 1861

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." 2 Cor. 1:9, 10

We may admire Paul's grace, stand amazed at the depth and variety of his experience, and almost envy him the abundance of his revelations and consolations. But do we envy him his deep afflictions, his cruel persecutions, his heavy trials, his sore temptations, his unceasing sufferings for Christ's sake? When we read of his being caught up into the third heaven, and there hearing "unspeakable words which it was not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter," we may wish to be similarly favoured; but what should we say if we had the subsequent lacerating thorn in the flesh, the pitiless, merciless messenger of Satan to buffet us? We may envy him his abundant consolations; but do we covet his stripes, his imprisonments, his tumults, his labours, his watchings, his fastings? And what should we think, say, or do, were his lot to be our own, as he himself has so vividly depicted it? "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Cor. 11:25, 26.) Could we endure a tenth of such afflictions as he here enumerates?

But these things must be set one against the other, for there is a proportion between them, as he declares in this chapter:—"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort: who comforteth us

in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." (2 Cor. 1:3-5.) And to show us that these sufferings and these consolations, both in their nature and in their proportion, are not peculiar to apostles and ministers, he says, addressing himself to his Corinthian brethren, "And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." If no suffering, then, no consolation; if no affliction, no enjoyment; if no trial, no support; if no temptation, no deliverance. Is not this apostolic argument? Is not this gracious reasoning? Is not this sound divinity? Yes; so sound, so scriptural, and so experimental that it can never be overthrown whilst the Church of God holds this epistle in her hands and has the substance of it in her heart.

But it would appear from the context, that over and above his usual amount of sufferings, a short time previous to the writing of this epistle, a trial of extraordinary depth and magnitude had, by God's sovereign will, befallen him, for he speaks in the verse immediately preceding our text, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." (2 Cor. 1:8.) What that trouble was he has not told us. Whether it were an affliction in providence, or whether it were a trial in grace, or, what is more probable, whether it were a temptation from Satan of extraordinary magnitude and of long endurance, we are not informed; but we are told what it was as regarded its extent and magnitude, for he says he was "*pressed out of measure*"—as though he had no measure of comparison to determine its greatness, for he was so pressed down by it that, like a heavy load under which a person might lie, he could not tell its weight. It was beyond all his limited means, not only of natural endurance, but even of clear and exact description. And not only so, it was "*above strength*," so that had he not been supported by Almighty power, he must have been crushed under its weight. Nay even then, supported as he

was by Almighty power, so pressing was it that it almost reduced him to despair, for he adds *"insomuch that we despaired even of life."* He hardly knew whether he should be able to live through it, whether his mind might not give way, and whether he should escape even with the maintenance of his natural life or of his reasoning powers. He then goes on, in the words of our text, to show us from what quarter his deliverance came, and what was the effect which this trial wrought in his soul: "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

Let us look at these words, if the Lord grant it, in the light of the Spirit, and may he graciously help me this morning so to open them up in harmony with the word of his truth and his teaching in the hearts of his saints, that they may be commended with divine unction, life, and power to your conscience, that being enabled according to the measure of your faith to trace out the work of God's grace in you heart, you may gather up a comfortable hope, or be favoured with a sweet encouragement to believe that you are under the same teaching wherewith God blessed this eminent saint and servant of the Lord. But in doing so, I shall

I.—*First*, show you what it is to *have the sentence of death in oneself*. "*But we have the sentence of death in ourselves.*"

II.—*Secondly*, what is *the effect* of this internal sentence of death: *the destruction of self-confidence*, and *the raising up of a trust in God*: "*that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, *the appearing of God in answer to prayer*, and the putting forth of his Almighty power in *vouchsafing a gracious deliverance*: "*Who delivered us from so great a death.*"

IV.—*Fourthly*, *the present enjoyment* of that deliverance, and the *future anticipation* that in every time of need there will be an

experience of the same: "*And doth deliver in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.*"

I.—There is a difference between "*death*" and "*the sentence of death*;" and there is a similar distinction between the sentence of death *generally*, and the sentence of death in *ourselves*. Let me by two simple illustrations endeavour more fully to explain my meaning, and to clear up the points of distinction which I have thus advanced.

i. All men are doomed to die. Every tolling bell, every passing funeral, the closed shutters of the house of mourning, the cemetery gleaming with its spire and white monuments in the distance, daily remind us of the mortality of man. Men may try to forget or drown the thoughts of this gloomy guest that haunts all their banquets of pleasure, but sooner or later he will strike his dart into the bosom of all that sit round the table. But though death hangs thus as a doomed sentence over the whole human race, over every one old or young within the reach of my voice, yet how few feel, how still fewer tremble at that sentence of death which they must know daily impends over them! But now look at a criminal, who, by the commission of some capital crime, say murder, has brought himself under the sentence of the statute law. As long as he was innocent of the crime, though the statute book denounces death as the penalty of murder, it reached not him. But directly he had imbrued his hands in innocent blood, that sentence which before lay in the statute book harmless as regarded him, began to lift up its angry brow and launch forth its thunder against him. Conscience brings it home to his bosom, and he who never trembled before now trembles at the sight of the officers of justice. But in spite of all his tremblings he is seized, brought before a jury of his fellow-countrymen, and found guilty of the crime laid to his charge; the judge puts on the black cap, and ratifies the verdict by pronouncing sentence of death against him. Now that man has "*the sentence of death*" recorded against him. *You* might stand in the court and hear the trial; you might see the criminal pallid and trembling at the bar; though you could not justify his crime, you

might even sympathise with him in his mental sufferings and agonies. But however keenly you might suffer partly from horror at the act and partly from seeing a fellow mortal doomed to die, how different would your feelings be from his who is anxiously watching the faces of the jury as they come in with their verdict—from his, who is eagerly scanning every look and listening to every word of the judge—from his, who is hanging as it were between life and death, and whose hope trembling in the scale sinks at the word "death" almost into despair! Here then we have in the case of a criminal condemned to die "*the sentence of death:*" but still, though he has the sentence of death, he may not yet have the sentence of death *in himself*. It is in the criminal law; it is in the verdict of the jury; it is in the mouth of the judge; but it may not have reached his inmost soul. He may hope still to escape. The Queen may show mercy; he may still receive a pardon; he may have the sentence of death commuted into penal imprisonment for life. But when all hope is taken away; when every application to the Crown for mercy is rejected, when the day of execution is fixed, and he stands under the gallows with the rope round his neck, then not only has he the sentence of death *in himself*, for in a few moments he will be launched into eternity.

Take another figure to illustrate the meaning of the apostle. As long as you are in vigorous health and strength you may hear of sickness and disease, and you may see your weak and aged neighbours dropping around you almost like leaves in autumn. You may hear the funeral bell, and see the melancholy procession go to the cemetery, the hearse bearing away your next-door neighbour, whom you have so often seen and perhaps conversed with. But the sight does not touch *you*. The funeral bell strikes no note of alarm on your mind. You are young and healthy, sound and strong, and what is death to you? Yet the sentence of death is impending over you as it impended over your neighbour, who perhaps thought no more that he should die than you. But say that you were, in the very midst of all your health and strength, seized by some disease which is well-known to be sooner or later fatal: say that cancer or consumption laid hold of you, and that

after long and careful examination by an experienced physician, your case was pronounced incurable. Then the sentence of death would be recorded against you in the mind, if not by the mouth of the physician. The first glance of his eye, the first click of his fingers, have told him that the seeds of death are in you. He might not think it prudent to tell you; but even were you informed of it from his lips you might have hope that the disease might be palliated if not thoroughly cured, and that it might not actually shorten life, though it might abridge you of much of its enjoyment. But should the disease make rapid and further progress, should all hope now be taken away, so as to be but a matter of a few weeks or days, and you inwardly felt that any moment might be your last, then not only would you have the sentence of death by the mouth of the physician and its seeds in your constitution, but the sentence of death would be *in yourself*.

So you see there is a distinction between these three things—death, the sentence of death, and having the sentence of death in oneself. Now take these ideas which I have thus endeavoured to illustrate into spiritual things, and see how far they agree with the work of grace upon the heart and with the experience of a living saint of God.

ii. *The law is a ministration of death*, as the apostle speaks, "But if the ministration of death written and engraven in stones was glorious." (2 Cor. 3:7.) By the ministration of death is meant that the law as a minister or messenger from God brings death as message from himself. It speaks his words, which are, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Ezek. 18:20; Gal. 3:10.) But though the law speaks thus, and by so speaking condemns every human being who transgresses it, yet as death in a general way impends over all, and yet men go about their usual occupations as if they never were to die, so until the law is applied to the conscience by the power of God, though it is actually hanging over men as a sentence of death, yet it is not felt by them as such. The apostle describes in his own case how men are affected toward the law before it enters as a

condemning sentence into their heart. He says, "I was alive without the law once." (Rom. 7:9.) The law was hanging over him as a condemning sentence, as a minister of death, as a messenger of wrath, as a consuming fire, but he felt it not. As with a thunderstorm in the remote distance, he might hear the low mutterings of the thunder which once rolled over Sinai's fiery mount, or might see from far the play of those lightnings which scorched its top. But at present the storm was in the distance. He went about without thinking, or feeling, or fearing, or caring whether the law was his friend or enemy. In fact he rather viewed it as his friend, for he was using it as a friendly help to buildup his own righteousness. He had gone to it, but it had not come to him; he knew its letter but not its spirit; its outward commands but not its inward demands. He therefore speaks of himself as being "alive without the law," that is, without any knowledge of what it was as a ministration of condemnation and death. But in God's own appointed time and way, "the commandment came;" that is, it came with power into his conscience. He found that he could keep every one of the commandments but the tenth; for according to his apprehension and his interpretation of them, they did not extend beyond an external obedience. But the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," struck into the very depth of his conscience, for it was a prohibition from the mouth of God of the inward lusts of the heart, and that prohibition attended with an awful curse. Under this stroke sin, which before lay seemingly dead in his breast, revived like a sleeping serpent; and what was the consequence? It stung him to death, for he says, "And I died;" for the commandment which was ordained unto life he found to be unto death! (Rom. 7:9, 10.) Sin could not brook to be thwarted or opposed: it therefore rose up in enmity against God, took advantage of the commandment to rebel against the authority of Jehovah, and its guilt in consequence falling upon his conscience made tender in the fear of God slew him. It would not have done so had there been no life in his soul; but there being light to see and life to feel the anger of God revealed in the commandment, when the law came into his conscience as a sentence from a just and holy Jehovah, the effect was to produce a sentence of death in himself. And this experience which the

apostle describes as his own is what the law does and ever must do when applied to the conscience by the power of God. It kills, it slays the condemned sinner; it is a sentence of death in a man's own conscience, which only awaits the hour of death and the day of judgment to be carried into execution.

But the apostle, in the words before us, does not seem to be speaking of the work of the law in issuing the sentence of death. He had passed through that, had been delivered from it by a revelation of the Son of God to his soul, and been blessed with the love of God shed abroad in his heart, before he wrote this epistle and before he described the afflictions out of which the Lord delivered him, and in the midst of which he had so abundantly comforted him. He is not therefore speaking here particularly of the work of the law upon the conscience, but rather of those distressing trials, temptations, and exercises which in the hands of God bring the soul down, lay it low in the dust, cut it up as to any expectation in self, and slay it to any and every creature hope. *"We had the sentence of death in ourselves."*

iii. But let us now see the various ways in which these trials and exercises bring about the inward sentence of death. You will see from what the apostle says that it is not once or twice only that this sentence of death is recorded or felt. Thus we find him speaking of *"Always* bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus;" again, *"For we which live are a/way* delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor. 4:10, 11.) And thus again he says, *"In deaths oft,"* that is, spiritual and experimental as well as natural and literal; for he could only once die literally, though in deaths oft spiritually. And again, *"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."* (1 Cor. 15:31.)

Now what is life naturally and what is death naturally? Is not that life in which there is breath, energy, movement, activity? And what is death but the utter cessation of all this moving activity and vital energy? To die is to lose life, and by losing life to lose all the movements of life. Thus, when the Lord takes, as it were, out

of our heart and hands everything in which we once had life, in which we lived and moved and seemed to have our earthly, natural, and enjoyed being, and condemns it by his holy word, so as to record therein, and in our conscience as an echo to his voice, a continual sentence of death against it, he delivers us over unto death. And you will observe that none but the living family of God are so delivered: "For *we which live* are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" and observe also that the reason for this mysterious dispensation is to bring to light the hidden life of Jesus within, for the apostle adds, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And observe also the connection which this sentence of death has with the death of Christ: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." We must suffer with Jesus if we are to be glorified with him; must die with him if we are to live with him. (2 Tim. 2:11, 12.) His death is the exemplar, the model, and the means of our own; and as he had the sentence of death in himself upon the cross, so must we be crucified with him, that we may be conformed to his suffering, dying image. (Rom. 8:29; Gal. 2:20.) Thus not only is there a death by, under, and unto the law, so as to kill the soul to all creature hope and help, to all vain confidence, and all self-righteousness; but in the continual teachings and dealings of God upon the heart, and especially in times and by means of heavy affliction, painful trial, and powerful temptation, does the Lord by his Spirit and grace execute a sentence of death in all those to whom he is giving to drink of Christ's cup and to be baptized with Christ's baptism.

iv. But if there be a sentence of death in oneself it will produce some sensible, experimental effect. The apostle in the same epistle in which he speaks of being crucified with Christ adds, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14.) There is then a crucifixion of the flesh, which we may call a dying unto it by having the sentence in our own souls against it. Look at this in the light of your own experience.

1. What influence *the world*, for instance, naturally has over us and how we are sure to be entangled in it, except so far as delivered from it by the power of sovereign grace! Look at the hold that worldly business has over the mind when fully engaged in it. Look at the power which pride and covetousness have over the human heart; how easily we get entangled almost before we are aware in a worldly spirit, and are drawn aside into carnal thoughts, plans, schemes, and anticipations, and spend time and stretch forth vain and foolish desires after objects which we know can never bring with them any real peace to our conscience, or indeed any profit to our soul. The Lord, therefore, at times sees it necessary to put a check on this *worldly* spirit, to crucify the world unto us and to crucify us unto the world, by putting a sentence of death in it and upon it. But in order to do this he sends some heavy affliction, brings some painful trial, or allows Satan to set upon us with some severe temptation. What is the effect? An inward sentence of death against it. In the light of the Lord's teaching, as shining through the dark clouds of affliction and temptation, we begin to see what the world truly and really is—a dying world, agonising as it were in the last throes of death, and carrying upon its heaving, struggling bosom dying men and women, gasping, groaning, and falling in all directions. As with a dreary desert, or volcanic region strewed with wreck and ruin, covered with lava and ashes, no plant lives and thrives in its burnt and arid soil. Can happiness then be gathered from it? Do the flowers of Paradise, does the tree of life, grow amidst these ashes? No. According to the primeval curse, nothing grows therein but thorns and thistles. Is not this then the effect of afflictions, trials, and temptations; that every expectation of happiness or comfort from the world is effectually cut off; and that if we attempt to gather pleasure from it, all it can do for us is to lead us into snares, cast temptations into our path, and, as the miserable issue of such courses, to bring guilt and trouble into our conscience? In this way then do we learn to find and feel the sentence of death in ourselves as pronounced by the voice of the Lord against the world, and more especially against that worldly spirit which makes the world within a greater snare and a more dangerous enemy than the world without.

2. But look at it again as regards our *own righteousness*. How few even of the living family of God are delivered from self-righteousness! What a Pharisaic spirit is plainly and evidently to be seen in some of the best of men! How slight and superficial a view many who fear God seem to have of the depths of the fall, of the utter ruin and thorough helplessness into which it has cast the whole human race! What a slight, slender acquaintance have many gracious people with the corruptions of their heart, and how little they seem to know and feel of their inward leprosy, their wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, and what pollution and defilement are in them to the very core! But need we wonder at this when we see them so little tried, tempted, or exercised? It is for want of these inward exercises that there are so many Pharisees in the inner court, and so few lepers outside the camp with the covering on the upper lip and the cry, "Unclean, unclean," out of their mouth. This is the reason why so many are secretly trusting to their own righteousness; for until we have the sentence of death in ourselves, to cut up, pull down, root out, and destroy our own righteousness, we shall in some way or other, and that probably hidden from ourselves, put trust in it. But when we have a discovery to our heart and conscience of the holiness of God, of the infinite purity of his righteous character, and have a corresponding sense of our deep sinfulness and desperate depravity before him; when seeing light in his light and feeling life in his life we see and feel how holy he is and how vile we are, then a sentence of death enters the conscience against our own righteousness and we view it as a condemned thing, as doomed to die, as having no more chance of escape from the justice of God than a malefactor has of evading the law when he stands upon the gallows with the executioner behind him. We view it as a guilty, condemned criminal justly doomed to die under the wrath of God. Thus we die to it, as the wife of the criminal dies to him at the gallows' foot, and by dying to it, it effectually dies unto us; we renounce it; we see death in it, and it drops out of our arms as a corpse falls to the ground when death strikes its natural life out of it.

3. So again as regards *our own strength*. There was a time with us when we thought we could do something towards our own salvation; when we might repent, or believe, or pray, or praise in our own strength; when we proposed to ourselves a vast number and variety of good works, whereby we hoped in some measure to gain the favour of God, and if not by them altogether to scale the battlements of heaven, at least to secure a sense of the Lord's approbation in our own conscience. This was indeed a pleasing dream in which many have so deeply slumbered that they never waked out of it until they opened their eyes in hell. But what dispelled so pleasing a dream as this? What aroused the soul out of a sleep worse than Samson's or Jonah's? The loud and angry voice of the Lord in the conscience. And this voice spoke through heavy trials, powerful temptations, and a distressing sense of our thorough ruin in the Adam-fall. Here was the sentence of death passed and executed against this imaginary strength of ours, this thief, this robber, who would not only spoil the soul of the strength of Christ made perfect in weakness, but even rob the Lord himself of his grace and glory. So, then, how there issues as if from the mouth of God a sentence of condemnation against all creature strength under which it passes as a condemned thing. Does not the Lord himself say, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and again, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me?" (John 15:4.) And is it not the express testimony of the Holy Ghost, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly?" (Rom. 5:6.) Is it not also the express declaration of the apostle, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing?" (Rom. 7:18.) It is God that must work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13), for from him and from him only is our fruit found. (Hosea 14:8.) Thus we have the testimony of the word of God as well as the experience of our own hearts to prove to us that we have no strength to believe, to hope, or to love; no power even to command a good thought, no power even to raise a hearty sigh, to bid a single tear to drop from the eye, or a groan of contrition to gush out of the bosom.

Then again, as regards *our own wisdom*. Against this too, as against every fancied good in the creature, is the sentence of death recorded in the word and in the experience of the tried and tempted saint of God. There was a time probably with us when we thought we could easily understand the scriptures and could explain them to others; the little light which we had seemed to us much greater than it really was, and, what through pride and what through ignorance, it seemed as if we could understand all mysteries and all knowledge. There are few things young Christians are more blind to than their own ignorance and their own folly. But apart from any light upon the scripture, in our fancied wisdom we thought we could easily see our way through this trial, or mode of escape through that temptation; that we could shape our own path, design our own way, and model our own end, both in providence and grace. But after a time, when brought into very trying circumstances, so as to despair even of life, then we began to find that much of the light which was in us was darkness; that in ourselves we really had no wisdom to see the snares laid for our feet or to escape them; that whatever knowledge we might have of the letter of scripture or of the truth in the mere doctrine of it, a thick veil of darkness was drawn over the whole word of God as regarded our experience of its saving, sanctifying power; that we might read the Bible till our eyes dropped out of their sockets, and yet remain in ignorance of the sweetness and savour of divine truth as applied to the heart by the power of God. We began also to see from innumerable stumblings and staggerings, backslidings and wanderings, slips and falls, that we had in ourselves no real or available wisdom to guide our own steps into the strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life, or keep ourselves in it when found; that we could not direct our own thoughts and meditations so as to be fixed upon the things of God; that we could not experimentally understand the scriptures of truth, know the mind and will of God, or find any mode of escape from besetting sins or besetting fears. We thus began to know the meaning of those words, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise" (1 Cor. 3:18); and, again, "We are fools for Christ's sake." (I Cor. 4:10.) Our wisdom then

being shown in the light of God's teaching to be folly, a sentence of death was executed against it, and it hung as it were before our eyes as a crucified thing.

5. But then, again, there is *our own fleshly holiness* which is one of the last things with which we are willing to part. It is as if the youngest and fairest of the little ones of Babylon is to be taken and dashed against the stones. (Psl. 137:9.) The law may have cut to pieces our self-righteousness, as Saul destroyed the Amalekites with the edge of the sword. But as he spared Agag who walked delicately, and the best of the sheep and of the oxen, so we might have had some secret reserve of our own holiness which we spared, when everything that was vile and refuse we were willing should be destroyed utterly. But O, this delicately walking religion of ours! Must that go too, must that be hewed in pieces in Gilgal? Our long and earnest prayers, our diligent and constant reading of the Scriptures, our careful and continued separation from the world, our consistent lives, our devotedness to the service of God in the house of prayer, and in the observance of his ordinances, our attention to every moral, social, and relative duty—that is, assuming that we had rigidly observed all these matters—must all this fair, pleasing reserve of fleshly holiness, which we have toiled for so laboriously and won so hardly, must this youngest babe die? But do not mistake me here. I am not condemning those things, but condemning the wrong use made of them. They are all good as appointed means of grace, but when they are abused to lift up the heart with pride and self-righteousness, then it is necessary that we should be shown what is their real character, and that that they are so defiled by sin that they cannot stand for a single moment before the eye of infinite Purity. When, then, through trials and temptations, all this rubbish which we have gathered up with so much toil and labour, is scattered like chaff before the wind; when God discovers to the heart and conscience, in the light and life of his Spirit's teaching, his holiness and purity, and the glorious majesty of his all-seeing presence and power; when this fancied holiness of ours is dispersed to the four winds of Heaven, all its beauty becomes filth, and all its loveliness, shame and

disgrace. Was not this the case with Isaiah, when he beheld the glory of the Lord in his temple? What was his cry but, "Then said I, 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.) So was it with Daniel when his comeliness was turned in him to corruption (Dan. 10:8); and so with Habakkuk, when his lips quivered at God's voice, and rottenness entered into his bones. (Hab. 3:16.)

Thus have we seen, both from Scripture and experience, how the sentence of death is passed and executed upon all our righteousness, strength, wisdom, and holiness.

II.—But, to come to the *second* point, *let us now see what is the effect of this inward sentence of death.* Two things are effected thereby; 1, *the destruction of self-confidence;* and 2, *the raising up of a trust in God,* according to the apostle's description of his own experience: "*That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.*"

1. As, then, the sentence of death is felt in our conscience, it cuts off all hope of escape by the deeds of the law, and indeed by any word or work of the creature. To effect this is God's intention in sending the sentence of death into our heart. As an illustration, look for a moment at the condemned criminal to whom I have before referred. He is put in the condemned cell; he is there heavily ironed; the bolts and bars of his prison door are firmly fastened against him; warders are on the watch to prevent him from making the least attempt to escape. See him there in gloom and solitude, shut up without any hope of escape, or any possibility of avoiding his sentence. Or to revert for a moment to my second illustration. Look at a person upon his bed gasping for breath, emaciated to the last degree, worn out with pain and disease, in the last stage of consumption. Now both these persons, by the very sentence of death which they carry in themselves, are precluded from all creature hope; if they are to escape their allotted doom it must be by the interposition of some power distinct from their own. It must be in the case of the

criminal, by the Queen in a most unexpected manner showing mercy almost at the last hour; it must be in the case of the consumptive, by God himself almost working a miracle. Thus it is in grace. The effect of the sentence of death in a living conscience, is this, that we *should not trust in ourselves*. Can the guilty criminal, can the dying consumptive trust in themselves? How can they with the sentence of death against them and in them? But without this experience of the sentence of death, there will always be a measure of self-confidence. I do believe that every person, whatever be his knowledge of the letter of truth, however high or low he stand in a profession of religion, will ever trust in himself until he has felt and experienced something of the sentence of death in his own conscience, whereby all hope of escape from the wrath to come through creature obedience, wisdom, strength, or righteousness, is utterly taken away. But what a state a man must be in to have the sentence of death in his conscience, so as to despair even of life; not to know what to do to obtain deliverance, and all hope effectually cut off to procure it by any exertion of his own strength, wisdom knowledge or ability! If the danger is very great and pressing; if as Elihu describes, "his soul draw near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers," if God do not interpose perhaps at the last moment, what can save him from utter despair? And God has dealt so with many of his people, as to lay them in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps, until their soul is full of troubles, and their life draweth nigh unto the grave. (Psl. 88:3, 6.) But it is God's purpose thus to wean them from trusting in themselves, that they might look out of self to seek help from whom help comes, and hope in Him from and by whom deliverance will be granted. It is thus that the saint of God is taught to cast himself as a dying wretch, as a guilty criminal, as one past all help and hope, upon the bowels of free mercy, upon the superaboundings of sovereign grace, and to depend for salvation on the finished work of the Son of God, and the manifestation of that finished work to his conscience. It is easy to say, "We do not trust in ourselves." The lowest Arminian will say as much as this; but in what situation are we when we say that we are not trusting to ourselves? Say, for instance, that you were on the very borders of death; say that

every evidence of your interest in Christ was removed from your eyes; say that the law was discharging its awful curses into your bosom, an angry God frowning over your bed, conscience recording a thousand unpardoned sins, the king of terrors staring you in the face, and the death-rattle almost in your throat:—then to look round and see what you are in yourself as a poor condemned sinner, and not to have the shadow of a hope as springing from anything you have done or can now expect to do! Were you ever brought here in anticipation, in experience? Here you would have learnt so to have the sentence of death in you as to despair even of life, and thus be taught not to trust in yourself. But what a way is this for God to take to teach us experimentally! How deep-rooted must be our self-confidence that God is obliged, so to speak, to take such a way as this to root it out! If there were a tree in your garden but lately planted, it might be almost pulled up by the hand; but if it had stood long and struck its roots deep into the soil, if thirty or forty years had passed over its head, it might be the work of a day to remove it. You would need to bring axe and saw to cut it down, and then spade and mattock to dig about the roots, before you could pull it up from the bottom. So God knows what a deep root self-confidence has struck the human breast. It is not then a slight effort that will pull it out thoroughly; he must dig deep, and that with his own hands, and pull it out by the very roots, that he may plant in it the tree of life of his own providing, even Christ in the heart, the hope of glory. Then think not that you are hardly dealt with, or that God is your enemy, because he at times brings into your conscience this most painful sentence of death. Is he an unkind surgeon who, when a patient goes to him with a cancer in her breast, cuts out the diseased part? She may shrink and wince and cry under the keen knife, but the operator knows that every diseased part must be clean cut out, or the disease will spread and be worse than before. And is God unkind if he puts his knife deep into your heart to cut out the cancer of self-righteousness and vain confidence, which even now is mining within? For if there be any left, it will assuredly grow again. Yet it will grow again, for, like the cancer, the roots are too deep to be fully got out, and therefore again and again must the keen knife be thrust in. But

his hand is as skilful as it is powerful. He will not let us bleed to death under his hand. All that he does, he does for our good; and this is the object of all these dealings, that we should not trust in ourselves.

2. But this is not the only effect. As, when the old worn-out or barren tree is cut down and taken out of the garden, it is only preparatory to the planting of another and better in its room; as when the cancer is cut out it is that the breast may kindly heal and health be restored, if God please to bless the operation, so the sentence of death is not to destroy but to save, not to kill, but to make alive. Out of this sentence of death then, there springs by the power of divine grace, *a trusting in God "which raiseth the dead."* Most men, and indeed, in a sense, many even of those who desire to fear God's name, are practical atheists. As far as regards vital faith, they live without God, and without hope in the world. They know little or nothing of any close dealings with God, as not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27); and indeed, so far from coveting any nearer acquaintance with him they view him rather as an enemy, and thus, if I dare use the expression, think him best at a distance. And indeed, how few of the Lord's own family are brought into any intimate union and communion with the God of all their mercies! And why? Because they have not yet felt their deep need of him; therefore God and they are as if strangers to each other. But the Lord will not suffer his people to be always strangers to him: they shall not live and die alienated from the life of God. Though sometime alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works, yet having reconciled them unto himself through the blood of the cross, he will bring them near to his bosom, will make it manifest that they have a place in his eternal love and an interest in the finished work of his dear Son. It is for this reason that he sends the law with its curse and bondage into their conscience, to purge out that miserable self-confidence which keeps them looking to themselves and not unto him. As, then, this is driven away like the smoke out of the chimney by the furnace which God hath set in Zion, and they find that unless God appear for them they must sink for ever, they begin to look out of themselves that they may find some hope or

help in the Lord. And as the Lord is pleased to help them with a little help, and to raise up and strengthen faith in their heart, they look unto him, according to his own invitation, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." And what a God they have to look to! He is described in our text as he who "*raiseth the dead.*" These words admit of several explanations.

1. First, as simply pointing out the *Almighty power of God*. Think, for a moment, of the multitudes who have died since the creation of the world. To concentrate more closely your thoughts, think of some individual who died a hundred years ago, or a thousand years ago. Where is he? Open the grave: where is the body committed to it? A heap of dust; and how much of that dust which was once a human being has long ago been scattered to the winds? How almighty then must be the power of God to collect from the four winds of heaven, the scattered dust of the millions of human beings who have been interred since the foundation of the world! Let us assume for a moment that you are a believer in Jesus. The time must come when your body must be laid in earth till the resurrection morn, in the sure hope that God will then raise you from the dead; that he will know your sleeping dust, call up your body from its narrow bed, and re-unite it to your glorified soul. Mighty must that power be to raise up millions in the twinkling of an eye at the sound of the great trump! But if, as the Apostle here intimates, God must exert the same power in delivering a soul from going down into the pit that he will put forth when he raises up the sleeping dust of millions, what a view it gives us of that mighty power which is needed to liberate, to deliver, and to bless a soul under the sentence of death! Yet nothing less than the same almighty power which raises the dead out of the grave, can raise up a soul sinking under wrath and condemnation unto a good hope through grace.

2. But take the words in another sense: view them as having a reference to *the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, which Scripture ascribes again and again to the mighty power of God. We have in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, a comparison drawn between the power put forth by God in raising Christ from

the dead and the exceeding greatness of his power to those who believe, and it seems plain from the language of the apostle, that this power is one and the same. (Eph. 1:19, 20.) How great then must that power be! Now the apostle says of himself that he was reduced by the trial which came upon him in Asia to that degree of self-despair that he could not trust in himself; but was compelled by the necessity of the case, as well as led and enabled by the inward teaching of the Spirit and the promptings of his grace, to cast the whole weight of his sinking soul upon him "who raiseth the dead." He had, no doubt, a view in his soul of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of the power that God displayed in raising up his dear Son when he had sunk into the tomb under the weight of the sins of millions; and thus looking up to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, as having highly exalted him to the right hand of his power, he felt he could trust in him as able to support him under, and deliver him out of his pressing trial.

3. But take another sense of the words: God "raiseth the dead" when *he quickens the soul into spiritual life*. Paul wanted the exertion of the same power, the manifestation of the same grace, and a display of the same sovereign authority, as that whereby he had been called and quickened at Damascus' gate. Many think that when life has been once implanted in the soul there is power to exercise faith. But such persons have never passed through severe trials and powerful temptations, or they would speak a purer language. I am sure that we have no more power to believe after the Lord has called us than we had before. We therefore need that the Lord should put forth again and again the same power which he manifested in raising us up from the death of unregeneracy.

4. But there is one meaning more of the words "*God which raiseth from the dead,*" for you will observe it is in the present tense, and therefore implies some continued actings of that mighty power. In this sense therefore God may be said to raise the *dead in self-condemnation*, those who are, through the strength of temptation, sunk into self-despair, and have no hope

but in the power of God to raise them up out of that sentence of condemnation and death, which they carry in their own consciences. Have you not sometimes fallen down before God with a feeling sense in your soul that none but he can save you from death and hell; that it must be an act of his sovereign grace to give you any present or even any hope of future deliverance; that to have your sins pardoned and your soul saved with an everlasting salvation, must come from the bowels of his free mercy; and that he, and he alone, can exercise that power in saving you from what you have most justly merited, even the lowest hell?

If, then, you have felt anything of the sentence of death in yourself and have been brought no longer to trust in yourself, but in God which raiseth the dead, you have had wrought in your soul a measure of the same experience that Paul speaks of as wrought in his. But remember this: a man may have a sentence of death in himself, yet never know what it is to trust in God which raiseth the dead. Saul had the sentence of death in himself when he fell upon his sword. Ahithopel had the sentence of death in himself when he went home and hanged himself. Judas had the sentence of death in himself when he put a halter round his neck. Many such characters have lived and died in awful despair under the tremendous displeasure of God, who never were able by his power and grace to trust in him which raiseth the dead. It is not then conviction, or condemnation, or doubt and fear, nor even a distressing sense of your state before God that can save your soul. These things are necessary to bring you down to his feet; but you must have something given beyond this, even a living faith, whereby you trust in God which raiseth the dead, and cast the whole weight of your soul upon him who is able to save from death and hell.

Now can you find in your conscience those two distinct acts—1, condemnation by the sentence of death in yourself, and yet, 2, a measure of faith communicated to your soul, whereby, looking up to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who raised him from the dead, you feel that you can put your trust in him? But

how can you do this if you have no ground to go upon? which brings me to the third point, viz.:

III.—To show how God wrought this faith in his apostle's heart, and "*vouchsafed him a gracious deliverance: Who delivered us from so great a death.*" It was "a great death." The death was so great that it must have killed him if God had not interposed. And so your sins will kill you and sentence your soul to eternal condemnation unless you get some deliverance from their guilt, filth, and power from the same God of all grace from whom Paul got it, and receive it into your breast as a message from Him with the same savour and sweetness that he experienced when he felt that as his afflictions abounded, so his consolations abounded also.

1. "*Who delivered us from so great a death.*" Now in delivering the apostle, the first thing God delivered him from was self-despair. There are two things, the exact opposites of each other, which are greatly to be dreaded, and I hardly know which is the worse, for if one has slain its thousands, the other has slain its tens of thousands: *self-confidence* and *despair*. Despair has slain its thousands; self-confidence its tens of thousands. The Lord keep us from both, for the path to heaven seems to lie between the two: on the one hand rise the lofty crags of presumption, on the other sinks the precipice of despair. God delivered Paul from *despair*, for he tells us that he despaired even of life. I do not say that a child of God ever falls into real despair, but he may feel as much of it as for a time stops the voice of prayer, grievously hinders, if it do not altogether destroy, the actings of faith, and leaves the soul in possession of little else but a sense of guilt and misery. To break up, then, those dark and gloomy clouds of despondency, the Lord graciously sent a ray of hope into the apostle's heart. He does not tell us *how* it came; but it evidently must have come, or he could not have had the deliverance of which he speaks. It might have been by bringing to his recollection his past dealings with him; it might be by applying some passage of scripture to his heart with power; it might be by favouring him in an unexpected manner with a Spirit of grace and

of supplications, enabling him to pour out his heart before him; it might be by vouchsafing a sense of his gracious presence to support him under his trial, and give him some testimony that he would in due time appear. For in all these ways the Lord deals with his people in delivering them out of temptations and trials. Thus he sometimes delivers by sending a promise into their heart; sometimes by shining with a peculiar light upon a passage of his holy word; sometimes by a blessed manifestation of Christ and a revelation of his Person, blood, and work; and sometimes by strengthening faith and drawing it forth upon his own promises, so that the soul holds him by his own faithfulness, as Jacob held the angel. But in whatever way the apostle was delivered there was a most blessed reality in it, so that he could say in the language of the firmest confidence, "Who delivered us from so great a death." The Lord assured him that however great was the death he should not die under it, but live through it and come out of it unharmed, as the three children came out of the fire and not a hair of their head was singed. So in love to the soul of Hezekiah, he delivered it from the pit of corruption. (Isa. 38:17.) So he assured repenting David by the mouth of Nathan, "The Lord hath put away thy sins; thou shalt not die." (2 Sam. 12:13.) It was "a great death," so great that none but the Lord could deliver him from it. But the Lord did deliver him, as he will deliver all that trust in him; and this deliverance gave him a most blessed testimony that the Lord was his God.

2. But you may depend upon it that he was not delivered except *in answer to prayer and supplication*; for the effect of a beam of hope shining into the mind or of any manifested presence of the Lord of life and glory, is to raise up a Spirit of prayer and to enable the heart to pour itself out before him. Indeed we may lay it down as a most unerring rule that whenever the Lord is pleased to pour out upon the soul a Spirit of prayer, he is sure in his own time and way to give the answer; for he sends that Spirit of prayer as a forerunner of the answer. It is meant to draw the promise out of his hands and to bring deliverance out of his breast. To be in guilt and condemnation, or under trial and temptation, and yet to be enabled by the power of God to pour

out the heart before him; to confess our sins, to seek his face, to call upon him for mercy, and wrestle with him that he would in due time appear,—this is like the dawning of the day before the sun rises; it is like the parting of the clouds in the midst of a storm, like the hushing of the wind in gale, like the blooming of the grape before we have the fruit,—all being certain heralds and indications of good things to come, and intimations that the Lord will deliver us. Now in proportion as the soul sinks, so must it rise. If you sink very deep, you will need a very long arm and a very strong arm to pull you out. If you fell into a well of only two, three, or four feet depth from the surface of the soil, you might extricate yourself; if it were six or eight feet deep, you would need help from another; but O, if it were twenty or thirty feet deep, how much more then would you require assistance from above to deliver you from death! So in grace: if you have little trials, you will need but little support under them; if your sinkings be few and small, few and small will be your risings; should you sink lower than usually, you will need to be raised up more than usually; but should you sink very deep into trouble and sorrow, then you will need the display of such a mighty and supernatural power to pull you up and lift you out and bring you to the very bosom of God as perhaps you have not yet experienced since you made a profession.

IV.—But, to come to our last point, the apostle not only had experienced a blessed deliverance from so great a death, but he was in some measure *enjoying it at the time*, and in the strength of faith was *anticipating similar blessings for the future*. "*And doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.*" This is one of the richest mercies of delivering grace, that when the Lord is pleased in any measure to bless the soul he does not leave it as he found it, but goes on to bless it more and more, so that day by day it sees and acknowledges God's delivering hand. Now it may not be above once or twice or thrice in our lives that we are plunged into very deep trouble, brought into such trying circumstances as I have described, so as to despair even of life. But all through the course of our spiritual life, we shall know something of being continually delivered over unto death. As the

apostle says, "I die daily." The sentence of death will be ever taking place in our conscience against our strength, wisdom, righteousness and holiness; not indeed always or often to the same degree, to overwhelm the soul in guilt or despair, but sufficiently to keep alive the sentence of condemnation in the breast, sufficiently to make us feel that we are still in the flesh, and carry about with us a body of sin and death. The criminal, according to my figure, might be respited; he might be delivered from the hand of the executioner, but he would be remitted to penal servitude for the rest of his life, and thus still carry about with him the sentence of death, though delivered from its full execution. So the Christian; though delivered from death eternal by the blood of the Lamb and from death spiritual by regenerating grace, still he carries with him the sad mementos of the fall. He still is reminded of what he has been and what he ever must be but for the grace of God. Thus there is a continual sentence of death in the conscience of the man who lives and walks before God in godly fear. Every day sentence of death is recorded in his conscience against the world without and the worldly spirit within; against pride in its risings; against covetousness in its workings; against self-righteousness in its deceptive movements; against the flesh in all its cravings. Thus more or less a daily sentence of death is passed in a godly man's conscience, so that he dies daily in that sense as to any hope or expectation in himself. And as he thus dies in self, the Lord keeps giving him deliverance—not to the same extent, not in the same marked way as in times passed when he needed the special deliverances of which I have spoken. These he does not now need; but deliverances suitable to his actual state and case; deliverance from coldness, carnality, and death by communicating a spirit of prayer; deliverance from love of the world, by dropping in a taste of love divine; deliverance from the snares spread in his path by causing godly fear to spring up in the heart; deliverance from the power of sin by showing him that he is not under the law but grace. The Lord is always delivering his people—sometimes from evil, sometimes from error, and sometimes from the strength and subtlety of the flesh in all its various deceptive workings. The Lord is ever putting forth his

mighty power to deliver the soul. It is but once a year that the trees are sharply pruned; but the good gardener is ever watching how they are going on. And so in grace: sharp pruning times may be rare, yet the husbandman is ever attending to the state of his vine, and purging (or "cleansing," as the word means) the branches that they may bring forth more fruit. Does not he himself say, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment!" (Isai. 27:3.)

2. And this present deliverance *made him look forward* confidently *to the future*: "In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." The Lord's delivering hand experienced day by day not only makes and keeps the conscience tender, but faith trusting, hope expecting, and love flowing. He who being thus favoured looks to the Lord day by day as his only hope and help, can also look forward even to expiring moments, trusting that when death comes the Lord will be with him even in nature's darkest hour, to smile upon his soul, to give him a peaceable death-bed, and then to take his ransomed spirit to be for ever with himself in the realms of eternal bliss.

How kindly, then, yet how wisely, does the Lord deal with his people! If he afflict them, it is in mercy; if he cast them down, it is to raise them up; if he bring a trial, it is as a preparation for deliverance; if he send a sentence of death into their conscience, it is not to execute it and hang them up like a murderer upon the gallows to be a spectacle to men and devils; but to prepare them for the communication of his grace, to make a place for the manifestation of his dying love, to work in them a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, that instead of being, as they deserve, hung upon a gibbet, the scorn of men, they might be monuments in heaven, and that to all eternity, of the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of redeeming love and superabounding grace.

SERVANTS AND SONS

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, July 4, 1841, at Zoar Chapel,
Great Alie Street

"And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth ever." John 8:35

No circumstances can arise in the visible church of God, for which there is not a provision already made in the Scriptures of truth; no heresy can spring up, for which there is not some effectual antidote: no error can come abroad in the face of day, for which there is not there some adequate remedy; no character can arise, whose features have not been there traced out; no delusion, stratagem, or deceit of Satan can start up, which is not to be found already exposed and condemned in the word of God. Not that these things are to be found on the surface, not that they are visible to ordinary observers, but they are hidden in the depths of God's word a part of those secrets which are with them that fear the Lord. It requires, indeed, Divine illumination to see, and Divine inspiration to feel and understand, truth as opposed to all such errors. And, generally speaking, we find, when any new doctrine arises in the visible Church of Christ, or any plausible error which opposes the truth of God, or is calculated to binder the growth of saints, or in any way to tarnish the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lord raises up some one or more instruments in his hands, whom he enlightens into an acquaintance with the truth, and whom he enables to testify as faithful witnesses and iron pillars against that error, whatever it may be. And such stand up, clothed in the armour of God, taught of the Holy Ghost, and bringing forth out of the word of God those weapons of warfare which are made instrumental in pulling down error and building up truth. I would fain hope that I see raised up in different places faithful witnesses who are boldly testifying against the death that prevails in the Calvinistic churches, and contending for the power of vital godliness.

But I proceed to consider the words that now lie before me.

The text from which I hope, with God's blessing, to speak a few words this morning, is pregnant with heavenly truth. It aptly describes the state of the Church of God in the days in which we live. It is a bright mirror, in which the features of the visible Church of God are now reflected, and, doubtless, have been similarly reflected in all ages since Christ set up his Church upon earth. It will be, therefore, my business, with God's blessing, this morning, to bring out of this text, as far as the Lord has been pleased to lead me into it, such instruction as he may condescend to bless to your soul? "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever."

Our translators do not seem to me to have understood the meaning of the text, for they have written the word "son" with a capital letter, as though it meant Christ, the Son of God, whereas it means a son in a house generally, as opposed to a servant.

The Lord brings this forward as a comparison, a metaphor, an illustration, and then leaves it. He did not then vouchsafe to interpret his meaning. He left it to be explained by the Spirit, in the epistles of his inspired apostles. He merely threw out a truth, and left it without further explanation. And that this is the meaning of the words, I shall endeavour to show from other parts of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

In the Scriptures of the New Testament, we find mention made in several places of "the house of the God." Now, I believe, the Scriptures of the New Testament never, in any one instance, mean, by "the house of God," any material building. It has come to pass, through the tradition received from the fathers, that buildings erected by man, collections of bricks and mortar, piles of squared and cemented stones, are often called "the house of God." In ancient Popish times they invested a consecrated building with the title of God's house, thus endeavouring to make it appear as though it were a holy place in which God specially dwelt. They thus drew off the minds of the people from any

internal communion with God, and possessed them with the idea that he was only to be found in some holy spot, consecrated and sanctified by rites and ceremonies. The same leaven of the Pharisees has infected the National Establishment; and thus she calls her consecrated buildings, her piles of stone and cement, "churches," and "houses of God." And even those who profess a purer faith, who dissent from her unscriptural forms, have learned to adopt the same carnal language, and even they, through a misunderstanding of what "the house of God" really is, will call such a building as we are assembled in this morning, "the house of God." How frequently does the expression drop from the dissenting pulpit, and how continually is it heard at the prayer-meeting, "coming up to the house of God," as though any building now erected by human hands could be called the house of the living God. It arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and is much fostered by that priestcraft which is in the human heart, inciting us to believe that God is to be found only in certain buildings set apart for his service. The ancient temple was indeed "the house of God," for it was typical of Jesus. God did indeed manifest his presence and glory there, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament continually call it by that name. "I was glad," says David, "when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 122:1). "I went with them to the house of God" (Ps. 42:4). "This house," says Solomon, "which is called by thy name" (2 Chron. 6:33). The ark of the covenant, the brazen altar, the table of the shew-bread, the altar of incense, with all the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood, were typical of Jesus, in whom it hath pleased the father that all fullness should dwell. Christ is indeed the true "house of God," for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and he is the true temple, of which Solomon's was but the figure and type, according to the Lord's own words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). No modern building, then, can ever rise to the dignity, or I claim the title of that ancient temple, because the substance having come, the shadows have passed away. The holiness of the old temple was typical of Christ, as "sanctified by the Father" (John 10:36); and holiness has never been connected with any building since the Lord of the house has appeared upon

earth, and is again ascended up where he was before. But the expression, "the house of God," bears in the New Testament several different meanings. It signifies, **first**, "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven," the spouse of Christ, the redeemed from among men, the mystical body of Jesus. It is used in this sense, Heb. 10:21, "Having a high priest over the house of God;" and again, "Christ, as a Son over his own house" (Heb. 3:6). But it signifies also a Church of God, an assembly of saints, which is formed on Gospel principles; a Gospel church, as consisting of living members of Christ's body; and thus we find the Apostle Paul instructing Timothy "how he ought to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). So again, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). And again, "Ye also, as lively **or "living"** stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5).

But there is a third meaning of the words, according to which they signify a visible church, one in which there are sheep and goats, wheat and tares, living souls and dead professors, vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath; as Paul speaks "but in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour" (2 Tim. 2:20). With respect to the meaning of the word "house" in the text, I believe it means a visible Church of Christ; not the "general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven," not that glorious church which Jesus has purchased with his own blood, and clothed with his own righteousness. Nor does it mean a pure Gospel church, one of which all the members are living souls, if indeed such a church ever existed; but I believe it means a visible church of Christ, such a one as is spoken of in the text above quoted, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth." The same as is intended in that passage, "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17), that is, the professing church below.

We read in the text of two characters inhabiting this house. "And **the Servant** abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth ever."

I. There are two characters, then, spoken of as dwelling in the house of God,—the servant and the son; and the lot and appointed portion of each is declared by the mouth of Truth itself: "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth ever." We shall see, as we proceed, that there are really three characters that dwell in this house,—servants, sons in their minority, and sons arrived at manhood. But taking the broad line of distinction, which is established in our text, the dwellers in this house on earth, in this visible church, may be divided into two—servants and sons. We cannot have a more familiar comparison than this. It is one with which all that have a family, and can afford to keep a servant, are conversant. In every such household there is always a marked line of distinction drawn between the members of the family and the servants who wait upon them; and no attempt on either side can ever change the servant into a son, or the son into a servant. The sons and daughters may often, from necessity, perform the menial offices of a servant; but this does not deprive them of their birthright and original character. They may do all that a servant does, but their undertaking these menial offices does not alter the position in which they stand with respect to their parents; nor, on the other hand, can any acts of kindness, any acts of domestic intercourse, any inviting the servant to sit at the family board, at all do away with, or alter the real standing and position of the servant. He is a servant still, merely made use of for a time to do those offices which he has contracted to perform, and no kindness nor intimacy on the part of the family can ever do away with that original distinction—that he is a servant, and not a son. Thus, then, it is with the visible Church of Christ. There are in that church, servants, who never, by any process, can be made sons, and there are sons, who never, by any process, can be made servants. "The servant may ride on horses," as we read, (Eccl. 10:7), "and the princes **the sons of the King of kings** may walk as servants upon the earth:" but there is no changing their

original position, there is no destroying their real standing, no overthrowing their intrinsic and eternal difference. By a church, I understand a church that professes truth; no other deserves the name. The Establishment is not worthy the name of a church, and if ever I call it so, it is from the mere force of habit; nor do I allow an Arminian Church to be a visible Church of Christ; its name is "a congregation of the dead," that is the title which the Scripture has stamped upon it (Prov. 21:16). The real house of God is "the pillar and ground of the truth;" and therefore, if a church so called does not hold the doctrines of grace, it is not worthy the name of a church. In the remarks, then, that I shall drop this morning on a church—I understand by the term a visible Church of Christ, a church that professes truth, that stands upon Gospel principles, and bears Scriptural marks of being a Church of God. In these churches, then, such as yours, to which I am now addressing myself, there will always be not only sons, but servants, whom God, for wise purposes, has seen fit to employ in the performance of such offices as cannot be done without them. Mark, I do not say that God introduces them, but he suffers them to be introduced. Their coming in was their own act and deed, for which they must be responsible—a fruit of that presumption of which their hearts are full. But being in, and that according to Divine appointment, God makes use of them as servants for the family. For instance, in a visible church, there are often persons of wealth, substance, and property, who seem employed by God to keep things together. You will scarcely find any church in which there are not members who have some substance or worldly property, and the Lord makes use of them as instruments to support the cause, and do that which it requires silver and gold to do. Not that the poor members of a church are to look with envious and suspicious eyes upon those who are favoured with worldly substance, and make their money an evidence against them, if they bear marks of grace; for the Lord, who is no respecter of persons, though he will not have many such among his people, has doubtless some; and thus the poor members of churches have no more right to take a man's worldly substance as an evidence against him, than they are warranted to take their temporal poverty as an evidence for themselves.

"Let the brother of low degree," says James (James 1:9, 10), "rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low;" clearly implying that they were both gracious characters.

Others of these servants may be useful in visiting and relieving poorer members, receiving the ministers, and filling offices. Some may have gifts in prayer, and understanding the Scriptures, and, to use a common term, may "make themselves generally useful." But whatever situation or position they may occupy, they will still have in their minds all the feelings of a servant. Let a servant be invited to sit at the family board, he never sits there as a child; there is a restraint, an unpleasant feeling working in his mind, an edging away from the table, a sense of confusion, as if he were out of his place, a conviction that he ought not to be there. And thus, though he sits with the children and partakers of the children's food, yet there is working in his bosom an unwillingness to be there; he would rather be in the kitchen, would rather sit in his own corner, and not be at the table to which he is promoted. So it is with those servants in visible churches, who have nothing of "the Spirit of adoption" in their bosoms, who have no tenderness of filial feeling towards God, who cannot approach with spiritual access to him, so as to feel anything like the working of a child towards a father. In all their approaches to God, and in all their sitting together with the family, there is a bondage and a constraint; when they partake of the bread. It is with servile fear; when they drink the wine, there is no partaking by faith of the Saviour's blood; but guilt and bondage chain them down with heavy fetters. And however they may talk of liberty, however they may boast themselves in a presumptuous confidence, however they may enthrone themselves among the princes of God's people, yet, with it all, there is a servile spirit; there is nothing like spiritual freedom in their hearts, no liberty nor enlargement in their souls; no filial access to God, but all is a piece of wretched lip-service, bodily exercise, and slavish toil, which is done to pacify the natural conscience, but which is not the real feeling of a child towards a father.

But some of these servants, through the base pride of their hearts, shall exercise authority, when they can, over the children of the living God. It happens in families sometimes, when the children are young, that the servants, behind the parents' back, shall show them cruelty. The servant, grudging, as it were, the privileges of the children, feels a kind of base delight in tormenting those who are his superiors in station. His wretched servile heart rises up with envy against the embraces that a child receives from his parent; and knowing the day will come when the child now under him shall rise above him, in order to gratify his mortified feelings, he will often tease, and show unkindness towards the child, who, for a time, is under his care. I do not mean to say that this is a common case, but still there are frequent instances of it. Thus there is in servants that are in visible churches, who have a Gospel tongue and a legal heart, have a servile enmity, a base, illiberal, grudging spirit against the real children of God. Their eyes are quick to see that sons have feelings different from servants. They mark in them contrition, reverence, godly fear, simplicity, tenderness, brokenness of heart, very different from the proud presumption that works in their minds, very different from that seared crust of a hardened conscience under which their servile spirit throbs and festers; and therefore, being provoked at seeing, in the living family, marks which they find not in themselves, they are glad to ride over their heads in the chariot of presumption. And if they find, as they continually do find, any of the living family in bondage, trouble, and distress of mind, they delight to cuff and beat them, to take down the parents' rod, which the servant is strictly forbidden to use, and flog them for their doubts and fears, and their very tears of affection at their parents' absence. Sometimes these servants shall get into a pulpit, and instead of feeling any love or affection for the family, instead of sympathising with the sons and daughters of that Parent of whom they presumptuously claim to be children, all their aim and delight is to trample down and shoot their bitter arrows against every feeling of tenderness, contrition, and godly fear, every symptom of meekness, simplicity, and uprightness in the children, and to harden their fellow-slaves in presumptuous confidence, in enjoying what I may call the slave's

holiday, the liberty of the negro in the absence of the overseer, not the sweet, savoury, chastened liberty that the "Spirit of adoption" communicates to a child of God. Watch them with a keen eye, and wherever you see preachers building up professors in vain confidence, and wounding and distressing broken hearts and contrite spirits, trampling under their proud feet the groaning living family of Zion, depend upon it they are servants, and not sons, walking in a vain show, thrust by the devil, their father, into the pulpit, to torment and harass the souls of God's family. But the servant will always carry about with him the mark of a servant. Let a footman doff his livery and put on his master's clothes, he is a footman still; there are his clumsy hands and his gawky figure; he has not the air of his master; he is not at home in his new dress; you discern him at once under his master's garb. And so let the servants in the visible churches deck themselves in the dress of the family, they are servants still; their "voice is the voice of Jacob, but their hands are the hands of Esau;" they may talk of humility, but it is only the pride which apes it; they may speak of liberty, but their faces bear the stamp of bondage; they may boast of God as their Father, but their very countenances mark that they know him not in any other way than as a Master and a Judge. Therefore, watch them in every state. Some of them are under convictions—I mean natural convictions; **they** are servants still. Some are walking in vain confidence; **they** are servants too. Mark them in every state—watch them in every position; servitude is stamped upon them. There is nothing of the features of the child—there is nothing but that which a servant is, and that which a servant ever will be.

"And the servant abideth not in the house for ever." It is needful for him to be for a while in the house. As I was passing a church so-called this morning, I could not but look at the scaffolding reared up to the top of the steeple. A thought crossed my mind. The scaffolding will be taken down—the building will stand—but the scaffolding will be removed; and when the poles become rotten, they will be cast into the fire. So there must be a scaffolding for God's visible church; and when the church is built up in its fair proportions, and the top-stone put on with

shoutings, "grace, grace unto it," the scaffolding will be pulled down and cast into the fire. So these "servants abide not in the house for ever." They must do their work—they must perform those menial offices which are necessary for the family—but their time will come to depart: they "abide not in the house for ever."

In a family, a servant may be a very useful person, almost indispensable to the comfort of the master and the mistress. They shall, for this reason, bear for a long time with his fretful humours, and shall endure many things from him which much try their patience: but there is a limit to all forbearance: the time at last comes when the master or mistress can no longer put up with that insolence which they have endured so long. The servant is summoned into the master's presence, his wages are paid, he is dismissed, he is no more to enter the doors: he "abideth not in the house for ever," and when he is once turned out, he is never to enter again. Not so with a child. A child may be refractory, disobedient, rebellious, and even show insults towards his parents; but he is a child still; and as being a child, he will be chastised. The master does not chastise the servant; he dismisses him—sends him about his business—dissolves the tie that exists between them; but he cannot treat a son so. Though he is a rebellious child—a disobedient, refractory son—he is the father's. He has an interest in his bosom, he has a place in his affections, and all his disobedience cannot break the tie. Therefore, the father chastises him; and if the son, in a fit of passion or sullenness, runs away from his father's house, and, like the prodigal, "goes into a far country to waste his substance in riotous living," not all his disobedience, nor even his turning his back on his father's abode, can do away with the ties of blood and relationship, or ever make him not to be a son; and when, in contrition and repentance, he comes once more to his former home, the doors are opened to him as before. But "the servant abideth not in the house for ever." When he leaves voluntarily, or when he is dismissed, he leaves no more to return. The days, indeed, of his stay may be greatly prolonged, but he must leave one day or other. He may even continue until the family is broken up; but when the family is dissolved, he must leave then. So

there shall be servants in the visible Church of Christ who may remain with the family until the day comes for the house to be broken up, when the Lord shall come a second time unto salvation, and "the elements shall melt with fervent heat;" then when the house is dissolved upon earth to be united in heaven, when the members are broken up here below to be gathered into one harmonious body above, the servants and the sons are separated. The one are taken, and the other left; the sons are admitted, and the servants excluded; the doors are opened for the one, and shut upon the other. Hagar and Ishmael are turned out, and Isaac inherits the promise.

II. "But the son abideth ever." We have a very different character to deal with now—one of quite a distinct class, as well as totally different origin. In God's family, as I hinted before, the sons and daughters are of different ages. We find a large part of the living family spoken of in Gal. 4:1, 2, 3, "Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." In God's house, then, there are sons in two different states—sons in their minority, not yet arrived at manhood, and sons grown up, what is commonly called, of age. We will consider the junior branches of the family first. Many of God's children have derived consolation from that text, that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." How does he differ nothing from a servant? We must not take this expression in all its latitude, because he differs from a servant very widely. The servant does not owe his natural being to the father, he has no kindred with the head of the house; and therefore it cannot be true in all its latitude, that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant;" for he differs in very many things. But in the matter of personal experience, so far as his feelings are concerned, viewed as under bondage to the law, he differeth nothing from a servant, being under rigid rule and government: as the apostle speaks, "He is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father." There are, then, children, sons and daughters in God's house, who in their

own feelings "differ nothing from servants"—that is, they have "the spirit of bondage unto fear" in their bosom; they feel guilt, condemnation, and constraint working powerfully in their hearts; and it is the presence of these servile feelings in their breasts that in a way of experience brings them on a level with servants.

Doubtless some of you, when I was describing just now the feelings of a servant, were writing bitter things against yourselves, and secretly saying, "Ah! that is just my case—I feel all that constraint and bondage; I labour under guilt and fear, when I come to the table of the Lord; I cannot come to God as an accepted child; surely I am a servant and nothing more. Oh! I greatly fear that I am a hypocrite in a profession, and have not a spark of grace in my heart; but I have been thrust forward to do some menial office in the church, and my doom is, not to abide in the house for ever, but to be cast out and dismissed by the mouth of God himself!" But does not the word of God say, that there are sons in the house who "differ nothing from servants"—that is, in their own feelings? Then you may be a son, and yet feel bondage, constraint, and a want of power to draw near unto God with acceptance. You may be an "heir," and yet not have the "Spirit of adoption" to cry, "Abba, Father," and feel no sweet liberty of spirit in approaching a throne of grace, but be "shut up unto the faith which shall hereafter be revealed."

But we shall find, if the Lord enables us to describe the character aright, amidst all their bondage, some feelings in their hearts, which never existed in the heart of a servant. The indescribable emotions that soften and melt the heart of a child, knitting him to his parent, never lodged in the bosom of a servant towards his master. We shall find, for instance, in their hearts reverence and tenderness towards their Parent, though they cannot yet call him, "Abba, Father." There is no filial tenderness in the heart of a servant towards his master; he may respect him, he may be grateful to him for the food and clothing that he gives him; but there is no yearning of reverent affection towards him. Thus, in those living souls that are sons in God's family, but under doubts and fears, there are tender feelings of reverence towards God as

a Parent, working up from beneath all their constraint and miserable servitude. There is no searedness of conscience in them, nor callousness of heart; there is no disregard or disrespect shown to their Parent's word and will; there is no coming before him, as the servant comes, with demure looks and expressions of respect, and then behind his back turning him into ridicule and contempt or perhaps speaking disrespectfully of him to the other servants of the house. But in the real family, however weak they be, however guilty they may feel, and whatever slavish fear they may suffer under, there is some tenderness and filial respect towards their Parent. Some perhaps here have known what it is to have had a harsh father naturally, and have dreaded him so much as scarcely to feel any liberty in his presence. A harshness and reserve on his part kept them from going to him with those feelings of affection and love with which the child can approach his parent when he is kind and gentle to him. But still, in spite of all that dread which his reserve created, you had a tender reverence for him as a parent. You longed for this frozen barrier of reserve to be broken down, and your heart yearned for a smile from him. At any rate there was no disrespect paid to him behind his back and respect shown to his face; there was no siding with the servants against him, nor confederacy with them against his property or character. You could not approach him with the feelings of a child, but there was no plotting against him like a servant. Thus it is, spiritually, with many of God's living family. Though they cannot come into the presence of God with sweet liberty of access; though they cannot approach him with the Spirit of adoption as sons, yet there is a thorough absence of disrespect towards him, an absence of carelessness, whether he frowns upon them or smiles. There is in them a sort of indistinct, yet strong principle of filial reverence towards him, though, from the want of his fatherly smiles, there is not that affectionate boldness and childlike love which distinguish manifested son-ship.

But there are moments when the harsh parent relaxes his countenance; when he smiles upon the child, whom, for the most part, he treats with reserve and distance. The child is anxiously watching his father's countenance; when he comes into the room,

he looks at his father's face to see whether there be on it a frown of displeasure, or whether it softens and relaxes into a smile. And if his watchful eye catch his father's features gently softening into a smile, it encourages him to come forward; when, did he observe a frown, he would make a hasty retreat. So with living souls, there is an anxious watching of the countenance of God. "The eyes of all wait upon thee" (Ps. 145:15); so the eyes of a child of God are upon him, watching whether he frowns or whether he smiles; and if he but sees his severe forbidding countenance **for God is a severe forbidding judge in the law**, disarming itself of its frown, and gently dimpling into a smile, the child is encouraged to go forward; and when he approaches, and the father opens his arms, and gives him a glimpse of affection, he is astonished; and yet is enabled to tell his father how he loves him, and to speak out of his bosom the thoughts and desires that are passing there And yet, when he leaves his father's presence, he is astonished and awe-struck at his own boldness, and wonders how he could have ever been so daring as to break through that barrier which kept him from his father, or how he could speak to him with familiarity. Now, a servant never knows this. Towards the servant the master preserves **if he is a wise master** the same unvarying aspect; he is always kind, always civil; he does not frown with angry displeasure, nor smile with undue familiarity; but he treats him with distant kindness. That is just the way in which God treats servants. He does not manifestly frown upon them. They have not an inward sense of his displeasure, though they may fear it. They are like a servant who has slandered his master's character, or been injuring his property; when he comes into his master's presence, it is with fear and apprehension; his master, perhaps, takes no notice of it, but there is something in the servant's conscience that tells him he deserves a frown. And so with the servants of God's house. God does not frown upon them; for they never see his face. He preserves the same unvarying aspect towards them—bestowing providential favours, but neither frowns nor smiles; yet their guilty conscience, knowing their secret sins testifies against them inwardly of expected wrath and condemnation.

But the timid child, whom I have been comparing to a child of God when he has broken through this barrier, though he cannot tell how he has broken through it, yet does not speedily forget the impression that was left behind, nor the sweet breathing of affection in his heart. "Oh," he says, "how I mistook my father—he is not a harsh parent!" The child reasons on with himself: "Oh, what a mistake I have been making! I thought he was so cold, so distant, so reserved; but it is not so—it is only his manner! How he smiled the other day when I went near to him! How kind he was! What kisses of affection he bestowed upon me, and how he took me on his lap! How affectionate he was to me! I will go again!" Well, the child comes another day; the parent's countenance is not as before—there is no smile; and then he has to retreat into the old spot—to go back to his former suspicions and surmises. So the child of God has to fall back into the old spot of doubts, and fears, and bondage, and guilt, and condemnation, thinking it was all his own fancy or his own presumption, that it was not really from God; and he is condemned as having been so presumptuous and daring a wretch as to tell out the feelings of his heart, and say, "my Father," when he goes again, and obtains no access nor liberty, as before.

And so he goes on, sometimes hoping, sometimes fearing, sometimes getting a little smile, but much more often repelled with a frown, until at last, as the apostle speaks, "the fulness of the time comes," when the appointed season to favour Zion arrives, and the "Spirit of adoption" is shed abroad in his heart, enabling him to cry, with unwavering lips, "Abba, Father." Then he is enabled to put his hands into the wounds of his Redeemer, and with the faith of Thomas, he exclaims, "My Lord and my God." Then he arrives at his majority; he is no longer "under tutors and governors," for "the time appointed of the Father" is come. And he comes, as it were, into some degree of intimacy with his Father; he occupies a new situation; he stands in a new position. He is not, as before, continually tormented and harassed with guilt, and fear, and doubt, and wrath, and bondage; but he has a more endearing access, a stronger "Spirit of adoption," and is enabled to feel more of the flowings out of Divine affection. The

father in a family, though he loves all his children alike **if he has the heart of a father**, yet will treat them according to their different ages. To his grown-up son he at times communicates freely what passes in his bosom; he thinks him deserving of some confidence: he treats him more as a friend; he discovers to him his plans and intentions. The babe could not understand him; the child of a few years old could not enter into his father's plans; he does not, nor can he understand, what is passing in his father's bosom; therefore, he must wait till he comes to his majority; and when he arrives at manhood, the father will treat him with more familiarity. And though the son will still have all the reverence, respect, and awe which a son owes to the parent, yet, mingled with it, there will be more familiar intercourse, and a greater entering into his father's counsels. As we read, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." And thus this son, who is in a measure favoured with some intimacy with his Father, as his kind Parent discovers to him more of his standing, opens up to him the mysteries of his ancient covenant, and reveals to him more of salvation through Christ's blood and righteousness, becomes established and strengthened in the faith and liberty of the Gospel.

"But the son abideth ever." It is the irreversible blessing of a son, that he is never to be turned out of the house—that the union between the Parent and the child can never be broken, but that he is to reign with Christ through the ages of one everlasting day. This is a sweet consolation to God's family, that "the son abideth ever." How often is a child of God exercised, whether he shall abide for ever, whether he may not draw back to perdition, whether some temptation may not overtake him whereby it shall be made manifest that he is nothing but a deceiver and deceived! But the Lord himself says, "the son abideth ever;" let him be but a babe, let him have but the first beginning of spiritual life in his soul, he "abideth ever;" he has the same interest in the affections of the Father, is a fellow-heir with Christ, and has a title to the same inheritance as those who are of longer standing, and those who are his elders in age.

But sometimes the son shall get tired of the restraint of his Father's house. God is a wise parent, as well as a kind one. He will treat his children with the most tender kindness and intimacy, but he will never allow them to be guilty of disrespect towards him. Sometimes, then, the sons shall get weary of their Father's house; they are like the younger son in the parable, when he asked his father to give him his portion, and when he had got it, he went away into a far country, away from his father's house, from under his father's roof, and wasted it in riotous living. This is where many of God's children get. There is a restraint in God's house, where the soul is really not blessed with the personal and present enjoyment of Gospel truth, and restraint being ever irksome, the vain idolatrous heart thinks it can derive some pleasure from the world which is not to be found under the roof of the father. And, therefore, he gradually withdraws his steps from his father's house, seeks to derive some pleasure from the things of time and sense, erects some idol, and falls down to worship it. But, notwithstanding all this, "the son abideth ever." If he leaves the house, he is not to be an outcast for ever, he is not to be an alien; the father does not take his pen and scratch his name out of the will; does not dissolve the connexion between them, and scatter the relationship to the four winds. The father of all his people in Christ does not disinherit his dear children; and though earthly parents may disinherit theirs, God's family are never cast out of the inheritance. The land might be sold away from the family, but it was to return at the year of jubilee. It never was to be alienated from generation to generation; it was always to continue in the same family, and to be known by the same name. Thus God never did and never can disinherit an heir of himself, for the elect are "heirs of God," and as being his own heirs, are "joint heirs with Christ." Let them be disobedient children, they are still heirs, and if they sell for a season the inheritance, it will return in the year of jubilee. The true-born Israelite who had waxed poor and sold himself unto the stranger, was to obtain his freedom in the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:47, 54), and to return to his own house and his own estate. So the son who has departed from his father's house, and sold himself under sin, and become a slave to that cruel taskmaster, when the year

of jubilee comes, the year of restoration, and the silver trumpet is blown, shakes off his shackles and fetters, casts aside the livery of servitude, returns to his father's house, and is received with joy beneath his father's roof. Oh, what a meeting! The forgiving parent, and the disobedient child! The father dissolved in tears of affection, the child dissolved in tears of contrition! Whatever, then, be our wanderings of heart, alienation of affection, and backsliding of soul; however we may depart from God, so far as we are sons, we shall "abide in the house for ever," and possess an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those that are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." And it will be our mercy to abide in the house below as members of the family, without departing from it, until reunited to the family above, "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven."

Some of you here present this morning may have been holding up a shield to ward the arrows from falling upon your conscience, by speaking thus within yourselves, "Shoot away; your arrows cannot touch me; I am not a member of any Church; I am merely one of the congregation; therefore, your arrows fall by me to the right and the left, and not one hits me; I never was in the house; there is my breast-plate of proof, and all your shafts fall short of the mark." Let me, however, once more bend my bow, if peradventure the Lord shall direct the arrow through the joints of your harness. Are you a professor of vital godliness? Have you made any separation from the world lying dead in wickedness and the world lying dead in profession? Then be you, or be you not, a member of any Gospel Church, you are still a member of Christ's visible Church upon earth; you are still an inmate in the house below; and if so, you are either a servant or a son. Then weigh up, and examine well what are the secret feelings that, from time to time, take place in your bosom. Have I described your character as a servant? Is there an inward voice in conscience that tells you are standing in presumptuous liberty, and in vain confidence; that you have no reverence or godly fear; that you have no affection or sympathy toward the living family;

that what you do, you do out of constraint and burdensome bondage? that you never had any filial access to God; and that he never bestowed upon you one smile? Then you are a servant; and what is your doom? "The servant abideth not in the house for ever." Oh, cutting words, "the servant abideth not in the house for ever!" He is to be taken away out of God's Church, perhaps, visibly before men, or perhaps left to continue till that day, when God shall dissolve your union with the professing Church by dissolving the union of your body and soul.

But there shall be others who say, "I hardly know what to make of myself; you have puzzled me strangely this morning. You have been telling me that the marks of a servant are guilt, bondage, condemnation, and fear; I thought that these were marks of a child of God; I have considered these were evidences of a living soul. And if I am not much mistaken, you yourself, and that during your present visit amongst us, have brought these forward as marks of grace." I have never said that nothing but condemnation, nothing but servile bondage, nothing but guilt and fear are marks and evidences of Divine life in the soul. I have always said, since I knew anything of these matters, that there were in the living soul, when first quickened into a spiritual existence, fear and guilt and condemnation; but if you have been attending to the line that I have been attempting, however feebly, to draw, you will see, that I have been endeavouring to show the co-existence of other feelings, and those of a filial kind, with the distressing exercises of guilt and bondage; and endeavouring to prove how these two distinct sets of feelings work together in the same bosom. Because you feel guilt, wrath, doubt, fear, and condemnation, it does not prove that you are not a child of God; it does not prove that you are, but it does not prove that you are not. If it be guilt spiritually laid upon your conscience, it is from God; and if it be condemnation brought with power to your heart, it is an evidence of your being under Divine teaching. But I would rather look at other feelings which are working in your bosom. What tenderness there is toward God, what feeling of holy awe concerning him in your soul, what affection you have to the living, family, what trembling at God's

Word, what occasional access, what transient glimpses of his countenance, what sense at times of liberty in prayer, and what breathing desires of affection toward him, even though you cannot without guilt cry, "Abba, Father!" But as the non-elect have guilt and condemnation, as Cain, Esau, and Judas, when we come to evidences, we must confine ourselves to what is peculiar to the elect; and therefore, though fear, and bondage, and so on, exist in the elect as **feelings**, I dare not set them up as **evidences**. To build up a man in the mere evidences of doubt and fear and guilt and condemnation, is not according to the Scriptures of truth, nor is it according to the line that I trust the Holy Ghost has traced out in my conscience. I have, indeed, had in my conscience, guilt, fear, bondage, doubt, and condemnation; but I might, with great justice, write against myself most bitter things, if I could not trace other spiritual feelings, other heavenly tokens, other Divine marks than these—I might then with great justice consider myself nothing hut a servant in God's house; but I am glad sometimes to find some better tokens of grace than guilt and condemnation. Then, if you would weigh yourselves up in the balance of the sanctuary, you must look at other things in the scale beside the wrath, doubt, fear, guilt, and condemnation that you are exercised with. Is there anything in you resembling the babe on its mother's lap? It stretches forth its hands towards its father, though not able to call him by that endearing name, not able to clasp its arms around his neck, but there is still a reaching forth of its little hands with a desire to do so. If you are a child, there will be a stretching forth of your hands unto God; and more than that, nothing but his love can satisfy your hearts. The servant does not want the love of the master of the house; all that he wants is good wages, a good table to be kept and very little work; and if he can get that, what does he care for affection or anything like love? He wants it not, he understands it not. So the servants in God's house below. Let them have the high wages regularly paid them of man's esteem; let them have their abundant meal of doctrines and duties, and very little work of self-denial and crucifixion of the flesh; and they want no manifestations of mercy and love.

But if you are a son, however weak and feeble you may be, you will abide for ever in God's house; and he will lead you on, day by day, into a deeper acquaintance with his fatherly feelings toward you, strengthen your weak faith to enable you to lay hold of him more as a parent, and, at times, sweetly encourage you to pour out your soul at his feet, till you can cry unto him, "Abba, Father," from the depths of a broken spirit, without any taint of guilt or any suspicious whispering of fear.

SHAKING OF THINGS MADE, AND FIRMNESS OF THINGS GIVEN

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 24, 1853

"And this word. Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Hebrews 12:27, 28

When God gave the law upon Mount Sinai it was with fearful accompaniments. Inanimate nature herself gave tokens of recognition of her Almighty Creator, and trembled at His fearful presence. "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 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."

To these visible tremblings of the earth before her awful Creator the Psalmist alludes, Ps. 68:8, "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." So also Ps. 77:18 , "The voice of Thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook." To this fearful display of God's terrible majesty at Mount Sinai the Apostle Paul refers in the chapter before us: "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words" (Heb. 12:18, 19).

Now these accompaniments, when Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke and flame, and the solid earth shook, were to denote God's majesty, holiness, and justice, in the giving of the law. But there was something more intimated in the shaking of the earth. It was typical and figurative of the shaking of the foundations on which men rested. When the stable earth itself was shaken, all hopes built upon that earth were shaken with it. It also denoted the shaking of that earthly idolatrous worship which was prevalent, in order to make way for the Levitical dispensation which was to last until the coming of the promised Messiah. We gather this from the remarkable prophecy of Haggai, to which the apostle refers in our text, and explains. As this forms the groundwork of our subject, and is the key to our text, we will devote a few moments to it.

In Hag. 2:6, 7, we find the following prediction: "For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, and it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." In these striking words Haggai refers to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, when the voice of God shook the earth. "But now," says the apostle, quoting and explaining Haggai's words, "He hath promised saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." When was this prophecy fulfilled? Clearly at the coming of Christ, for when God shook the heavens, "the desire of all nations should come," and the temple then building was to be filled with glory, which it was when the glorious Son of God, in human form, entered into its courts. But how were the heavens and earth then shaken? Were they not literally so at Christ's crucifixion, when the sun withdrew his light, when the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent? These visible commotions in heaven and earth were, to a certain extent, fulfillments of the prophecy. But the apostle takes a wider scope, and explains the prediction spiritually, as referring to the shaking and consequent removing of the Levitical dispensation. This interpretation of the apostle will form the groundwork of our subject, in which there are five distinguishing features.

I. The **removing** of those things which may be shaken.

II. The **remaining** of those things which cannot be shaken.

III. The **receiving** of a kingdom which cannot be moved.

IV. The holding it fast by the power of divine grace.

V. The **fruits and effects** that spring out of receiving and holding an immovable kingdom.

I must ask your attention this evening. The links in this chain are so very closely connected, that unless you give me your attention you will perhaps be hardly able to see the beauty and blessedness of the subject brought by the apostle before us.

I. The apostle lays it down as a fundamental axiom that that which is shaken, or may be shaken, is to be removed. You will perceive that I adopt both the rendering of the text and the reading in the margin. The text reads, "are shaken:" the margin, "may be shaken." Both are good, but the latter is more extensive in meaning. Now, this principle is of great extent and wide application. It holds good in the things of time and sense. An earthquake takes place: buildings are shaken; a rent is made in the wall of some public edifice. That rent speaks to the eye, and says, "This wall must be taken down; it endangers the passers by." A bridge shakes as you pass over it. It is unsafe: it must be removed and a new one built. How simple, and yet how universal is the principle! Whatever is shaken or may be shaken is unstable; whatever is unstable may be, must be, removed. When God then shook the heavens they were to be removed. But what heavens? Where God dwells in glory? No. This heaven can neither be shaken nor removed. But the typical heaven, the temple with all its rites and sacrifices, the framework of the Levitical dispensation, could be both shaken and removed. The holy of holies was a type of heaven; and that sanctuary was shaken when the veil across it was rent asunder. Its holy privacy

was then shaken, and its sacred contents laid bare. When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, His train filled the temple, evidently showing that the temple was the type and representation of heaven, God dwelling mystically there between the cherubim. This typical heaven, therefore, was first shaken at the crucifixion of Christ, and by the Romans forty years afterwards removed by fire.

i. But we may extend the axiom laid down by the apostle and apply it to a variety of things, for it admits of a very wide application. Take it thus, "Whatever may be shaken is to be removed." Now apply this fundamental principle to every earthly good.

1. Let it be **health**. Cannot that be shaken? Broken health, shattered nerves, a shaken frame; these are words in everyday use. The shaking of the tent pole and the flapping of the canvas show that it is not a fixture. Thus Paul speaks of the present body as a tent or tabernacle; but of the future, the glorified body, as a "building" (2 Cor. 5:1). Every ache, twinge, or pain, every sickness or sore is a shaking of the tent pole, a flapping of the canvas, certain marks that it is to be removed.

2. Look again at **property** of every kind, little or much, from the wealthy capitalist to the toiling stitch-woman. It is all shaking, fluctuating, wavering with every breath. A bank failing ruins hundreds; a change of fashions, a factory burnt down, a sudden rise of prices, throws thousands out of employment.

3. Take again our dearest natural comforts, our **social ties**, wife and children, house and home. What a shaking of these idols, these household gods, when death comes in at the door and bears away our own flesh and blood to the cold, silent grave. But what is there which may not be shaken? Long friendships, family connections, mutual confidence, the highest natural integrity, and the finest moral character, aye, the noblest intellect and the most powerful mind may all become a wreck and a ruin, fit only to be removed and taken away like the rubbish of a fallen house.

ii. But we may carry the axiom a step further still. The apostle applies it to the shaking and consequent removal of the Jewish heaven, the temple at Jerusalem, and that form of ritual and ceremonial worship which Moses introduced. So now there is a legal religion, a ceremonial lip-service, a pharisaic self-righteousness, a form of godliness which, in the case of God's children, He first shakes, then removes and takes away this legal religion. He shakes as He shook Mount Sinai, by the law. The wall built upon a sandy foundation and daubed over with untempered mortar is rent by the stormy wind and overflowing shower, and brought down to the ground (Ezek. 13:10-14). What is the rubbish then fit for but, like the leprous house, to be carted away?

iii. But carry the principle farther still. **Natural faith**, high or low, Calvinistic or Arminian, sound in the letter of truth or unsound, if it be but natural can be shaken, and is to be shaken that it may be removed. It will do for fair weather, but not for foul; stands firm in a calm, but gives way in a storm. So with natural **hope**. It is with it as Bildad describes, Job 8:14, 15: "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure." The same is true of the whole of a **fleshly religion**, root and branch. When the Lord takes the soul in hand, He shakes the whole tree, shivers the stem, breaks off the branches, overthrows it from the roots, hacks up the stump, and carries it away.

But why all this? Because there must be a removing of the "things that are **made**." A made religion—man's own handiwork, manufactured to order by earthly fingers, has no place in the kingdom of God. Vital godliness, the religion which saves the soul, is not made but given; the donation of God, not the fabric of man. It is like the temple at Jerusalem, and the temple of Christ's body. The one was made by human hands, therefore to be shaken and taken away. The other was not made by hands and therefore eternal and immortal. So there is a religion made by

hands, and a religion not made by hands; the one is shaken, the other immovable; the one falls, the other stands; the one is taken away, the other lives throughout eternity.

II. We pass on, therefore, to consider that branch of our subject which stands in diametrical opposition to the point we have been thus far handling, the remaining of those things **which cannot be shaken**.

The foundation of this vital truth rests on an axiom as broad and as wide as the foregoing. There are things which can be shaken, and there are things which cannot be shaken; the things which can be shaken are to be removed, the things which cannot be shaken are to remain. It is true in nature as in grace. To be shaken implies inherent weakness, therefore decay, therefore removal; not to be shaken implies inherent strength, therefore firmness, therefore fixedness. But what are the things in divine matters which cannot be shaken? We will, with God's blessing, look at a few of them.

i. **"The everlasting covenant** ordered in all things and sure" is one of those things which cannot be shaken. The counsels of the eternal Three in One, with the fixed decrees before the world had a being or time an existence, cannot be moved to and fro by the restless waves of chance or change. As well might a mountain be moved by the mists round its head as the eternal purposes of God by the breath of man. "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?" "I am the Lord; I change not."

ii. **The finished work of Christ** is another of those things which cannot be shaken. Did He not say with expiring lips, "It is finished"? Almost His last words were, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Hence it was prophesied of Him that He should "bring in everlasting righteousness," which He did when He obeyed the law and died under its curse. Of this finished work of the Son of God we may indeed say, "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." It is a perfect work, a finished salvation, a

complete redemption. Nothing can shake, alter, or disannul it, and therefore it remaineth.

iii. **The work of God upon the soul**, the kingdom of grace set up in the heart, is one of those things which cannot be shaken. But you say, "I am very often shaken as to the reality of the work of grace on my soul." That may be, but your being shaken as to the reality of it does not shake the thing itself, that is, assuming the work to be real. Your apprehensions do not alter divine realities. If there is a work of grace begun upon your soul, it is begun; if it is being carried on, it is being carried on; and if God the Holy Spirit has planted His fear in your soul, He has planted it. These may seem commonplace truisms, but they are not. I merely put them in this form to set the matter in a clearer light. What I want to show you is that the work of grace is for eternity, and therefore cannot be shaken by the storms of time. Doubts and fears, therefore, which spring out of an unbelieving heart, as mushrooms from a meadow or fogs from a fen, cannot destroy what God has wrought. "I will work," He says, "and none shall let **or hinder** it." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible."

iv. But not only does the work of grace, viewed as a whole, remain unshaken and unremoved, but its **component parts** also cannot be overthrown and taken away. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," that is, on His part; in other words, He never repents of having bestowed a gift, and therefore never recalls it.

1. Take for instance faith. This is the gift of God, therefore never taken away. Nay, more, it is never really shaken—at least, never shaken as false faith is shaken, so as to be removed. Let me explain my meaning a little more clearly and fully by a figure. Here are two trees in a park; the one dead, root and branch; the other living, stem and bough. A storm comes—the one falls with a crash: the other is shaken, but not moved from its place. It bows

for a moment before the wind, but leaps back uninjured when the storm has passed by. The dead tree is now chopped up and taken away; the living tree remains clothed with foliage and fruit. Or it may be that the fruit is shaken off, and only the tree remains firm. So the fruits of faith, as joy, peace, confidence, assurance, communion, may be shaken and seem to fall off their parent tree, and yet faith itself be unmoved. This is a nice point and requires delicate handling; but I believe my assertion is substantially true. Look at it a little more closely, and I think you will see it must be so.

Say a man has **false** faith. It is shaken. Who has shaken it? God. Why? That He may take it away. Say a man has **true** faith. It is shaken. Who shakes it? Not God, but unbelief. God tried Abraham's faith, but did not take it away. If true faith could be shaken in the same way that false faith is shaken, how would they differ, and how would a living faith be superior to a dead one? We read of some that "they believe for a time and then fall away;" of others, that they "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

Saul and Judas had the faith of the former; David and Peter the faith of the latter. They all were shaken; but the two first, like the dead tree, fell to rise no more; the two latter, like the living tree, sprang back to their place.

2. So with a **good hope through grace**. It may be deeply tried, and the heart may be moved, like Israel's of old, "as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." Nay, under fits of despondency and unbelief, a child of God may say with Jeremiah, "My hope is perished from the Lord;" or with Job, "My hope hath He removed like a tree." But it is not really so. It is a fruit and grace of the Spirit, and therefore abideth; as Paul says, "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three."

3. **Love**, therefore, for the same reason cannot be shaken. It may be most sharply tried; nay, at times seem almost extinct, be covered up with ashes; but it never can perish out of a believer's

heart. The apostle therefore says, "Charity," or, as the word means, love, "never faileth."

4. So the testimonies which God bestows on the soul, the promises which He applies, the tokens that He gives for good, the smiles of His countenance, the visitations of His presence, are things which abide. They are not shaken by the earthquakes of the law. If they could be thus shaken, it would show they were "things which were made." But they are not made, but given. Fleshly hands never wrought them; earthly fingers never wove them; the hammer of creature strength never forged them on the anvil of human merit.

Can you not see the line which thus divides the things that are shaken from the things which are not shaken? The things shaken are those which are made; the things not shaken are those which are given. To sum up the whole in one word, the religion of man is made, therefore shaken, therefore taken away; the religion of God is given, therefore unshaken, therefore abiding for evermore.

III. But we pass on to our third point—**The way in which this unshaken kingdom is received.**

I am always very unwilling to drop a word against our translation, it is so excellent; but I think if our translators had preserved the same word here, as is the case in the original, it would have been better.

Suppose we read it thus—"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken;" what a sweet connexion there now is with the preceding verse! Now take the whole connexion—"And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken." There is the connection at once—it is "the kingdom" which cannot be shaken. And what kingdom? The kingdom of grace here, the kingdom of glory hereafter; the kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace, and

joy in the Holy Ghost;" the kingdom of which the Lord Jesus Christ is Head and Sovereign. This is the kingdom which cannot be shaken.

Earthly crowns fall from the heads of monarchs; worldly comforts wither and die; temporal prospects are beclouded; all that the world calls happiness how rent it is to the very foundations, and how soon all we see will be removed like a shepherd's tent! But there is a kingdom which cannot be moved, a kingdom of present grace in the heart established there by the hand of God, and a kingdom of future glory in which the kingdom of grace opens up and terminates.

But this kingdom is to be **received**. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." It is not worked for, nor worked into, but received as God's own gift. This throws a light upon what I have been endeavouring to establish—the difference between a made religion and a given religion, between works and grace. The people of God are, therefore, called by the Lord "the children of the kingdom," and by James, "heirs of the kingdom." This kingdom they receive by faith. How did our queen **Queen Victoria**. receive her kingdom? Her uncle died; she was the legal heir, and she succeeded to the kingdom by way of right. But when did she receive it? Tidings were brought her—"the king is dead;" she believed the message, and by believing it she received the kingdom which was now hers, into her heart. So in grace. God's children are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. But though heirs they are often kept out of the kingdom by their unbelieving fears. They cannot rise up into the dignity and privilege of being kings and priests unto God. But a message from the Lord breaks in upon their hearts. There is some discovery and manifestation of the Lord Jesus. He is received into the soul as the Christ of God. In receiving Him there is a receiving of the kingdom.

Look at the prodigal. He returned to his father's house barefooted and in rags. What did his father do? Did he turn his face away as justly incensed at his base conduct? No; but he fell on his neck

and kissed him, and said to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." But how passive in all this was the prodigal! All he did was to receive what was given. His shoulders received the robe; his finger received the ring; his feet received the shoes; and when the fatted calf was dressed, his mouth received the meat. So a child of God receives the kingdom which cannot be shaken. But how? By faith. Faith embraces what God reveals, takes hold of what God applies, and receives what God gives.

But do you not see how needful it is for the things which are shaken to be removed that the kingdom which cannot be shaken may remain? There is no room in the heart for the kingdom of grace whilst Self sits on his lordly throne. Legality, self-righteousness, and fleshly holiness are as great barriers to receiving Christ into the heart as sin and profanity. But let proud pharisaic self be shaken to the very centre; let the sinner quake before God; let the condemning law come into the conscience burning up all his righteousness; let him tremble at the wrath to come; and under a sense of condemnation let his legal hopes flee away like smoke out of the chimney, or chaff from the summer threshing-floor; then let there be some discovery of the Lord Jesus, how he receives the Saviour!—receives Him, as Hart says, "in his best room." Christ is King and Head in Zion; therefore, in receiving Christ, His precepts are received as well as His promises. A kingdom without laws is as great an absurdity as a king without subjects. There is an "obeying the gospel" as well as a believing it; receiving a Lord to rule as well as a Saviour to save. The dew and rain which water the earth make it bring forth and bud; and the same grace which pardons sin subdues it.

This, then, is the kingdom which cannot be shaken. We may be shaken, and are; but that is not the shaking of the kingdom. You may have all your money in a bank, and may have some apprehension whether the bank be secure. Do your fears make the bank insolvent? No more than your confidence makes it safe. So it is in grace. You may have fears, misgivings, and apprehensions; but the kingdom remains the same. Misgivings

and suspicions do not alter facts. If God has wrought a work in your soul He has wrought it; and if He has given you faith, and hope, and love, He has given you these graces of the Spirit. These are decisive realities. What I may feel, or what I may fear, does not alter them. The soul may be in darkness, love cold, and the things of God out of sight. But they are there. I may stand upon Hampstead Heath and look towards St. Paul's; but it is so covered with smoke and fog that I cannot see it. My not seeing the dome does not sweep it into the river. Let the sun break out, the dome stands forth in all its noble proportions. So if the Lord has ever done anything for your soul, be it much or little, if He has given you one grain of grace, raised up one ray of hope, or shed abroad one beam of love, the kingdom is there; your eye may be dim, mists and fogs may obscure your view; but when the Sun shines, as shine it will, it will stand forth in all its reality and beauty.

IV. We pass on to the fourth point—**the way in which the kingdom is held fast**. I adopt the marginal reading, which is often most correct, and certainly best here: "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us **hold fast** grace." There is a holding fast grace, as the Lord speaks to the church of Philadelphia: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "Hold fast," says the apostle, "that which is good." If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope "firm unto the end." So here—"let us hold fast grace." Why? Because if we have grace, though we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, yet we shall find many, very many things, which will try that grace, and seem as though they would take it utterly away. The same grace, then, whereby the kingdom is received is needful to hold that kingdom fast. The same favour of God that bestowed the gift is needful to retain the gift; and the same blessed Spirit who brings the kingdom into the soul must maintain that kingdom which He has set up.

Here is the mystery; here comes the trial of faith. The soul says, "Have I not received Christ? Was there not a time, a blessed time in my experience, when He was manifested to me? Then I received Him as the Christ of God. I felt Him precious, and He

was near and dear to my heart. But now He is gone; His presence is not enjoyed; the manifestations of His love are withheld." Now, what need of faith to believe that the Lord did reveal Himself! Unbelief says, "It was all a delusion." Infidelity whispers, "It was all mere excitement of the natural mind." Doubts suggest themselves; fears begin to work; misgivings haunt the soul; Satan distresses the mind; and all well-nigh seems gone.

Now what do we need? Grace, and especially the grace of faith to hold fast what has been received. This is the fight, the conflict, the trial of faith. In receiving, faith is as it were passive; but in holding fast, it is active. There is no trial of faith in taking what God gives; the trial is to keep it when sin and Satan would snatch it out of the hand.

Some allow that grace is freely given, but that when given, it is, as it were, self-sustaining. When I see a stone suspend itself in the air, I shall credit the self-sustaining power of grace. Faith is said in Scripture to be "of the operation of God;" and those who are kept, are "kept by the power of God." The same grace which gave faith must maintain faith. The same grace which inspired hope must maintain hope. The same grace which shed abroad love must keep that love warm in the heart. All is of grace from first to last. Did Satan never tempt you to give up all, to abandon your profession, desert your place of worship, resign your church membership, if you are a member of a church, and cast away your very hope? But why have you not done all this? You would have done so if God had not given you grace to withstand the temptation. Have you not been tempted to plunge into sin? Have you not been tempted a thousand times to believe that there was nothing done in your soul by the power of God? What has kept you so long to the word of the testimony, to the throne of mercy, to hearing the truth, to a profession of the holy name of Jesus? Grace. As Paul says: "By the grace of God I am what I am." Now what is the main point? To believe in spite of unbelief; to hope in spite of despondency; to love in spite of coldness and even enmity; to pray though no answer come; to hear, though rarely blessed; to search the Scriptures, though you rarely find comfort

in them. Here is the trial of faith, still to go on faint yet pursuing, and holding fast by grace that which grace has bestowed.

V. But see **the fruits and effects** which spring out of all this. The child of God cannot always, nor often, see his own grace; he can see it in others, and they may see it in him; but he seems more ready to believe in the reality of their religion than of his own. Why is this? Because there is so much in him opposed to grace; and looking at this, he says, "Can I have grace? Should I be what I am'? Should I act as I do'? Would my heart be so carnal and sensual? Would my lusts and passions be so strong? Would my temptations be so powerful, had I grace'?" Here then to help poor doubters we need some marks and evidences of the inward possession of grace. Two are specially mentioned here—"Reverence and godly fear." Can you not find these sister graces in your heart? Have you no reverence towards God? When you come before Him in secret prayer is there no reverence of His Great Majesty? Here is a mark of grace. Does it never wound your heart to hear God's name blasphemed? Is presumption a sin which you very much dread? Would you be anything sooner than be a hypocrite? Do you see and feel the infinite disparity between you, a vile and polluted sinner, and Him, a pure and holy Jehovah?

And have you no godly fear? Fear of offending the great God of heaven? Search and sound your heart to the bottom, and see if there be not godly fear working in your soul. If you have backslidden, is there no contrition, sorrow, repentance? These are the fruits of godly fear; and God is served acceptably when He is served reverently, and when godly fear is in exercise. If you have one grain of holy reverence, one spark of godly fear, you are a Christian, a child of God, an heir of glory, and have received a kingdom which cannot be moved.

But you say, and I say with you—"Would to God I were more spiritual, heavenly-minded, and that my heart was more set on things above where Jesus sits at the right hand of God." Well, these things are very desirable. I can speak for myself and some

of you, that we have enjoyed these things and felt their sweet reality. But we are not always nor often here. We have an earthly heart, a corrupt flesh which lusts against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would. Still with all this there may be in a child of God features and marks of grace. Now just trace out if you can the work of grace upon your soul, and see whether there be not a chain with these several links. First a shaking; then a removing; then a receiving; then a holding fast; then a serving God from whom all these come with reverence and godly fear—five precious links and all closely joined together.

Thus grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, and all redounds to the praise, honour and glory of a triune Jehovah.

THE SICK MAN'S PRAYER AND THE SINNER'S CRY

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 8, 1849

"Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise." Jeremiah 17:14

Among the many features which distinguish the people of God, there is one which seems more particularly to shine forth; and that is, that however distressed their minds may be, however low they may be sunk, they can accept no help nor deliverance, but that which comes from God Himself. We find this spirit breathing all through the word. Take such passages as these, for instance; "Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man." **Ps 60:11** "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel." **Jer 3:23** "O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me." **Isa 38:14** The Psalms are full of this spirit. However exercised, however distressed, however deeply sunk the soul of the Psalmist was, you will always find this distinctive feature, that to God, and to God alone, he looked. "My soul"—he charges her—"my soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." **Ps 62:5** And we find something of the same spirit breathing itself forth in the words of our text, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise."

Our text consists of three clauses. And these three clauses I shall, as the Lord may give me strength and ability, endeavour spiritually and experimentally now to open up.

I.—The **first** is, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed." What is this expressive of? A felt disease; a disease too deeply felt for any but God to cure. Now when the Lord teaches His people to profit **and all His teachings are to profit**, He makes them sensible, deeply sensible of the malady of sin. Thus, without

doubt, there is not a living soul upon the earth whom the Lord has not more or less taught to feel the malady.

There are, however, three things necessary in the work of grace upon the soul with respect to this malady of sin. There is, **first**, a knowledge of the **malady**; there is, **secondly**, a knowledge of the **remedy**; and there is, **thirdly**, the **application** of the remedy to the malady.

1. There is the knowledge of the deep and distressing **malady of sin**; and this lies at the root of all. At the foundation of every sigh, every cry, every prayer, every groan is an internal and experimental acquaintance with the deep and distressing disease of sin. Thus, if a man do not feel internally and experimentally the desperate disease with which he is infected from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, I am bold to say, that a spiritual groan, cry, or sigh, never came forth from his heart.

Let us, as the Lord may give us ability, look a little more closely at the various maladies that the Lord's people feel themselves to be infected by; for this disease of sin is not a single or solitary one. It has many, many distressing branches; and for the various distressing branches of this one disease, God has His own divinely appointed remedy.

i. There is the disease of **blindness**. Now this is what man does not feel by nature. When the Lord told the pharisees their state and condition, could they receive it? This was their answer, "We see;" therefore the Lord said, "your sin remaineth." They were not acquainted with the desperate disease of blindness; they thought they saw; they were well persuaded they knew everything, which they ought to know. But the Lord's people are taught to feel how blind they are, and how unable to see anything except as the Lord is pleased to anoint their eyes with His divine eye-salve. Thus they cannot see what or where they are, nor the meaning of any portion of God's truth, nor the blessedness and beauty of Jesus; they cannot see His glorious Person, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, dying love, sweet suitability, nor

the preciousness of all His covenant characters and divine offices, whilst labouring under this disease of blindness.

Now, when we feel at first what poor, blind, ignorant creatures we are, we often have recourse to human remedies. We think perhaps that **study** may remedy this disease of blindness; that if we get together a number of religious books, read the Bible very much, and hear the best preachers, we may heal that disease; but alas, alas, we soon find that all these fancied remedies only leave us blinder and darker, and more ignorant than before; till feeling how blind we are, how little we know, what a veil of ignorance is over our hearts, it makes us sigh and cry and beg and pray and look unto the Lord to open these blind eyes of ours; to bring light, and knowledge, and truth into our hearts. This is in fact a part of the breathing in our text, "Heal me, and I shall be healed." And when the Lord is pleased to open our blind eyes, and show us something of His own beauty, blessedness, and glory; when the blessed Spirit anoints our eyes with heavenly eye-salve to see something of the glorious Person of Christ, the riches of His grace, the efficacy of His blood, and the sweetness and suitability of all His covenant characters and offices—when He thus brings a measure of divine light, life, and power into our souls, He answers that prayer, and heals our blindness.

ii. We are also afflicted, naturally, with the dreadful disease of **deafness**. We are deaf to all the admonitions of God's word, deaf to all His threatenings and judgments, deaf to all His gracious promises; and not all the preaching in the world can of itself heal this deafness of ours. But it is the Lord's office to unstop the deaf ears; and when we begin to feel how deaf we are, and to mourn over our inability to hear God's truth with life and feeling, it brings a cry up out of our hearts unto God that He will apply and bless His precious word with a divine power to our souls. Do you not sometimes come to chapel with this dreadful disease of deafness upon you? You may come time after time, Lord's day after Lord's day, and yet, through this disease of deafness, no power accompanies what you hear. You do not hear to your soul's satisfaction; there is no melting, no softening of your heart and

spirit under the word. It seems as though, however you heard with your outward ear, there was another ear wanting—the ear of your heart; and until the Lord is pleased to open that ear, all that you hear with the outward ear is unavailing. Now, when we begin to cry to the Lord. that He would apply His word to our hearts, bring His precious truth into our soul, cause it to drop like rain upon our spirit—this is, in effect, to cry to the Lord to heal this disease of deafness.

iii. There is another disease that we are sadly afflicted with, and that is the disease of a **hard heart**; a heart that refuses to melt, a heart that can read of all the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and feel no compunction; no trickling tear, no godly sorrow, no softening experienced within. O this disease of a hard heart! For the people of God want to feel their hearts made soft, their souls watered, their spirits melted, laid low, and dissolved into tears of contrition. But through this dreadful disease of a hard heart, they cannot produce these gracious feelings in their souls. They cry, therefore, 'Lord take this hard heart away; Lord, do thou soften my soul. When I come to hear Thy word when I read of Thy sufferings, do Thou melt my heart; do Thou take away this heart of stone, do Thou give me a heart of flesh.' This is, in effect, breathing forth the words of the text, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed."

iv. We are afflicted also with another dreadful disease, that of **unbelief** So afflicted are we with this dreadful malady of unbelief that we cannot raise up a single grain of faith in our souls; we cannot believe a promise, however sweet or suitable; we cannot believe our interest except so far as it is made clear to our eyes; we cannot believe that "all things work together for our spiritual good;" we cannot believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, nor trust in His blood and love. Now when we feel this, and ask the Lord to take it away, to bless our souls with faith, what is this, in effect, but breathing forth the prayer, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed?" And when the Lord is pleased to give us faith to believe His word, to come to Him, to hang upon Him. to trust in His mercy, and rest in His love—this is the fulfilment of the prayer,

the Lord hearing and answering it to heal this felt disease of unbelief.

v. There is **pride, worldly-mindedness, and carnality, self-glorying,** and a host of vile corruptions and dreadful lusts, continually bringing our souls into bondage; and these we cannot heal. We cannot clothe ourselves with humility; we cannot give ourselves repentance and godly sorrow for sin; we cannot sprinkle our own conscience with the precious blood of the Lamb; we cannot shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, cannot dispel doubt and fear, cannot deliver ourselves from temptation, nor subdue the evils of our hearts. Man may tell us to do so; but we have tried, and tried, and tried, and found we could do none of these things. And thus we are brought to fall low before the footstool of mercy, and cry unto the Lord in the language of the text. "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed."

2. Now these are the three steps. We first of all feel the **malady;** then we see revealed in God's word the **remedy;** and when the Lord is pleased to bring the remedy into our hearts, then He fulfils the prayer of the text in **healing** our souls. When light comes, it heals our blindness; when power is felt in the heart, it heals our deafness; when we feel softness and humility, by a sense of God's goodness, it heals our hardness; when faith springs up in living exercise, it heals our unbelief; when contrition, humility, meekness, and godly sorrow are given to us, it heals the disease of hardness and coldness, deadness and barrenness.

Thus, when the Lord is pleased to apply His precious word with divine power to our hearts, and to work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, it is a fulfilling in our soul's experience of the words of the text; it is not only a cry to the Lord that He would heal, but it is a healing of our diseases. "Heal me, O LORD," the church cries, "and I shall be healed." I want no more. It is not man that can do it. I cannot do it. It is not my promises, nor my resolution; it is not my prayers, nor my desires; it is not my sighs, my cries, my groans, nor breathings, nor wishes. All these

are physicians of no value. But Thy precious blood sprinkled upon my conscience, Thy glorious robe of righteousness put upon me by Thine own hand. Thy dying love shed abroad in my soul by the Holy Ghost,—there is healing efficacy, blessed virtue in these things, O Lord. And if Thou do but apply these things with a divine power to my heart, then I am healed. One look can do it; one word can do it; one smile, one touch can do it. Thou, Lord, hast only but to speak, to bring one word, to bestow one look, to give one promise, to drop but one drop of Thy precious love, blood and grace into my heart—it is done in the twinkling of an eye. This is the substance of the cry that comes up from time to time out of a living soul, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed."

Now if this be not the substance of your prayers, why do you go to a throne of grace? What else is the real subject of your petitions? What else is the language of your groans? What else is the import of all your desires? "Heal me, and I shall be healed" this is the language of all prayer; this is the import of all supplication; this is the breath of every praying soul; this speaks in itself volumes of anxious desires, earnest longings, fervent prayers, hungerings and thirstings—all the wants and wishes of really contrite hearts.

II.—We pass on to the **second** clause. "Save me, and I shall be saved." Now what after all is the great concern of every living soul? Is it not salvation? If his soul be saved, what can hurt him? and if his soul be not saved, what can profit him? "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?" Whatever trial, whatever temptation, whatever difficulties, whatever exercises beset me by the way, if I reach heaven at last, what do all these anxious troubles concern me? If I bathe at last in streams of endless bliss, what are all the cares, sorrows, troubles, perplexities, trials, and griefs of this life? "Save me," then the church cries, "and I shall be saved."

Do not the words imply despair of self salvation? If I can do anything whatever to save my soul; if I can by a desire, if I can by a prayer, if I can by a wish. if I can by any exertion of my own free-will do anything whatever to save my own soul. I cannot, with an honest heart utter the words of the text. But if I am brought to this inward feeling, that do what I can, do what I may, I cannot in the matter of salvation bring my soul a step nearer heaven, and that I am absolutely helpless as regards all divine matters; then, as the Lord is pleased to quicken and revive my soul by the blessed operations of His Spirit, how the substance at least, if not the words of the text, comes forth, "Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved!"

I. Now **salvation** implies several things. First of all, it implies a salvation from the **guilt of sin**. This is what the souls of God's people are first chiefly exercised by—the guilt of sin, and the troubles and sorrows that it brings; as well as the distressing doubts, fears, bondage, and hard labour that a sense of sin laid upon the conscience is always accompanied with; so that in crying, "Save me, and I shall be saved." they cry to be saved from the **guilt** of sin felt in the conscience.

2. There is the **filth of sin**. which pollutes the mind. When we see what sin is in the light of God's countenance, it stains our conscience, and brings a distressing sense of self-abhorrence and self-loathing. Now from this filth of sin polluting and defiling the mind, do we desire to be saved and delivered by the mighty power of God.

3. There is the **power of sin**—the secret dominion sin possesses in the heart; and O, what a tyrannical rule does sin sometimes exercise in our carnal minds! How soon are we entangled in flesh-pleasing snares! How easily brought under the secret dominion of some hidden corruption! and how we struggle in vain to deliver ourselves when we are caught in the snares of the devil, or are under the power of any one lust, besetment, or temptation!

The Lord, and the Lord alone can save us from all these things. He saves from the **guilt** of sin by sprinkling the conscience with the precious blood of the Lamb; when that is felt in the soul, it delivers us from its guilt. He saves us from the **filth** of sin by the washing of regeneration, renewing us in the spirit of our mind, and giving us a solemn plunge in the fountain once opened for all sin and uncleanness. He saves us from the **power** of sin by bringing a sense of His dying love into our hearts, delivering us from our idols, raising our affections to things above, breaking to pieces our snares, subduing our lusts, taming our corruptions, and overmastering the inward evils of our dreadfully fallen nature.

None but the Lord can do these things for us. If we have backslidden from God, **and who among us has not backslidden from Him?**; if we have been entangled in Satan's snares, and the corruption of our own hearts, **and who has not been entangled in these evils?**, nothing but a sweet application of the precious blood of Christ can cleanse us from the guilt of sin. If we have defiled our conscience by our crooked and perverse ways, nothing but the sanctifying operations of the blessed Spirit, washing us in the fountain of Christ's blood, can cleanse away and remove this inward defilement. And if we are under the power of evil; if sin be working in us and bringing our souls under this dreadful tyranny, nothing but the felt power of God, nothing but the putting forth of His mighty arm, nothing but the shedding abroad of dying love, nothing but the operations of His grace upon our soul, can deliver us from the secret power of evil.

If we never felt the guilt of sin, we should never want to have our consciences sprinkled with the precious blood of the Lamb; if we never felt how we are defiled from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, we should never want to be washed in the fountain for sin and uncleanness. If we never felt the secret power of sin, how it entangles our thoughts, carries away our affections from the right path wherein we should walk; if we never sighed, cried, or groaned beneath the power of evil, we

should want no mighty miracle to be wrought in us, we should want no outstretched hand of God, we should not want to feel the power or taste the sweetness of dying love. Thus, would we enter into the freeness, the suitability, the beauty, the riches of God's great salvation, we must descend into the felt depths of our malady, into our distressing disease—the hidden workings of the evil within—into the abominations that lurk, work, and fester in our fallen nature; for the knowledge of the malady is so deeply connected with a knowledge of the remedy, that if we know not the one we never can know the other.

When the Lord is pleased in any measure to bow down His ear to hear our prayer; when He is pleased to make His word sweet and powerful in any degree to our souls; to give us a sight and sense of our interest in the precious blood of the Lamb; and to deliver our souls from the hand of the enemy—then we can see and feel and know what a great salvation the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought out; and we are brought to see and feel that nothing but such a salvation as He has accomplished, and none but such a Saviour as the Lord Jesus Christ is, can really suit and save our souls. So that the foundation of all true religion—the foundation of every sigh, of every cry, of every groan, of every wish, of every desire, of every true breath of prayer is, an experimental acquaintance with the disease in its various branches, and a knowledge, an internal knowledge of the depth of the fall, as made manifest in our wretched heart. Thus, when the Lord is pleased in any measure to stretch forth His hand, and to work powerfully for our deliverance; when the Lord blesses our souls, and visits us with the discovery of His goodness and love,—then, comparing what we are, and what we have been, with the riches of His mercy and grace, how it exalts His salvation and sacrifice, and the love, blood, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in our eyes!

These two things will always go together. When I feel no malady, I want no remedy; when I feel no condemnation, I want no salvation; when I am not exercised with a sense of inward guilt and distress, I want no precious blood sprinkled upon my conscience; I want no love shed abroad in my heart; I want no

blessed visit from the Lord of life and glory; I want no sweet promise to bring its dew into my soul; I want nothing that the Lord has to bestow; I can occupy my mind in the things of time and sense, and be carnal, sensual, and earthly. But when various exercises recommence in the soul, and the Lord sets to His hand, and begins to revive the work of grace in the heart, then I want something divine, something experimental, something applied, something done in my soul that He alone can do for me. Without, then, these exercises, without a knowledge of the dreadful malady, without strong temptations, without daily conflicts, what is internal religion to me? If unexercised, I can do without internal, experimental religion; without the felt power of God; without Christ, without the blessed Spirit, without the Bible. But place me in circumstances of guilt, of exercise, of distress, of sorrow, of trouble, and the various perplexities that encompass the child of God, and let the Lord work by these things to kindle in my breast the spirit of supplication, then my soul will be wanting every blessing that God has to bestow; it will be separate from the world, and living a life of faith and prayer; it will be dealing with God; it will be coming out of the creature in all its shapes and forms, looking simply and solely to the Lord Jesus Christ. So that as we have the knowledge of the malady in its various branches, and an acquaintance with temptation, guilt, sin, shame, and sorrow—as these things are opening a way for the precious truths of God, and giving a place in our hearts for their heavenly influence, we are arriving at the knowledge of the remedy.

I can appeal to your consciences, you that have any **for there are very few that have consciences, there are very few really exercised about divine things, there are very few that the Lord is really teaching by His blessed Spirit, and leading down into the solemn depths of divine things** I say, you that have consciences, whose souls are kept alive by daily exercises, who know the evils of your hearts by their continually bubbling and springing forth; you that are not deceived by a name to live, or an empty profession of religion: I say, you whose souls are thus exercised, know that "in all these things you live

and in all these things is the life of your spirit." Take away your exercises, your afflictions, your sorrows, your perplexities, and the working of God by these things, and where is your religion? It has made to itself wings, and flown away. But let your minds be well exercised in the things of God; let affliction befall; let the bonds and ties of this world be severed: let temptations come with overwhelming weight; let the corruptions of our fallen nature boil up; let your soul sink down into trouble; let eternity open before your eyes; let death come into sight; and let your souls be solemnly exercised on divine realities; then I will answer for it, you will want what God alone can bestow upon you; and in the silent watches of the night, you will be crying, to God to look down upon you, to visit and bless you, to speak words of mercy to you, to shed abroad His love in your hearts, and to comfort and cheer your troubled soul.

Take away a sense of the malady, you are taking away a sense of the remedy; take away the doubts and fears, the temptations, the trials, perplexities, the troubles and disappointments that God is exercising you by, and you are taking away the promises, the sweet manifestations of God's love, and all the application of God's truth with divine power; in fact, you are taking away all prayer out of the soul, and removing that which lies at the foundations of every groan and every sigh that comes up out of the heart.

III.—This leads us to our **third** clause; "for thou art my praise." Why, when we can feel that the Lord has in mercy done anything for our souls, when we can believe that He has wrought a work of grace in us; that He has convinced us of our ruined state by nature; that He has led us to Himself. enabled us to rest on His promises, and made us to hate ourselves in our own sight; that He has kindled and stirred up in us a spirit of prayer, and at times made Jesus precious to our souls; that He has given us a view of the glory of His Person, the riches of His grace, the suitability of all His offices and characters, and thus endeared Him to our hearts—then we can say. "Thou art my praise." 'I can praise Thee for every trial, thank Thee for every sorrow, and bless Thy name

for every exercise; for I feel that all these things have been for the good of my soul. There has not been one trial nor one sorrow too many; it has all issued in my good and Thy glory.' And therefore, in solemn moments, we can take up this language in our lips, because He is "our praise."

We have reason to praise Him for every discovery of our dreadful malady and every discovery of the suitability of His precious remedy; we have reason to praise Him for every view of self, and every view of Christ; for every view of guilt, and every view of atoning blood; for every view of sin and shame, and every view of the robe of righteousness that shields and shelters from it. We have reason to bless Him for every breath of prayer, for every desire, for every sigh, for every cry, and for every groan. We have reason to praise Him for every acting of grace in the soul, for every spark of living hope in the breast, and every feeling of life and love in the conscience. We have to bless Him for looking down upon us in the depths of His mercy, convincing us of our ruined state by nature, leading us to the Lord Jesus Christ, making Him precious to our hearts, and giving us to see something of His beauty, blessedness, and glory; and all this connected with a sense of sin, and the exercises of the soul, with the cries and sighs of a burdened heart, as all having been effectual, preparations for the blessings that God, and God alone can bestow.

Now just see whether we can lay down our exercises side by side with this text. This is the way that we are to deal with our experience if we have any. Have we, then, any hope that God has begun and is carrying on the work of grace in our soul? Have we anything that God has done, or is doing for us? Let us lay it down, and compare it with this part of God's word. Can we find this prayer in our hearts, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved." Has the Lord given to us any sight and sense of the distressing malady of sin? Have we felt what miseries we have brought upon our own heads? Have we seen too what a salvation there is in the Lord Jesus Christ? and how suitable it is to the state of our souls? And are we pleading

with Him, and saying, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed? Thou hast but to speak the word; my case may be very desperate; my maladies very distressing; the evils of my heart very strong; my backslidings very numerous; my soul very far from Thee. But then, Lord, Thou hast all power; Thou has only to speak the word, Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed." Nothing else is wanting, I cannot wash the Ethiopian white; I cannot make the leopard change his spots; but Thou canst do all these things. Heal me, then, by Thy precious truth and grace, and let a sense of Thy pardoning love and mercy reach me. "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved" I want no other remedy but Thy precious blood applied to my conscience; no other love but Thy blessed love shed abroad in my heart.

If these are the exercises, desires, and feelings of our souls, they bring us to a throne of grace, they separate us from the world, exercise our minds to godliness, take away hypocrisy, deceit, lies, and falsehood, and make our hearts earnest and sincere, before the God of all truth.

If we feel that we have ruined our own souls, that no human arm can save us, that we cannot bring salvation into our own consciences, nor of ourselves see any beauty, glory, sweetness, or suitability in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet are striving with prayer and supplication to touch the hem of His garment, to taste the sweetness of His dying love, to feel the efficacy of His atoning blood, to be wrapped up in His glorious robe of righteousness, and to know Him in the sweet manifestations of His grace, why, then too we can say, "Save me, and I shall be saved." Here is this sin! save me from it: here is this snare! break it to pieces; here is this temptation! deliver me out of it; here is this lust! Lord, subdue it; here is my proud heart; Lord, humble it; my unbelieving heart! take it away, and give me faith; my rebellious heart! remove it, Lord, and give me submission to Thy mind and will; take me as I am with all my sin and shame, and work in me everything well-pleasing in Thy sight, for "Thou art my praise." If ever I have blessed Thee, it has been for Thy goodness to my soul; if ever my heart has been tuned to Thy praise; if ever my

lips have thanked Thee, it has been for the riches of Thy grace, and the manifestations of Thy mercy, I am nothing and never shall be anything but a poor guilty sinner in Thy eyes; but I have to praise Thee for all that is past, and to hope in Thee for all that is to come; "for Thou," and Thou alone, O LORD, "art my praise."

May this be an encouragement for every child of God who can say, 'This is really what my soul is exercised with; these are really the feelings and breathings of my heart.' And if there be this voice in your soul corresponding to the word of God, is not that a testimony that the same Lord that wrote this experience in the heart of Jeremiah has written the same experience in your soul too! The very desire after these things is from God; the very sense of our misery, the very knowledge of our helplessness, the very cry for mercy, the very looking to Jesus, the very hoping in His blood, the very act of casting ourselves down in godly simplicity at the footstool of grace, and seeking the manifestations of His love to our souls—spring from grace, and manifest the work of the Spirit.

Nay, if you cannot rise up to the full height, and thoroughly say, "Thou art my praise," why, the time will come when you will be able to say so; when you will bless the Lord for showing you the malady and showing you the remedy, when you will thank Him for discovering to you your condemnation and your salvation, will give Him cheerfully all the praise and crown Him with all the honour. For I am well assured, we never can take a single atom of it to ourselves, but that this is and ever must be the language of our hearts, and, if sincere, the language of our lips, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed." I look to no other balm but Thy blood; sprinkle that precious blood upon my conscience, and I shall be healed. "Save me," in the sweet discoveries of Thy mercy and Thy grace, "and I shall be saved." I want no other Saviour, and no other salvation; and as that comes into my heart, I joyfully ascribe to Thee all the praise, and render to Thee all the blessing, honour, glory, and thanksgiving.

The Sieve and its Effects

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 16, 1849

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:31, 32

God's ways are not our ways; neither are his thoughts our thoughts. This is applicable to a variety of things. In fact, there is scarcely a single circumstance connected with the things of God to which these words do not apply. But there are two special instances to which, according to my mind, they apply particularly. One of these respects the growth in grace of the child of God; the other, the necessary qualifications for a minister of Christ. If we were asked, (supposing that we were ignorant of the way, and that we had the educating of a Christian), what was most conducive to a growth in grace, and how we should set about it, perhaps some such scheme as this might occur to our mind. Place him in the country, in a quiet and retired spot, where he would have no business nor worldly anxieties to distract his mind; there let him read his Bible, be surrounded by religious friends, fix certain hours to meditate, watch, and pray. Such might be a faint sketch of what we should consider the right mode of educating a Christian in the things of God. This scheme has been acted upon. By it men have been driven into the cave of the hermit; monasteries and convents have been formed upon this plan; and instead of being the abodes of religion, they have eventually proved little else but dens of wickedness. But suppose we were also called upon (I still presume we are ignorant of God's mode) to fit and educate a minister for the work of the ministry. We might propound some such scheme as this. Give him a good education; instruct him in the original languages; furnish him with a well-selected theological library; place him in a circle of brother ministers; let him spend his time in reading, meditation,

watching, and prayer. Upon this scheme men have endowed Universities. Colleges, academies, and institutions of various kinds have sprung up on this system. And what is the result? Instead of nurturing servants for God, they have ended in bringing up servants for Satan. This is man's way. And we see the result; that instead of conducing to the growth of grace in a private Christian; instead of fitting a minister for the service of God, all ends in confusion, and a departing from the right ways of the Lord.

I have thus simply sketched out man's ways and man's thoughts. Let us now come to the fountain head of all truth and all wisdom, and see whether God's ways do not differ from the ways of man, and the thoughts that dwell in the heart of the Creator from the thoughts that lodge in the bosom of the creature.

What those ways and what those thoughts are, I shall endeavour this evening to lay before you from the words of the text. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

We may observe three leading features in the words before us.

I.—*First*, the *sieve*; "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat."

II.—*Secondly*, what it is that *fails not* in the sieve; "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *benefits and blessings* that spring out of the sieve; "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

I.—The Lord was approaching the close of his sojourn upon earth; he was drawing near the solemn hour when he was about to be baptised with the baptism of suffering and blood. And it seems that Satan took this opportunity to see whether by his infernal

arts he could not draw away his disciples. He was not ignorant that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, nor what he came upon earth to do. He knew that he came to build up a church against which the gates of hell should not prevail. But if he could succeed in drawing aside into temptation, or into perdition, any of the Lord's disciples, what a victory he would obtain! He, therefore, seems to have reserved his great strength for the last hour, and to have looked with a watchful eye upon every one of the Lord's followers. There is an expression in Job (1:8), which, I think, throws great light upon the way in which Satan marks out his prey. The Lord said to him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Now, if we look at the margin, we find it runs, "Hast thou *set thine heart on* my servant Job?" The Lord saw that he had set his heart upon Job; not a heart of love, but a heart of enmity; that he was like a butcher fixing his eye upon a lamb, and saying, 'Here is one for my knife!' or like a wolf surrounding a flock of sheep, and singling out the fattest for his greedy maw. Therefore, God said to him, "Hast thou set thine heart on my servant Job?" 'What! must he be thy prey? Will nothing satisfy thee but to glut thy malice upon him?' But what was the reply of the adversary of God and man? "Hast thou not set a hedge about him?" He did not deny that his heart was set upon Job; that he longed to embrace his hands in his heart's blood; but he complains that God had set a hedge round about him; that there was a fence through which he would, but could not break. Thus, though he could look over the hedge, the prey was safe from his infernal malice until God took the hedge away. But the Lord did twice take the outer hedge away, and twice reserve the inner, saying, at last, "Behold, he is in thy hand; but save his life." The Lord kept that; the rest he gave to Satan. And thus, when the outer hedge was taken away, we find Satan bursting in upon him, first stripping away his property and his family, then afflicting his body, and doing everything but what he was not allowed to do—to touch his life. So it seems to me in these last days of the Lord's sojourn upon earth, this wolf was surrounding the pen in which the Lord had placed his sheep, setting his heart upon one and another, and desiring to glut upon them his infernal maw. And God permitted him in one instance; he allowed him not only to set his heart

upon one, but to gratify his infernal malice upon Judas, the son of perdition, who not being kept by the mighty power of God, was allowed to fall into Satan's hands, and to be destroyed body and soul for ever.

The Lord comprehends in our text *all* his disciples. It is a mistake to think it is only applicable to Peter. The words run thus: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have *you*; not only *thee*; (it is in the plural in the original;) "to have *all of you* that he may sift you as wheat." What follows is special: "but I have prayed for *thee* that *thy* faith fail not; that is thee, Simon. As though Satan viewed them all, and longed to sift all in his sieve. And so he did to a certain extent. But there was one in particular. It is almost as though Satan spake thus: 'I have picked off one of the lieutenants; let me see if I cannot shoot down the colonel. I have got Judas; I will have Peter next.' And so he would, if the Lord had not prayed for him, and strengthened his faith. Judas he might have; he was one of his own. Peter he might not have; he was one of the Lord's. Encouraged by the fall of Judas, he was determined to have Peter next. But how the Lord overruled it all, and made it a blessing to Peter, and the rest of the disciples! And this shows us that *all* must have the sieve. All professors—all that call themselves *by* the name of the Lord, and all that call *upon* the name of the Lord—all must be put into the sieve; and thus be proved who are God's and who are not.

But what is a *sieve*? First, let us view the figure literally and naturally; for unless we understand the figure literally, we cannot expect to understand its spiritual signification. What is the object of the sieve? It is to separate the corn upon the barn-floor, mingled as it is with dust and chaff, small seeds, and rubbish. It must be separated from all these before it is fit to make bread. And what is that instrument used for this purpose? A sieve. This is the leading idea represented. The sieve is riddled backwards and forwards to separate the sound grain from the unsound; dust and small seeds thereby drop through the meshes of the sieve, while the good corn remains behind. This agrees with the words of the Prophet, "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of

Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." (Amos 9:9.)

Now to apply it, let us see its spiritual interpretation. It signifies, then, being put into those circumstances whereby our profession is tried to the utmost. Whatever it be whereby our profession is tried, our religion sifted, and the dust and dirt separated from it; whatever it be, whereby that process is performed, it may be called a sieve. And I would say, there are for the most part *four* sieves employed. There may be others; but there are four especially which occur to my mind—wherein professors of religion, and all that call themselves by the name of the Lord, are to be tried, sifted, and proved, whether they are the Lord's or not.

1. *First*, there is the sieve of *prosperity*. The effects of this we read in the 73rd Psalm, and in the 21st chapter of Job, where we find the fruits of professors being in prosperous circumstances. This sieve we find also hinted at in the first epistle to Timothy, where the Apostle says, "The love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many **arrows.**" [**sorrows in the KJV**] (1 Tim. 6:10.) Who that has eyes to see, has not seen this plainly again and again? There shall be a member of a church, and he shall be, whilst in poor circumstances, a humble, contrite, broken-hearted character; his conversation shall be savoury, sweet, and profitable; he shall be watching the hand of God in providence, and receiving many marks of God's favour, mercy, and love. But he shall have money left him, business shall prosper, or he shall marry a rich wife. And what is the effect? He becomes lean, barren, dead, and unprofitable; and instead of his conversation being as before, savoury and sweet, and upon the things of God, the world and the things of it seem to eat up every green thing in his soul. By this sieve God also sifts out professors, and often manifests whether there be the true life of God in the soul or not.

2. But again. There is the sieve of *adversity*. And the sieve of adversity tries some who have not been tried in the sieve of

prosperity. Poverty, depressed circumstances, losses in business, a sinking trade, anxieties in the family, and sickness of the body, form a part of this sieve; and a very trying one it is.

3. Another sieve is the sieve of *soul tribulation*. Exercises concerning our state before God; painful discoveries of the evils of our heart; the workings up of the unbelief and infidelity, rebellion, blasphemy, and obscenity of our depraved nature; no light upon our path, no sweet answers to prayer, no manifestations of mercy and love, no appearances of God to our heart; groans and cries, sighs and tears, exercises, burdens, afflictions, and sorrows—in this sieve how many of God's people are tried to the uttermost!

4. The fourth and last sieve I shall speak of, is the sieve of *temptation*; such as Peter was placed in, and such as all the people of God are more or less put into. For Satan desires to sift *all* as wheat; and there is not a child of God, nor a professor either, whom Satan does not desire, more or less, to sift with the sieve of temptation. Now of these temptations, some are very suitable and pleasing to our flesh, and some are very dreadful, cutting, piercing, and wounding to our spirit. For instance; look at the way in which Satan sifted the saints of old. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the fear of man; and Aaron by the same temptation. Look how he sifted in his sieve Noah by strong drink; Rachel by envy and jealousy; David by lust; Hezekiah by pride; Asaph by fretfulness; Solomon by idolatry; and Moses by impatience. Look through the records of old, and see whether we can find a saint in God's word who has not been in some way or other sifted in the sieve of temptation. But, besides those suitable and alluring to the flesh—besides the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—besides ease, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, and a thousand alluring besetments, there are other temptations whereby Satan is allowed to sift the people of God. Temptations as to his very being; temptations as to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; temptations as to the inspiration of the Scriptures: temptations as to the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb; temptations as to whether God hears and answers prayer;

whether we have a soul, or our souls exist after death; temptations about heaven and temptations to blaspheme, to give up all religion, and plunge headlong into the world; temptations to curse God and die; temptations to murmur, fret and repine under every painful dispensation; temptations to pray no more because God does not manifestly send an answer to prayer.

Who that knows anything of the things of God, or of his own heart, does not know what it is to be in one or other of these four sieves; sometimes elated by prosperity; sometimes depressed by adversity; sometimes exercised by tribulation; sometimes riddled backwards and forwards in the sieve of temptation?

II.—But we pass on to our *second* branch,—what *does not* fail when put into the sieve. "I have prayed for thee that thy *faith* fail not." The Lord did not pray for Judas; he was the son of perdition, and therefore he fell through the sieve, and fell into hell, where he now is, and where he will be to all eternity. And you and I must fall through too, unless we have an interest in the love and blood of the Lamb. You may escape for a time; but if you have no interest in the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; if you have no part in his atoning blood and grace; if he is not pleading for you by virtue of his presence at the right hand of the Father, sooner or later you will fall through the sieve and will drop into hell, and that perhaps speedily.

Now in the spiritual sieve there are things that *fail*, and there are things that *fail not*; just as in the literal figure, there are things that drop through the natural sieve, and there are things that drop not through it. Dirt, small seeds, rubbish drop through; good, sound, solid grain remains. So in the Christian's soul, there is that which drops through the meshes of the sieve, and there is that which is left behind.

But what is it that drops through? I will tell you.

1. *First, self-righteousness.* That drops through; for if a man be put into the sieve of tribulation, and in it there be to him a

discovery of the evils of his heart; or if Satan be allowed to riddle him backwards and forwards in the sieve of temptation, it will riddle out his self-righteousness. It must drop through. A man cannot be a self-righteous Pharisee who is well sifted in the sieve of temptation. It is impossible. Self-righteousness drops out of his soul as the dirt drops through the meshes of the sieve.

2. *False confidence* is another thing that drops through. How vain-confident some men are! What strong language they make use of! What a high position they occupy! Is there one of the heights of Zion on which they will not stand? Why, if you judge them by their words, they would seem ready to fly to heaven; but watch them in their deeds, and you will see them grovelling upon earth. In words, they seem very near to the throne of God; in actions, not very far from the spirit of the devil. Now this vain confidence drops through. If I am sifted in the sieve of temptation; if I know the evils of my heart; if I am riddled backwards and forwards in the sieve of soul tribulation and exercise, how can vain confidence stand? It all breaks up and flies away like the mist before the sun, or the thistledown before the wind. It drops through, and I sink to my right place—a poor needy wretch.

3. *Creature strength* is another thing that drops through the sieve. Creature strength! That was Peter's strength when he trembled before a servant girl; when he could not stand the brunt of a house-maid, but cowered like a chicken before a hawk. That was the strength, the prowess, the courage of this boastful mighty Peter, who was going to prison and to death, who could draw his sword and cut off the high-priest's servant's ear, but was now shivering and trembling before a silly maid of all work. Let our creature strength be put into the sieve of temptation; let the devil riddle us backwards and forwards; let God hide his face; let darkness cover the mind; let trouble seize the soul—where is all our strength? Let temptation come to allure, to bewitch, to ensnare, to entangle, to draw aside, can we stand? No; we are gone in a moment. Let the devil come in, can we stand? Could Job stand? Could David stand? Could Aaron stand? No, not for an

instant; our creature strength gives way when we are put into Satan's sieve.

4. *Fleshly wisdom* is another thing that drops through the sieve. Our boasted acquaintance with God's word; our deep views of *this* chapter, and our deep views of *that* passage; the doctrinal knowledge that perhaps we have stored our heads with for years, all drops through, affords no comfort, brings no relief, communicates no support; all that we have learned in our judgment fails us in the hour of trial. We cannot make use of these things; they all fall through the sieve.

Others I might mention; such as fleshly prayer, creature holiness, legal observances. Everything of an earthly nature, everything not of God's own implantation in the soul, fails us in the hour of trial. You know it, if you have been in the sieve. It was a sieve to me to be laid aside from the ministry, and my enemies saying, 'God has shut his mouth; we hope it will never be opened again!' Was not that a sieve? I know it was to me. Affliction, trouble, sorrow, and tribulation; the fiery darts of hell; snares and besetments laid for our feet;—a man that does not know these things to be a sieve, never has been in them. But if he get into this sieve, it will riddle out all his false religion, and make him feel he has nothing but what God himself has put into his soul, breathed into his heart, and made known to him by the power of the Spirit. Nothing else will stand in the sieve; "for every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15:13.)

All these things, then, and others which might be mentioned, fail us in the sieve.

But is there not something which *does not fail*? Blessed be God there is. The Lord said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy *faith* fail not." And what a mercy that Peter's faith never failed; for if his faith had failed, he would most assuredly have gone down through the sieve. But the Lord had prayed for him; and his faith did not fail. It did not leave him in the day of trial; there it

was where God himself had first implanted it. But how does faith act in these circumstances? Why, to lay a firmer hold upon God's truth; a firmer hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the only refuge and Saviour of sinners; a firmer hold upon his atoning blood, glorious righteousness, and dying love. Faith does not fail; no, it is only more strengthened by being put into the sieve; for the false religion, the carnal faith that had surrounded it, as the ivy clasps the trunk of the tree, being cut away, faith grows stronger in the soul. Faith does not fail, and never will, where it is really implanted by God. And *hope* does not fail. False confidence fails; creature strength fails; fleshly reliance fails. All fall through; there is not one of them left. But hope never fails; for it is the anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast; and does not fail because it enters into that within the veil. It stands the trial; it remains in the sieve, as the good grain does not, cannot fall. *Love* does not fail. Peter never ceased to love the Lord Jesus Christ; he could appeal to him as a heart-searching God, and say, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Let us be in the sieve of tribulation, temptation, adversity, and distress, does this blot out the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, where once it has been shed abroad in the heart? No; it draws it out; it cannot die; the soul is going out in affectionate desires after Him as "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." It cannot, does not fail. Does *prayer* fail? O no; where once the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon a soul, it never fails. I have never known this to fail. We may have long seasons of deadness and barrenness; but the more we are tried, the more we pray; the more our soul is exercised, the more we cry unto the Lord; the heavier the trial presses, the more we groan out our desires. We cannot do without it. Does sorrow oppress our labouring breasts? Prayer, supplication, cries, groans, desires? What! these fail? Never. There may be stunning blows for a time; I have felt it so. The blow seems so heavy we can scarcely utter a word; but prayer rises, springs up again, is poured out again, drawn out again to the Source and Fountain of all good. Does *looking* to the Lord fail? Dependence upon his word fail? *Hanging upon* his promise fail? No. These are God's own implantation in the soul; these do not fail. False prayer drops through, true prayer abides;

false hopes perish, true hope remains behind. So we might run through the whole work of grace, and shew that none of the graces and fruits of the Spirit ever fail when we are put into the sieve of temptation, but are all strengthened thereby.

III.—But we pass on to our *third* leading feature, which is a very remarkable one; for it throws a blessed and gracious light upon the whole, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Some have drawn a very strange conclusion from this, that Peter was not converted before. That is not the meaning of the word; the meaning of the word is this, "when thou art *restored* strengthen thy brethren." "When thou art brought back; when thou art recovered." Peter was converted before. Before this, the Lord had said to him, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;" (Matt. 16:17); and Peter could say, "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:69.) Men must be strangely misled by the sound of a word to think that Peter was not converted before. But he fell away, and denied his Lord. Under the temptation he was not able to stand; but mercy restored him, and brought him back; the Lord had pity on him; and he came out of the furnace like pure gold. But when he was thus converted, restored, recovered, brought back, this was the benefit, this was the fruit of his having been sifted in the sieve of Satan; he was to strengthen his brethren. This was the way in which Peter was made a minister. He was not sent to the academy at Capernaum, nor to the university of Nazareth; he was put into the sieve of Satan; and in this sieve he learnt those lessons whereby he came forth to strengthen his brethren. I am bold, then, to say that a man who has not been more or less in the sieve is scarcely worth the name of a Christian and I am sure that an unexercised preacher is scarcely worth the name of a minister. In fact, what are such fit for? Pretty much like the salt which has lost its savour—only fit for the dunghill.

Take for instance, an unexercised *minister*; what is he fit for? To eat, drink, and sleep; to build up hypocrites in deception; to crush the poor, needy, exercised people of God; and to shoot the

arrows of contempt and scorn against those servants of the Lord that feed the flock of slaughter. That is all he is fit for. To build up the church of God; to cast up the highway; to take up the stumbling blocks; to strengthen the weak hands; to confirm the feeble knees; to lift up a standard for the people; he does not know, he is not fit for these things. And no exercised child of God will long listen to his ministry. Take an unexercised *hearer*, what is he fit for? Half the time asleep, and the other half looking at the clock; or dreaming away the time about something he did on the Saturday, or occupying his thoughts with something to be done on the Monday. That is all he does, except to make a minister an offender for a word, or pick up something from the pulpit that he may go and make a tale about. That is all he is fit for. What is an unexercised *member* of the church fit for? To breed strife, and make others as dead as himself. What are unexercised *deacons* fit for? To fill the church with empty professors. Not being exercised themselves in the things of God, not being riddled themselves in the sieve, not knowing how to distinguish between the work of God and the work of nature; how can they, when candidates come to them, discern what is of God in their soul? If they cannot discern it, (and discern it they cannot, except they have been well riddled in Satan's sieve), they will fill the church with empty, superficial professors. In fact, what is an unexercised professing man fit for? For nothing; his profession unfits him for the world; and his want of exercise unfits him for the church of God; he is only fit to be cast out by both.

But take the other side of the case. What is an *exercised Christian* fit for? He is fit for God and glory; fit for heaven and eternal bliss, **wherever [where?]** the billows of trial and sorrow shall no more beat over his troubled soul; fit for conversation with the exercised people of God; fit to hear the truth as it is in Jesus; fit to live a life becoming the gospel he professes; fit to shine as a light in the world. What is an exercised *hearer* fit for? He is fit for crying and sighing as he comes to chapel, that the Lord would bless the word to his soul; he is fit to hear an experimental ministry; fit to sit under an exercised servant of

God; fit for the promises, mercies, and blessings of the gospel; fit for the sweet manifestations of blood, grace, and love to his soul; fit for every good word and work. And what is (I must go through it all; I have shown one side of the case, I must shew the other) an exercised *deacon* fit for? Fit to find out the real state and case of the candidate; to know the experience of the members; to see where the work of God is; to prove what the servants of God preach from personal experience; to discern what is truth, and what is error; what is the teaching of the Spirit, and what the teaching of man; what is the wisdom from above, and what is the wisdom from beneath. And what is an exercised *minister* fit for? To strengthen the brethren; that is what he is fit for. Nobody else is fit to strengthen the brethren but he that has been in the sieve of Satan. If false religion has not been riddled out of the soul, he must build up false religion in the soul of others; if he has not proved what will stand, and what will not stand, how can he build up a real work of grace in the hearts of God's people? or how can he take forth the precious from the vile?

But how does he strengthen his brethren? He is not to strengthen the hands of evil-doers; he is not to strengthen the hands of ungodly professors; he is not to strengthen dead assurance, vain-confidence, empty presumption, superficial and outside religion; he is not to strengthen one of these things; but to pull them to a thousand pieces, as God shall enable him, and not leave one tatter remaining. All is to be torn away; and he will do it, if God has pulled away these rags from his own back. But he will strengthen the brethren; the dear children of God; the tried, exercised saints. He will strengthen them; for they are often weak, and need strengthening.

But how will he strengthen them? In various ways.

1. He will show them the way wherein God leads his people. There may be, for instance, a child of God here this evening who has never heard the various trying leadings and dealings of God described. But he now says, 'I have felt temptations for years; but I have always been told that this was not religion; that we

ought to put away all these things; that we ought never to have a doubt; that we should never entertain a fear; but put them all under our feet. I have been told to look to Christ, to live upon him, to claim a share of his mercy and love, and to mount to heaven as upon eagle's wings. I have been instructed again and again that this is religion; and that temptations, trials, exercises, conflicts, groans, sighs, tears, dejection, and depression—that all this is never to be entertained, never to be thought of for a single moment; that a child of God has no trials and exercises, but walks in the light of God all the day long. But now,' (I suppose a tried child of God here to speak) 'I can see I have experienced all this for years; but I have been tried because I could not be what I thought a child of God ought to be, and could not put away those doubts and fears that made me such a poor dejected creature, or overcome those temptations that have so pestered me.'

2. He will also strengthen the brethren by pointing out more clearly *the fulness of grace* that is in Christ, and thus lead them to look to and lean more upon him, and less upon themselves.

3. Or, a servant of God may shew from the sieve *what is opposed* to the work of God in the soul; and in this way the brethren may be strengthened to fight against it.

4. Or, again, when the Lord is pleased to bring us up out of our troubles, and bless us with any discovery of his mercy, we can say to the people of God, 'I have been in trouble, and the Lord appeared for me, and blessed me and delivered me.' When we come forth in this way out of the furnace, we can strengthen them by saying, 'Wait, look, sigh, cry, and pray; and the Lord in his own good time will appear.'

5. Again. We strengthen the brethren by showing them that in the sieve all false hopes give way; all creature righteousness comes to an end; and everything of an earthly nature perishes. And thus, by taking away these things, the life and power of God are strengthened. Suppose that you were a farmer, and in early

spring you took a walk in your fields, and saw the charlock, the poppy, and all kinds of weeds springing up, 'O,' say you, 'I shall lose my crop: these filthy weeds will choke the corn.' You set to work to pull up the weeds, root them out, and to cleanse the crop; and when it is done, when the weeds are pulled up, and thrown upon the dung-heap, what is the consequence? The wheat flourishes. It is so spiritually. The exercised servant of the Lord comes and shows you the rubbish in your heart; that which is not grace, but only nature. 'Here is the corn-cockle of self-righteousness; there the couch-grass of covetousness; here the charlock of fleshly holiness; there the red poppy of pride and ambition: pluck them up; do not leave one remaining.' What is the consequence? When these things are plucked up, the life of God begins to flourish in the soul: and a crop begins to spring up to the honour and glory of God. They were before half suffocated by the weeds: but now the weeds are plucked up, grace thrives.

Now in this way the man who has been in the sieve of temptation will be able more or less to strengthen his brethren. But he will strengthen nobody else: and in his right mind he does not want to strengthen any one else. Suppose I were to come to Eden Street with a view to strengthen the hands of evil-doers; to encourage careless professors; to strengthen those who know nothing of the life and power of godliness—should I be doing God's work? should I have a clear conscience in the sight of God? should I this evening lay my head upon my pillow, and say, 'I have been doing God's work to-day? I have been strengthening the hands of the ungodly? I have been making them bolder, stouter, and stronger than they were before.' Could I, if I had any conscience at all, lay my head upon my pillow, and say, 'Bless God, I have strengthened the hands of the ungodly to-day?' No; I could not do it. But if God should bless my feeble words, and cause this visit to be a means of strengthening the brethren, and comforting the poor, dejected children of God, by showing the work of God in their souls, and cheering their hearts, what other reward do I want? Why should I leave my people and family, and come here with a weak body, with many trials and exercises of mind, except in the Lord's hand to strengthen the brethren? If the

Lord has put me in the sieve, (as he has again and again) and has brought me forth out of the sieve, and enables me so to speak, that I may strengthen the hands of the brethren—God's tried and weary people—and thus be made an instrument of blessing to their souls, I want no more and if God will, I would have no less. This can bear up my soul, let men say what they will, or think what they will. If God give me a testimony in my own conscience; and if God approve me to your conscience, that is a sufficient testimony. It is what God is pleased to do in me, and what he is pleased to do in you by me that will stand. Let my soul; let our souls who fear God, stand on the testimony of God. "If I pleased man," said the apostle; and every true servant of God will add his hearty amen, "I should not be the servant of Christ." I leave this to your consciences.

SIGNS SEEN, AND NOT SEEN

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, on Lord's Day morning, June 20, 1841

"We see not our signs." Psalm 74:9

The Psalm, from which the text is taken, is clearly not one of those that were written by the pen of David. We gather this, not merely from the title of the Psalm, where it is called "Maschil" **which means "giving instruction"** "of Asaph," but also from the strongest internal evidence. For instance, we read in the 6th and 7th verses (Ps. 74:6, 7), "But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary; they have denied by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground." We have no such event as this in the days of David, for the temple at that time was not even built; that privilege being reserved for his son Solomon, because David "had shed much blood upon the earth" (1 Ch. 22:8).

It evidently points, then, to a period, when the carved work of this temple was broken down with axes and hammers; when fire was cast into the sanctuary; and God's dwelling place, that is, his temple, was defiled by being cast down to the ground. Again, in the 8th verse (Ps. 74:8), we read, "They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land." Now, there were no synagogues in the days of David, nor were there any such assemblies till the time of the Babylonish captivity. Thus we have the strongest internal evidence, that this Psalm was written about that time, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple of God at Jerusalem; and it appears to have been penned by Asaph, a descendant of Asaph the singer, who remained at Jerusalem, and witnessed those desolations, that were committed by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers.

With respect, then, to the words from which I hope to speak this morning, we find Asaph pouring forth his soul in this bitter lamentation:—"We see not our signs." Now, these signs, which he mourned that he did not see, were certain outward marks of God's special favour, certain testimonies of his presence, certain memorials that he was with them to bless them. And it is said, that there were five things in Solomon's temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which were not in the second temple, which was erected after the Babylonish captivity. Five memorials or tokens of God's special presence were there wanting. One was the ark of the covenant; another, the fire from heaven upon the brazen altar; the third, the Shechinah, or cloud that rested upon the mercy-seat; the fourth, the Urim and Thummim which were in the breast-plate of the high-priest; and the fifth, the spirit of prophecy. For though there were the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, at the time of, and shortly after, the restoration; yet the spirit of prophecy ceased with Malachi, and did not reappear until John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus.

We see, then, that there is a ground-work from these words on which to build up a spiritual and experimental interpretation. We are not warranted to take any words that we find in the Scriptures of truth, and spiritualise them according to our own fancy. Unless there be some groundwork for a spiritual and experimental interpretation, founded upon the literal meaning of the passage, we seem rather to be trusting to our own fancy and imagination, than to "prophecy according to the analogy of faith," and "rightly to divide the word of truth." I never wish to build up an experimental signification upon a passage of Scripture, unless, **first**, I can find some solid groundwork whereon to build it; and unless, **secondly**, I can find some life and feeling out of it in my own heart. When we go by what the Spirit of God has recorded in the written word, and by what the same blessed Spirit has, in a measure, traced out in our hearts, we then move upon solid ground, and bear a testimony of which we need not be ashamed.

The lamentation of the church here then was, that she saw not her signs. So now the church of the living God, the regenerate family of Zion, have often reason to pour out the same melancholy complaint. Signs of God's favour, marks, and testimonies of his work of grace upon their souls are often so out of sight, so buried in obscurity, so enveloped in clouds of darkness, that the living family are compelled, from soul-feeling, to take up the language of lamentation here expressed, and say, "we see not our signs."

We gather, then, from these words, that there are such things as "signs," that is, tokens and marks of God's special favour to the soul; that there is also "a seeing" those signs, when God the Holy Ghost is pleased to shine upon them; and that there is a third state, where there is a "not seeing the signs," those signs being enveloped in dimness, darkness, and obscurity.

I. "Signs," then, are marks and testimonies of God's favour, memorials and Ebenezers of the Lord's special loving-kindness to us, as "chosen in Christ before all worlds"—as redeemed by the blood of the Son of God upon the cross at Calvary and as quickened in due time by the Holy Ghost bringing us to a knowledge of ourselves, and to a knowledge of "the only true God, and of Jesus Christ Whom he has sent." Now, where all signs of God's favour, and all testimonies of his gracious dealings are absent, then we must pronounce the work of grace to be absent. But remember that it is one thing to have a complete absence of signs; it is another thing not to be able to see them. The absence of signs shows an absence of life; not seeing the signs merely shows that the living soul is in a state of gloom and darkness. There are, then, certain symptoms, marks, and tokens of life in the soul; and where these symptoms or signs are totally absent, then we must pronounce, that that soul is dead in sin, or dead in a profession.

If we look at "signs" generally, there seem to be two classes of them. There are some signs which, were they removed, would not remove the existence of the thing itself. And there are other

signs of such a nature, that if they were removed the existence of the thing which they signify would be removed with them. For instance, the crown upon a monarch's head, and the throne on which a monarch sits are signs of royalty. But take away that crown, put it into the Jewel Office in the Tower; or remove that throne on which the sovereign sits; the absence of the crown, and the removal of the throne do not take away royalty; the monarch is still a king, though the insignia of his dignity are out of sight. So, to use a more familiar comparison, the milestones upon a road are certain marks of distance and when we come to them, we know how far we have travelled. But these milestones might be all defaced, to as to become illegible, or they might be taken clean away; yet the road and the distance would remain the same. So a bank note is a sign of value; it has no value in itself, it is merely a representative of property, let the bank note be destroyed, still the property, of which it is the sign, remains the same to the company that issued it. Well, these are certain signs or marks of the existence of a thing, and yet, if these signs were taken away, the thing would still exist as it was before. But there are other signs which are so constituent parts of the thing itself, that if the signs were taken away the thing would, in its measure cease to exist. For instance, at a certain period of the year, the days begin to lengthen—the sun rises higher in the sky, and sets later—the trees put forth their leaves—the flowers appear in the earth—the singing of the turtle is heard in the land,—and we say, these are signs of spring. But, suppose that these signs were removed; that the days did not become longer, that the sun did not rise higher, nor continue for a greater space in the firmament, that the trees did not put forth their leaves, nor the earth put forth its flowers; why, the very removal of these things would remove spring itself.

There are signs, then, which may be removed, and the thing still exist—and there are signs, the removal of which takes away the thing itself. Now with respect to signs of Divine favour, marks and testimonies of God's special blessing, these signs are chiefly of the latter class, that is, could you take away the signs you would take away that life which is there signified; because the life of

God consists in certain feelings, certain manifestations, certain workings, certain breathings which could they be removed out of that man's heart, the life would be removed with them. But though the chief parts of signs, spiritually considered, are of the second class, I must observe, there are some signs of the first class, for instance, external fruits—the fruits that are visible in a man's life, conduct, and conversation. If these signs are absent, we say that the man is not possessed of spiritual life; but still they might be present and not prove the existence of spiritual life, but might spring from self-righteousness. But the greater part of signs of God's favor, are signs of the second class, that is, their removal implies the removal of that which they point out. We will then, with God's blessing, look a little at some of these signs; and may he assist us to find out, that these signs have been stamped by the Holy Ghost upon our consciences.

1. Now, the first sign, according to the Scripture testimony, is "the fear of God;" for the word of the Lord says, that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," and that it is "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." And therefore, "if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," it must be the first sign of spiritual life, because it is the beginning of spiritual life. He then whose religion began without the fear of the Lord being implanted from above in his heart and conscience began with God before God began with him; he took up his religion before the Holy Ghost gave him that which constitutes vital godliness. And he that took it up, can lay it down; he that began in his own strength will probably finish in his own weakness. He that lays hold of the things of eternity before the things of eternity lay hold on him, will be able to, and, no doubt, will leave go of that which he has thus in the flesh laid hold of. "The fear of the Lord," then, "is the beginning of wisdom," and operates as a fountain of life. But connected with "the fear of the Lord" in the soul, there are different workings toward that source and fountain, whence this life comes down. In this "fear of the Lord," we feel what sin is. By this "fear of the Lord" we depart from outward evil. By the working of this "fear of the Lord" we are brought into the presence of a heart-searching God. Through the springings up of

this "fear of the Lord," as the fountain of life in our souls, we call unto the Lord that he would pardon our sins, manifest himself to our souls, make Jesus known, keep us from evil, and lead us into all truth. Then, "the fear of the Lord" is a living principle in a man's conscience; no dead stagnant pool, no rain-water tank, but it is a living stream of living water, which is continually gushing up from the bottom of his heart, springing up like the well spoken of in the Scriptures, "Spring up, O well"—springing up in the soul, as the Spirit of the Lord, from time to time, works upon it, and draws it forth into blessed exercise.

2. Another sign of the Lord having chosen us in Christ before all worlds, and redeemed us by the blood of his only begotten Son, is his having poured out upon us "the Spirit of grace and of supplications." This is the testimony which the Lord himself has given us in Zachariah: "I will pour out upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Now, when "the Spirit of grace and of supplication" is poured out upon the soul, it enables the soul to pour itself out before God; as Hannah said to Eli, when he thought that she was drunken,— "No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord," that is, she poured out all her feelings, all her wants, all her desires into the bosom of that God, who had brought her to his footstool. And there is no real prayer, in whatever stage or state of experience of the divine life we may be—there is no real prayer, where there is not a pouring out of the soul into the bosom of God, that is, there is, as it were, a casting forth, and a casting down, at the feet of the Lord those burdens, griefs, trials, and difficulties, wherewith the soul is beset. Now, this pouring out of the soul does not necessarily imply any great fluency; it does not carry with it the idea of what are called gifts, but it carries with it this idea, that the man unbosoms himself, unburdens himself, earnestly tells out the wants of his heart; and therefore it corresponds with the work of the Holy Ghost spoken of in (Rom. 8:20): "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," or rather, that are not to be expressed. So that these

groanings are poured out into the bosom of God, pressed out of us by the heavy burden of guilt, condemnation, temptation, exercise, and sorrow. And he that has never known what it is to feel the Spirit, as a "Spirit of grace and of supplications," enabling him to pour out his soul before the Lord, and he who has never felt the Spirit within him, interceding with "groanings which cannot be uttered," has a mark upon him that he is destitute of that gift, which the Holy Ghost gives to the people of God.

3. Another "sign" of God's special favour is **repentance**, and this, not "the repentance of the world that worketh death," not the remorse of the carnal mind, not fleshy sorrow, nor the mere workings of natural conscience, but, as the Scriptures speak, "repentance unto life." "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life;" or, as it is spoken of in another passage, "repentance not to be repented of." Then this repentance will not consist merely in conviction of guilt, nor pangs of remorse, for this a man may have, who has no grace in his heart at all, as a criminal upon the gallows may have remorse of conscience, and as murderers have, at times, been so haunted by the remembrance of their crimes, that they have yielded themselves up into the hands of justice, being unable to bear any longer that intolerable load. So in a reprobate, or in a man devoid of the grace of God, there may be, and doubtless there often are, strong pangs of remorse, convictions of guilt, and sensations of the tremendous wrath of God against sin; and yet this is not "repentance unto life," but "the sorrow of the world that worketh death," the beginning and foretaste of an endless eternity of misery. But wherever there is "repentance unto life" given by the Holy Ghost, there will not be merely pangs of guilt and convictions of sin, but there will also be implanted a solemn hatred, abhorrence, and detestation of those sins, which lie heavy upon our consciences, and of our own selves, as being so involved in transgression.

4. Another "sign" of God's special favour and mark of his quickening grace, is **faith in the Lord Jesus**. The message which the apostle preached, was "repentance towards God, and

faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." The Lord himself went about preaching these words, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." There is, sooner or later, in the heart of every quickened child of God, some measure given to him of faith in the Lord Jesus. Not that this comes at first. In the living family there are different states and stages of experience. There shall be some whom God has quickened into spiritual life, who have the "fear of the Lord" in them, as "the beginning of wisdom," who have had "the spirit of grace and of supplications" poured out upon them, who have repented and are repenting of their transgressions against God, and hate themselves before him; and yet the Lord the Spirit has not yet fulfilled his covenant office, in taking of the things, of Christ, and showing them to their souls. For faith in the Lord Jesus Christ arises out of some discovery of Christ to the soul by the Holy Ghost, some bringing of Christ near, some anointing the eyes with eye-salve, whereby a glimpse of Christ's blood and righteousness is received, and his glorious salvation in some measure made known. Now, till a man gets there, if the Lord has quickened him by his blessed Spirit, he can never find solid rest nor peace; you may doubt a man's religion who can rest satisfied, short of a manifestation of Christ to his soul. Guilt, conviction, the workings of godly sorrow, a deep feeling of self-aborrence and self-loathing, will so press a man down into the dust, will so strip him of all creature-righteousness, and so empty him of all fleshly religion, that nothing short of application, manifestation, discovery, and gracious revelation, can ever satisfy his soul, or bind up the wounds of his bleeding conscience. Therefore, write yourselves down as dead in a profession, if you can do without some manifestation and discovery of Christ in your souls.

5. Love to God's people is a sign that God has chosen us in Christ before all worlds; and the Apostle John gives us this as an express mark. He says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life" **not merely that we have passed, but "we know that we have passed from death unto life"** "because we love the brethren." Now, there are many mistakes made here. Hypocrites, and rotten professors, and other presumptuous characters—those tares among the wheat, those goats among the

sheep, are glad to catch at any evidence to buoy them up—are fain to lay hold of any sign or testimony whereby they can ease the pangs of an accusing conscience. Many, therefore, lay hold of this testimony in the word, who have never received this testimony inwardly from God. But whom do they love. Those that will flatter them, that will think highly of them, that will back their religion, who run in the same channel of doctrine, or who are in any way kind, and pleasing, and amiable; and this they call loving the people of God. "They are sure," they say, "that they have passed from death unto life, because they love the brethren." But do they feel any love to the tried, the exercised, the sin-burdened, the distressed, the Satan-harassed? Do they love the faithful, bold, fearless soldiers of the great Captain of our salvation? Do they love those who will deal honestly with them, and strip off the false coverings that are spread over their hearts, and cannot be bought, by favour nor by gold, to say that which they do not feel. Do they love **them**? No, they are the last persons that they love. The smooth, the amiable, those who never say a word to ruffle them, nor to inflict a wound upon them, they can love; but the upright, the sincere, the straightforward, simple-hearted, living family, who dare not disguise their real sentiments when they are called to express them, these they hate with a perfect hatred, and account them their enemies. Then, before you can write yourselves down to be living souls by the love that you feel to God's people, examine and try who the people are whom you really do love. Are they the broken-hearted, contrite, mourning, sighing, afflicted family? Do you feel soul-union with them, so as to be united to them with bonds of affection and love, feel a sympathy with them in their sorrows and trials, and not merely feel it, but manifest it by your words and conduct? not acting like those hypocrites spoken of by James, who says, "Be ye warmed and filled, and give them not those things which are needful to the body," but acting upon that which you profess, and manifesting by your words and actions the deep sympathy of your heart.

6. **Love to Christ**—that is another "sign" of God's special favour. "Whosoever loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be

Anathema; Maranatha," that is, let him be accursed; the Lord cometh. And what solemn words are these spoken by the mouth of an inspired apostle! He must evidently mean, that he who lives and dies without this love to Christ shed abroad in his heart—for he cannot wish for the curse of God to rest upon the living family, who are not yet brought into the enjoyment of the love of Christ, but he who lives and dies without love to Christ—let him be "Anathema;" and this seems to be confirmed by what follows, "Maranatha," that is, "the Lord cometh," to avenge himself on that man. Now, wherever there is a measure of faith toward Jesus, there will be a measure of love toward him. Faith and love are just proportionate. Just so much faith, just so much love; so that he that believes on the Lord Jesus, by the sweet testimony of Jesus to his soul will, just in the proportion of his faith, have a measure of love to that Redeemer who has enshrined himself in his warmest and tenderest affections.

7. Again, another "sign" of God's special favour—indeed, I may say, the grand sign of all—is, the witness of the Spirit to our spirits, that we are born of God. Some signs are immediate, other signs are but mediate, that is, they are seen through a medium. Some signs are like the sun shining upon a man's countenance, or into a man's eyes; he believes that which he sees. Other signs are like the same rays shining upon a mirror. They do not shine directly upon him, but he sees them reflected in that bright mirror which catches those beams. So some "signs" are reflected signs, mediate signs, that is, a man has certain feelings in his heart; he looks at the word of God, the glass and mirror of truth **Jas 1:23** , and he seest in it the very experience that he is passing through; and thus heavenly light is reflected from the mirror into his soul. When the Lord the Spirit then shines upon his own truth in the word, and upon his own work in the soul, he stamps, more or less, a living testimony that the experience is genuine and divine. But, after all, nothing can really satisfy the living soul, but some immediate testimony from God himself. He must have the ray shining, not as reflected in a mirror, but streaming directly and immediately into his soul out of the glorious "Sun of righteousness," the Spirit itself bearing his own

blessed inward testimony to his spirit, that he is born again, that he is a child of the living God, that he was chosen in Christ before all worlds, has been pardoned by atoning blood, has been called by the quickening Spirit, and is sealed an heir of glory.

8. Another sign is, a **life and conversation agreeable to the gospel**. Uprightness, sincerity, simplicity, humility, a walk which is manifest to others, though not so to ourselves, as becoming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, are signs of the grace of God. And though this evidence is often no evidence to us, because we find so much sin mixed up with all that we say or do, that the evidence seems obscure and dim, and at times utterly lost, yet the family of God, whose eyes are opened to see what truth is, can read this evidence, and more than that, where they cannot read this evidence, they are bound, by the word of God, and by conscience, to stand in doubt of a man's religion. Where, then, there is a decided want of moral honesty, sincerity, simplicity, uprightnes, and straight-forwardness, or where there is a manifest absence of the fruits of love to the people of God, or of those plain marks and grand outlines of a Christian walk which the Scripture has traced out, in that case, we are bound, unless a man be in a great state of backsliding, we are bound to say, the life of God is absent. Not but that there are wintry seasons, as I shall presently show, where the tree remains the same, and the fruits are fallen off; but still we expect the tree to bear fruit at some season of the year. If there are no leaves, no flowers, and no fruit at any one period, or at any one season, we are warranted in pronouncing that tree dead.

II. But we pass on to consider, What is the seeing of these signs? There is, then, such a thing as "seeing a sign;" for, if there were not, why should the complaint have been poured forth? Why should the prophet have so piteously complained, "We see not our signs," unless they were, at times, to be seen! His complaints would be unfounded, were they never visible; and, therefore, the very lamentation shows, that there are times and seasons when the signs can be seen, as well as times and seasons when the signs cannot be seen.

Now, to revert a little to one of our previous illustrations, the way of life is called in the Scriptures a highway, a path, and similar expressions, indicative of a road. Those, then, that travel along this road will have at different intervals certain landmarks, what the Scripture calls "tokens for good"—Ebenezers—"stones of help." Now, what is requisite to see them? Why, surely the main requisite is light. The landmarks might still be there, the milestones might be every one in their place, their inscriptions might be perfectly legible, and yet, if it were dark, none of these landmarks could be traced out—none of these milestones could be seen. Light, then, is necessary in the soul, in order to "see our signs;" and this light—such a light as is spoken of in the Psalms—"With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light;" corresponding with the Lord's expression, "The light of life." Then the light wherein we "see our signs," is not the moonlight of speculation, nor the frozen northern light of doctrine, nor the meteor light—the **ignis fatuus** of delusion—nor the phosphoric light, which faintly glimmers from rotten evidences, nor "the sparks of their own kindling," which are elicited by the striking together of flinty hearts and steeled consciences. All this kind of light would be very insufficient to show us the road, stretched out over mountain and valley. We want some clearer, some brighter, some more powerful light, to show the whole extent of the road, that shall run for miles through a country, than a lantern can afford, or any dim light that we ourselves can create. Nothing less than the light of the sun can show us the whole road stretched out into a far distance, and thus, nothing but the light of God, streaming into our hearts, can ever illumine the road, so that we shall "see our signs."

There are times, then, when the Lord is pleased to revive his work in our souls, to draw forth those graces which he himself has implanted, and to shine upon that which he himself has produced. Sometimes, for instance, **the fear of the Lord** is acted upon by the blessed Spirit, and it rises up as a fountain of life. Some evidence is then afforded us, and we derive some comfort from the testimony that we have in us—not a dead

profession, not a seared conscience, not a hard heart; that we are not abandoned to the power of sin, not given up to utter recklessness; but that we have a fountain of life springing up in contrition, in godly sorrow, in aspirations and breathings after the Lord, to manifest his special blessings. So again, with respect to the sign of "the spirit of grace and of supplications." When this "spirit of grace and of supplications" is drawn forth into blessed exercise, a man has an inward testimony, that he is "praying in the Spirit," he feels that he is worshipping God "in spirit and in truth"—that he is drawing near to the throne of the Most High; that there is a power—a supernatural power, which is working in his soul, and enabling him to pour out his petitions and desires at God's feet. A man who has received "the spirit of grace and supplications" knows when his soul is favoured therewith. If not, there is every reason to believe that he has never received it at all. So, when a man is brought to loathe himself in "dust and ashes," and mourns, and sighs, and "groans, being burdened" with the sins in which he is entangled, with the gins and traps in which his feet have been caught and to abhor himself as a beast before God—so far as his soul is humbled and broken within him, he has some evidence, some "sign," that he is not "given over to a reprobate mind"—he has some inward testimony, that he is not one of those, who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues, and have no sorrow for their baseness and vileness before a heart-searching Jehovah; and though it can bring him no ease, nor give him peace of conscience, nor remove the guilt, yet he is, in some measure, brought to a brokenness of heart and tenderness of spirit; and he would a million times sooner be in the dust of humiliation and the posture of confession, than hardened in recklessness, or confident in presumption.

So again, when he has some measure of faith in Christ—when he is able to realise, more or less, according to the Spirit's operation, the blood, the righteousness, and the grace of Immanuel—when faith is drawn forth into exercise, and, spreading her arms, embraces Christ, as he is spiritually made known, there is some evidence, mark, symptom, or "sign," that he is interested in this great redemption; and he has that in his soul, which, more or

less, satisfies him and persuades him—not very deeply, perhaps, not very powerfully, not very abidingly—but while it lasts, while the heavenly sensations continue, before the vision is removed, gently and yet sweetly testifies to him of his eternal interest in the blood of the Lamb. So, when he loves the people of God, and feels his heart burns with affection towards them, experiences a knitting of soul to the poor and tempted and exercised and tried and harassed family, and feels that there is no insincerity in his affection, but that there is a real communion of spirit, and a tender sympathy of soul—when these sensations are experienced, as long as the blessed feeling is in exercise, there is some sweet testimony that he has "passed from death unto life," because he loves God's living family. But above all, when "the Sun of righteousness" is pleased to shine, and the Spirit itself bears its immediate testimony—then, above all things—then, above all times and seasons, will he have the testimony, will he see his signs, and be able to see his name written amongst the living; in Jerusalem.

III. But we must turn to the other side of the picture. Most ministers are all for the bright side—all for speaking of consolation—of the Spirit's blessed testimony in the soul, and how the children of God walk in light and life and liberty and love. What is the consequence? They build up hypocrites, and they plaster with "untempered mortar" those that are dead in a profession; whilst they distress and trouble the living family who have tender consciences, and know that matters are usually very different with them. We must have, then, both sides of the question. We read in this Psalm 74:16, 17, and it is a sweet testimony of the Lord, "The day is thine;" "Yes," says the dead Calvinist, "that is plain enough"—"the **night** also is thine." What think you of that? "Thou hast made **summer**;" "Yes," says the dry doctrinal professor, "God makes summer—it is always summer with me." But listen to what the Lord goes on to say, "and **winter**;" then the Lord "makes winter." Now, if you only know the Lord that made the day, and never knew the Lord that made the night,—if you only know the Lord that made the summer, and do not know the Lord that made the winter, you do

not know the God of the Bible, you do not know him as he has revealed himself in the Scriptures; then do not think that you know the "only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent," unless you know him as he has discovered himself in the Scriptures, as making day and night, summer and winter. There is, then, the **night** and the **winter** of the soul. When it is brought into this state, "we see not our signs," and the sweet testimonies are lost, not really, but experimentally; not lost out of the heart by the removal of their existence, but lost out of the feelings by a beclouding of them.

But to pursue the figure which I was just employing. What was requisite to see the signs? Day, bright day, the glorious sun in the sky, casting his blessed beams over mountain and dale, and flood and field, was necessary to see the broad landscape. The absence, then, of this, the withdrawal of this glorious orb of day, will produce just the contrary result to us; and when the soul is brought into this state, "we see not our signs." Now, these shades of darkness may be various. For instance, there may rise up from some deep mine a cloud of pitchy smoke, which, as it rolls forth, shall cover the hemisphere, and so obscure all the path that is stretched out before the eyes. Such is **infidelity**, that black cloud, that column of murky, pitchy darkness, which rises out of the bottomless pit. When infidelity comes, with its clouds of pitchy darkness, into a man's soul, it obscures, buries, hides all his signs, because it spreads itself over the very foundations of truth; as the Psalmist says, "If the **foundations** be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Bunyan has a striking expression on this point. Alluding to these feelings of infidelity, he says, "It is as though my girdle were taken from me," that is, his garments were no longer in a fit state for him, "to run with patience the race set before him," but all his joints were unloosed, and he was in a state of absolute weakness. So, when this black, murky cloud of infidelity comes from the depths of the bottomless pit, it so darkens and obscures the word of God, and our experience, every outward as well as every inward testimony, that we are utterly unable to see any one sign, either the being of a God, or the

existence of Christ, or the teaching of the Holy Ghost, or anything of a divine work upon our hearts and consciences.

But this road of which I was speaking, might be obscured by a fog coming over the face of the sky. Suppose you and I were standing on some lofty mountain, Mount Snowdon, we will say, and we were gazing upon the outstretched prospect, and admiring the beautiful valleys, and the fruitful fields, and the flowing rivers, and the mountain lakes, and not only saw these, but saw also the road which we had been travelling, the different elevations over which we had come, the valleys in which we had been hid, the village spires which we had marked upon our road, and the towns through which we had passed. Well, suppose whilst we stood looking upon the prospect, clouds gathered round about us, and mists and fogs came down from the upper regions of the sky. Would they not envelope not only the top of the mountain, but envelope us also who were standing there? Where is the road? or rather, where is our sight of the road? Are not all the landmarks gone? Is not the whole landscape obscured and dimmed, and with it the road we have travelled completely lost from our view? Well, thus it is with the mists and fogs of unbelief that rise in a man's carnal mind, and spread themselves over the whole work of God in his soul. These mists and fogs hide all our evidences, obscure all our testimonies, envelope in deep obscurity the workmanship of God, and thus "we see not our signs." No fear of God in the soul, no godly sorrow for sin, no love to Christ, no love to the people of Christ, no sweet testimony of our interest in the blood of the Lamb can be seen; all are dimmed, obscured, and darkened by these mists and fogs that have spread themselves over our souls.

But there may be a third cause, why we cannot see our signs. A man shall have travelled over many miles of country, and after he has journeyed over this long and waste tract, he shall come into a valley, into some deep depression between rising mountains. Can he see his road? Why, no. There are mountains behind and mountains before; and these mountains shut out the road, so that he cannot look back upon the path that he has passed, and

can only see just the spot where he is at the present moment. So, when the living soul gets into the valley of trouble, "the valley of Achor," as the Scripture speaks, into the valley of confusion, the valley of darkness, the valley of soul-temptation, the valley of self-abhorrence and self-loathing; why, these mountains behind, and these mountains before, block out his prospect. When he would fain look behind him to see the road he has travelled, there is a huge, black, desolate, rocky mountain, so that he cannot see the road that he has passed over; it is blocked up, and he only wonders how he got where he is. But he **is** there, and he cannot get out. And then the road before him, he cannot see it, for there are mountains before him as well as mountains behind him. Bozez in front, and Seneh in the rear (1 Sam. 14:4). Well then, these mountains of trial, of difficulty, and of temptation, these rough and rugged mountains which stretch forth their lofty peaks into the sky, seem impassable for his galled and aching feet, and not merely impassable, but they block out all view of that heavenly country to which he is tending, and whither he is dragging his weary and toiling steps. He cannot "see his signs;" the Ebenezers are hidden, the milestones which have tracked his path are altogether out of sight by the obstacles that intervene between him and them.

But we read also that "the sun knoweth his going down," and that "the Lord maketh darkness, and it is night" (Ps. 104:19, 20). So the child of God sometimes shall lose all sight of his signs by the sun going down upon them. There are different ways of not seeing the landmarks; there is the going down of the sun and the night coming on, as well as the murky clouds of infidelity, the mists and fogs of unbelief, and the high rocky mountains which block in the valley of humiliation. So the child of God sometimes shall come into a state of darkness, and cannot tell how he came there. But he is in darkness because the sun has set, though he has never moved from the spot; for the sun goes down just as much upon one who stands still, as upon one who is travelling. Thus a man might stand upon this mountain that I have been describing, but when the sun went down, the landscape would be lost; it would be all dimmed and obscured from his view. So when

the "Sun of Righteousness" goes down, when the Lord "makes it dark," and all the beams and rays out of that glorious fountain of light are removed by the withdrawal of the orb itself; then darkness covers the man's heart, he gropes for the wall like the blind, and he gropes as if he had no eyes, he stumbles in desolate places like dead men. All is dark around him and he is dark to it. He can neither see his signs, nor see the sun which makes these signs visible. And he sits mourning in darkness, until the Lord is pleased, once more, to cause the sun to rise upon his soul.

Such then is, more or less, the chequered path of the Christian—such is a feeble sketch of the way in which the Lord leads his people through this waste wilderness. But God's people cannot be satisfied with "**not** seeing their signs." It is a subject of mournful complaint with them. The hypocrites in Zion catch up the language of the saints, for there is nothing more easily picked up, than a few of the expressions which are in the mouth of God's tried family. You will find professors, whom God has never quickened into spiritual life, when they are in the company of God's people, hanging down their heads like bulrushes, and imitating and apeing the gestures and language of the living family of Zion. "I am so dark, so dead, so carnal, so unbelieving." You are quite right, you **are** so because you always **were** so—you never were otherwise. No doubt you are dead, because you are dead in sin; no doubt you are carnal, because you never were spiritual; no doubt you are unbelieving, for God never gave you living faith; no doubt you are cold, for you have never had a ray of warmth out of the Sun of righteousness. It is not, then, being dead and cold and carnal, but it is what we feel in these seasons. A traveller, who was journeying over and exploring the rocky Alps, if the sun were to go down or fogs were to arise, would not say, "How dark it is here! I am in darkness; surely I am right now. Oh! the sun is gone down, it is an evidence that I am in the right road;" and feel a kind of pleasure at the very darkness which surrounds him, and hides the landscape from his view. Were he thus to congratulate himself; should we not say he was a fool or a madman? So for one professing to stand upon the very

brink of eternity to say, "I am dark, I am dead, I am carnal, I am worldly, I am covetous"—to pick up these feelings as so many evidences, gather up this counterfeit money, which ought to be nailed to the till, and spread it abroad as solid gold, go with this base coin in his hand amongst the family of God, to pass it off as from heaven's mint—why, every living soul should snatch it out of his hand, and strike a nail through it, that it may stand as an evidence on the counter that the money is forged. The living soul may be, and continually is, barren, dark, stupid carnal and dead, but he cannot congratulate himself upon his deadness, nor rejoice in his darkness, nor take an evidence from his barrenness. It will be, as the Lord the Spirit works in him, a subject of complaint with him, it will be his grief, his trouble, his plague, his burden; he can no more take comfort from his disease, that a man in a consumption can take comfort from his cough, or a man in a fever from his burning sensations of heat, or a man who has fallen from a building can take pleasure in his broken limb. He will want a cure, a blessed remedy; he will want life instead of death, light instead of darkness, spirituality instead of carnality, heavenly-mindedness instead of worldliness, a heart enlarged to run the way of God's commandments, instead of sluggishness, slothfulness, and carelessness.

"We see not our signs," it is the language of lamentation. Now where are you? Are you there? You never have been there, if you have not had signs. And if there were not any signs to see, why does the prophet who penned this Psalm say, mourning, "we see not our signs!" For the same reason that some of the Jews wept, when they saw the second temple erected upon the ruins of the first. Why did they weep? It was not because the temple was not so large a temple as the preceding; that did not grieve them, for the second temple was, in some respects, a nobler and more beautiful building than the first, but the glory of the Lord had departed—that made them weep. "**Ichabod**" was written upon the walls. The ark of the covenant, the Shechinah, the Urim and the Thummim, the fire upon the brazen altar, and the Spirit of prophecy had all departed. The Lord had left the house, and that was the reason why the elders wept, while the younger, who had

never seen the presence of the Lord, rejoiced. Apt emblem, striking illustration, of the difference between the living soul and the dead professor! The temple shorn of its glory, and the departure of that which was all its ornament and all its beauty, made the elders mourn and weep. But the younger rejoiced in the external beauty of the temple, for they knew nothing of that inward glory which had departed when the Lord was justly provoked with their iniquities, and gave up the building which he had consecrated by his presence, to be spoiled by the Chaldeans. So the living soul will be mourning and complaining that he sees not his signs, whilst the mere empty professor of religion will be looking at the external beauty of the building, admiring the harmony of the doctrines, the grand scheme of salvation, the glorious plan of the covenant, and the fair proportions traced out in God's word, whilst he knows nothing of the inward glory of the temple in the manifested presence of God. But what avails admiration of the columns and architecture of the building without, if he knows nothing of the ark of the covenant within the temple sprinkled with blood; nor of the fire from heaven on the brazen altar; nor of the Shechinah the divine presence as a cloud on the mercy seat; nor of the Urim and Thummim, those oracles of God to teach him, and warn him when he turns to the right hand, or to the left; nor of the Spirit of prophecy, whereby he is enabled to pour out his soul in inspired language, and offer up to God those feelings with which the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of grace and of supplication," indites in his heart.

Sin Condemned and Righteousness Fulfilled

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Feb. 3, 1861

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:3, 4

What a wondrous change both of views and feelings is produced in the soul when divine light and life first enter it from above! It is indeed a revolution, a mighty revolution, for it is effected by no power short of his who says, "Behold, I create all things new." The Scriptures, therefore, when they make mention of this mighty change, always speak of it as being effected by the power of God. Sometimes, for instance, it is spoken of as an "opening of the eyes," and a turning of sinners "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts 26:18.) Sometimes it is spoken of as a deliverance from the power of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13.) At other times it is compared to a birth, a new birth, as in those words of the Lord, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) At other times to a resurrection from the dead: "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." (Eph. 2:1, 4, 5.) Sometimes to a creation, as in the words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (or, as in the margin, "a new creation;") "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.) All these expressions imply a change by a power not our own.

Now one of the first fruits and effects of this heavenly change, this mighty revolution, is the *different views and feelings* that the regenerated soul entertains concerning the law of God. Before it is quickened into divine life, the law exerts no commanding

power, no supreme and domineering authority over it. In word, perhaps, in name, we yield to it an unwilling allegiance; but the law as yet has not asserted its right nor spoken to us as with the voice of God. Thus the apostle speaks of himself—and we cannot find a more vivid or more experimental description of what the soul feels before and after the law has come with power than his relation of his own experience—"I was alive without the law once;" that is, not alive unto God in the best sense of the word; nor alive spiritually by regenerating grace, or by living a life of faith on the Son of God; but alive in this sense, that he had not then been killed by the sentence of the condemning law in his conscience. In this sense the soul is alive before it is dead; for never having felt the killing power of a condemning law, it is at ease in Zion, alive to a round of duties, easily satisfied with a multiplicity of forms from which it is expecting life and salvation, but utterly dead to a knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. But when God, by the operation of his word upon the heart, which is as a hammer to break the rock in pieces (Jer. 23:29), batters down the walls of Pharisaic pride and self-righteousness, then the law enters through the breach with a whole army of terrors. Before the law is made known to the conscience by the power of God, the soul is like such a city as Laish, of which we read that "the people therein dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure." (Judges 18:7.) But when the children of Dan fell upon Laish and made a breach in the walls, then as an invading army they entered through the breach, and smote the citizens with the edge of the sword. (Judges 18:27.) So as long as the soul is alive without the law, like Laish, it is easy and quiet after the manner of the luxurious Zidonians, who engaged in trade and traffic, and having the sea for their rampart, lived without external war or internal strife. But when the word of God is applied with quickening power to make a breach in the walls of Pharisaism—for in this sense "the rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit," (Prov. 18:11,)—then through this breach enters the law as an invading army; and as an army let loose upon a city, sacks, plunders, massacres, and lays waste in all directions, so does the law attack and slay a guilty conscience.

Thus the apostle, speaking of his own experience, Romans 7:9, says, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Sin was quiet before. But when the law came, it stirred sin up; it put new life into it; it revived sin out of its slumber in which it had been lying like a viper under a hedge in winter, or a dog sleeping at night in its kennel. The hot ray of the sun does not give the viper its poison fang; nor does the passing step of the traveller set the strong tooth in the jaw of the mastiff. So the law does not create sin, though it calls it up; is not the author of it, though it revives it. The apostle therefore says, "The motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death;" and again, "But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." (Rom. 7:5, 8.) Thus the law as reviving every secret lust and putting strength into every corruption, is armed as it were with a double power—a power to condemn the transgressor, and a power to stir up the transgression; for such is the hideous nature of sin, that "it works death in us by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Thus Paul says of himself, "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Rom. 7:13, 14.) He thus felt that the law was holy, but he unholy; the law just, but he a criminal; the law good, but he vile. Taking him, then, as an exemplar of one who felt in no common measure the operation and the condemnation of the law in his conscience, we see how a poor sinner is brought in guilty before God; for the law being opposed to sin, and he being in himself nothing but a mass of sin; the law condemning every sinful thought, and he being full of sinful thoughts; the law condemning every vile imagination, and he prone to indulge in every vile imagination; the law condemning every foolish word, and his tongue ever dropping foolish words; the law condemning every unbecoming look, and he not able to keep his eyes from wandering after evil; the law requiring a perfect obedience, in which no allowance is made for any deviation, and he continually unable to render that obedience; the law thundering in his ears, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," and he not having a grain of

that love; the law bidding him love his neighbour as himself, when his heart, by nature is full of enmity against that neighbour;—this ministration of death entering into his conscience, like an invading army through the breach into a besieged town, kills, condemns, and brings them in guilty before God. But, still to pursue Paul's experience, if when he is sunk under this condemning sentence, and is without help, or hope in himself, God is pleased to reveal to his soul salvation through the blood of the Lamb, then we see that the same man who cried out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" when he gets a view by faith of the atoning blood, justifying obedience, and finished work of the Son of God, bursts forth in a moment, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He has found a ransom; a deliverer has come to the rescue; atoning blood is revealed to his conscience; the love of God shed abroad in his heart; and under the sweet influence of God's grace, he can raise a joyful song of praise, that through Jesus Christ his Lord he is saved from death and hell.

Having thus laid the foundation deep and broad from his own experience, the apostle goes on to tell us in the next chapter, which is but a continuation of the preceding, the happy state of all who are interested in this great salvation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." He could see the eternal security of those who had an interest in the Person and work and blood of the Lamb. He could see that there was no condemnation for them; that let the law utter its loudest thunders and flash before their eyes its most forked lightnings, yet being in Christ they were secure in him; and therefore for them there was no condemnation. But lest any man might mistake the characters to whom these blessings belonged, he adds, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" for if a man be still walking after the flesh, he has no evidence of being in Christ Jesus. He has no testimony that he is manifestly interested in his blood and righteousness, and as such is free from condemnation; for as still walking after the flesh, he lies in all the filth and under all the condemnation of the flesh. He then goes on, in the verse preceding our text, to show how "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," meaning thereby the grace of

God in the heart, the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the soul, which was to him a law, had made him free from the law of sin and death under which he had groaned. And then he proceeds, in the words which I have read, and from which I hope to speak this morning, to show how this was effected, by God "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

In opening up our text, I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First*, show what the *law cannot do*, and the reason: because it is "*weak through the flesh.*"

II.—*Secondly*, what God *has done* by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, viz., "*condemned sin in the flesh.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, the *fruit and effect* of God sending his own Son, and thus condemning sin in the flesh, "*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.*"

IV.—And *lastly*, the *characters* in whom this righteousness is fulfilled: those "*who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

I.—Now does it not surprise your mind that after the description which the Holy Ghost has given of the strength of the law, the apostle should say that it was weak? How can the law be weak if it can kill, accuse, condemn, and bring the whole world in guilty before God? You must understand, then, that the law is not weak *in itself*: nothing can be more strong except the Gospel. But the law is weak *through the flesh*. This, therefore, with God's blessing, I shall endeavour to explain: and in so doing, shall show, first, how the law is *strong*, and then how the law is *weak*. Nor can I take a better way of illustrating this than by referring to human laws, for by looking at the law of man we may gather up some spiritual idea of the holy law of God.

i. What makes the law, as a human institution, *strong*?

1. *The authority of the law giver.* In our country, law is strong. Why so? Because no law can be passed except by the three estates of the realm met together in Parliament. To that collective authority all bow. Every class in society, with every individual from the peer to the peasant, and in fact all except the lawless outcasts, the mere waifs and strays of society, bow to the law on account of the authority whereby it is promulgated. But suppose that a number of people were to meet together, say in Edinburgh or Dublin, call themselves a Parliament and make laws: who would feel bound to obey them? It would be a treasonable act and their pretended laws could not be put in execution. But our laws, being passed in Parliament, by an authority which all recognize, are thus made strong.

2. But there is another thing needed, which is, *sufficient force to carry the law into execution.* The legislative power may be strong, but the executive weak. It is so in the United States, and in some measure so in Ireland. But in our country we have a whole array of judges, magistrates, and police, and these backed not only by an army of a hundred thousand men, but by the universal voice of the country to carry the law into execution. In England therefore the law is strong, but not so in other countries. Whether from weakness of the legislative or from weakness of the executive, in many countries the law is weak. In America, a man may whip his slave to death; in Ireland, may shoot at his landlord from behind a hedge, and both escape being hanged, not because each crime is not murder, but because the leniency of the jury in the one country, and the unwillingness of the people to give evidence in the other, favour the escape of the criminal. We see then that in order to be strong, a law must have not only a trumpet voice but an iron hand. Now carry these two ideas into spiritual things, and see whether they do not both meet in the law of God. Look at its *Legislator*. Who gave the law? The great and glorious "I am," the ever-living Jehovah, the Judge of heaven and earth, the Almighty Creator of all things, before whom all the hosts of heaven and all the inhabitants of the earth are less than nothing and vanity. Must not that law be strong which emanated from the great God of heaven and earth? And look at the power

which that great and glorious Judge can wield. Is any one beyond his reach? Can any heart escape his piercing glance? Can any hide himself in secret places where the hand of God cannot find him? Thus whether we look at the authority of the Lawgiver, or the power that he can display in executing his commands, we see how strong the law of God is.

3. But as an additional proof of the majesty and power of God in his holy law, observe *the accompanying circumstances* which marked its first promulgation. Go to mount Sinai where that law was given and see how it was attended by the ministration of angels, that holy mount being surrounded by legions of bright angelic beings, every one of them swift to execute God's commands, any one able to smite an army like that of Sennacherib with instant death. See also how it was given in lightning and thunder, in darkness and tempest; see how the very mountain quaked, the earth rocked, and so terrible was the sight that Moses himself, that man of God, said, I exceedingly fear and quake.

4. Then, again, look at the *authority* of the law over *men generally*—how it can and will accuse every man and bring him in guilty before God for positive sins, for actual transgressions. See, too, how it condemns every unclean thought and every foolish word. View how it thus seizes the whole human race, brings them before God's tribunal, and condemns them there as guilty before a heart-searching Jehovah. Hear, too, how the law curses all who are disobedient to it with an everlasting curse, declaring as in tones of thunder, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Then see how the law as its last judicial act upon earth, takes every impenitent, unbelieving sinner in death and binds him as with adamant chains, to await the judgment of the great day.

5. Having thus seen its authority over *sinner*s, next look at its effect upon the consciences of *saint*s. How it slays their self-righteousness, cuts them off from all schemes of pleasing God by any obedience of the flesh, and strips them naked and bare of all

creature help or hope. Thus when we look at the law under these five aspects, the authority of the Lawgiver, his power to execute its penalties, the way in which it was revealed from Mount Sinai, its dominion over sinners, and its effect upon saints, can we think it is weak? Must we not rather say, "O how strong!"

ii. Yet the apostle declares that the law was *weak*, and that in consequence of this weakness there was that which it could not do. What, then, could the law not do? There were two things which the law could not do, and yet unless they were done, not a single soul could be saved, and the whole human race must have perished under the wrath of God.

1. One was *to save*. This the law could not do. It can curse, but it cannot bless; it can send to hell, but it cannot take to heaven; it can bring bondage, wrath, guilt, fear and terror into men's consciences, but it cannot communicate to them pardon, deliverance and peace. And why? Because it merely says, "Do this and live." It makes no provision for disobedience; it does not breathe a syllable of mercy for a transgressor; it holds out no pardon to the sinner. If we could keep it we might be justified by it; but not being able to obey, we must fall under its condemnation as disobedient.

2. Nor can the law *sanctify*. There is no provision in it to communicate holiness to the soul—that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. Being a ministration of death it cannot communicate life; not being the ministration of the Spirit, it has no power to make the soul meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is true that many try to make themselves holy by the law, but there being no provision in it to supply real sanctification, to bestow grace, to communicate a spiritual conformity to the image of God's dear Son, it leaves the heart still carnal; and as those "who are in the flesh cannot please God," they cannot rise into the enjoyment of his eternal presence.

iii. But the apostle says it was "*weak through the flesh*;" here it is

that we gather up the real cause of the law being weak. It is not weak in itself, for it is armed with all the strength of God; but the flesh, that is, human nature in its fallen condition, is unable to obey it, and thus the law fails, not from any want of power in God to command, but from want of power in man to obey. Let us seek an illustration of this from human laws.

Suppose that Parliament were to pass a law that not a single drop of beer or wine, or any spirituous drink, should be sold on the Lord's day in London. It might be an excellent provision, and if I am not mistaken it is to a certain extent effected by municipal regulation in Scotland. But could that law be carried out in the metropolis? Say that an attempt were made to carry it out with a view to suppress or check intoxication, would it stop drunkenness in secret? Has it stopped it in Glasgow? would it stop it in London? The law might be good—an excellent law, if men would obey it; but you cannot make drunkards temperate by act of Parliament. Therefore the law might be good, yet it would be weak, because of the weakness of the flesh. So it is with the law of God. The law of God commands men to obey on the penalty of eternal damnation if they obey not. The law bids them love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, but they cannot do it; and therefore as it cannot part with, or lower its demands because man has lost its power to obey, it visits their disobedience with a most solemn curse. The sinner being unable to render that love, to yield that obedience, the law is weak, for as a human law requires obedience and punishes for disobedience, yet gives no power to obey it, so it is with the law of God. This may seem hard doctrine; but how can it be otherwise? The law cannot give life; as the Apostle says, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." (Gal. 3:21.)

Look, then, at the whole human race, and see what a state they are in. See how they are transgressors, condemned by the law; brought in guilty before God; without any salvation, without any sanctification; without strength to obey what God commands, and yet as disobedient justly amenable to God's eternal justice. O

what a state! O what an end!

Now how justly God might have left all mankind to reap the fruit of their disobedience! He left the fallen angels to the consequences of their transgression; he made no provision for their recovery. No Saviour, no Redeemer, interposed between them and eternal wrath. They sinned, and were left to suffer the consequences; they transgressed, and must for ever endure the penalty. It might have been so, and that with the strictest justice, with the whole human race. There was no more call upon God to redeem man than there was to redeem the fallen angels. But he was pleased to do so. In his own sovereign grace; in his infinite compassion and boundless mercy, he was pleased to provide a way whereby sinners could be saved—a way so peculiarly his own, that whilst his justice should sustain no tarnish, his grace might shine forth with everlasting lustre.

II. This brings us to our second point, *the mission of God's dear Son*, that he might do what the law was unable to do; according to the words of our text: "*God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.*"

i. God knew what man would be, and that in consequence of the fall, he could not do what his holy law required. But he could not lower the demands of his law to meet the sinner upon sinful ground; he could not lessen its claims upon the obedience of his creatures, because those creatures had, by their own sin, brought upon themselves an incapacity to obey. That would be to infringe his own justice, to sacrifice his own holiness. Do human laws accommodate themselves to the crimes of our criminal population? Because some men steal and others murder, must the law be softened down to accommodate thieves and to give license to murderers? Such a law, if law it could be called, would but multiply crime and break to pieces the very bonds of society. If a drunkard by habitual drunkenness render himself incapable of sobriety, is his intoxication less a sin? But though God could not lower the claims of the law, yet in order to save a guilty race, he devised a plan in his own eternal mind to save and sanctify fallen,

polluted sinners, which will be the admiration of the saints of God throughout all eternity; to taste which in a measure is the only real happiness upon earth, and to enjoy which in full, will be the only true bliss in heaven. *He sent his own Son.* Now as I have written and spoken so much about the eternal Sonship of Christ, I shall not dwell much upon that point this morning. You know well what my views are, and I hope they have an echo in your own bosom from your having had some personal revelation of the Son of God to your own soul, for that indeed is the only way whereby he can be effectually known as the Son of the Father in truth and love. But do admire with me for a few moments the wondrous mercy and love of God in sending *his own Son.*

Who could be so fit to come as God's only begotten Son? Where could be found so meet a representative? When our Queen lately would send to Canada a fitting representative of herself, whom did she select for that purpose? Not the Prime Minister: he had not dignity enough. She sent her eldest son, not her son in name or office; not her son as becoming so by being sent upon that mission; but her own true and proper son, the legitimate heir of her crown and dignity. When, then, the Prince of Wales went from place to place in that important colony, he was received with honour as being the Queen's own son, with such honours as could have been accorded to no one else except her Majesty herself. So it is in grace. Who can be so fit a representative of the majesty, power, and glory; who can be so fit a witness of the love, mercy, and grace of God, as his own Son? It is true that we cannot comprehend the mystery how the Lord Jesus Christ can be the eternal Son of God. It is hidden from mortal eyes and from the comprehension of finite understandings, for the Lord himself declared that "no one knoweth the Son but the Father." (Matt. 11:27.) But we receive it as a most blessed truth on the authority of God's own testimony in the word; and as our eyes are enlightened by divine teaching, and our heart touched by divine power, we not only believe it, but see in it inexpressible blessedness and feel in it indescribable beauty, grace, and glory. As revealed to our soul by the power of God, we see in Jesus, as God's own Son, the very glory of God himself; for he is "the

brightness of God's glory and the express image of his Person." By him God has revealed himself to the sons of men; he has come out of that light which no man can approach unto, and made himself known in the person and work of his dear Son. The apostle therefore says, "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." Now when we see by faith the only begotten Son of God coming forth from the bosom of his Father, we see not only Deity shining forth conspicuously in him as God the Son, but we see all the love, mercy, grace and truth of God reflected in his glorious Person, for "we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (John 1:14.)

ii. But God sent him "*in the likeness of sinful flesh.*" He did not come, as he will one day come, arrayed in all his eternal glory. He did not appear in all the open majesty of the Godhead, nor in all the manifested brightness of the image of God. But he came "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Carefully observe these words, for they contain in them deep and important truth. He did not come in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of it. Our Lord's flesh was sinless flesh. He did not take a fallen, but an unfallen nature. Though born of a sinful woman, yet the nature he took in her womb was not polluted by her sins, either original or actual; for his pure, holy, and immortal humanity was formed in a miraculous manner, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and therefore "a holy thing," which was united in the moment of conception to the glorious Person of the Son of God. Yet it was "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh." He had a body like our own, in which dwelt a holy and immortal soul, so that his pure humanity was not a visionary phantasm, a shadowy appearance, but a true human nature in all points like ours, with the exception of sin. Thus, though in his human nature incapable of sin or sickness, he appeared amongst the sons of men as one like unto them; yet was "separate from sinners," as having a human nature absolutely sinless. Here, then, is a heavenly mystery. There could have been no redemption of man had the Redeemer not become man; yet, unless a sinless man, he could not have been a Saviour

of sinful men. This body God prepared for him. He took it thereby to fulfil God's will, as he says of himself, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7.)

iii. "*And for sin,*" or, as it reads in the margin (and I adopt that meaning), "by a sacrifice of sin." A sacrifice was needed, an expiation demanded, an atonement required, in order that sin might be pardoned: for "without shedding of blood is no remission." Thus, we find in the Levitical ritual a constant offering of sacrifice; not only on such solemn and stated occasions as the day of atonement, but every morning and evening; for at these periods a lamb was duly offered. This daily sacrifice, we know, was typical of "the Lamb of God who beareth the sins of the world;" and he is, therefore, said to have been "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 5:6.) Our blessed Lord offered himself "for sin;" that is, that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. We therefore read, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24); and we are said by the same apostle to have "been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:19.) It was absolutely necessary either that the sinner should suffer in his own person, or in that of a substitute. Jesus became this substitute; he stood virtually in the sinner's place, and endured in his holy body and soul the punishment due to him; for he "was numbered with the transgressors." He thus, by the shedding of his most precious blood, opened in his sacred body a fountain for all sin and all uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1.) The cross was the place on which this sacrifice was offered; for as the blood of the slain lamb was poured out at the foot of the altar, sprinkled upon its horns, and burned in its ever enduring fire, so our blessed Lord shed his blood upon the cross. He there endured the wrath of God to the uttermost; he there put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; he there offered his holy soul and body, the whole of his pure and sacred humanity, in union with his eternal Deity, as an expiation for the sins of his people. Thus all their sin was atoned for, expiated, put away, blotted out, and will never more be imputed to them. This is the grand mystery of redeeming love and atoning

blood. Here the cross shines forth in all its splendour; here God and man meet at the sacrifice of the God-Man; and here, amidst the sufferings and sorrows, the groans and tears, the blood and obedience of God's dear Son in our nature, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

iv. Thus we see that God, by sending his own Son, did what the law could not do: he "*condemned sin in the flesh.*" But you will say, "Does not the law condemn sin?" It does, for it is "the ministration of condemnation," as the apostle tells us. (2 Cor. 3:9.) But the law does not condemn sin in the same way that God condemned it when he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by this wondrous act of love and mercy made him a sacrifice for sin. I will show you how.

1. God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ *when he laid our sins upon him*, and by taking vengeance of our transgressions in the Person of his own dear Son virtually condemned, and by condemning put them away. We read of our most gracious Lord that "God made him sin for us who knew no sin." (2 Cor. 5:21.) Thus he not only bore sin as our sin-bearer, but was viewed and treated by divine Justice as though he himself were all sin. He so took the sins of his people upon himself, that it was as if the whole mass of their sins met in him. Justice, therefore, viewing him as made sin for us, fell upon him as a creditor falls upon his debtor; and as God's justice goes hand in hand with God's wrath, for wrath is but offended justice, the whole wrath of God fell upon the head of Jesus as bearing sin. When justice therefore combined with wrath fell upon the sacred head and discharged all their contents into the bosom of Jesus, God thereby condemned sin in the flesh, for he condemned it in the flesh of Jesus Christ by their wreaking his vengeance upon it, and visiting with righteous condemnation the sins which Jesus was bearing by imputation in his body on the tree. Thus it was upon the cross that God judged sin, condemned it, passed sentence upon it, and executed it, by the sufferings and death of his only begotten Son. The sins therefore of God's people being judged, condemned, and executed in the sufferings, blood-shedding and death of the

incarnate Son of God, can no longer be visited with punishment. God having once condemned sin in the person of Jesus Christ; having accepted the sacrifice thus offered, and ever viewing him as the Surety and Representative of his people, cannot condemn sin again in their persons. It would be to punish sin twice over—to punish it first in the Representative, and then in the represented; to exact the penalty first from the Surety and then from the original debtor. Here, then, is the great blessedness of such a sacrifice, that God having once condemned sin in the person of Jesus Christ, it was expiated, atoned for, blotted out as a cloud from the sky, and will never be brought against the family of God any more. The law could not do this. It could condemn sin, but could not put it away. The law condemns sin in individuals. It says "Thou, O man, art guilty; thou, O woman, art a transgressor, and as such ye are both doomed to die." But it did not and could not take the aggregate of sin, the whole mass of transgression, lay it upon the head of God's Son, and by condemning it in his Person, remove it all away. It takes individuals one by one, curses each and all, and leaves them under the weight and personal guilt of their own transgressions, affording them no means of escape, opening to them no door of hope. But God took another way: he took all the sins of millions of redeemed sinners, laid them in all their burning mass upon the head of his dear Son, judged, condemned, and punished them, and when they were thus condemned and punished, he cast them all behind his back, and drowned them in the depths of the sea. Here then we learn the strictness of justice, the severity of the law, and the impossibility that God can "clear the guilty" in any other way than through the bloodshedding and sacrifice of his own dear Son. Thus at the foot of the cross, we see justice and mercy equally triumphant. What other place of refuge, then, is there for poor guilty sinners, who feel the weight and burden of sin? Here and here only is mercy revealed and pardon manifested, and hence will arise an eternal tribute of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as all alike engaged in contriving, executing, and applying so great, so glorious, so free, and so everlasting a salvation.

2. But there is another meaning of the words which I think is well worth our consideration, for it casts a great light upon our text, throwing its beams, as it were, in two directions, upon that which precedes and upon that which follows the expression, "condemned sin in the flesh." God was determined to show to men and angels his holy abhorrence of evil, his righteous condemnation of sin in a new, unlooked for, and yet most convincing way. To cast the sinning angels out of heaven; to banish Adam from Paradise; to destroy the old world by a flood; to burn with fire from heaven Sodom and Gomorrah—these examples of God's displeasure against sin were not sufficient to express his condemnation of it. He would therefore take another way of making it manifest. And what was this? By sending his own Son out of his bosom in the likeness of sinful flesh, and offering him as a sacrifice for sin upon the tree at Calvary, he would not only whilst time endures, but throughout all eternity, *make it manifest how he abhorred sin*, and how his righteous character must for ever condemn it. It is almost as though he would say, "The law condemns sin, but the law cannot show before men and angels its true and hideous character. It cannot sufficiently reveal any holy indignation against it, my eternal abhorrence of it, and the necessity that lies upon me to punish it. This I will now show by sending my own Son, and punishing him in the sinner's place, and thus it shall be manifested before men and angels that I will not spare it, even though I have to wreak my vengeance against it in the Person of the Son of my love." Look then at these two things, the love of God to poor guilty man in not sparing his own Son, and yet the hatred of God against sin in condemning it in the flesh of Jesus. The Apostle tells us that he and his brother Apostles were made a spectacle to angels (1. Cor. 4:9); and we read that a part of "the mystery of godliness is Jesus seen of angels." (1. Tim. 3:16.) We may well, therefore, conceive what a spectacle to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," was the suffering Son of God upon the cross. It is almost as if God said to them by it, "If you want to see what sin really is, you cannot see it in the fall of your brother angels; you cannot see it in the myriads of human beings cursed and condemned by the law; you cannot see it even in the depths of

hell. I will show you sin in blacker colours still: you shall see it in the sufferings of my dear Son; in his agonies of body and soul, and in what he as a holy, innocent Lamb endured under my wrath, when he consented to take the sinner's place." What wondrous wisdom, what depths of love, what treasures of mercy, what heights of grace were thus revealed and brought to light in the unsparing condemnation of sin, and yet in the full and free pardon of the sinner!

3. But there is a third sense, by which it is brought to bear still more closely upon the heart of the saint of God; I mean *the experience of this condemnation of sin in the conscience of a believer*. The law condemns you; and you may have felt its curse and its guilt as a most awful reality. Night and day you may have felt its condemnation in your conscience, and have truly cried with anguish of spirit, "Guilty, guilty before thee, O God." But with all this anguish of spirit there was no real repentance, nor godly sorrow, nor sight of sin in its hideous blackness; for the law not being the ministration of the Spirit cannot communicate repentance unto life nor melt the heart into real contrition. But if you have ever had a view by faith of the suffering Son of God in the garden and upon the cross; if you have ever seen the wrath of God due to you falling upon the head of the God-Man; and viewed a bleeding, agonising Immanuel, then you have seen and felt in the depths of your conscience what a dreadful thing sin is. It is in this way that God condemns sin in your flesh. He condemned it on the cross in the flesh of Immanuel. In his suffering humanity was God's open display of his condemnation of sin. But when he brings a sinner to the foot of the cross and there reveals to him the Son of his love in his sufferings and death, then by this sight he condemns sin in the flesh of the believer. Then the broken-hearted child of God looks unto him whom he has pierced and mourns for him as one mourneth for his only son, and is in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zech. 12:10.) Under this sight he feels what a dreadful thing sin is. "Oh," he says, "did God afflict his dear Son? Did Jesus, the darling of God, endure all these sufferings and sorrows to save my soul from the bottomless pit?"

O, can I ever hate sin enough? Can I ever grieve and mourn over it enough? Can my stony heart ever be dissolved into contrition enough, when by faith I see the agonies and hear the groans of the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God?" Thus, God condemns sin in the flesh in the feeling experience of his people. They hate their sins; they hate themselves; they hate that sinful, that dreadfully sinful flesh of theirs which has so often, which has so continually, betrayed them into sin; and thus they join with God in passing condemnation upon the whole of their flesh; upon all its actings and workings; upon all its thoughts and words and deeds, and hate it as the fruitful parent of that sin which crucified Christ and torments and plagues them.

III.—But we now come to our third point, which we shall find very closely connected with the sacred subject of the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ, which I have been endeavouring to set forth,—*"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."* God was determined that his righteous law should be fulfilled; for if not, how it would seem to mock and hurl defiance at the authority of the Lawgiver! If his authority could be set at nought and disobeyed, how it would reflect disgrace even in the courts of heaven! The law required obedience, or it would have been given in vain. God, therefore, was determined that this righteousness should be fulfilled. And we shall see that according to God's purpose it was to be fulfilled in two different ways; 1, first, *for us* by the obedience of Christ, and 2, secondly, *in us* by the work of the Spirit. Let us look at these two things in their order.

1. The law demanded two things: perfect love to God, and perfect love to man. In consequence of our crippled, ruined state by the fall, we can render neither. We cannot love God perfectly or even imperfectly, for the carnal mind is enmity against him; and we cannot love our neighbour as ourselves, for we are full of pride and selfishness. And yet this righteousness of the law must be fulfilled either by us or for us, for God's authority must not be set at nought. It was fulfilled then for us by the blessed Jesus, who in our nature rendered to God a perfect obedience—obeying God's law from the heart; loving him with all his heart, and soul, and

mind, and strength, and loving his neighbour not only as himself, but better than himself, because he laid down his life for his neighbour, the church, to whom he was allied, not only by eternal espousal, but by taking upon him the flesh and blood of the children. In this sense, therefore, when God sent his own Son, this righteousness that we never could fulfil was fulfilled *for* us by the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus.

2. But I observed that there is another meaning of the expression; for if you look closely at the language of the text, it does not say that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled *"for"* us but *"in"* us. A minister of truth once named this text to me, as creating in his mind a difficulty, and asked me whether *"in"* here did not mean *"for."* My answer was, "Certainly not; for so to interpret it would spoil the whole meaning of the passage." I have told you that there is a righteousness fulfilled *for* us; but the apostle here is not speaking so much of the fulfilment of this righteousness for us by the obedience and suffering of Christ, as of a fulfilment of it *in* us by the Spirit and grace of God. For God was determined not only that the law should be fulfilled outwardly and perfectly by the obedience of Christ; but inwardly and experimentally in the hearts of his people by the grace of his Spirit. How, then, is this? What is the righteousness of the law? Love to God and love to our neighbour; for "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:40.) Now these two commandments have to be fulfilled not only *for* us but *in* us. They were fulfilled *for* us by the perfect obedience of the Son of God; they are fulfilled *in* us when sin is condemned in our flesh, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart; for "love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. 13:10.) If then you love God, and if you love your brother, you have the righteousness which the law required fulfilled, not only *for* you by the perfect work of Christ, but fulfilled *in* you by the grace of God. But there is this essential difference between the righteousness of the law required as a command, and the righteousness of the law fulfilled as a grace, that the former at its very highest point is but carnal, whilst the latter at its very lowest is spiritual. Were we legally and naturally as holy as the law required, we should still

only "serve in the oldness of the letter," but by regenerating grace we serve "in newness of spirit." The highest obedience of Adam was but natural; the lowest obedience wrought in the heart of to child of God by grace is spiritual.

But let me show you how the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in a believer through the Spirit and grace of God.

1. First, in the fulfilment of the *first* great commandment—*love to God*. The Lord is pleased, in greater or less measure, to shed abroad his love in your heart. He brings near his righteousness, reveals Christ, gives a testimony of interest in his blood and obedience, and with this communicates love to his most precious name. Now you are fulfilling the law, because under this heavenly influence you are loving the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, mind and strength. Is not the righteousness of the law now fulfilled, not only *for* you, by Christ's obedience as your justifying robe, but fulfilled *in* you by the Spirit's inward teaching and testimony? Love is of God, for "God is love;" and it is the communication of his presence and power that kindles love to him in the believer's heart. You may have often tried to love God, but you could not. But when he is pleased to shed this love abroad in the heart, then he is loved with a pure heart fervently; and this love is the fulfilling of the law.

2. But see how in the same way there is a fulfilling of the *second* great commandment, *love to your neighbour*. This flows immediately from the former, for when the love of God is felt in the soul, it casts out selfishness, and fills the heart with love and affection to God's people, who are not only our neighbours, but our nearest neighbours, as being of the same family. John therefore gives it as a mark of divine life, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." This love is pure, unselfish, and spiritual. To love the Lord's people, to be willing to spend and be spent for them, because they belong to the Lord; to serve them to the utmost of our power and to do them all the good we can, because we feel a pure love for them, is a fulfilling of the righteousness of the law. This the law could

not do, "in that it was weak through the flesh." But God has done it by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Before we can obey, we want two things, motive and power. The law gives neither; the gospel gives both; and thus the gospel secures an obedience which the law commanded but could not produce: and grace works an inward righteousness which fulfils the law, not in the letter but in the spirit.

IV.—But let us now look at our last point, the *character* of the persons in whom this is fulfilled: "*Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

Men widely differ from each other in rank, station, abilities, and a thousand other instances; and even on the broad grounds of moral and religious conduct a vast difference may be observed between individuals; but, viewed in the light of God's word, there are really but two classes—those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the Spirit. The apostle here and elsewhere draws a broad line of distinction between these two classes. Let us see if we can gather up this distinction. By "the flesh," we are to understand human nature in its present fallen condition. It matters not how high or how low, how gross or how refined, this flesh may be, nor what guise or form it may wear. To "walk," then, "after the flesh," is to live, speak, and act according to its movements and dictates. Now the apostle tells us that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." He tells us also that "they that are after the flesh do mind or savour of the things of the flesh;" and also declares that "to be carnally minded," that is, to follow the will of the flesh, "is death." (Rom. 8:5, 8.) It follows from this that those who "walk after the flesh" are dead before God. They are at enmity against him by wicked works, and therefore their obedience, such as it is, cannot please him as being the unwilling servitude of a slave, the forced obedience of an enemy. But those on the other hand, "who walk after the Spirit" are alive by his quickening grace. But observe the expression: "walking after the flesh." A person may be "in the flesh," as indeed we all are, and yet not "walk after it." To walk after it implies, a setting it up as a pattern, and walking in

accordance with it. But a person may be dragged after another, as we see sometimes a child is dragged unwillingly along by its mother, who does not willingly walk with her. The child is not walking after its mother, nor hand in hand with her, nor side by side; but is compelled against its will to go a road which it hates, as to go to school when it fain would go to play. So in a sense it often is with the child of grace: he is often dragged on by the flesh. He does not go after it willingly; he does not sin wilfully, but is entangled by the strength of the flesh, dragged on contrary to his best wishes, and sometimes in spite of his earnest cries, tears, groans, and desires. He does not walk after it as in Alpine countries tourists walk through the snow after a guide, setting his feet deliberately in every step which the flesh has made before him. The saint of God, therefore, though he is in the flesh, does not walk after the flesh; for if he so walked he could not fulfil the law of love, and therefore the righteousness of the law could not be fulfilled in him. But, as enabled by grace, he does from time to time walk after the Spirit, for as the Spirit leads he follows; as the Spirit prompts, he obeys; and as the Spirit works, he performs. Nay, he is never so happy as when he can walk after the Spirit. When the Spirit reveals Jesus, he loves him with a pure heart fervently; when the Spirit applies a promise he believes it: and when he makes known the truth of God to his soul, he feeds upon and delights in it. As, then, the Spirit imprints the way before him by leading him into the footsteps of the flock, he puts his feet into those footsteps, and he is never so happy or blessed as when he can walk under the teaching, leading, and influence of this blessed Guide. As, then, under these divine influences he walks after the Spirit, he is fulfilling the righteousness required by the law, for this blessed Spirit, breathing into his heart love to God and love to man, fulfils in him this righteousness, and that not only inwardly and experimentally, but outwardly and openly before God and man, by leading him into the ways of righteousness, and making him obedient to the precepts of the gospel, and fruitful in every good word and work. Thus as he walks after the Spirit, he does the will of God from the heart. He does not walk after the flesh to gratify every foolish desire; for if he walk after the flesh, he dies in his soul as to any felt divine

influence. (Rom. 8:13.)

See, then, what a wondrous way God has taken to save the sinner and yet glorify himself. First he sends the law, and therein reveals his righteousness; but the law is weak. It cannot save, it cannot sanctify; it therefore leaves the whole human race under wrath and condemnation. But he will not leave all so; he will interpose; all shall not perish under his righteous wrath. As he saved Noah from the waters of the deluge; as he saved Lot from the conflagration of Sodom; so will he save those whom he has loved and chosen in his dear Son. And how does he save them? The law could not save them, for they could not keep it. What then shall he do? He sends his own Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin." Atonement is made, sin is blotted out. The law is gloriously fulfilled; and now that it may be fulfilled also in the heart of his saints, he sends forth his Spirit to reveal Christ to their souls, to take of his blood and obedience, to shed abroad his love, and by this means to fulfil in them that righteousness which they could not perform themselves, and thus make it manifest, before men and angels, that he has a people upon the earth who do obey his word, and that by walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

What a way of salvation does this open to a poor guilty sinner who is ready to perish! What a way of sanctification to a child of God, who would fain be holy but cannot! As received by faith, is it not enough to make the poor sinner's heart leap for joy that there is such a way of being saved, and of a saint's being sanctified?

The Lord give us grace to believe these divine mysteries more and more firmly, from a sweet experience of their blessed reality, so that we may be enabled day by day to walk after the Spirit, and, in doing so, to be ever finding it the path of life and peace.

THE SIN-SICK SOUL AND THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday evening, July 11, 1844

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."
Matthew 9:12

The way in which the Lord, in the days of His flesh, dealt with cavillers and critics is very remarkable. He did not convert, but confound them. He did not appeal to anything spiritual in them; for they had no spiritual understanding in the things of God; but He silenced them by addressing Himself to their natural consciences.

We have one or two remarkable examples of this nature. On one occasion, for instance, we read, that the "Pharisees took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" Here was a snare laid for His feet, a dilemma in which they thought they had placed Him. Now, suppose He had said, "It was not lawful to pay tribute unto Caesar," then they would have accused Him to the Roman governor as preaching high treason. And suppose He had said, "It was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar," then they would have asked, "How He, as a Jew, and professing obedience to the law, could command subservience to a foreign prince? when Moses had expressly commanded, 'One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.'" **De 17:15.**

But how did the Lord meet this cavil, and extricate Himself from this dilemma? He asked them to show Him the tribute-money; and when they had brought it unto Him, He said, "Whose is this

image and superscription?" They were compelled to answer 'Caesar's.' "Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." **Mt 22:16-21** The very fact of the money, bearing Caesar's image and superscription, circulating among them, was an unanswerable proof of their subjection to the Roman yoke, and that therefore it was lawful to pay tribute.

Again, on another occasion **Joh 8:3**, we read, that "the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery;" and they tried to entangle Him by enquiring what was to be done with her. "Master," paying Him all due respect, said they, "Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?" Here was a dilemma they thought to place the Lord in. Suppose He had said, "The woman ought to be stoned;" then they would have accused Him before the Roman governor of setting up the Jewish in opposition to the Roman law; the power of life and death being in the hands of the Roman governor only. And if He had said, "She ought not to be stoned;" they would have directly asked Him, "How could this be consistent with the law given by Moses?" But how wisely He met this difficulty, and took "the wise in their own craftiness," by saying, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." **Joh 8:7** By thus appealing to their natural consciences, He caught them in their own net, and overwhelmed them with confusion.

The text, and the verses connected with it, afford another instance of the same nature. "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" These self-righteous Pharisees were always on the watch to find, if possible, something to condemn the Lord with. And here they professed their pious astonishment, that so holy a man as He claimed to be, could associate with such vile, ungodly wretches. "For do we not judge," they would insinuate, "of a man by the company that he keeps? And must not a man love and practice sin who keeps company with

sinner?" But how did the Lord disentangle Himself from this net that they were seeking to spread for his feet? He met their cavil thus, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." He appealed to their own sense and reason, and to their natural consciences. It was as though He had said, "Where should a physician be? Is it not with the sick in the hospital? Are not the sick wards his peculiar place and province, and are not diseased patients the very persons he is called to associate with and take care of? Is the physician necessarily contaminated by the disease that he cures? How can he heal the sickness, if he do not visit the sick?" By thus appealing to their reason and conscience, He silenced and confounded them. Now, this is an example well worthy of our imitation.

We are sometimes thrown into the way of scoffers, and of persons who will cavil even at the great foundation truths of divine revelation. With such persons there is no use attempting to argue the question on spiritual grounds; for they have no spiritual ears to hear, no spiritual eyes to see, no spiritual heart to fall under the power of truth. To do so is to throw pearls before swine. If the Lord enable us, the best way is to appeal to their natural consciences; and, as shortly as possible, without entering into the details of truth, to silence them by putting before them something which they themselves cannot deny.

But the words of the text have a much higher sense than a mere appeal to natural conscience or human reason. They contain a gospel truth, far deeper and higher than reason can comprehend, and one that will last as long as the world endures. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

We find, in the text, two characters spoken of, and these put in a distinct opposition to, and contrast with, each other the "whole," and the "sick." And as the two characters are distinct in themselves, so their case is distinct also; the case of the one being that he "needs not," and the ease of the other that he needs "a physician." And thus, if the Lord enable me by His blessed Spirit experimentally to trace out this evening who are

"the whole," and who are "the sick;" and shew why the one "needs not," and why the other needs "a physician," it may be for our profit, and may also, if God so grant, be to His own glory.

I.—Let us look, then, at the character pointed out in the text by the expression, "the whole." I need scarcely say, that the word naturally means a person healthy, strong, and vigorous; one untainted by sickness or disease; one in all the enjoyment of robust health, without any constitutional ailment or bodily affliction. Now it is a truth, naturally, that such persons, "need not a physician." They are not in circumstances to require such aid; their vigorous health, their robust constitution, their freedom from all disease, give them perfect liberty to dispense with the services of medical skill. From this comparison we may easily gather who are "**the whole**," in a spiritual sense. Those who have never received any wound in their conscience, who have never felt sick unto death, who have never groaned and suffered under the disease of sin.

But who are these hearty and healthy people? All men in a state of unregeneracy; all in whose hearts the Spirit of God has not begun His quickening work. These are called "**whole**," not as really and actually free from taint or infection; for in the sight of God they are one mass of disease; but they are called "**whole**" in the text, because they feel and know nothing, spiritually and experimentally, of sickness. They are not healthy in the sight of God, but in their own sight; for "their eyes stand out with fatness," and they are not "plagued **with sickness** like other men." **Ps 73:5,7**

If we look a little more closely at these characters, we shall find them divided into two grand classes: those **dead in sin**, and those **dead in a profession**. As never plagued with the sickness of sin, both of these characters may be said to be "**whole**."

Look, for instance, at men generally; say, those you have daily to associate with, whose conscience God has not touched with His finger. Is there any sigh, any cry, any groan, any sorrow for sin

ever manifested by them? Are they not light, trifling, and frivolous; or, if staid and sober, altogether buried in the things of time and sense? Do you ever witness anything in them that shews they have the least concern for their immortal souls? Are they not evidently **dead in sin**—so dead as not to have one thought for the future, one solemn feeling of eternity? And is there not a large class of professors, who are as dead in formality as the others in transgression, though they may have a name to live? But what is the grand distinguishing mark of both? Is it not that they are "**whole?**" They have never felt any inward sickness or running sore; they have never been wounded by the arrows of God shot into their conscience; they have never had the ill-conditioned ulcers and deep abscesses of human nature laid open by the keen dissecting knife of the great Anatomist; nor have they ever been brought down to sigh and groan under a body of sin and death. "Their strength is firm." Their "face is covered with fatness, and the collops of fat are on their flanks;" their "breasts are full of milk, and their bones are moistened with marrow." **Ps 73:4 Job 15:27 Job 21:24**

Now, however heady, high-minded, presumptuous persons may despise the groans and sighs of God's sin-sick people, and the feeling acquaintance that each rightly-taught man has with his own sore, and his own grief; or whatever ridicule may be poured out upon the trials which God's children experience when the internal plague of corruption is felt, it is a solemn truth, in spite of all contempt or ridicule, that "the whole need not a physician." And it is equally true, let them speak of Christ as much as they may, that there can be no spiritual communion with the great Physician, Jehovah-rophi, unless there be some inward wound or sickness of soul felt, so as to make them desire healing from His blessed hands. "The whole need not a physician;" they want no visits from Jesus, no smile from His loving countenance, no balm from His tender hands, no cure from His gracious lips. They may know from the Bible that there is such a Person as Christ, just as a healthy man may know that some celebrated physician lives in such a street; but as to any personal application to Him, any sighing at His gracious footstool, any shewing before Him their

sickness, any laying down their broken bones or bruised consciences at His door, they can know nothing of it, because they are "whole." Still less can they know the efficacy of His balmy blood sprinkled on their conscience; still less the spiritual experience contained in those words, "He maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole" **Job 5:18**; "Who healeth all thy diseases." **Ps 103:3** And how can those who despise or ridicule all experience, know any thing spiritually of Jesus? For they are "whole;" and being "whole" they "need not a physician." Now you that make a profession, do look at this matter; it concerns your immortal souls. Did you ever feel sickness of heart and wounds in your conscience? Did you ever groan under the felt malady of sin? Did you ever apply to, and tell out your wants before the great Physician? Did you ever look to and hang upon His balmy blood as cleansing from all sin? And have you ever felt His hands dealing gently with you, binding up your wounds, and pouring into them the healing wine and oil of gospel grace?

Now, I am sure of this, if you have walked in this path, you will never ridicule the experience of God's people, stigmatize it as "corruption," and heap upon it all the contempt which enmity can devise. You will never despise the groans of God's people, if you were ever in the same situation, or if your soul ever passed through a similar experience.

Let me illustrate this by appealing to your natural feeling. Suppose that some years back you had gone through some operation, say, the amputation of a limb; and as you pass by the hospital, in which you yourself once had been, you were to hear the piercing shriek of some poor sufferer stretched on the operating table: would you ridicule and laugh at his cries? Would you not remember that you yourself once lay there in agony? Or, suppose that the Lord had afflicted you in times past with insanity, and afterwards mercifully delivered you from the asylum. But should you pass by St. Luke's, and hear the ravings and shoutings of some unhappy inmate, would you laugh and jeer, or would you pity and sympathize? So spiritually, if a man

has ever known an inward wound made in his conscience by the entrance of the two-edged sword, and afterwards enjoyed health and cure, will he pour contempt on those who are walking in the same path in which he himself once travelled? Depend upon it, when a man ridicules and despises the afflictions of God's people, it is a bad sign, a black mark against him; it strongly looks as though he had never himself passed through the same experience, and had never known similar exercises.

1. No one, as I before observed, knows anything spiritually and experimentally of soul sickness, until God the Spirit quickens him from a death in sin. Then for the first time **a wound is made in his conscience by an arrow shot from the bow of the Almighty.** Now spiritually, as well as naturally, when a man is groaning and languishing under a wound, will he not anxiously desire a surgeon to bind it up? Let a man meet with what is called an accident; let him fall from a ladder, or be run over by a carriage. Will not the bystanders gather together in a moment, and take him off to a hospital? And even the poor man himself, if he retain his senses, is glad to be taken thither as soon as possible. But what has made the labourer, who just before was standing careless upon the scaffold, now all pale and trembling upon a shutter, crying to be taken to the surgeon? Is it not the broken rib or fractured limb that in a moment has produced the change? So spiritually, there was a time when the vessel of mercy ridiculed spiritual things, cared for neither heaven nor hell, nor had one pang of concern about his immortal state; but the wound came, the bones were broken, distress of mind followed, and the soul pined and languished away, fearing the "second death." But no sooner was this felt, than a Physician was wanted, one able and willing to heal. At first, perhaps, through ignorance, he looked out and sought after "physicians of no value," running hither and thither for ease, and not seeking only to the Lord. But, sooner or later, being baffled in all his attempts to find relief from human help, he is brought to apply to "Jehovah that healeth thee" **Ex 15:26**; and finds there is "balm in Gilead," and a "physician there."

2. But the Lord's people are not merely wounded by the arrows of God sticking in their conscience; **they have also to be led into the deep depravity of their fallen nature,** the desperate wickedness of their evil heart. We may class spiritual patients under two heads; those that are wounded and need the surgeon, and those that are sick and need the physician. And generally speaking, we need the first before the second, and have to go to the surgery before we go to the dispensary. Thus usually, we know but little of our dreadful depravity, when the Lord first takes us in hand; the fountains of the great deep are not then broken up; the desperate unbelief, enmity, rebellion, perverseness, pride, hypocrisy, uncleanness, and all the other vile corruptions of our heart are not at first opened up and brought to light. But as the Lord leads the soul on, He opens up by degrees the desperate corruption and depravity of our nature, and unfolds the hidden evils of our heart, which before were covered from our view. It is with us as it was with the Prophet. The Lord led him into one chamber after another; and when his astonishment increased at what he saw there, He said unto him, "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these." **Eze 8:15** But as the Lord leads us into a knowledge of our depravity, He makes us to feel sick at heart, and thus we come into the state of feeling described by the prophet Isaiah: "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." **Isa 1:5,6** And as we are led into a knowledge of our sinfulness, and groan under it, we feel more and more a burden of shame and sorrow on account of it; and the more deeply and daily that this is felt, the more deeply and daily do we find our need of the great Physician.

All the Lord's dealings with our souls are that He may exalt His dear Son in our hearts, that we may have all the shame, and Jesus all the glory; and therefore, all this deep and daily discovery of our depravity is eventually to bring greater glory to the Son of God. The deeper we sink into shame and guilt, under the knowledge of the depravity of our nature, the more do we seek unto, feel the power, and prize the love, blood, grace, and

preciousness of the Lord Jesus. Every fresh discovery of our vile nature, when the Lord is pleased to bring the savour of Jesus' name, like the ointment poured forth, into the conscience, serves only instrumentally to increase our faith and affection towards Him; and thus the deeper we sink in self, the higher the Lord Jesus rises in our soul's admiration and adoration.

3. But to make us more and more dependent upon Jesus, the Lord, by His teachings, leads us usually into a knowledge of our **backsliding and idolatrous nature**. And O, what a backsliding and idolatrous heart do we carry in our bosom, and how perpetually does it make us sigh and groan! Is there anything too vile for our depraved nature not to lust after? Is there anything too base which our hearts will not imagine? Are there any puddles, which, if God left us to ourselves, we should not grovel in? As we are brought more to feel the workings of this base backsliding heart, and have the burden of it more laid upon our conscience, the more sick are we at heart, and the more is the disease felt to be in the very vitals. We sigh and groan because we are so vile: for we would be far otherwise. In our right mind, we would be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and would never do a single thing inconsistent with the precepts of the gospel; we would never say a word that the Lord would disapprove of; would always walk in faith, hope, and love; and would continually be spiritual and heavenly-minded. But alas, this is what we cannot attain unto. Our eye is caught by every passing vanity, our carnal minds rove after forbidden things, and our vile heart will still commit villainy. And as the conscience is made tender **and if it be not so, the fear of God is not there**, and as the soul is led into a deeper acquaintance with the spirituality of God's character and the purity of His nature, and as a deeper and clearer knowledge of Jesus in all His covenant relationship is gained, the more it is felt to be an evil and bitter thing to depart from "the Fountain of living waters."

Some people seem to think many allowances ought to be made. "They have business," they say, "to attend to, and their daily occupations to follow; and they are sure they could not transact

their business if their hearts were not in it, nor carry on the necessary dealings in trade, or pursue their worldly calling, if their minds were not fully in them." They argue that they could not be bustling trades-men, nor faithful servants, were their hearts in heaven. But do they never feel guilt, and never groan and cry because they are thus buried in the world? Is there no gathering up of their heart's affections heavenward sometimes from their business? The merchant in his countinghouse, the tradesman behind the counter, or the servant at his work—have they no secret, solemn moments when their hearts go up after Jesus? Are there no inward sighs and groans to the Lord, that He would bless, keep, and water their soul from time to time by the dew of His Spirit? Or can your hearts be buried in the world well nigh all your waking hours? Can you be as carnal and as thoughtless as the servants of Satan who are engaged in the same occupation with yourself? and never be cut to the quick at your carnality, never pour out one sigh, nor groan out your trouble before God?

I believe, from soul experience, that a backsliding heart and an idolatrous nature, is one of the greatest troubles a child of God can have. All his worldly trials, heavy as they may be, are light compared to this. That he should daily, and sometimes hourly, seek pleasure and gratification in the things of time and sense; and should perpetually turn away from all things spiritual and heavenly, gives him more trouble than all his other trials put together. But what good comes out of all this soul exercise? What spiritual profit springs from a sense of our diseased nature and depraved appetite? Such need the Physician. And the deeper they sink into soul sickness, and the more sensible they are of the plague of their hearts, the more do they prize and want to realize the healing remedies which this great and good Physician has to bestow.

4. But there is, after all, one class only of persons that this great Physician admits as patients. In this metropolis, you know, there are hospitals for different diseases; and a man afflicted with one disease must not go to an infirmary intended for another. The consumptive patient must go to the hospital for diseases of the

chest; the man suffering from typhus fever must be taken to the fever hospital: and the sufferer from inflamed eyes must go to the Ophthalmic institution. So spiritually, the Lord's Hospital, "Christ's Hospital," if I may use the expression without irreverence, is only for **incurables**; and till every other hospital refuses us admission, or turns us out as hopeless cases, the Lord does not admit us as patients. It is like a man with a fever going for admittance to the consumptive hospital. They would say, "You are not the patient for us; persons with your disease are not admitted here." So spiritually, the Lord's dispensary is only for incurables, whom every other hospital rejects; and as long as we, like Asa, seek to other physicians, we are not admitted into His sick wards.

Look at the woman who had spent all her living upon physicians, and got worse instead of better. Was it not her incurable disease that instrumentally caused her to seek and find health and cure from the hem of Jesus' garment? And it is the Lord's purpose to bring all His people into the same spot of being incurable by human power or help. We may illustrate this, by supposing there were in this city a hospital for incurables. If a patient came for admittance who was not very ill, the physician would say to him, "You are not bad enough for admittance here; you are not sufficiently ill; we may make an out-door patient of you; but at present there is no room for you. When the disease lays greater hold upon you, then we can admit you." And so spiritually, as long as a man has only a trifling ailment, is only slightly wounded, and the disease is not deeply spread, there is no admission for him to the benefits of Christ's blood.

Look at the leper under the law. **Le 13** Had he not to go before the priest, whose province it was to examine "the rising, the scab, or bright spot?" And was not this one of the marks of leprosy, that it "spread much abroad in the skin," and "in sight was deeper than the skin?" But the priest was not to receive him immediately as a leper: he was to shut him up seven days, and wait till it was a clear ease of leprosy, which was known by its deepening and spreading. The leprosy was an incurable disease.

So experimentally, till the disease of sin gets so desperate as to be past the help of all human skill, past our own healing, and all healing from others, we cannot seek unto, and I am sure we cannot find, the great Physician. A great part, an important part of the Spirit's work, is to bring men into this state; for we read, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." **1Sa 2:6,7** And what is "to kill," and "bring down to the grave," but to render a man incurable? Not that God is the author of sin; God forbid. He does not work sin in us, but discovers it as already there; and shews us what we are, by bringing light and life into the conscience; so that in His light we see, and in His life we feel, and groan over the malady of sin thus made manifest.

Now many of God's people are on the way to this free hospital; but they are not admissible yet; not deeply sunk enough into the disease yet; it has not yet laid hold of their vitals, not yet spread its deep roots into their conscience. Like the first commencement of a cancer, or of a consumption, the symptoms may be discoverable, but the disease has as yet not spread into the whole constitution. But like the two fatal diseases I have named, the felt malady of sin will spread and extend until the soul becomes incurable: and the more this is seen and experienced, the more urgently will a man seek, and the sooner will he find, the great Physician. But O, how nature shrinks from this! What a death-blow it would be for a patient in a decline to be told that he is not bad enough yet for the consumptive hospital. The physician might say, "I see the symptoms; I mark the hectic flush, the labouring breath, the hacking cough; but you are not bad enough yet: a few weeks or months will make you admissible" What a death-blow to him. But if according to the common phrase, "you must be worse before you are better," the remedies used at this point were to be the means of healing the patient, instead of its being a death-blow from the physician, it would be the first buddings of a hope of cure.

O how the soul shrinks from going more deeply into the felt malady of sin! The little it has known of it has made it so sick and

faint, that it dreads its spreading more and more, and becoming more and more incurable. But if the more deeply we sink into a knowledge of the disease the more we prize and value the great Physician, then may we not say, "Welcome disease, welcome pain, welcome sickness, if it be but the preparation for us to receive Jesus in all His fulness and covenant characters." But this is a way quite contrary to sense and reason, and utterly distinct from anything which nature would suggest as true or desirable. We cannot think that the way to make us prize Jesus is to get deeper and deeper into the filth and guilt of discovered sin, and that we must lie in our blood, that the Lord may come down to us, and spread His skirt over us, enter into covenant with us, and call us His. **Eze 16:8**

This great Physician has His eye upon all His patients and sees in whom the malady is just beginning, in whom it is progressing, and in whom it is fast reaching the incurable point, and only waiting for Him to stretch forth His hand to cure. The patient often knows not the nature of his own disease; but the great Physician has His eyes on every one of His patients; on those who are just feeling their sickness, and on those who are dying without His healing balm. The first He deepens, and the latter He cures. But O, how tenderly does He deal with every class of His patients! And even if He deepens the wounds of some, however painful, it is for their profit; for "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." **Ps 103:13**

III.—But what are His remedies? For this great Physician must suit the remedy to the malady.

1. One remedy, then, and that perhaps the only one, may be **to take off a diseased limb**. We may have a scrofulous knee; and the only remedy is, to take the limb off to keep us from dying. You may have some corruption, some lust, some besetting sin, that, like a diseased limb, is gradually draining away your spiritual health, and making such havoc with your constitution, that you must die, unless the limb be amputated, unless the idol be removed. It may be even your money, or good name, or

something which you hold near and dear, and can no more willingly part with than your leg or your arm; and yet it must be amputated that your life may be saved. The skilful operator, we know, in a hospital will not spare the patient for his crying; nay his very tenderness directs him to make a deeper incision, and to wield the knife with a firmer hand. So this great Physician, in proportion to His skill and tenderness, will amputate with a firmer hand the diseased limb which is draining away our spiritual strength.

2. Or, as a part of His office as the Physician of the soul, He may have **to handle our sores**. How we shrink, naturally, when the surgeon puts his hand on a tender spot, and presses it to ascertain where the disease lies; and so, when the Lord puts His finger on some sore place in the conscience, some backsliding, some inconsistency, committed perhaps years ago,—how the soul winces from the touch! And, I believe, could I thoroughly ransack the conscience of each living soul before me, there would be something of which you were deeply ashamed before God, some secret sin, past or present, which when the Lord puts His finger on it, and brings it under the light of His countenance, makes you wince under the pressure of His hand. But it is needful to have it pressed, that it may be probed, in order to be thoroughly healed. How often is it with God's people, as the Lord complains, by the Prophet, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly." **Jer 6:14** Sin has been passed over and thought little of; but the Lord, sooner or later, laying His hand on the conscience, brings it to light, and makes the soul feel the guilt and shame of it, before He manifestly pardons it.

3. But this great Physician **has balm also to apply**, as well as limbs to amputate, and wounds to press. What balm is this? It is that "blood which cleanseth from all sin." "Behold," He says, "I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth." **Jer 33:6** This is the "blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel;" which is the only God-appointed remedy for a guilty conscience; as the Holy Ghost testifies, "For if the blood of bulls

and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 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?" The Lord will not suffer His people to rest upon any other remedy than this. There are many who rest in doctrines, or church membership, or consistency of life, or zealous exertions for what they consider truth; but the Lord will never let any of His own children rest upon anything save, an experimental knowledge of "the blood of sprinkling," the precious blood of the Son of God. And if a man can rest upon anything else but this, it shews that God the Spirit has not yet taught him either his malady, or the only remedy provided for sin-sick souls.

Those, then, "that are sick" need a Physician. It is not with them a matter of speculation. I might read in the "Court Guide" the names and residences of all the physicians in the metropolis; but that would not profit me if I were labouring under disease. So men may read in the Bible of the offices and titles of Christ, of the healing virtue of His blood, the justifying power of His righteousness, and the saving efficacy of His intercession; but it is applying to and receiving benefit from His healing hands which can alone endear Him to us as the great Physician. A man may pass by a chemist's shop, and see the bottles of medicine in the window, may read the labels, and even theoretically know their use; but having recourse to the remedies will alone profit one in sick circumstances, or afflicted with bodily disease. And so spiritually: whenever soul sickness is opened up in our conscience, and whenever the malady is felt and groaned under, there will be a needing of the great Physician. Who and what Jesus is will be no barren speculation then. His Person will not be a mere doctrine floating in the brain; His blood will not be a mere theory, His righteousness merely an article of creed, and His dying love but a stone in a sound Calvinistic arch. There will be something deeper, something more abiding, something more powerful than names, notions, and theories to the sin-sick soul; and the more it needs the Physician, the more it will apply to Him.

This blessed Physician heals "without money and without price;" He never demands a fee for His wondrous cures; nor did He ever turn away one that lay languishing at His door, that felt his sickness, or pined at His feet after a manifestation of His healing blood applied to his conscience with almighty power. All His covenant characters, all the sympathizing tenderness of His bosom, all His almighty power, all His everlasting love, all that He is and has as God-Man, are all enlisted on behalf of His poor and needy family.

You are languishing, say, under sickness of soul, and feel the plague of a wretched heart, a depraved nature, a vile body of sin and death, and a corrupt imagination. You are afflicted with every disease. You have palsy, to weaken all your powers; you have consumption, to drain up your very vitals; you have fever, quickening your pulse after evil and inflaming your base lusts; you have lethargy, so that you cannot move forward a step in the Lord's way. Your heart is diseased; your appetite depraved; your knees are faint; and your hands hang down. In fact, there is scarcely a disease known to the physician, of which we have not spiritually the anti-type in our vile nature; with this striking difference, that we do not usually suffer in our body from more than one disease at a time, but in our soul from all. But, you say, your malady is such as none but yourself have experienced. Yet does it not say, "The **whole** head is sick, and the **whole** heart faint?" and surely that includes every disease; for if the whole "head" and "heart," all the intellectual powers of the one, and all the feelings and affections of the other, are sick and faint, that surely must include all.

Why should you, then, perish from your diseases? Is it for want of power in the great Physician? Is it for want of will? Does not He combine in Himself these two qualifications? "O," say you, "I believe He has the **power**, for my conscience has received the truth, that He is God as well as man; but I dare not say He has **the will**." He has the will, for He has made you willing to be cured; and if you are willing to be cured, you are one of His

people; for this is one of their characters, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." **Ps 110:3** Well then, He has both power and will, and has in the exercise of both, healed thousands of diseases and thousands of patients, and never turned away one that came unto Him. Then, why despair, sin-sick soul? "Because my heart is so corrupt," you reply; "because my imagination is so depraved, my will so rebellious, my affections so earthly, and my nature such a sink of sin." It is so; far deeper than you or I can know, far worse than you or I can feel. It is so. But shall that be a reason why you should die in your sickness? It is rather the very reason why you should hope.

Now, if you were "whole;" if you had no sickness; no pain, no ailment, no languishing, no pining away, no nightly groans, no daily sighs, you would not want a Physician; you would be whole-hearted, and could do without Jesus. This is your very mercy, that you feel your sickness and disease; and that it is incurable by all that you have yet done, or think of doing. This very incurability is the very reason that makes you a fit patient for this great Physician. The Lord sees in all His people this incurability; His eye is upon them all for good; His heart overflows with love and compassion; and, if I may use the expression, He tenderly desires to stretch out His hand to heal.

Let me ask you two questions. Search the records of the New Testament. Look at the acts of Jesus.

1. Did you ever know a patient to be sent away uncured?
2. Did you ever know any saved but an incurable? Did not the Lord give eyes to some that were born blind? Were not they incurable? Did He not unstop the ears and loose the tongue of those who were deaf and dumb? Were they not incurable? Did He not heal the woman of her disease that had suffered so many years? Was not she incurable? Did He not heal the man at the pool of Bethesda? Was not he incurable? Did He not heal the ten lepers? And were not they incurable? Can you find any disease which He healed that was not incurable? If they were not

incurable, would not His power have fallen short in point of manifestation? Would not His numerous enemies have said, it was all collusion or deception?

And can you find that He anywhere said to those diseased sufferers that cast themselves at His feet, that they were first to do something for themselves, and begin the cure which He would then complete? Or can you find that any were sent away, without being made perfectly whole? He healed all their maladies in a moment, by one glance of His eye, one touch of His hand. Has His power ceased? Does not the same compassionate heart beat in His bosom? Is He not, still "mighty to save?" "God over all, blessed for ever?" **Ro 9:5** And will He disappoint any poor soul now whom He has made to feel his own sickness and his own sore? He cannot do it; He would deny Himself if He did; and "He cannot deny Himself," for "He abideth faithful."

But how many of God's poor needy children have many years of sickness to pass over their head before they feel the balm of His atoning blood on their conscience! And why is this? That they may become more incurable **if I may use such an expression** and sink deeper and deeper into the sense and feeling that they cannot cure, comfort, bless, or save their own souls. And when they at length are brought here, the Lord will appear for them, that they may know His power, and that He alone may have all the glory. Thus, while he sends away all the "whole," and does not vouchsafe them a look, He bestows His compassion and love on those that are "sick." And all to redound to the glory of Jehovah, who, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons in one undivided Godhead, deserves the praise, adoration, and thanksgiving of His redeemed and justified church now and for ever.

THE SOLEMN APPEAL AND EARNEST CRY OF A WAITING SOUL

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 20, 1845

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

True religion is a solemn thing. And I firmly believe, that when God lays eternal realities with weight and power upon the conscience, He will make His people to know it to be a solemn thing. I do not mean to say, that there are not many times and seasons when it does not lie with weight and power upon the conscience. I am sure there are times with me when I seem to have no more religion, no more spiritual feeling, and can no more trace the work of God upon my conscience, than if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, no judgment, no eternity. But, through mercy, there are times and seasons when my heart is solemnized by the things of God; when they lie with that weight and power upon my soul, that I must feel them, whether I will or not.

Now it seems to me, that when David penned this Psalm by divine inspiration, he was in a peculiarly solemn frame of mind. I do not mean to say that he was not always in a solemn state of mind when he penned the Psalms. But there were, doubtless, degrees in this matter. There were times when he was more solemn; there were times when he was less solemn. But, it appears to me, looking at this Psalm, and viewing it in its different bearings, that when he penned it, it was a time of peculiar solemnity with his soul.

It seems that he had brought guilt upon his conscience by the free and immoderate use of his tongue—a frequent source of condemnation to God's tried family; and being stung with guilt on account of having been unable to bridle this unruly member, he

breaks forth thus: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." **Ps 39:1** The ungodly had taken advantage of expressions that had dropped from his lips; they had misrepresented and misinterpreted the words that he had inadvertently uttered. And being wounded, not merely with the guilt of having spoken unadvisedly, but also with the misrepresentations that had gone forth, he determines to put a check upon his tongue for the future, he would keep his mouth with a bridle, while the wicked was before him. Nay, more than that, he felt he had sometimes spoken inadvertently before God—that there was need not merely to bridle his tongue before men, still more before the ungodly, but he was not free to give utterance to everything before the Lord.

He felt that in the multitude of words, even before the Almighty, there lacketh not sin. He therefore goes a step further, and says, "I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, even from good." **Ps 39:2**—"I felt and found it to be the wisest way to give utterance to none of the feelings of my soul." But did this do? No. There was a holy flame burning upon the altar of his broken heart. "My sorrow," he says, "was stirred." "If I spoke, I had guilt; if I was dumb, I felt sorrow." "My heart was hot within me;" so that I could not keep my mouth, any better than my feelings under control: I was obliged to give vent to what was within. "While I was musing, the fire burned;" not merely was "hot" in my heart—not merely smouldering in the embers; but ready to blaze forth. "As I mused and meditated, and sat in solemn silence, revolving in my heart the dealings of the Lord, the flame smouldering in the embers burst forth; the fire burned." Then, no sooner did the fire burn than the flame shewed itself—my mouth gave vent to the feelings of my soul, "Then spake I with my tongue." What was this that burst forth? During his silence he had been meditating on various subjects; the solemn realities of eternity especially had been resting upon his heart, 'Therefore,' he says, viewing the shortness of life, 'seeing what a poor dying worm I am—looking at the length of eternity, and the brevity of time,—"Lord, make me to know mind end!"—let the day of death be

before my eyes; let me not put it far away from me. "Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am;" or, as it is in the margin, "what time I have here." And then, looking at his own life, he says, "Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth"—no longer, no wider than the breadth of mind hand, which an insect, a worm may crawl over in the space of a few seconds. And my age, however long, if it be prolonged to the utmost verge of man's life—"mine age is as nothing before thee," the eternal infinite Jehovah. When I look around me, and view the state of man, "verily every man"—not myself only—but "every man in his best estate"—his wealthiest, his healthiest, his most prosperous condition—"every man"—whoever he be—"in his best state, is altogether vanity"—nothing more, nothing less. In looking around, he saw what the condition of the world was—what a shew, what a vain delusion! He says,

"Surely every man walketh in a vain shew!"—their pursuits, their acts, their pleasures, their desire their anxieties, their fears, are all equally vain. They are all in a masquerade—they are all deceiving themselves—they are all deluded by the arch magician—the god of this world hath blinded their minds. "Surely they are disquieted in vain." Wordly cares, and temporal anxieties disquiet them; but surely it is in vain; they lead to no result; they bring forth no fruit; they do not terminate in their good, or in God's glory. And if I go to the rich man, who seems of all men to be the most envied, I see, says the Psalmist, "he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." When he is laid in the grave, the riches he has been heaping up, and selling his soul to Satan for—who shall gather them? The lawyer, the broker, and the spendthrift may gather all he has heaped together, and scatter them like dust before the wind. And then he appeals to his own soul in the words of the text. This is the connection of the text with the preceding verses. He turns within. He had been taking a solemn survey around,—looking at man in his best estate—viewing him in his most beauteous form;—then he turns his contemplation to his own soul, and appeals to God and his own conscience for the truth of what he says, "Now Lord, what

wait I for?" Do I differ from the ungodly? Have I the same mind as they? Am I pleased with the same things as they are? Am I heaping up riches, not knowing who shall gather them? Am I walking in a vain shew? "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish?"

Looking at these words, we may observe there are four distinct clauses in them. Therefore, without making any other division, I shall endeavour to take them up as the Holy Ghost has revealed them, and consider them one by one, endeavouring to trace out the mind of the Spirit in them.

I.—We begin with the **solemn enquiry**, the **direct appeal** that he makes to the Lord. "And now, Lord, what wait I for?" Now that I have looked at others—at the condition of men at large—now that I have seen that mine own life is but a hand-breath—now that I have viewed the shortness of time, and length of eternity—now, Lord, to what resolution have I come in my own conscience—"What wait I for?"

Let us see, **first, what he did not wait for**—in other words, look at it **negatively**; and **then see what he did wait for**, and view it **positively**.

1. Now **what did he not wait for?** What is meant by the expression "wait?" It implies the expectation of the soul after something—the desire of the heart to receive something. What did he not thus wait for? One thing that he did not wait for was, the **good opinion of man**. The good opinion of men is the all in all of some people's religion—the grand pivot on which it turns, the hinge on which the door of their profession swings. "What am I thought of? Do I stand high in the opinion of this or that person? Do the minister and people speak well of me? Do they endorse my religion, and stamp it with their approval?" O depth of rottenness! O wretched delusion; O spawn of a deceitful heart!—that a man should be looking at the good opinion which his fellow creatures entertain of him and resting the foundation of

his hope upon the fickle, wavering opinion of a worm of earth! "No," says David, "I do not wait for that." The good opinion of men has often been obtained by the greatest of hypocrites, who have crept into churches for the basest purposes, and while honoured and well-esteemed, have had but a lie in their right hand. Whilst some of God's own tried, exercised, and perplexed family have been set at nought, despised, and trampled down, from the mistake of man's judgment. As Solomon says, "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth." **Ec 10:7**

2. In saying to the Lord—"What wait I for?"—he was not expecting **to gain worldly advantage from his religion.** if your religion stands upon worldly interest: if to advance yourself in lucre, in honour, in power, in the world, has been the root and core of your profession, it is rotten to the very centre. Now what induced you **I address myself to all that profess truth here present** to make a profession? What was the secret motive that brought you out of the world? Was self interest, filthy lucre, honour, praise, admiration. the root and bottom of your religion? Depend upon it, if it was so, it is rotten to the very centre. Unless sovereign grace prevent, that which began wrong will end wrong; that which is based in hypocrisy will end in despair; that which began in deceit will end in an overwhelming curse.

3. In saying "what wait I for?"—he was **not waiting to see which way the tide turned;** he was not waiting to observe from which quarter the wind blew; but he was for starting at all hazards, without waiting for the shifting and veering of man's applause. In other words, he was not a **time-server.** But how many such characters there are in the church of God, whose religion is but one continual timeserving! They never think of the honour of God; they have no single eye to His glory; they have no inward craving after His approbation—no holy fear of His great name—no desire to be right before Him; but are ever watching and waiting, crying and bowing, and looking to the creature, and the creature only. Thus, all their religion is one wretched makeshift: and like a waterman, they are watching which way the

tide turns before they venture their bark upon the river of profession.

4. He was not waiting for his **old nature to undergo a radical change**; he was not expecting to become more holy, righteous, and pious in himself; he was not waiting to be sanctified perfectly, so as to be free from the very being of sin.

Now we will turn and look at the other side of the picture, and see **what he was waiting for**. "Now, Lord." He appeals to the Most High; he lays his conscience, with all its intricate movements, before the footstool of a heart searching Jehovah. "Now, Lord, what wait I for? Thou knowest." I will shew, if God enable me.

1. He was waiting for **the testimony and approbation of God in his own conscience**. Now a man can never wait for the testimony and approbation of God in his own soul till he is delivered from waiting for testimony and approbation of the creature. "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." **Mt 6:24** We cannot be veering and shifting betwixt God and man—we shall be either waiting for the favour and testimony of man, or waiting for the favour and testimony of God. But David could appeal to the Lord and what he was waiting for, was the gracious testimony and inward witness of the favour and approbation of God Himself. Now, can you say so, in solemn moments of waiting at God's footstool? Is there a looking up, and waiting for, a panting after the inward testimony of God in your soul?—a turning your eyes away from the creature, and looking wholly and solely to God Himself? Is there a thirsting after the testimony of God, after His manifested favour, the witness of His Spirit, the smiles of His love, the sheddings abroad of that blessing which maketh rich? If so, you can say, "Lord, what wait I for?" It is for Thy smile, Thine approbation, the dropping in of Thy grace, mercy, and truth into my conscience.

2. He was waiting for **a manifestation and revelation of a precious Jesus**. Now the Lord the Spirit will bring all our religion, sooner or later, to the centre in the Son of God. He will gather up all our scattered feelings, and concentrate all the spiritual desires, affections, thoughts, and sensations of our soul in Immanuel, "God with us." When the soul is thus guided and led, and brought to centre in Jesus all its hopes, all its expectations, all its desires, all the hidden emotions of the divine life; when all the varied feelings of the heart are brought to flow unto, and centre in the great High Priest over the house of God—then the soul can say before God, "Now, Lord, what wait I for?" The appearing of the Son of man, the revelation of a precious Christ, the manifestation of His dying love, the sprinkling of His atoning blood, the shedding abroad of His ineffable loveliness and beauty.

Now, we cannot come here, unless we have seen something of the beauty of the Son of God. We must have had in our own consciences, through the teachings of the Spirit, a discovery of the glorious Person, and perfect loveliness of Immanuel; we must have seen him by the eye of faith, as the only Mediator between God and man, felt our hearts fluttering within us through the solemn sensation produced by the sight, our conscience melted down at His blessed footstool, and every tender affection of our soul flowing unto Him. Till we are brought here, our eyes are looking everywhere but to the right quarter;—to our own religion, our own piety, our own evidences; to what we have done, or what we hope to do for the Lord: we are staring and gazing a thousand different ways. But when the Lord gives living faith, brings a precious Jesus near, and shows His glory and beauty, this draws up our spiritual affections, and gathers up all our gracious feelings into His own blessed bosom, Thenceforth all our religion centres in Him, and we can say, "What wait I for?"—the manifestation of Jesus, the appearing of the Son of God, the kisses of His blessed lips, the smiles of His countenance, and the coming over all the mountains of unbelief of this most precious Immanuel.

3. "What wait I for?" **The teachings of God the Spirit.** When we are thoroughly emptied of ourselves—when our knowledge is shown to be ignorance, our wisdom folly, our righteousness filthy rags, and our strength weakness, then we begin to long after the teachings of the blessed Spirit. We must be purged and tried before we can value and receive the treasures of grace. When we are well exercised and tried in our souls, then we begin to long after the teachings of the Holy Spirit, that He would shed abroad the love of God in our soul, visit and guide us, overshadow us with His holy presence, and drop into our hearts His secret unction. Before we are brought here, we know not the personality of the Holy Ghost. We have no evidence in our conscience that He is God; we cannot worship and adore Him as the Third Person in the blessed Godhead. But when we are brought to this spot, that we know nothing without His teaching, feel nothing without His giving, and are nothing without His making—this makes us pant and sigh after His teachings and leadings; and we are brought to wait in the posture of holy adoration and still quietness for the dew and unction of the Spirit to fall upon our conscience.

4. "What wait I for?" **To know Thy will, and do it.** We have no desire by nature to know the will of God; or if we know it, we have no desire to do it. For that will is contrary to ours. That will is spiritual—ours is carnal; that will is holy, ours is unholy; that will is pure, but ours is averse to all good. Therefore, by nature we cannot desire to know, and do the will of God. But when He makes Jesus dear and precious to us—lifts our hearts up to Himself—then we desire to know the will of God; and not merely to know that will, but do it when known. Now could we be brought in singleness of eye to know God's will, and do it, it would relieve us from a thousand perplexities. What is the cause of many of our perplexities? Nature bids us one thing, conscience another: the law of God in our mind points one way, and the law of sin in our members points another. It is this conflict within, the warring of the two principles one against the other, so that we cannot walk in the path of obedience, which so perplexes the soul. But when we are brought to this point. "Lord, let me know Thy will; and let me do Thy will. at whatever price, at whatever

cost; however it may pain my flesh, let me know it. and do it"—whenever we are brought there, though it makes the cross itself more heavy than before, it relieves us of much exercise and perplexity, because it makes the path plain before us.

Now, David could say, on all these points. "What wait I for?.... Dost Thou not know, Lord, and I wait for them?" This implies tenderness of conscience, simplicity of object, godly tear and ardent desire after God's honour and glory. So that no man can utter these words, sincerely and simply. from the bottom of his heart, in whose soul the Lord has not begun, and is not carrying on. His own gracious operations.

II.—But he adds another word. **"My hope is in Thee."** There is a connection between these two clauses. He had appealed to God—"What wait I for?.... Am I a timeserver, a hypocrite, a double-minded man, a perverse rebel? Thou knowest. Lord, there is in me another mind another spirit, another nature, which cleaves to, and loves Thee." "What wait I for?" I wait on Thee because my hope is in Thee.

What is it to be able to say, "my hope is in thee?" To feel that in the Lord rests all the hope of our troubled minds; that in Him is deposited all our treasure **"for where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also"**; that He is our rock, whereon we venture for eternity, in the face of sin, death, and hell. "My hope is in thee." Not in myself—fickle and feeble; not in my own righteousness—defiled and polluted; not in my own strength, which is utter weakness; not in my own resolutions, which are to be broken; not in the creature, wayward and wavering. No: it is in Thee, Lord.

Before we can be brought to this point—to hope in God—we must know something of His Person and character. Observe, it does not say, "I hope **on** God," but **"in** God." It is one thing to hope **on** God—another thing to hope **in** God. When we hope on God, we hope on His attributes, on His perfections, on His invitations, on His promises. But this is not the Person of Jehovah. This is not a

looking into His very heart and bosom. This is not the repose of the soul in the Triune God, as personally revealed to it. The **on** is external—the **in** is internal. The **on** is when the soul is at a distance—the **in**, when it comes to the very centre of the bosom of Jehovah. So that it is not the same thing to have our hope **on** God, as **in** God. We cannot have our hope **in** God till we have entered the sanctuary within the veil, till we have looked into the sympathizing bosom of Jesus, till all the emotions and desires of our heart have pierced beyond transitory things, and mounted beyond the dark cloud that hovers over earth up to the very bosom of the Three-One God, to anchor there, as our hope for eternity. Now, when we can say, "My hope is in thee," in Jehovah-Jesus, in His sympathizing bosom, in His atoning blood, in His finished work, in His justifying righteousness; for I have a vital union to Him, as the head of the church, "God over all, blessed for ever;" when we can say, "My hope is thus in Him, centering in His very bosom;" then comes, "What wait I for?"

Whilst our hope is **on** Him, not "in" Him, we may be waiting for many things. We have not been fully separated from the world; we have not come to the slaughtering stroke that cuts to pieces all our own righteousness; we have not had the grafting knife fully passed through the scion to separate it from the old stock. But when we can say, "My hope is **in** Thee; all my soul's hopes, all my soul's affections, all my soul's desires, are in the precious Lamb of God;"—then we can say, "What wait I for?"... "Is not my all there? Does not my hope centre there? Is He not the winner of my affections, the Lord of my heart, the God of my soul, and the guide of my feet? Is He not my Creator, Preserver, Saviour and Mediator?.... What wait I for?" Shall I go to the creature, when there is the Creator? look to man. When there is God? go to a worm of earth, when there is Jehovah, the Rock of Ages? "What wait I for?.... Why. I wait for Thee because my hope is in Thee, and because I expect to receive everything out of Thee."

III.—Is it not strange that all this should be consistent with a deep personal knowledge of sin?—"Deliver me from all my transgressions?" What a strange expression! Here is a man

whose affections and desires are of a spiritual nature, and all whose hopes and expectations spring from, and centre in the Three-one God. Why, should you not expect this man to have no sin at all? no inward transgressions, no external backslidings, no slips nor falls? Should you not expect him to be perfectly holy and pure? Yet the same Spirit that uttered, "what wait I for? my hope is in thee," breathed forth this petition and cry of a brokenhearted sinner, "Deliver me from all my transgressions." It is not, then, our holiness, nor our purity, nor our piety which bring us near to the Lord; but our felt sinnership, our guilt, our filth, our condemnation, and our shame. And when the blood of Jesus is sweetly applied, it brings the soul through all these things, and above all these things, into His bosom. And yet to be a transgressor still! We will look at the words a little more closely, if God enable.

"Deliver me from all my transgressions." What! **"all** my transgressions?" Yes, **"all** my transgressions." You see David was but a sinner still. What is transgression? It is stepping beyond the narrow line—disobeying the word of God, the will of God, the mind of God, the dictates of the Spirit in a tender conscience, and the workings of godly fear in the soul. But how is this? How can a man be in this posture, "Now Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee;" and yet be feeling the workings of base transgression in his heart? It is a mystery, and always will be a mystery, except to the exercised family of God. This is the source of the mystery—that they carry within their bosom a defiled and polluted nature; a nature utterly incurable—a nature so thoroughly saturated with evil, as absolutely to be irremediable in this life.

Now, David felt the workings of these transgressions. He knew what it was to have a lustful eye, a backsliding heart, and filthy imagination, a roving, roaming, and carnal mind. perpetually transgressing God's holy will and word. He knew what it was to be entangled in the snares that Satan spread for his feet, to be caught in the besetments of a wicked heart, and be ever stumbling through the corruptions of his nature. He knew what it was to be a sorrowful captive, a poor broken-hearted soul,

exercised with a daily, and sometimes an hourly conflict. And how came he to know this? It was waiting upon the Lord, whereby he received light to see it—it was waiting upon the Lord, whereby he received life to feel it. It was hoping in the Lord, having his anchor there, that made him feel more the tossings to and fro of the sea of iniquity within. But sin was his burden. It was not his joy—it was not his glory. He could not feel comfortable, nor happy as a transgressor. It was the trouble of his heart, and the very grief of his soul that he was one. And I believe a man is dead in sin who feels otherwise.

I have no idea of a hardened transgressor among the children of God, or of a seared conscience in the living family. I know by painful experience, that stripes follow sin; and if we transgress God's holy word, we shall be visited for it. Then this cry, "Deliver me from all my transgressions" **and this delivers us from hypocrisy** follows. We can no longer walk with the clean-handed and the clean-hearted. We can no longer boast of our own uprightness and consistency. We fall down as poor, guilty sinners, we smite upon our thigh, and we remember the sins of our youth. We dare scarcely at times look up to heaven, but say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

In crying to the Lord to deliver him from all his transgressions, there were **three things** specially connected with sin, from which David desired to be delivered.

1. One is, the **guilt** of sin. Now, wherever there is transgression in a child of God, there must be guilt. I do not care what he has passed through—what his experience is—however the atoning blood and pardoning love of the Saviour may have been felt—guilt will be assured to follow sin, as the shadow follows the sun. Now, when a soul feels it has transgressed against a holy and pure God, it will desire and cry earnestly to be delivered from the guilt of its transgression. Nothing can really do this for the soul, but that balmy blood, the blood of the Lamb of God. Which "cleanseth from all sin." This can, and does deliver the people of God from the guilt of sin.

2. There is also, the **filth, shame, and confusion** that sin produces in the conscience. The conscience becomes defiled through sin, and filth and shame cover the heart. Now, in crying to be delivered from all our transgressions, we desire to be delivered from the filth and shame, from their pollutions and defilement. Do you not feel how sin pollutes, how sin indulged hardens and defiles the conscience, the heart, and the imagination? So that, when you would go into the sanctuary of God, and have heavenly and spiritual feelings, some lust that you have indulged, some idol that you have set up in the chambers of imagery, comes with a polluting flood into your holiest moments, defiles your conscience, and makes you feel "a beast before God"—"yea, more brutish than any man"—"a worm and no man." Now, when you feel this, we want to be delivered from the filth of sin, as well as the guilt of it. How is this done? By having a divine plunge into the fountain which was once opened for sin and uncleanness; so as to feel the filth and shame of sin for ever done away.

3. There is besides the **dominion** of sin. How hard sin strives for the mastery in a man! Few persons, comparatively speaking, know the power of sin. They give way to it, and then they do not feel it; or their corruptions are not stirred up, and their souls are not exercised. With some, one lust governs, and keeps out the rest. If pride fill the throne of the affections, it shuts out covetousness; and if covetousness rule, it keeps out pride. So that, being under the power of one sin, the door is shut against the rest; and they think they are free from sin, because they have not the conflict with it that others of God's people are exercised with. But he who watches the movements of his heart, he who is tried by the conflict, he who is perpetually assaulted by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"—he knows what it is for sin to be perpetually seeking to gain the mastery over him. And O, what struggles, sighs, and groans does the poor child of God pour out into the bosom of his heavenly Father, that he may not fall a victim to the power of sin.

Now all these things—the guilt of sin, the filth of sin, and the power of sin—did David cry to the Lord to deliver him from. And I believe it will find a responsive echo in every God-taught breast. We cannot know the guilt of sin without crying to be cleansed from it; we cannot experience the power of sin without crying to be washed from it; and we cannot experience the power of sin without crying to be delivered from it.

IV.—There was one thing more in David's breast; there was a feeling besides that lay deep in that holy man's bosom: **"Make me not the reproach of the foolish."** Who are these foolish? I believe them to be persons in a profession of religion, utterly destitute of the feeling power of it in the heart—the five foolish virgins, who had lamps, but no oil. These foolish ones know nothing of the workings of sin and corruption in the heart of a child of God: they know nothing of the powerful temptations that Satan is continually seeking to ensnare them by; still less do they know anything of the agonising struggles in a tender conscience that they may not be entangled in the snares of the wicked one. These foolish ones are very consistent, upright, virtuous, and amiable, viewed as moral characters. There is much in them exceedingly admirable to nature; and yet they are foolish; for they have not the grace of God in them which makes them wise unto salvation. They do not know the treachery of their heart, the temptations of Satan, nor the inward struggles of a gracious principle against the corruption of depraved nature. But being so consistent, so upright, so virtuous, so moral, so amiable, and so honourable, they know no pity for the slipping and halting.

Now what David feared very much was this—lest by his slips and falls, lest by the transgression of his lips, the transgression of his hands, or the transgression of his life, he should be made "the reproach of the foolish." These foolish ones, unexercised and unplagued, who know nothing of the inward workings of sin, and the strugglings of a living soul against it, he knew would point the finger of scorn against every poor, Satan-tempted, sin-plunged transgressor.

But why did he utter this cry? It was because he felt a conflict in his soul. So powerful were his temptations, so subtle were the snares that Satan was spreading for his feet—and so weak his flesh to stand against the temptations, that he felt if God Himself did not hold him up by His own almighty arm fall he should, fall he must, and thus become "a reproach to the foolish." Well; but should we not expect something better from David than this? Why, was he not a holy man, a heavenly-minded man, led up from time to time into sweet communion with his God? What! this good, gracious, holy, and heavenly-minded saint talk in this way? It is a mystery, and ever will be a mystery, that the same man who could solemnly appeal to God that he waited only for His smiles and the testimonies of His approbation—that all his hopes centred in Him, and all his spiritual affections flowed unto and rested in Him—that this same man was so tempted in his soul, so tried in his mind, so plagued by the unceasing conflict betwixt nature and grace, that he should cry as a poor broken-hearted sinner at the footstool of mercy, "Deliver me from all my transgressions."

Is it not a sweet encouragement to a poor, sin-burdened wretch, that this holy man was thus exercised? Suppose you had the bright part only of David's character—his holiness, his spirituality, his heavenly-mindedness, and his love to God; and had not the darker shades—his corruptions, temptations, conflicts, and perplexities. Suppose the Holy Ghost had revealed only one portion of David's experience, his blessings and manifestations, and neglected to record the cries and groans of his troubled soul; would God's poor, tried, and tempted family have gone to the Psalms as to a full breast of consolation? But the Lord the Spirit has mercifully unfolded both parts of David's experience; the bright lights, and the dark shades—the workings of grace, and the workings of nature—the deep sinkings, and the sweet deliverances; turning him out to our view, just as he was—not exalting the man, but magnifying the grace of God in him. We can read in the Psalms his experience, and feel the same workings in our own bosom. For this purpose they were revealed, that they might be a standing consolation, a breast of ever-

flowing milk, to the poor and needy, hungering and thirsting after righteousness; that the Lord's exercised family might thus have a sweet testimony raised up in their hearts, that they are treading in the footsteps of the flock, and that their spot is the spot of God's children.

Let us endeavour to gather up these fragments. I have endeavoured to trace out their connection—to show you how David came into this solemn frame, and then how he breathed out his soul before the Lord. Can you and I find any echo here? Do look at it—it will bear close inspection. If you are a child of God, you will not mind a cross-examination. You will lay your whole soul at times bare before a heart-searching God, and say, "Search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me." Can we then walk step by step with this holy man of God?—"Now, Lord. what wait I for?" Do we know what it is to wait upon the Lord, to plead and wrestle with Him at His footstool, that He would appear for us? Can we lay down our feelings side by side with the feelings of David? Then the same Spirit that prompted the one prompts the other. Can we go a step further—"My hope is in thee." It is a great word to use: we may say it unadvisedly—we may say it delusively—we may say it hypocritically. Can we say it **honestly**? That is the question. What manifestations, what testimonies, what discoveries have we had? What goings out, and what comings in? What cries, and what answers? What tears and what wipings away of tears from our eyes? What afflictions, and what consolations? We must know some of these things in order to be able to say, "My hope is in thee."

Let us go a step further. Are we unplagued, unexercised professors, that have never loathed ourselves for the guilt of sin, and never felt its filth and power? Or if we be these unburdened, untried professors, we cannot say with a feeling heart and conscience, "Deliver me from all my transgressions;"—"more in number than the hairs of my head"—transgressions in heart, lip, and life; transgressions morning, noon, and night; proud transgressions; covetous transgressions; hypocritical transgressions; transgressions of every kind, every colour, every

shade, and every hue. But when we come as penitents to the footstool of mercy, we can say, "Deliver me from all my transgressions." Have we ever feared, cried, and groaned within us, lest we should be made a reproach of the foolish? lest our sins should break forth? lest our lusts should desolate our soul? lest our temptations should so overpower us as to cast us altogether down? Have we ever feared and quaked within us lest the foolish should point the finger of scorn at our falls and backslidings? Why if we can come in here. surely, surely we may use the words. "Make me not the reproach of the foolish."

Thus our personal experience will coincide with that of the Psalmist. We shall have testimony that the same Spirit is teaching us who taught him. We shall travel on side by side, and view our experience in his experience; for "as in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Thus we shall bless and praise God that ever He led David into these paths and gives us some testimony that the same Spirit that guided him is guiding us, and will bring us eventually to the same place where David now is; when God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and give us to see, face to face, the glory of the Lamb.

The Sons of God; Their Blessings and Their Privileges

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Jan. 31, 1864

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." 1 John 3:1

The life of John, the beloved disciple, was, by the express wisdom and goodness of God, prolonged beyond the space allotted to his fellow apostles. Church history informs us that he lived to be nearly one hundred years old; and Jerome, one of the ancient Church Fathers, as quoted by Milner, records a pleasing incident of him at that advanced period of life, which is so much in harmony with his general character that it seems to deserve our credence better than most of the current traditions concerning him. It is this. When he was too old and infirm to walk, he was carried into the assemblies of the Christians at Ephesus, and there he confined himself to these few simple words of exhortation: "My children, love one another." But I intimated that it was by the express wisdom and goodness of God that his life was so long spared; and now I will tell you my reason for drawing this conclusion. Satan, when he found he could not overthrow the Church of Christ by violence, changed his plan, and sought to subvert it by treachery. He therefore raised up in almost all directions, where there were churches of Christ, a set of vile characters, men erroneous in doctrine and ungodly in life, who sprang up as tares in the fields of wheat. To us it seems scarcely credible that within thirty or forty years after our Lord's death and resurrection there should start up in the churches such characters as Jude and Peter describe with their graphic pens. Hear Jude's description of many members of Christian churches in his day, which, taking the Bible date of the Epistle, A.D. 66, was but 33 years after the ascension of Jesus—a shorter space of time than I have professed to be a servant of Christ. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God

into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." "These," he adds, "are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." (Jude 4, 12, 13.) What strong, what emphatic language! And yet the Church of Christ at that early period was pestered with these infamous characters. You will find equally strong language concerning them in the second epistle of Peter written about the same time. And even Paul, a year or two before the same period, denounces similar characters in terms not much less severe: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil. 3:18, 19.) And again: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." (Titus 1:10, 11, 16.)

Now what a mercy it was that John should have been spared to witness not only the introduction of these ungodly characters into the professing church but their full development; that he, who had been an eye-witness of the Lord's glory on the mount of transfiguration; who had viewed his agony in the garden; who had stood by him when expiring on the cross, and marked the blood and water gush from his pierced side; who had seen and handled him after the resurrection, and had beheld his ascension from Bethany, should have been spared to witness all these evils introduced into the primitive churches; for he was thus enabled, towards the close of his life, by the grace of God and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to testify, with all the greater power and authority as an eye-witness, against these evils and these

errors. The "grievous wolves," for instance, that Paul prophesied should enter in among them at Ephesus (Acts 20:29) were there before his eyes, "not sparing the flock." And so with other churches, such as Pergamos and Thyatira. The men and their evil ways and works were not shadows in the future, like the beast with seven heads and ten horns, but were then living, moving, and working in the churches with all their craft and hypocrisy, all their errors and heresies, all their wantonness and wickedness. God, therefore, preserved him so long in life that, as his last New Testament witness, he might deliver a standing testimony against those errors and evils which afflicted the early churches. If we had a fuller knowledge of these errors and evils we should see that John's testimony was particularly directed against them. We should see why he was specially led in his gospel to testify so plainly to the Deity and eternal Sonship of Jesus, truths which these heretics denied; and to preserve so carefully the exact discourses of the blessed Lord, in which he asserted his essential oneness with the Father as the Son of God, and yet the reality of his flesh and blood as the Son of man. So in his Epistles, and especially in the first and longest of them, we should see how in every verse he denounces some vile error or declares some important truth. Well may we say that upon it are inscribed, as with a ray of light, these three conspicuous features: truth, holiness, and love. How, for instance, he testifies for the *truth* by setting before us the essential Deity, the eternal Sonship, and the propitiation made for sin by our blessed Lord! How he treats of his advocacy with the Father, as Jesus Christ the righteous, and assures us that his blood cleanseth from all sin! How he denounces error with most trenchant pen, cutting off those who hold it as men devoid of the grace of God, and bidding us take heed of them, and not even receive them into our houses or bid them God speed! And is not *holiness* the very breath of the epistle? How he tells us that he who is blessed with a good hope through grace of seeing Jesus as he is purifies himself even as He is pure. (1 John 3:3.) How he warns us against loving the world or the things that are in the world. (1 John 2:15.) How he seeks to lead us up to have "fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3); declares that "he who saith he abideth

in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked;" and lays it down as a practical test of the new birth: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." (1 John 2:29.) Nor need I say with what a glorious flood of heavenly *love* this epistle is bathed. The love of God in Christ to us in sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; the love of Christ in laying down his life for us; the love which we should have to him and to each other—is not this divine and heavenly love in its mountain and its streams, in its communication and in its claims, in its living fruits and practical effects, the very animating breath of the whole epistle? The love of God, softening and melting his heart, seems to have touched his pen as with a double measure of holy force and fire, so that we may almost say, if truth be the body, and holiness the soul, love is the spirit of this blessed epistle.

Without further introduction, I shall at once approach our text; and I think we may see in it four distinguishing features:

I.—*First, the wondrous love of God:* "Behold, *what manner of love* the Father hath bestowed upon us."

II.—*Secondly, the amazing blessings and privileges* of God's people: "that we should be *called the sons of God.*"

III.—*Thirdly, the gross ignorance* of the world: "therefore *the world knoweth us not.*"

IV.—*Fourthly, the explanation* of the mystery: because it *knew him not.*"

I.—Our text commences with a "Behold." Let us not pass by this; for is it not as if John would summon us to behold a wondrous sight? Is it not as if he would call up our sleeping graces and animate every faculty of our renewed mind, to gaze upon the stupendous miracle which he sets before our eyes? "Behold, *what manner of love!*" This call upon us to come and look seems to remind us of the various appearances of God in the Old

Testament, when he suddenly and unexpectedly manifested himself as a God of love or power; as, for instance, when he appeared to Abraham in a vision of the night with those gracious words: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1.) It may also remind us of the wondrous appearance of the Lord to Moses when he was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the desert, when "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush;" and as he drew near to behold the marvellous sight, God spake to him out of the burning bush—wondrous type of the ever-blazing Deity of our gracious Lord, and yet of his pure, unconsumed humanity in the most intimate union with it! This call of "Behold" seems to remind us also of Ezekiel, when sitting "amongst the captives by the river of Chebar, on a sudden the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God." (Ezek. 1:1.) May it not also call to our mind the vision of Isaiah, when he saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple?" (Isai. 6:1), or of Daniel, solitary and mourning by the river Hiddekel, when lifting up his eyes "he looked and beheld a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz?" (Dan. 10:5.) It may also serve to remind us of John himself when in the Isle of Patmos he heard a great voice, and turned and saw one like unto the Son of Man in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. (Rev. 1:10, 13.) As all these appearances were unexpected displays of the Lord in his grace and in his glory, so when holy John says in our text "Behold," it is as if he would rouse up our sleeping graces and bid us behold with eyes of faith and affection a stupendous sight not less marvellous than these appearances of God in the days of old.

Now what is this stupendous sight which John bids us here behold? "*What manner of love* the Father hath bestowed upon us." It is not merely what love, but what "*manner*" of love. Thus he would bid us contemplate the love of God under that particular form and in that peculiar manner in which God has revealed and made it known to the sons of men. In pursuance, then, of this godly counsel, I think we may contemplate this love under these three points of view:—1, In its *nature*; 2, In its *manifestation*; 3,

And in its *communication*.

i. Look, then, first, at the love of God in its *nature*—what it is *in itself*, as a pure Fountain, distinct from its streams and effects; and I think we shall see certain peculiar features stamped upon it as such, enabling us to say, "Behold *what manner* of love."

1. First, it was *self-originating*. Love, if we have any to the Lord and to his people, is God's gift and grace; it does not dwell naturally in our hearts, but its source and spring are from above; but love in the bosom of God dwells in him as one of his glorious, underived perfections. It gushes, therefore, freely out of his bosom, as a river springs out of a mountain side, without any call from earth, without any invitation from man. Whence come three of our noblest rivers—the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Danube? All spring from the bosom of the same mighty Alps, a few leagues only from each other, whence they flow each in its own direction to gladden and fertilise every land to which they come. So the love of God to his people gushes forth from his own bosom unsought, unasked, undeserved, but carrying a blessing wherever it flows.

2. It was also *eternal*. No change can take place in the mind of God. No new plans, no fresh purposes, no unthought-of schemes can enter the mind of him who is One eternal NOW—the great self-existent I AM. His love, therefore, like himself, must be equally *eternal*. It had no beginning, as he had no beginning; and it will have no end, as he had no end. Well may we pause before so stupendous a sight, as Moses at the burning bush, and gather up every faculty of our soul to listen to the words with solemn admiration which he spoke by his prophet: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) If, then, you are asked, Why is God's love eternal? all you can answer is, Because it is the love of God who is eternal. And if you are farther asked, "How do you know that God has from all eternity loved you?" all you can reply is, "Because with loving kindness he has drawn me." This is the

solution to the question whether in doctrine or experience; we can give no other.

3. But being eternal it must be *infinite*, for God is infinite; and as he is love in name and nature, his love must be the same as all his other gracious and glorious perfections, all of which like himself are infinite. But what a wondrous mercy it is for the Church of God that his love is thus infinite. To see this point more plainly, look at two other perfections of God in their infinity—his wisdom and his power. First look at his *wisdom*, and see how it is displayed on every side in creation. See in what infinite wisdom the Lord has ordained and arranged everything in the visible creation, adapting each part to the other with all the perfection and finish of an exquisite machine. The sun moving in its daily orbit; the moon walking in her midnight brightness; the succession of seasons; the multiplicity of animals upon the face of the earth; each one of them a miracle in its formation, propagation, and provision—what proofs before our eyes do all these daily wonders afford us of the infinite wisdom of God. And do they not also give us equal proofs of his infinite *power*? If, then, his wisdom and his power are thus shown to be infinite, is it not equally true of his *love*? Now the peculiar blessedness of this love as being infinite is that as such it includes all the saints of God in one universal embrace. It is like his wisdom and his power in nature. In creation, there is nothing too great and nothing too small to display the infinite wisdom and power of God. There is as much wisdom and power in the creation of the trunk of a bee as of the trunk of an elephant; in the making of the sting of a wasp as of the claw of a tiger; in the formation of the eye to see the light of the sun as in the formation of the sun to give light to the eye. Now what is true in creation is true in grace; what is true of God's wisdom and power is true of his love. Do but apply this. You may think yourself too insignificant a creature or too sinful a wretch for God's love to embrace. But as his love is infinite, it embraces with equal strength all the elect of Christ; and if you are so blessed and favoured as to be amongst the number of those whom God from all eternity has loved, his love reaches down to you who are less than the least of all saints as much as

his wisdom and his power to the smallest of his creatures.

4. But being infinite, this love is also *inexhaustible*; and this is another blessed object of contemplation in looking at "the manner" of God's love. We should soon have drained it dry were it not an inexhaustible fountain. Look at the millions of God's redeemed family, whether glorified spirits in heaven or still sojourning upon earth, or still to be born in the process of time. How inexhaustibly the love of God has been flowing forth for ages to every one of those countless millions. As an emblem of this inexhaustible love, look at the sun; think of the ages for which it has shone unexhausted and inexhaustible; consider the millions and millions of beams which it has cast upon the earth; the thousands of crops which it has ripened, the millions of fruit it has brought to perfection; and yet it shines still. It shines to day as it shone 6,000 years ago; and it will not cease to shine till he who made it what it is bids it cease to be. So with the love of God: it has shone into the hearts of millions; it has been the spring of all their happiness and the source of all their fruitfulness; their joy in life, their support in death, their bliss in eternity. Their sins have not worn it out, nor their backslidings exhausted it; for its very nature is to be unexhausted, inexhaustible.

5. It is, therefore, *unchangeable*. God does not love to day and hate to morrow. His own words are: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6.) It is most contrary to the revelation which God has given of himself in the Scripture as "resting in his love" (Zeph. 3:17); as "being of one mind and none can turn him" (Job. 23:13); as "one with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17): to think that after he has once fixed his love upon any of his people, he should repent of that love and take it away from them as being unworthy of it. "The gifts and calling of God," we are expressly told, "are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29); that is, God never repents of the gifts of his love and grace, and the calling which is the fruit of them. Did not the Lord know from all eternity what his people would be? Did he not know that, as Moses said to the children of Israel, they would be "a stiff-necked

people," provoking him continually to his face? And yet he says of them: "If heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:37.) The immutability of his love is the foundation of all our hope; for we well know if our sins and backslidings could turn this love away we soon sink to rise no more. But this is the consolation of the family of God, that his love is as immutable as his own eternal essence. Thus far then have I endeavoured to describe the *nature* of God's love; but O, how weakly and imperfectly have I set it forth!

ii. I now, then, pass on to consider the two other peculiar features of this love, viz., its *manifestation* and its *communication*; and I think I shall do this best by coming at once to the second branch of my subject in which they more conspicuously appear:

II.—*The amazing blessings and privileges of God's people in being called the sons of God.*

i. God loved his people from all eternity, but he loved them *only in Christ*. This must ever be borne in mind, or we shall make sad mistakes in this important matter. If God loved you, it is not because he saw anything in you to love. He does not only love you as the mere creature of his hand, for that you share in common with your fellow men; for you must bear in mind that there is a love which God bears to the creatures of his hand distinct from his love in grace. We therefore read: "He loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment." (Deut. 10:18.) But the love which he has to your soul, whereby he means to make you a partaker of his eternal glory, is not the love which he has to you as the creature of his hand, but the love he has to you as a member of the mystical body of Christ. This is what I mean by the love of God in its *manifestation*. The apostle therefore says: "In this was *manifested* the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he

loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." If, therefore, sometimes you stand astonished at the love of God, or have ever been incredulous that the love of God should be fixed upon you, as feeling your utter insignificance as well as miserable sinfulness and vileness, you must consider why it is that God has loved you or any other of the human race: it is in his dear Son. It is in his Son that he chose the Church; in his Son that he blessed her with all spiritual blessings; in his Son that he accepted her as without spot or blemish, for she is "accepted in the Beloved." Is not this the clear, indubitable language of the apostle? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. 1:3, 4, 6.) The Church never was separated in the mind of God from her covenant Head, for she is "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:23.) The love, therefore, which God has to his dear Son reaches and is extended unto all the members of his mystical body. This is blessedly intimated in the intercessory prayer of our Lord: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23); and again: "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26.) The apostle, therefore, says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:4, 5, 6, 7.) Is God "rich in mercy?" It is "in Christ Jesus." Is the love wherewith he loved us great? It is so only in Christ Jesus. When we were dead in sins, did he quicken us? It was "together with Christ." Did he raise us up together and make us sit together in heavenly places? It is "in Christ Jesus." Will he

show "in the ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace?" It will be "in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Christ, then, in his Person and work is the *manifestation* of the love of God—the consecrated channel through which it flows, and by which it is bounded.

Now this brings us to a very important feature in the love of God as thus manifested in the Person and work of his dear Son, which is *redemption*. This is a point which it deeply concerns us experimentally and savingly to know, for it meets us in our lost ruined condition as sinners; and it is as being in this case that the love of God is specially manifested. You know that in Adam we all sinned and fell from our native purity and innocency. The image of God in which we were created was utterly defaced; we became alienated from the life of God, and sank down before him dead in trespasses and sins. There was a need, therefore, of redemption from this state of alienation and death, guilt and condemnation, and all the other dreadful consequences of the Adam fall. Here love was so singularly manifested. The fall did not forfeit sonship, but it forfeited the image of God; it did not blot the names of the elect out of the Book of Life, but it blotted them all over with the mud and mire of sin; it did not destroy the union which the people of God had with Christ their covenant Head, but it sank the members of his mystical body into a pit of sin and misery, out of which nothing but the incarnation of the Son of God and the propitiation he made by his bloodshedding and death could lift them out. It did not remove or impair the love of God towards the Church of Christ, for that was antecedent to the fall, but it made redemption necessary for its manifestation. It enhanced it, made it more signal and glorious, and displayed in all its lustre the nature of that love which is as strong as death, which many waters of sin could not quench nor all the floods of evil drown. Whatever God was to man, whatever man was to God, sin had come in and separated between them. Sin is so dreadful an evil; it is so loathsome to the eyes of infinite Purity, such an insult to his divine Majesty, such treason to his authority, such a violation of his justice, that whatever the love of God might be to man it could not flow down to him whilst this barrier stood in the way. It

must then be removed, or God and man be ever separate. But none could remove this barrier except God's dear Son, and he only by his mediation and death. Hence the necessity and nature of redemption by the bloodshedding of Jesus. To us, then, as sinners there is no manifestation of the love of God but in the Person and work of his dear Son, for in him there is redemption, and in no other. The apostle therefore says: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7.) But what is the result of this work of redeeming blood? That by it poor guilty sinners obtain the pardon of all their sins; and their sins being pardoned and put away, they obtain access unto God. They are thus reconciled and brought near to their heavenly Father; for sin being removed by the sacrifice and bloodshedding of Christ, there is now no longer a barrier between God and them. Now to obtain a sense of this pardon in his own soul every child of God is made to sigh and cry mightily with prayers and supplications before the throne of grace. He is thus taught the value and blessedness of atoning blood; and as the sufferings, bloodshedding, and death of the Lord Jesus are more and more revealed to his heart, the more simply and unreservedly does he look to the blood of the Lamb to purge his conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Thus the very weight of sin on his conscience makes him enter all the more feelingly and experimentally into the nature of redemption; and it becomes more opened to his view that by his precious bloodshedding and death Jesus redeemed unto God all who believe in his name, put away their sins, and for ever blotted them out. He sees that he silenced the curse of the law by himself being made a curse for us; that he appeased the anger of God due to our transgressions, and fully satisfied the claims of justice, which otherwise would have dragged us to her awful bar, and hurled us for our offences into a deserved hell. A sight and sense of our danger much open the ear to receive instruction; and thus as the work of redemption is more plainly discovered to our spiritual view, and faith is raised up and drawn forth to believe more personally and experimentally what is thus revealed, we get clearer, more abiding, and soul-transforming views of the love of God in Christ. Despair on the one side and

self-righteousness on the other get a deadly wound from a believing sight of the cross; and the soul rejoices in a crucified Christ with trembling. Well may John then say: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." How wondrous in its nature; how gracious in its manifestation; how blessed in its communication. This last is the point to which we are now come, and which I shall attempt to open.

ii. Whatever be the *nature* of the love of God, in all its self-originating, infinite, inexhaustible, and immutable character; or whatever grace there is in its *manifestation* in the Person and work of his dear Son, it is only by its *communication* to our soul that we come to any personal experience of it. It is therefore with this as with all other precious truths of the gospel. Though they are all contained in the Person and work of the Son of God; though they are most blessed realities as unfolded in the word of his grace, there must be a communication of them to our souls that we may believe them, feel their power, and walk in the sweet enjoyment of them.

1. Here, then, we are at once brought to the first work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart in *regeneration*, to make us sons of God by a new and spiritual birth. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." This is the love of God in its first *communication*, for it is bestowed upon us as an act of sovereign grace to make and manifest us to be the sons of God. And do we not see *all* the three Persons of the Godhead in the manner of this love? In the manner of its *nature*, we see the Father; in the manner of its *manifestation*, we see the Son; in the manner of its *communication*, we see the Holy Ghost; and each and all of these three Persons of the Godhead engaged in the bestowing of this love on the members of the mystical body of Jesus. But the work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart, in *regeneration*, is to manifest us sons of God by making us partakers of a new birth.

2. But this is not enough. There must be the *spirit of adoption*, breathed into our soul by the same Holy Spirit, before we can

claim the sweet relationship, for we are sons before we know it, before we feel, or believe, or enjoy it. As the apostle says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 4:6.) This is the Spirit's witness: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16.) This, therefore, is the greatest and most blessed communication of the love of God, for it is then shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It is what few enjoy in its full communication, and they only at special seasons; but some measure of it is necessary before we can see our sonship clearly, or believe in our heart that God is our Father.

iii. But the contemplation of this love in its nature, manifestation, and communication may, with the Lord's help and blessing, lead us more clearly to see the amazing *blessings* and *privileges* which God has conferred upon his people in bestowing upon them this love. John calls upon us to admire it: "Behold, what manner of love;" as if he would hold it up for our special view and spiritual contemplation, that we might be engaged thereby to meditate more deeply upon it, and seek for a more believing and experimental reception of its beauty and blessedness into our inmost spirit. What, then, are some of these amazing *blessings* and *privileges*?

1. The first and the foundation of the whole is to be "*called* the sons of God." "Called" but by whom? By man? That will little profit us: for many have called themselves and called others sons of God whom the Lord never authorised, whose claim and whose call he never ratified. Some through presumption, and others through ignorance, lay their claim upon God as their Father whom he will never own as his children, but rather say, "Depart from me; I never knew you." But if God call you his son then "all things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Look then next at some of these *blessings* and *privileges* of sonship thus bestowed.

2. If you are a son, you are a *pardoned* son. Christ has borne your sins in his own body on the tree. He has washed you in the

fountain of his precious blood, obeyed the law which you have broken, wrought out a robe of righteousness which is freely imputed to you, and in which you stand complete before God.

3. As another blessing and privilege of a son of God, he has *access to his Father's house*. The child, you know, as one of his privileges, enjoys a free entry into his father's house; he does not knock at the door as a stranger, but opens the latch as one of the family. He knows he is welcome there, and that his parents miss him if he does not fill up his place in the house among the other children. So it is with the child of God: he has free access to his Father's house. He does not stand outside as a stranger, or come in as an occasional and not always acceptable visitor, but enters in with the familiarity of a child. But what mean I by his "Father's house?" Do I mean merely what is so commonly called "the house of God"—the place where prayer is wont to be made, the tabernacles below where he sometimes manifests his presence and his power? This is indeed a privilege, and should be a highly valued one; but the house which I mean is the inner sanctuary of the Lord's presence—that sacred spot of which David speaks: "he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psa. 91:1); that habitation of which Moses wrote: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" (Psa. 90:1); that holy and heavenly abode which the Lord promised by the prophet: "I will be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." (Ezek. 11:16.) Access to God in our troubles, a refuge in his bosom from every storm—this is the special privilege of a child. To such he speaks in those gracious words: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." (Isai. 26:20.)

4. The son has also a *seat at the Father's table*. Whatever the food be, be it little or much, be it dainty or homely, the child has a place at his father's board. So it is with these sons of God. God has richly supplied his table with every gospel delicacy: there is bread made from the very finest of the wheat—"the living bread

which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die;" there is honey out of the rock; there is the choicest and sweetest milk to feed the babe; there is strong meat to nourish the man. There is not a single delicacy that can tempt the feeblest appetite, nor the most solid food that can gratify the most insatiable hunger, which God has not spread upon his heavenly table. The sweet promises, the encouraging invitations, the glorious truths, the holy precepts, the solemn ordinances, and, what crowns all, gives life to all, and is the sum and substance of all—the flesh and blood of his dear Son, are the provisions with which God has abundantly blessed Zion. And he who has spread the banquet says, "Come eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." (Prov. 9:5.) Nay, Jesus himself proclaims from the head of the table, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." The child comes as a child; he finds the table spread for him without his care or forethought, without his labour or expense. O how sweet it is when in this childlike spirit we can sit down and eat of heavenly food; when without fear, bondage, or unbelief; without darkness, barrenness and death, we can take up the word of life, and, mixing faith with what we read, sometimes drink the milk, sometimes eat the solid meat, sometimes take a sip of gospel wine, or taste of the honey out of the rock. This spiritual appetite for spiritual food; this sitting under the shadow of Jesus with great delight, and finding his fruit sweet to our taste (Song. 2:3), is a sure testimony of our adoption into the family of God.

5. Another privilege of a son is to be *an heir*. "And if children then heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Our sonship does not end with this life, but abides for ever and ever. This indeed is the peculiar blessedness of being a child of God, that death, which puts a final extinguisher on all the hopes and happiness of the children of men, gives him the fulfilment of all his hopes and the consummation of all his happiness; for it places him in possession of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Pet.1:4, 5.) In this life we have sometimes sips and tastes of sonship, feeble

indeed and interrupted, so that it is with us as Mr. Hart speaks:

"Though thou here receive but little,
 Scarce enough
 For the proof
Of thy proper title;"

yet are they so far pledges of an inheritance to come. But this life is only an introduction to a better. In this life we are but children, heirs indeed, but heirs in their minority; but in the life to come, if indeed we are what we profess to be, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, we shall be put into full possession of the eternal inheritance. And what is this? Nothing less than God himself. "Heirs of God," says the apostle. For as the Lord said to Abraham, "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward;" as he said to the Levites, "I am their inheritance," so God himself is the inheritance of his people; yes, he himself in all his glorious perfections. All the love of God, the goodness of God, the holiness of God, all his happiness, bliss, and blessedness, all his might, majesty, and glory, as shining forth in the Person of his dear Son in all the blaze of one eternal, unclouded day—this is the saint's inheritance. Let us not then be weary in well doing; nor faint and tire in running the race set before us, with this prize in view; but press on by faith and prayer to win this eternal and glorious crown.

6. But I must add one more privilege of sonship, and that is *obedience*. If we are children of God, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, it is our privilege to be obedient to the will of our heavenly Father; and that from the heart. It is one of our richest mercies and noblest privileges to render to him, not eye service, the miserable bondage of the slave, but that free obedience which is due to him as Parent from a child. You know the difference between the cheerful obedience of an affectionate daughter or a dutiful son, and the forced obedience of a wretched drudge. One is spontaneous, hearty, affectionate, free, and is accepted as such; the other is extorted by fear, or given with an eye to the wages. Obedience to the precepts of the gospel, doing

the will of God from the heart, living to his honour and glory, walking daily in the fear of the Lord, loving his people and seeking their good, and manifesting the power of vital godliness by a meek, quiet, holy life and conversation, are so many blessed marks and evidences of an adoption into the family of God.

7. *A daily cross*, a path of trial and tribulation, a chastening rod for going astray, a furnace of affliction, purging away the dross and tin, and its fruits, as producing true humility of mind, brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, and tenderness of conscience, with much self-loathing and self-abhorrence, godly sorrow for sin, and earnest desires for close and holy communion with God—these are other privileges of sonship, not indeed much prized or coveted by the professors of our day, but blessed marks of a heavenly birth.

In looking at these privileges and comparing your experience with them, you will probably find some to encourage and others to discourage you. We would not be deceived; we would be honest to God and to our own consciences; and as we cannot take to ourselves what the Lord does not give, and our evidences are often obscured or out of sight, the seasons are many when we cannot rise up into the sweet enjoyment of our adoption into the living family.

III.—But I pass on to the third point which I proposed for our consideration, *the gross ignorance of the world as to who or what these sons of God are*: "Therefore the world knoweth us not."

What is meant by "the world" here? All who are not partakers of the grace of God, all who are in their natural state of unregeneracy and death. Some of these belong to the openly profane, others to the professing world. But it is true of each of these worlds that the real character and condition, the state and standing, the joys and sorrows, mercies and miseries, trials and deliverances, hopes and fears, afflictions and consolations of the sons of God are entirely hidden from their eyes. But we shall see this more clearly by entering a little more fully into what is thus

hidden from the world's knowledge and observation.

1. It does not know that they are *sons of God*. It does not know what manner of love God has bestowed on them that they should be called his sons. It believes that God loves all men alike—that any one can be a child of God who will; that God offers himself as a Father to all without any exception, and that those who like to embrace this offer become his children at once. They have no idea that God bestows his love upon any particular persons, and calls them his sons. Nothing more moves their indignation than that a few poor, ignorant, despised people should dare to believe and call themselves the sons of God; as if such a favour peculiarly belonged to them, and to them only. How can therefore the world know them if it begin with denying their heavenly sonship?

2. It does not know *their blessings*. Being ignorant of spiritual things, having no apprehension or comprehension of divine realities, it cannot and therefore does not know those rich, those peculiar blessings with which God has blessed his people in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 1:3.) It knows not, for instance, what it is to be blessed with a sense of God's presence, with a manifestation of his love, with a revelation of his mercy, with a discovery of the Person and work, grace and glory of his dear Son. Nor has it any acquaintance with those special favours that the Lord's people are so earnestly coveting, if they are not in present enjoyment of them. It knows nothing of the breathing of a living soul after God's presence; of its panting after him as the heart panteth after the water-brooks; of its longings to see his power and glory, so as it has seen him in the sanctuary. And as it knows nothing of spiritual prayer and supplication, so it knows nothing of gracious answers. It knows nothing therefore of the joys of pardoned sin; of the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart by the Holy Ghost; of a deliverance from the curse of the law, the guilt and sting of sin, and the fear of death. It knows nothing of the sweet opening up of the Scriptures of truth with power to the soul; of the application of the promises to the wearied spirit; of access to God in secret supplication through his dear Son; or, in a time of special trial and temptation, obtaining a

testimony that the request is heard and registered, and will in due time be granted. It knows nothing of any softening, melting, or moving of the heart under the preached word; of any entrance by faith into the glorious mysteries of the gospel, so as to experience their transforming efficacy, and feel their subduing, sanctifying power and influence. These blessings, and many others—in fact, all the spiritual blessings wherewith God has blessed his people, the world knows not; therefore it knows us not.

3. Nor does the world know the *motives* and *feelings* which guide and actuate the sons of God. It views them as a set of gloomy, morose, melancholy beings, whose tempers are soured by false and exaggerated views of religion; who have pored over the thoughts of hell and heaven till some have frightened themselves into despair, and others have puffed up their vain minds with an imaginary conceit of their being especial favourites of the Almighty. "They are really," it says, "no better than other folks, if so good; but they have such contracted minds, are so obstinate and bigoted with their poor, narrow, prejudiced views, that wherever they come they bring disturbance and confusion." But why this harsh judgment? Because it knows nothing of the spiritual feelings which actuate the child of grace, making him act so differently from the world which thus condemns him; such as *the fear of God* in his heart, "as a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death;" such as the holy *reverence* that he feels towards the name of the Most High, as deeply impressed upon his spirit; such as the dread of offending the Majesty of heaven by indulging in pleasures which the world calls harmless, but which he knows from the testimony of the word and from his own experience to be fraught with peril to the soul. It knows nothing of what it is to *worship God in spirit and in truth*; and therefore cannot understand why we separate ourselves from all false worship, and will not mingle spiritual service with natural devotion, or join hand in hand with those who serve God with their lips and Satan with their lives. It cannot understand our sight and sense of the exceeding *sinfulness of sin*, and that is the reason why we will not run riot with them in the same course of

ungodliness. It does not know with what a solemn weight eternal things rest upon our minds; and that that is the cause why we cannot join with them in pursuing so eagerly the things of the world, and living for time as they do, instead of living for eternity. Being unable to enter into the spiritual motives and gracious feelings which actuate a living soul and the movements of divine life continually stirring in a Christian breast, they naturally judge us from their own point of view, and condemn what they cannot understand. You may place two men upon a mountain top, with a vast and beautiful view before them. One man, dull and prosaic, without one spark of taste for beauty of scenery, resembles a Frenchman of whom I have read, who, when crossing the Alps, shut his eyes and sat shuddering in the carriage, for he could not bear to look upon those dreadful precipices and horrid icy peaks which rose in their silent majesty all around him. O no; he would sooner have been shut up in a miserable *cafe* in Paris than have had all this glorious mountain scenery before his eyes. How impossible for him to understand the feelings of his fellow traveller, some romantic Englishman, who is scarcely able to breathe for very delight and ecstasy. In a similar way, worldly men can no more understand why we can take pleasure in hearing a long sermon, or reading the word of God, or being upon our knees in secret prayer, or feeling holy delight in the service of the Almighty, than this poor Frenchman could understand the beauty of the Alps, or that any one could take a delight in looking at lake and mountain, wild gorge or rushing waterfall, which made him shiver all over. You may place a horse and a man upon the same hill; whilst the man would be looking at the woods and fields and streams, or, if a Christian man, engaged in prayer and supplication to his divine Maker, the horse would be feeding upon the grass at his feet. So if men cannot enter into the divine feelings of the saints of God, need we wonder that they despise and condemn what they know not? The horse, if it could reason, would say, "What a fool my master is! How he is staring and gaping about! Why does he not sit down and open his basket of provisions, for I know he has it with him, for I carried it, and feed as I do?" So the worldling says, "These poor stupid people, how they are spending their time in going to chapel, and reading the

Bible in their gloomy, melancholy way. Religion is all very well; and we ought all to be religious before we die; but they make so much of it. Why don't they enjoy more of life? Why don't they amuse themselves more with its innocent, harmless pleasures; be more gay, cheerful, and companionable, and take more interest in those things which so interest us?" The reason why the world thus wonders at us is because it knows us not, and therefore cannot understand that we have sublimer feelings, nobler pleasures, and more substantial delights than ever entered the soul of a worldling.

IV.—But we now come to the *explanation of the mystery*. We need not wonder at the gross ignorance of the world, and that it knows us not, for our text declares, "*it knew him not.*"

The word "him" evidently points to the Lord Jesus Christ; for when he was in the world, the world knew him not. But we may take the word as applicable also to the Father, for the Father is spoken of in the text: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." What does the world know of the *God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ? Has it any fear of his great and glorious name? Has it any faith in him? any love to him? any desire to please him? any dread of displeasing him? Has it any knowledge of the justice of God in condemning, any acquaintance with his mercy in forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin? We know, from the testimony of Scripture and from daily observation, that whilst men are dead in sin, with a veil of unbelief spread over their heart, they do not, indeed cannot, know God; for to know him is a new Covenant blessing: "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them" (Jer. 31:34); and it is also eternal life, for "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God." (John 17:3.) They may indeed "profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." (Titus 1:16.) Need we wonder, then, that it knows us not, if it knows him not?

Neither did the world know the *blessed Lord* when he sojourned

here below as the very image of the Father. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." They despised his word; they rejected his message; and hated both him and the Father who sent him. They crowned his brow with a crown of thorns, they struck him and buffeted him, and did not spare to spit in his face; they took him beyond the precincts of Jerusalem to the common and abhorred place of execution, and there they nailed him as a malefactor to the accursed tree. And why? Because they knew him not. As the apostle says: "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. 2:8.) If that, then, was the way in which the world treated God's only begotten Son when he came into it; if the only reception which it gave to the Lord of life and glory was to put him out of the way as an abhorred malefactor, need we wonder if the world that knew him not knows us not? If we are followers of Christ and believers in the Son of God; if we have his mind and image, walk in his footsteps, and are made like unto him by regenerating grace, need we wonder if the world is as ignorant of us as it was of him? Are we to be known and our Master unknown? Are we to be honoured and our Lord despised? Are we to be applauded and our King contemned? Are we to be loved and our Redeemer abhorred? Is the world to treat us better than it treated Christ? But you will say, "This is taking high ground." It is; but can we take lower if we take any at all? We are either children of God, or we are not. If we are, the world knows us not; if we are not, the world knows us and all about us. Some of you, with all your profession, are in that spot. The world knows you; for you are one with it in walk and spirit. It knows, therefore, all about you. Your inward character is not concealed from its keen, observing eyes. The world knows ungodliness, but it does not know godliness; it knows superstition, but, not worshipping God in the spirit; it knows unbelief, but not faith; despondency, but not a good hope through grace; worldly pleasures, but not rejoicing in Christ Jesus; self-confidence, but not having no confidence in the flesh. It knows the love of sin, but not the love of holiness; the fear which hath torment, but not the love which casts it out; the stings and lashes of a guilty conscience, but not the blood of

sprinkling to cleanse and heal it. The world, then, will see all through you if you are imbued with its spirit; but if you have the Spirit of Christ, it knoweth you not because it knew him not. Nay, the more you are conformed to the image of Christ, the more you manifest your sonship by your obedience, the more separated you are from the world, the less will it understand you. If we kept closer to the Lord and walked more in holy obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we should be more misunderstood than even we now are. It is our worldly conformity that makes the world so well to understand many of our movements and actions. But if our movements were more according to the mind of Christ; if we walked more as the Lord walked here below, we should leave the world in greater ignorance of us than we leave it now; for the hidden springs of our life would be more out of its sight, our testimony against it more decided, and our separation from it more complete.

I have laid before you this morning the wondrous love of God. Have you ever felt it? I have brought before you the peculiar blessings and privileges of the sons of God. Have you ever enjoyed them? I have shown you why the world knows them not. Do you feel that you have in your bosom something the world knows not, but which separates you in heart and spirit from it? And I have brought before you the solution of the mystery, and that it is because the world knows neither the Father nor the Son. Do you feel that you have that knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, which is eternal life? May he, if it be his sacred will, give us to know more of his stupendous love; to feel more our interest therein; may he warm our hearts more with his dissolving beams, and bring our life more under its constraining efficacy!

The Sons of God, Their Blessings and Privileges

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,
December 2, 1858

"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." John 1:11-13

You may sometimes perhaps have thought in your mind that had you lived in the days when the Son of God appeared here below, you certainly would have believed in his name, at any rate you would not have been one of those who persecuted him, blasphemed him, spit upon him, and finally nailed him to the cross. Your mind revolts at the idea that you could have nailed him to the accursed tree; but if you think and say so it evidently proves that you are at present a stranger to your own heart, you know not the depths of iniquity that work there. What is there in you more than there was in the people, when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh, that should make you follow him when others turned their backs on him, believe on him when others disbelieved, receive him as your Christ when others received him not? Has some important change taken place within the last 1800 years that you are not so sunk in sin and unbelief as those of old? The Holy Ghost is very plain upon this point; he does not open any door of escape for a self-righteous Pharisee to boast of. He declares in the most positive manner that when the Lord Jesus Christ came to his own, his own received him not, and he tells us that those that did receive him did not receive him by any power or prerogative of their own; but because they were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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

I.—First, shew *How the Lord Jesus Christ came unto his own, and*

his own received him not.

II.—Secondly, *That there were those who received him.*

III.—Thirdly, *Why these received him, when others rejected him, because they were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God.*

IV.—And fourthly, *What he gave to those who were enabled by grace divine to receive him, which was power or the right or privilege to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

There is in the original a distinction which our translators have not and could not well observe between the first and second clauses of the 11th verse. "He came unto *his own*," in the first clause is in the neuter gender, and "*his own*" in the second is in the masculine; so that, "He came unto *his own things or property*," and "*His own persons received him not.*" We have lost here the force of the original, "He came unto *his own property, estate*," to "*his own world*," which he had created by *his own hands*, and *his own men and women*, whom he had created by the self-same hands by which he had created the world upon which they stood, received him not. Now what should we think if a nobleman were to go to his own estate, to present himself before his own mansion, and instead of receiving him with all courtesy and all obedience, the servants were to drive him out of the property with spades and pitch-forks, and instead of acknowledging that he was the owner of the estate, sought his life, and nothing could satisfy them but it. Would not this fill all England with astonishment, and would it not be the theme of all the newspapers for a month? Yet when the Lord of heaven and earth descended into this lower world and visited the creatures of his hand, whose souls and bodies he had made, they, instead of receiving him as their Lord, Head and King, rejected him, blasphemed him, and finally nailed him to the cross, putting him to the most ignominious death that man's heart could have ever devised. When we look at this do we not wonder that the God and

Father of the Lord Jesus Christ did not send his lightnings to set Jerusalem in flames? What were all the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, or all the sins of the Canaanites, to this? Yet these cities were burnt, and the Canaanites were cut off root and branch, and the command was to put them all to death. And yet so great was the long-suffering and clemency of the Almighty towards the Jews, that it was not till more than forty years after the crucifixion of our Lord that Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, when thousands of Jews, some of whom had crucified our Lord were crucified; for Josephus tells us that so many crosses were set up around the wall, that they consumed all the wood round about Jerusalem for miles! Then he came unto his own, proved his mission by the most stupendous miracles, such as cleansing the leper, healing the paralytic, feeding thousands with a few loaves and fishes, thus carrying about with him the strongest evidence of his being the Son of God, and because he did not come as a conquering Messiah, because instead of exalting them to earthly power and dignity, he bid them repent of their sins, the Jews were provoked to malice by the innocence of his life and purity of his words, and they crucified the Lord of life and glory. But was not all this according to the design of God? Was it not all according to his purposes planned before the world was, as Peter speaks so beautifully, "Him, being delivered, *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain?" He was delivered by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. He came to be crucified, his mission was to be led like a lamb to the slaughter. His atoning blood could not have been shed by stoning, the Jewish mode of punishment. He was to die a death in which blood was to be shed, which took place by the nails piercing his hands and feet, and the spear piercing his side. So that though he came to his own and they received him not, turned their backs upon him, blasphemed him, and crucified him, don't let us think that God's purposes were frustrated, because men in sinning act voluntarily, not knowing the intention of God. Everything was carried out in the exact way that God had before designed.

II.—But I pass on to show that though his own people after the

flesh, his own people, the Jews, not his own elect family; but his own people after the flesh received him *not*, yet there were those that *did* receive him, there was a people prepared by grace, there was a family, an elect family, whom God had in his eternal purposes chosen before the foundations of the world to call, whom he had designed to be at that time upon earth that they might receive his dear Son, that he might have witnesses, followers, and disciples who would receive him as the Christ of God and the Saviour of men. It is the same now; the mass, the bulk of mankind treat Christ, though not actually, yet virtually as the Jews did; they crucify him by their ungodly deeds, despise him actually in their hearts, as those who blasphemed him openly. But he is out of their reach above the clouds, at the right hand of God. Let us not think that human nature is changed. He might as well be crucified in Broad Street, Stamford, did the laws permit, now, as formerly he was crucified on Calvary, outside the gates of Jerusalem. But there was a people that did receive him, and they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, they were taught of the Spirit to feel their need of him. They saw what a poor miserable world this is, they felt they were dying worms, that life was short and eternity long, and feeling the weight and power of eternal things, they hailed the Redeemer, the promised Messiah who might save them from the wrath to come, and the Holy Spirit was pleased to show them the glory, grace, beauty, and blessedness of the Messiah; and, thus, though he walked among them as a man like themselves, though he veiled his glory, and took upon him the form of a servant, yet, their eyes being illuminated by a divine light, and their heart touched by a divine unction, they saw the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, again, they received him in their understanding, they saw by the eye of faith that he was the Son of God, as Peter did when that blessed vision was given unto him, so that when the Lord asked his disciples what they thought of him, he answered, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God;" then the Lord told him that *flesh and blood* had not revealed that unto him but *his Father* who was in heaven. So again when Peter with the other disciples were tempted to forsake him, the Lord said, "Will ye also go away," Peter said,

"Lord, to whom shall we go, thou art that Christ the Son of the living God." From this time they were held fast. Well, may I ask you who profess to fear the name of the great and glorious Jehovah, whether you have received Christ? You know what the Apostle said to the Colossians, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Have ye received him into your understanding, has your mind been enlightened to see his blessedness as the God-Man? Have you seen by the eye of faith his glorious Son-ship, what he is as the Son of God? Have you seen his suffering humanity? Have you seen these two natures in the person of Immanuel God with us, and have you felt him to be so, because where the understanding is illuminated by a ray of divine light, there is a ray in the heart? Have you received him into your heart? But the Holy Ghost is ever taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto you. Was your heart ever softened by a sweet discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ? Was he so blessed and suitable that you could have wept tears because of his sufferings, yet you were glad he did suffer, because by his stripes you are healed? Again, have you received him into your conscience, so that he lives, moves, and acts there, that you feel and desire to please him, and you would have your conscience more and more increasingly tender? Again, have you received him into your affections, so as to feel that you love him more than husband, wife, brother, sister, house, or land, or friends, so that there is a spiritual love in your soul of a different kind from all earthly love? Have you received him in these four ways, into your understanding, into your heart, into your conscience, and into your affections? But we pass on.

III.—To show, *Why it was that they were enabled to see Christ, when others rejected him.* Now you must be one or the other, you must either reject or receive Christ. How do you feel in hearing Christ set forth; for you may judge much by your feelings under the word. Do you feel an inward heaving up against the word of God, so that there is a principle of pride and resentment against the truth of God, so that you feel that nothing could make you receive it? If you don't receive the truth you reject it, and reject him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Men little think

what it is to reject the truth of God, they little think of the responsibility that is incurred by sitting under the Gospel. If they reject it they are tying damnation round their necks, and if they live and die with that rejecting spirit, they will sink to rise no more. Do you feel that there is a heart in you to receive that which you hear? It is commended to your conscience, so that your whole soul seems open to receive it? You must know the difference between a mind full of unbelief, infidelity, pride, and self-righteousness, and tender, broken, contrite thoughts, open to receive God's truth. If you reject the word, you reject him who is "*The Word*." If you reject the truth, you reject him who is "*The Truth*." If you receive the word, you receive Christ, the incarnate Word. If you receive the truth, you receive him who is The Truth. People little think in this town what an awful spot they are in, in rejecting God's truth! What a hell of wrath and indignation they are pulling down upon their heads! and those who receive it little think of the heaven of eternal bliss which shall one day receive their souls! As those who reject the truth know little of the gulf of gloom that is to devour them, so those who receive the truth know little of the heaven of bliss that is to receive them. But how came they to receive it? They were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The Apostle tells us here what they were *not* born of, and then what they *were* born of. They were not born of blood, that is, they did not inherit their religion, they were not religious because sprung from the blood of religious parents, because the blood of religious parents, so to speak, circulates in their veins. It is a blessed thing where godly parents have a godly seed, and there are many instances of it; but it does not always happen so. I have not had godly parents, at least before the time when God called me by his grace; for I hope my mother died in the Lord. Then you are not born of blood. Because your father was godly that does not say you are; there must be something more than having godly parents. Churches, the great mass of churches, are formed out of Sunday schools; though I don't mean to speak against Sunday schools; but against making them the nurseries of the church, and making persons believe because they go to the Sunday school, therefore they are on the road to heaven, and in this day

Sunday schools are made the recruiting place of churches. We may pray for our children that God may have mercy upon them, but they will have no claim upon the grace of God because the Lord has been pleased to visit us. My children will have no claim upon the grace of God because the Lord has been pleased to visit me with it. We know that a spiritual birth is something better than this. "*Nor of the will of the flesh,*" which is *free-will*, nothing more nor less, and the will of the flesh is anything but good, or godly. It has led thousands to hell, and it is leading thousands every day to that place of eternal horror, but it never led a single soul in the way to heaven. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Can it, then, lead the soul to Jesus? You know that your flesh leads towards everything evil. There is not a single sin that is not in your flesh; there is lust, pride, and self-righteousness, and everything in the flesh that leads *from* God, not *to* God; therefore you are well satisfied, if you are a partaker of a spiritual birth, you were not born of the will of the flesh. Have you felt the will of the flesh to be contrary to the will of God; for these are contrary the one to the other? so that if born again, you are not born of the will of the flesh. Oh, what an enemy is the flesh to grace and godliness, every breath of the flesh, every movement, every thought, and every word are all opposed to all godliness; so that if you are partakers of grace it is not *according to*, but exactly *opposite to* the flesh. "*Nor of the will of man,*" whether good or bad; not of bad men certainly; for what bad man ever will be born again with a spiritual birth; nor of a good man; for he cannot carry his will into execution. How people are sending missionaries to all parts of the world! not that I do not like missionary societies; for I believe that much civilization has sprung from the labours of missionaries, and they may have communicated an outward form of Christianity, and God may raise up a people out of that natural Christianity; but after all the will of man never yet brought about a spiritual birth, it is a thing quite distinct from it, as distinct as God is from man or heaven is from earth. Those who receive Christ receive him, as being born of God; he implanted a divine principle, which begot them to a spiritual life. Oh! how sovereign is this, wholly in the breast of God to give it where and to whom he pleases! I may preach till

my tongue cleaves to my jaw, yet all my preaching cannot communicate one breath to the soul. It is all of the Holy Spirit wherever souls are made alive. It is not my preaching or any other man's preaching, it must be God working through the preached word, and raising up the new man of grace within. Have you any reason to believe that you are born of God? You see every other birth is but a false conception, and will end in misery and shame, but a true birth is a birth of God, of which he is the soul. Can you see any mark of God's sovereignty in your soul? Have you felt so far from God by wicked works, so ignorant and self-righteous that you must be forced by the work of God to turn your ways from sin to righteousness, and to the fear of his great name? So far you have an evidence of being born of God. If you can recognize any traces of sovereignty, there will be an evidence of divine power with the breath of life. This is as distinct from natural religion as heaven from earth. It may be assimilated, but it never can be executed except by the sovereign power of God. If God is yours, if he has sealed you as heirs of Christ, he will never leave you nor forsake you; but will bring his work to a glorious perfection.

IV.—But I pass on to our last point, which is, *He gave to them that believe on his name the power, the right, or privilege, to become the sons of God.* We have a sweet explanation of receiving Christ in these words, "They believe in his name." It is by faith we receive him. It is by the eye of faith that we see him, by the ear of faith that we hear him, and by the arms of faith that we clasp him. So it is by faith we receive him; for it is by faith that we have all those communications of the Holy Ghost to our heart, by which we receive him. To those that receive him he gives *power* or the *right* or *privilege* to become the sons of God. We will look first at the word "*power.*" We are all weakness, we cannot raise up in our heart even an evidence, or even strength to believe God gives the *power*; "for where the word of a king is, there is *power,*" and "the gospel is the *power* of God to salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." When God speaks in his word, then power is given to believe, and thus to become the sons of God. There is no

becoming a son of God except by the power of God. You must have a power in your soul to translate yourself from the *power* of the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God's dear Son. But when you believe you receive the *power*, and then you become manifestly a son of God, you are then stamped as an heir of immortality, and you become manifestly one of his family. But, again let us look at the word "*right*" or "*privilege*." What a privilege to become a son or daughter of the Lord Almighty! How proud men are of worldly rank! There is nothing so much in the world esteemed as rank. At Oxford there were three things admired, and they were stated in this order. First, being born of a *good family*; next to this was "*property*;" and thirdly, "being blessed with a *good intellect*." Here rank and family stood first, then came riches, and then a good headpiece. If you had lived in the world as much as I, you would have seen what idols this "rank" and "party" are. But how little they know of the only true *rank*, the only *royal blood*, the only *good family*. To be a child of God is better than being the son of a duke or a queen. None but this rank will be with God, when time shall be no more. When dukes, marquises, bishops, and barons are in their graves, and when nothing will remain of them but a shovel-full of bones, then the sons of God will shine forth as brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is their *brother*, he being their elder brother, he advancing them to more than royal dignity. What a privilege in being a child of God! The world may turn its face from you, speak of you in a most contemptuous manner, and apply to you words of the greatest disgrace and contempt, through the enmity and ignorance of its carnal mind, but if you are born of God, a child of your heavenly Father, you need not mind their scorn. When you go to heaven, God will wipe off all tears from your eyes. Then you can say,

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou remember me."

You see here what a broad line of distinction the Lord traces out

between the righteous and the wicked. You must stand on one side or the other; reject Christ and receive your own condemnation, or receive Christ and manifest your interest in the heavenly crown. But there may be some here who are doubting and questioning whether they stand on this side the line or the other. They say, "I cannot say that I reject Christ, it would cut me to the heart to reject him, God forbid that I should reject Jesus, but I hardly know whether I have received him." But your conduct will show on which side the line you are, your life will show it. Whose company do you prefer? Who are the excellent of the earth to you? Whom do you walk with? And with whom do you really desire to be found in life or death? If you reject Christ's servants or people, it is the same thing as rejecting Christ. On the other hand to receive Christ's servants and people is the same thing as receiving Christ. As the Lord said to his disciples, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." Lay these things to your heart, and the Lord shine upon those walking in darkness, and give them a testimony that they have received Christ, and are born of God, that they are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and will be with him when time shall be no more.

The Soul's Pursuit After God

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 27, 1843

"My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me."
Psalm 63:8

Did the question ever arise in your mind, how David composed the Psalms? Of course, the answer would be, "He composed them by divine inspiration." But that is not my meaning. We will put the question in another form. Do you suppose that David wrote his Psalms, as the College Clergy and Dissenting Academics prepare their sermons on a Saturday evening; that is, that he sat down, with his pen in his hand, for the express purpose of composing a Psalm? I think not. I believe that David composed his Psalms in this way. The Lord led him into some experience, it might have been a mournful, or it might have been a joyful one: he might plunge him into some depths, or he might raise him up to some heights: but which ever it was, the Spirit filled his soul with some deep feelings; and when these had begun to ferment, so to speak, in the Psalmist's soul, he straightway gave them utterance; as he himself says, "While I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue." (Psa. 39:3.) Thus he seized his pen, and as the Lord the Spirit brought the thoughts into his mind, and dictated the words, he penned them down. Now that will account for this circumstance, that in David's Psalms notes of mourning are so intermingled with strains of rejoicing, that he is sometimes crying after an absent God, and sometimes enjoying a present Lord; sometimes overwhelmed in the deep waters, and at other times standing on a rock, singing the high praise of his God. And being written in this way, they have become such a manual of Christian experience. The feelings flowing out of a heaven-taught heart; and the words being dictated by the Holy Ghost, they suit the experience of all Christians, more or less, at all times. Would we then know whether the same God that taught David is teaching us, we have only to compare our experience with that of David as recorded in

the Psalms; and then, when laying it side by side with his, we find it to agree, we may, if the Lord the Spirit shine into our heart, gather up some testimony that we are under the same teaching as that highly-favoured man of God enjoyed in his soul.

In the words of the text, we find David describing his soul as being engaged in a divine pursuit; he says, "My soul followeth hard after thee;" and yet that pursuit was not free from difficulties, but one which required all the support of God; he therefore adds, "thy right hand upholdeth me."

I.—We will look, then, *first*, at *the pursuit of David's soul after God*; and let us see if you and I can trace out in our hearts any similar pursuit from time to time going on within.

Pursuit implies *want*; that the soul engaged in it is seeking to overtake and obtain some object. Spiritual want, then, lies at the foundation of spiritual pursuit. Were there no object to obtain, there would be no purpose in the pursuit. The spiritual want is the key which unlocks the text, and is the root of the experience contained in it. But whence comes spiritual want? It arises from the quickening work of the Spirit in the soul. Until we are divinely enlightened so see, and spiritually quickened to feel our lost, ruined state, we are satisfied with the things of time and sense; our hearts are in the world; our affections are fixed on the poor perishing vanities that must quickly pass away; and there is not one spiritual longing or heavenly craving in the soul. But when the Lord sends light and life into the conscience, to show us to ourselves in our true colours, and as the Psalmist says, "to see light in God's light," then spiritual wants immediately commence. The eyes of the understanding are spiritually enlightened to see God, and the heart is divinely quickened to feel that he alone can relieve the wants that the soul labours under and thus there is set before the eyes of the mind, not merely certain objects of anxious pursuit, but the Person also, who alone can give us that which the soul craves to enjoy. "My soul followeth hard after *thee*."

But what does it follow hard after God to *obtain*?—

1. The first thing that the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain is *righteousness*. The first teaching of the Spirit in the conscience is to convince us of our own unrighteousness; that we are sinners in the sight of a holy God; and to make us feel that unless we have a righteousness in which we can stand accepted before a pure and a holy God, we can never see Christ in glory. Now when a man begins to feel his want of righteousness; when his sins and iniquities are opened up to him, and laid as a burden upon his conscience; when he knows that he has to do with a God that cannot be mocked, and whose justice cannot "clear the guilty," he feels that he must have a righteousness which at present he has not, or perish in his sins. And most persons, in order to obtain this righteousness, seek it by "the works of the law." Like the Jews of old; "being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." The Lord having certain purposes to answer, allows them to set off in this vain pursuit. And what success have they? What does this vain pursuit do for them? For every step which they think they have taken forward, they find that they have slipped two backward; so that instead of obtaining this righteousness, they have only found a deeper discovery of their own heart, and are more and more convinced that in themselves, that is, in their "flesh, dwelleth no good thing" and that all their "righteousness are as filthy rags.

Now when a man is brought experimentally, in the feelings of his soul, to groan under the weight and burden of sin laid upon his conscience, the Lord the Spirit, sooner or later, enlightens his eyes to see and brings into his soul a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness. The reason why so many stumble at the imputed righteousness of Christ is, because they have never seen their sins in the light of God's holy law, have never felt condemned before him, have never had the deep corruptions of their heart turned up from the bottom, so as to loathe themselves in dust and ashes. Men therefore mock and scorn at imputed righteousness, because they are so deeply enamoured

with their own. But when a man is brought to stand on the brink of eternal ruin, with but one step betwixt him and death; when he is brought to see and feel that he is nothing, and has nothing in himself but sin and guilt; when the Lord begins to set before his eyes, and bring into his heart a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness; when he shews him the dignity of Christ's person, and that his righteousness is that of the God-Man, he is anxious to stretch forth the hand of faith, and "lay hold of eternal life." Then the soul "followeth hard after" God, that it may obtain this righteousness, and stand accepted and complete in the Beloved.

2. Again. In following "hard after the Lord," the quickened soul followeth hard after *pardon*. None of God's people can live or die happily without the manifested pardon of their sins and they cannot be satisfied without receiving it from God's own lips. It is not merely having some loose, floating ideas about it; it is not taking it up as a doctrine, or learning it from the experience of others; but every child of God must sooner or later feel the pardon of sin manifested in his conscience. And when he feels guilty and condemned, then he followeth hard after pardon, the manifested forgiveness of his sins, through the blood of sprinkling applied to his conscience. But if a man never knew what it was to follow hard after God, nor the many difficulties he has to press through before he can obtain it, he has never had pardon yet manifested in his soul.

3. *Grace* is another thing which the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain. Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings. Thus no one can really want to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of manifested grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and that "God's law is exceeding broad;" and is brought to know and feel in the conscience that his good works would damn him equally with his bad works. When grace is thus opened up to the soul, when it sees that grace flows only through the Saviour's blood; that grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin; that "grace" heals

all backslidings, covers all transgressions, lifts up out of darkness, pardons iniquity, and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under; when grace, in the sweetness and blessedness of it, is thus spiritually opened up, there is a following hard after it in order to lay hold of and enjoy the happy and peaceful effects of it in soul experience.

But let us look at the expression *thee*: "My soul followed hard after *thee*." Not only does the quickened soul follow hard after the blessings which God has to give, but the great and ardent object of its pursuit is God himself, the giver. The Lord has made himself in some measure manifestly known; he has discovered to the soul the dignity of his Person, with the beauty and comeliness of his countenance; and thus he has secretly drawn up the affections unto himself, and the soul desires to know him, and him only. In following then, hard after the Lord, it is that it may obtain possession of him, that it may, as the Apostles, says, "win him;" that is, clasp him in the arms of faith, and embrace him with spiritual affection, so as to be mutually loved and embraced by him.

Now, there is something in the expression "*hard*," which demands a little attention. It does not say merely, "my soul followeth after thee," but "*hard* after thee," which implies the intensity of the pursuit. It is not merely a simple following, but a following with eagerness and ardour. And the expression also shows that the object sought after is very difficult to be overtaken. It is not a slothful pursuit that will attain the object desired; it is not a mere wishing after something that will bring down the desired blessing; but the pursuit in which the soul is engaged is a most intense and eager one. There is also implied in the expression that the object retires, so to speak, as we pursue it; that it is not only overtaken with great difficulty, but that the Lord, the object of the soul's pursuit, so withdraws himself, as we advance towards him, that it requires all the intensity, and I was going to say, agony of the soul to pursue, and if possible to overtake and gain in him all that it longs to enjoy.

But *how* does the soul thus "follow hard" after the Lord? Chiefly in longings, breathings, earnest cries, and intense pantings after him. The Psalmist has expressed this in one short sentence, and a most emphatic and beautiful one it is: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" He there represents the hunted stag panting and thirsting after one refreshing draught from the water-brooks: panting, as David himself once panted by the well of Bethlehem; when he uttered that poignant desire, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate!" Thus it is by the panting and longing of the soul after God in intense desire and vehement longings of the soul to enjoy his presence, that this "following hard" after the Lord is chiefly manifested. And God's people know this experimentally. How many times do they stretch themselves on their beds, and pant after the Lord, as though the last breath were going out of their body! How often as they are engaged in the daily pursuits of life is there a cry going up out of their heart after the Lord, pleading with him, and telling him that they cannot be satisfied without his manifested presence. How often perhaps, when for some time you have felt cold and dead, a sudden spirit of grace and supplication has come into your hearts, that has vented and breathed itself forth in cries to the Lord. And thus your souls has gone forth with the most intense desire to enjoy the sweet manifestations of his Person and testimonies of his covenant love.

"My soul followeth hard after thee." The Lord (we would speak with reverence) does not suffer himself at first to be overtaken. The more the soul follows after him, the more he seems to withdraw himself, and thus he draws it more earnestly in the pursuit. He means to be overtaken in the end: it is his own blessed work in the conscience to kindle earnest desires and longings after himself; and therefore he puts strength into the soul, and "makes the feet like hind's feet" to run and continue the chase. But in order to whet the ardent desire, to kindle to greater intensity the rising eagerness, the Lord will not suffer himself to be overtaken till after a long and arduous pursuit. This is sweetly set forth in the Song of Solomon, (5:2-8.) We find there the Lord

coming to his bride; but she is unwilling to open to him till he puts his hand in by the hole of the door. She would not rise at his first knocking, and therefore he is obliged to touch her heart. But "when she opened to her Beloved, he was gone;" and no sooner does he withdraw himself, than she pursues after him; but she cannot find him; he hides himself from her view, draws her round and round the walls of the city, until at length she overtakes, and finds him whom her soul loveth. This sweetly sets forth how the Lord draws on the longing soul after himself. Could we immediately obtain the object of our pursuit, we should not half so much enjoy it when attained. Could we with a wish bring the Lord down into the soul, it would be but the lazy wish of the sluggard, who "desireth, and hath not." But when the Lord can only be obtained by an arduous pursuit, every faculty of the soul is engaged in panting after his manifested presence; and this was the experience of the Psalmist, when he cried, "My soul followeth hard after thee."

II.—But we observe, *secondly*, that there are certain obstacles and impediments in the way of this arduous pursuit; and therefore the Psalmist adds, "thy right hand upholdeth me."

These words imply our need of divine strength, in order that the soul may not merely commence, but also be strengthened to keep up the pursuit. We soon grow faint and weary after the heart has been a little drawn forth to the Lord; and like Abraham, "when the Lord left off communing with him," we "return to our place." This strength is from time to time mysteriously communicated. Perhaps after the soul has been going forth in earnest pantings and intense longings after God's manifested presence, a deadness and coldness comes over the mind, as though we had neither a God to find, nor a heart to seek him. In order, then, that we may not utterly faint by the way, there is a continual reviving of God's work in the soul, enabling it to follow hard after him. And this is implied in the expression, "thy right hand *upholdeth* me." Just in the same way as the Lord strengthened Elijah to run before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46), a race he could not have performed unless the

Lord had girded him with strength, so we can only "run with patience the race that is set before us," and follow hard after the Lord, as he blessedly and secretly communicates strength to our souls.

1. But *unbelief* will sometimes damp this arduous and anxious pursuit. Unbelief, when the power of it is felt, seems absolutely to unnerve a man's limbs, and to paralyze every spiritual faculty. When he would run, unbelief hamstringing him, so that he cannot "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now the Lord in upholding him with his "right hand," secretly weakens the power of unbelief, by kindling and communicating faith. Thus, as his soul finds the power of unbelief sensibly weakened, and the power of faith sensibly increased, he is enabled to press anxiously on, and follow after the Lord.

2. Sometimes *doubts* and *fears*, and heavy despondency lie as a burden on the soul, and keep it back from pursuing this arduous chase. Doubts whether the heart is altogether right with God; killing fears as to whether he will receive us when we draw near; painful apprehensions and suspicions as to whether our religion be God's word in the soul:—these things lying as weights and burdens on a man's soul, check and impede him in running the race set before him. The Apostle therefore says, "Let us lay aside every weight." (Heb. 12:1.) These weights lie heavy on the shoulders, and keep the soul from following "hard after the Lord;" nay, under these weights and burdens it would sink, did not the right hand of the Lord uphold it; but he secretly communicates strength, so that these burdens do not altogether press it down; and enables it, in spite of all its weights, to run patiently and perseveringly on.

3. But *carnality*, *worldliness*, and *earthly affections* will at times also damp the soul's earnest pursuit after God. Heavenly things lose their savour; spiritual affections are not sensibly felt; and the heart grows cold Godward, and warm earthward. The Lord seems to be at a distance; the world and worldly things fill the thoughts, and almost banish spiritual feelings from the mind. The Lord, then, must again revive his work in the soul, and bring it out of

this carnality, deadness, hardness, and carelessness; he must stir it up again and again into desires after him. But directly he leaves us to ourselves, we relapse into our former carnal state. Only so long as he keeps us near him, do we overcome this wretched carnality; and when he leaves us to ourselves, our hands hang down, and we sink again into our former deadness and worldliness.

4. Sometimes *presumption, vain confidence, and fleshly security* act as hindrances, so that the soul is unable to follow "hard after the Lord." When this feeling of carnal security comes over a man's mind, he is not anxious about his eternal state, his soul is not looking to God; and secure of reaching "the world to come," the world present lays such a fast hold on him, as to bury him in its cares and pursuits, and take away his heart from following after the Lord.

All these things, then, conspire, as so many hindrances; and the soul is often so encumbered and entangled by them, that it is not able to follow "hard after the Lord." But God will not leave a man here; he will not suffer him to be altogether swallowed up in the things of time and sense. He stirs up his mind, and by stirring it up, he more and more engages him in this pursuit after himself.

Sometimes, for instance, *he sends heavy afflictions;* and when these fall upon a man they show him where he has been; they are often blessed to lay bare his secret backslidings from God; and to open up to him how he has been content with only a name to live, how he has been secure in a form of godliness, whilst his heart was not alive to God, nor eagerly pursuing after the power and savour which he once felt. When affliction, then, embitters to him the things of time and sense, he begins to look out for solid comfort; and he finds none but in the Lord, for every thing else is full of labour and sorrow. But the Lord has been provoked by his backsliding conduct to withdraw himself, so that the soul cannot find him, though it can find solid satisfaction nowhere else. This stirs it up only the more earnestly to follow after the Lord as the only source of true consolation.

But again. *Temptations* coming suddenly into the mind, and sweeping away all false evidences, removing vain hopes, and laying bare the corruptions of the heart, will often at first plunge the soul down into the depths of creature helplessness. But the Lord mysteriously works by these very temptations, that we may follow "hard after him;" for when we are thus tempted and exercised in our minds, we want immediate relief. It is like a patient afflicted with an acute disease, or like a man with a fractured limb; he wants to send for the doctor at once: it will not do to wait till to-morrow; he must come immediately, for the case admits of no delay. And so, in the case of powerful temptations, when Satan attacks the soul with all the malice and craft of hell, it does not do to wait till tomorrow, or the day after; the relief must be immediate; the case is pressing, and the remedy must be at hand. Thus powerful temptations are overruled to make us follow "hard after God."

Sometimes the Lord *lays a man on the bed of sickness*, and brings death, the king of terrors, before his soul in all his ghastliness. And the heart being made honest before God, and alive in his fear, he begins to examine his religion, to overhaul his evidences, and to look back on the way in which the Lord has led him from the first. But in so doing he looks not only at the Lord's dealings with him, but how he has requited the Lord; he calls to mind his idolatries and spiritual adulteries, his continual backslidings, his vile ingratitude, with all the baseness and rebelliousness which his soul has been guilty of. All these things are brought to light in his conscience, and laid upon it; and he must now have the Lord himself to speak peace to his soul. Death stares him in the face; his sins rise up to view in clouds; and his conscience bears testimony against him. He must now have the Lord himself to acquit him; he must have his blood sprinkled upon his conscience; he must have his righteousness revealed; and his love and manifested presence sensibly felt. But to obtain this, his soul "followeth hard" after the Lord. These mercies being delayed, he is made to see and feel more and more the solemn reality of his state; and under the teachings of the Spirit, he

wonders how he could go dreaming on through so long a period, without panting more after the immediate presence of the Lord. Thus, through these painful exercises, his soul follows hard after the Lord, as though he would take no denial.

Now the man that thus follows hard after the Lord, knows what he wants; he is not undecided as to what vital godliness is; he is not resting on refuges that thousands shelter themselves in. He has a determinate object, and no one can put him off from that object. He cannot be flattered into a belief that he has what his conscience tells him he has not; nor is he to be persuaded that he has the enjoyment of what he wants, when all within is one mournful, solitary blank. Thus, whatever darkness of soul a living man may be plunged into; however he may be harassed through the workings of Satan's temptations; whatever he may feel of the sinfulness of his corrupt nature; and whatever carnality of mind he may seem to sink into, so as sometimes to appear to himself, or even to others, to have scarcely a spark of grace in his soul, yet in his worst state, in his darkest hours, in his most confused and self-condemning moments, the child of God, taught by the Spirit, will differ from every one else on the face of the earth. Nothing but God can really satisfy his panting soul; nothing but the Lord's smiles, and the manifestations of his presence can comfort his heart; and to all others he says, "miserable comforters are ye." He can take up with no hope but what the Lord communicates to his soul; nor rest in any other testimony but that which he receives from God's own lips.

Thus, the child of God, in whatever state he may be, carries certain marks which distinguish him from the dead professor of the highest doctrine, and from the lowest groveller in Arminianism. The grand distinguishing mark of a living soul is this, that he alone either is in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence, or is panting after the manifestation of it; that he alone is either happy in God, or restless and dissatisfied without him. I do not mean to say, that a living man always feels unhappy when he is without the manifested presence of God; for sometimes he seems to have not one spark of feeling in his heart at all, and

there is no more going out after the Lord than if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, or as if we had no immortal soul to be saved or lost. Such a deathlike stupor, such a complete paralysis, such a benumbing torpor seems to creep over the soul, that it seems at times as if it were altogether dead Godward. But the Lord from time to time revives his own blessed work. In the midst of all this deathliness, he brings a secret testimony into the conscience: and thus, by the teachings of the Spirit, in the midst of all this worldliness that the soul gets buried under, and all the carnality it may be overwhelmed by there is an inward feeling of self-condemnation. In the midst of the world, or in company perhaps, a secret groan bursts from the soul, an inward pang of self-loathing is felt on account of its carnality, and a secret desire goes forth to the Lord that he would come down into the heart, and bless it with his presence.

But there are special seasons when the soul "followeth hard after" the Lord. We are unable to produce them, and we are unable to recall them. We can no more kindle in our own soul a holy panting after God, than we can make a world. We can no more create a spiritual desire, than we can create a new sun, and fix him in the sky. We may indeed take up the word of God, and try to peruse its pages; but we can find no comfort from it; it is all a dead letter. We may fall on our knees, and utter words; but we have no power to cause the heart to go with them. We may come to hear the word preached; and as we come through the streets, perhaps a secret sigh may go forth that the Lord would bless it to our souls: but when we have got to Chapel, and are sitting to hear, Satan may come down, like a foul bird of the air, and spread his baneful and blighting wings over the soul, so as to fill it with the miserable feelings that dwell in his own infernal mind. And thus we know by painful experience that it is out of our power to kindle this panting after God. But we know also, at times, that the Lord is pleased to work in us breathings after himself. It may be, when we walk up and down our room, sit by our fireside, or are engaged in our daily labour, that our soul will be panting after the Lord; there will be a going up toward him, and a telling him, that nothing on earth, and nothing in heaven

can satisfy us but himself. There is a secret turning away from our relations and friends, and every thing else, to go only after God; and thus the renewed soul pants again and again after his manifested presence.

Now, my friends, if you know these things experimentally; if you know what it is, time after time, as the Lord works in you to "follow hard after" him; and yet, with all your following, find little else but obstacles and difficulties, feel burdens placed upon your shoulders, and impediments continually presented in your path, you have the experience of David; you are in the path which many of God's saints have trod before you. And the Holy Ghost has left upon special record this, and other parts of David's experience, for the comfort and encouragement of those who have the same Spirit, and are called to walk in the same footsteps. Thus it not only shows that the soul must have tasted something of the goodness of God, but that in this following hard after him, it has but one object in pursuit, but one desire: to obtain.

When a man is diligently engaged, early and late, in his business, does it not shew he has an object on which his heart is fixed? In whatever pursuit a man is engaged, does not his anxiety clearly shew that he earnestly desires to overtake the object he pursues? When a man, then, can honestly say, "my soul followeth hard after thee," it shews that he experiences an earnestness and intensity of pursuit after God. There is perhaps some one here who is grievously perplexed and harassed in his mind to know whether the Lord has really visited his soul; and he says, Are my sins pardoned? Do I stand accepted in the Beloved? Am I an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ? Has the blessed Spirit begun a work in my soul, has he indeed quickened me into spiritual life?" There would be no following hard after the Lord, my friend, unless God had done something for thy soul; there would be no panting after his love, and desire to realize it, unless you had tasted something of it; there would be no desire to feel the efficacy of atoning blood to purge your conscience from sin, unless you had seen and felt in a measure the vileness of your

sins, and had seen by faith the fountain once opened; nor would there be an longing cry and sigh to the Lord that he would reveal himself in your soul, unless you had seen some beauty in the Lord Jesus, and felt in your heart that nothing but his presence could really content and satisfy you.

If, then, you really and experimentally know what it is, in the secret pantings of your soul, to be following hard after the Lord, let me speak this for your comfort, you are sure to overtake him. The Lord has not kindled this panting in your soul to disappoint you; he has not made you feel your misery and wretchedness here to give you a foretaste of misery and wretchedness hereafter; he has not made you to feel out of love with your own righteousness, that you may be disappointed in receiving Christ's righteousness; but, on the contrary, when he makes you to fall out of love with yourself, it is to make you fall in love with him. He has disappointed your false hopes only that he may implant in your soul a "good hope through grace." Your very thirst after him, your anxious desire to overtake him, is a pledge and a sure foretaste that you will obtain him, and clasp him in your arms as all your salvation and all your desire.

But if a man can go on for weeks, months, and years, in a profession of religion, satisfied without the Lord's presence; without either having urgent wants, or longing to have those wants gratified; if his soul never pants after the Lord, or is never satisfied with manifestations of the Lord's favour, I would not stand in that man's religion for a thousand worlds; for however high his assurance may rise, his religion is not worth having, for it has neither life nor power. The man who can thus go on for months without any ardent longings, earnest pantings, or fervent cries after the Lord, shows that he is dead in a profession; that he is satisfied with the mere husks, and knows not the savory kernel; that he is content with being thought well of men, without seeking and craving after the valid testimonies and inward approbation of God in the conscience. But it is not what we think of ourselves, it is what the Lord thinks of us; "for not he that approveth himself is commended, but whom the Lord

commendeth;" still less is it what others think, for their opinion, good or bad, will affect us but little. We shall not be judged by man's opinion, but stand at the bar of God. And if he is pleased to drop in some testimony to the conscience, and assure us of our interest in the Son of his love, we shall care little either to court the smiles or to fear the frowns of men; but having tasted the riches of his grace, we shall be satisfied with it, and require nothing further for time or eternity.

The Spirit's Intercession

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Nov. 15, 1857

"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. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Rom. 8:26, 27

It is somewhat more than thirty years ago since I was first sent to school. I do not mean the public school at which my father placed me to learn Latin and Greek, because my education in nature was finished before my education in grace began. But I mean the school of Christ, where the instruction is heavenly, the rules spiritual, and the discipline divine. And one of the first lessons that I was taught in the school of Christ, was to learn the force and meaning of the words addressed by the Lord to the woman of Samaria, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It is a crying time with most children when they first go to school, and so I found it; for it was amidst tears and sorrow in a season of deep mental trial and affliction that the Lord, in his sovereign mercy, was pleased first to pour out upon me the Spirit of grace and of supplications. As the Lord poured in I poured out, and passed much of my time in tears, prayers, and supplications: for, in fact, I could find relief in no other way. That Spirit of prayer thus and then first communicated, I hope I can say to the praise and glory of God, has never to this day been lost out of my heart. It has sometimes sunk, I freely confess, to a very low ebb; it has been at one time pent back by guilt and condemnation; it has been almost crushed at another out of me by unbelief, or overwhelmed in me by the superincumbent masses of carnality and death. But like a spring gushing out of the hill side, or like a stream issuing from a mountain glacier, it still pours itself forth as the Lord is pleased to

draw it out by his Spirit and grace, and I trust it never will be lost until it empties itself into the bosom of an ocean of eternal praise.

But besides this gracious work of inward intercession, many and various are the operations of the Holy Ghost upon God's saints as revealed in the Scripture and made known to them by personal experience. It is he who first quickens the dead into spiritual life; it is he who first convinces the awakened conscience of sin; it is he who, as the promised Comforter, takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the soul; it is he who sheds the love of God abroad in the heart; it is he who consoles those who are cast down by trouble and sorrow; it is he who leads all the living family of God into the strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; it is he who bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God; and, to add no more, it is he who enables them to cry "Abba, Father." All these are various branches of the work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart. But there is one spoken of in our text to which I shall, with God's blessing, more especially ask your attention this morning; namely, how the Spirit helps our infirmities; and how he intercedes in the heart with unutterable groanings. I shall also ask you to view with me how the great Searcher of hearts sees and recognizes his interceding breath; and how the whole is transacted according to the will of God, which is the supreme rule of right and wrong, and without which nothing is holy, nothing acceptable. With God's blessing, therefore, in opening up the words before us, I shall

I.—*First*, endeavour to show what these infirmities are and how the Spirit *helps* them.

II.—*Secondly*, how the blessed Spirit *intercedes* himself in the heart with *groanings which cannot be uttered*.

III.—*Thirdly*, how the great *Searcher of hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit*.

IV.—*Fourthly*, how *agreeable* this is to the will of God, because it is added, "He maketh intercession for the saints *according to the*

will of God.

I.—In order to understand the mind and meaning of the apostle in using the expression "*infirmities*," we must draw a distinction between infirmities and sins. Infirmities in us to a certain extent partake of the nature of sins; but that all infirmities are not in themselves necessarily sinful is evident from the instance of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Certain infirmities are incidental to human nature and therefore necessarily inseparable from it. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ hungered and thirsted, was weary and slept. Now these in his case were sinless infirmities, because though he took human nature in all its entirety, he did not take the corruption of human nature; for the nature which he assumed into union with his divine Person was perfectly holy, without any spot or speck of sin; yet as being actual flesh and blood, it necessarily possessed those sinless infirmities which are inseparable adjuncts of flesh and blood in its present condition. But those infirmities which in the Lord Jesus Christ were free from sin, are not in our case necessarily free from it. There is, for instance, no sin in a man sleeping at night; but there is sin in a man slumbering during a sermon, or falling asleep upon his knees. There is no sin in being weary after a hard day's work; but there is sin in being weary in the house of prayer. There is no sin in eating in moderation to satisfy the cravings of hunger; but there is sin in gluttony. There was no sin in Timothy taking "a little wine for his stomach's sake;" but there would have been sin in taking a bottle or drinking himself drunk. Thus, though hunger and thirst are not sins, yet they are infirmities, and though eating and drinking are not sinful, yet gluttony and drunkenness are. So that though infirmities in themselves are not necessarily sinful, yet our sinful nature is so mingled with them as continually to make them servants of sin and instruments of evil. You will see in a moment the distinction by looking at our text. We could not say with any propriety of speech—nay, we should shrink from both the thought and the expression—that the Spirit helps our sins; but we may say, as God himself has said in the words before us, that the Spirit helps our infirmities. The true meaning of the word "infirmity" is want of strength, in other words weakness; and

taking this as the best and readiest definition of the term, I shall now point out, with God's blessing, some of those infirmities that the Holy Spirit in a special manner helps.

1. There is first the infirmity of *ignorance*; for we read in the text that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Ever since the fall, a veil of ignorance has been spread over the human mind which none but God can take away. Of this veil the apostle speaks where he says, "But even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart." But clearly implying that none but the Lord can remove it, he adds, "Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." Nor does he leave us in ignorance whose work it is of the three Persons in the blessed Trinity to perform that divine operation, for he adds, "Now the Lord is that Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:15-17.) The blessed Spirit, then, helps this infirmity of ignorance by removing it; and he removes it by illuminating the mind with divine light, and giving us a spiritual insight into those things which before were hidden from our eyes. It is in grace as in nature. At night a veil of darkness is spread over the earth, which no exertion of the earth itself could remove. Thus we read of "darkness," that is, spiritual darkness, "covering the earth, and gross darkness the people." But how in nature is this darkness removed except by the rising of light? So it is in grace, according to the words, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." And again, "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." (Isaiah 60:1, 2.) In almost similar terms speaks the apostle, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." (Eph. 5:8.) Whilst, then, this veil remains over the heart, we are ignorant even whom to pray unto; nor can we see the great Object of all true spiritual worship till the Spirit shine; what to pray for till the Spirit help; or how to frame our petitions aright till the Spirit give us right feelings and right words.

But this infirmity of ignorance and the necessity of the Spirit helping it we may see more clearly by looking at various instances in which this infirmity is seen and helped. Look, for

instance, at the various *afflictions* in providence or in grace which the Lord lays upon us. How deep is our ignorance often here! How little we know why the Lord is pleased to lay upon us that particular affliction under which at present perhaps our soul groans being burdened. Here is an infirmity of ignorance. And how we need the Spirit in an especial manner to help this infirmity, that we may not needlessly and unbelievably pray for the removal of an affliction, which the Lord has sent to work in a gracious manner for our spiritual good. We may pray, and that by the Spirit's help, as the Lord himself did in the garden of Gethsemane, for submission to the cross; but as to praying for its removal, that may not be agreeable to the will of God; and we may be certain that the Spirit will not help us to offer unacceptable petitions, because "he maketh intercession for the saints only according to the will of God." The apostle prayed that the thorn in the flesh "might depart" from him; but it was not the Lord's will to remove it, but to manifest therein the sufficiency of his grace, and to teach the groaning sufferer that his strength was made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9.) And as we are ignorant of the reason of *afflictions* until the Spirit helps this infirmity by showing us the needs be and giving us submission under them, so are we ignorant of the nature or even necessity of *spiritual blessings* until the Spirit help this infirmity by giving us divine light upon them. The apostle therefore says "we know not what to pray for as we ought"—the very *nature* of spiritual blessings being hidden from our eyes. How, then, can we pray for them, unless the Spirit is pleased to remove this ignorance and make us feel what we really stand in need of? And he shows us not only our need of spiritual blessings, but gives us clearly to see that they must come from God himself into our hearts by a divine application; for "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above." (James 1:16) How little, for instance, we once felt our personal need of mercy received from God's own hands; of pardon spoken from God's own lips; of love of God's own shedding abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; of smiles vouchsafed from the light of his uplifted countenance; of promises from his word brought home with power; of applications of atoning blood experimentally sprinkled upon our conscience; of

the revelation of Christ by the power of the Spirit to our soul:— how ignorant were we in our time of darkness not only of the *nature*, but even of the *necessity* of these vital matters as the very soul of a living and saving experience, till our hearts were illuminated by the Holy Ghost. But seeing light in God's light, through his illuminating grace, we not only see our need of these things, but are made to seek and sue for the things themselves as suitable to our need, if we do not actually enjoy them. How blessedly, then, and how suitably does the Holy Spirit remove our ignorance of these vital realities by casting a flood of light into our souls. Thus may we not well say that he, and he alone, helps this infirmity? For without his helping light we should still continue to sit in darkness and the very shadow of death, contented with our ignorance, or, like the Pharisees of old, saying "we see," when the light which is in us is darkness, and so our sin remaineth.

2. But we want divine *life* as well as divine light—life to *feel* as well as light to *see*. We may and sometimes do see our need of these blessings, and that they are all stored up in the fulness of the Son of God. But is there always in us a heart to pray for them? Is there ever going up a spiritual breathing after them? Is there a continual earnestness in wrestling with the Lord to grant them unto us? Alas! no; for we are often buried in carnality and death. Thus we need the Spirit to help our infirmity of death and deadness as well as our infirmity of ignorance. And he helps this infirmity by communicating or graciously renewing that spirit of faith and feeling, that inward life and power, that earnestness of wrestling prayer whereby we are from time to time, enabled to come to the throne of grace with the movements of divine life springing up in our soul, ("Spring up, O well!") and to pray unto the Lord not merely as seeing at a distance our need of heavenly blessings and how suitable they are to us, but as feeling, deeply feeling, that need, and breathing forth our earnest desires into the bosom of God, that he would in the riches of his grace pour down these blessings upon us.

3. But there is the infirmity of *unbelief*, which Paul speaks of as

"the sin which doth so easily beset us." We may see our need of divine blessings; we may feel our need of these blessings to be communicated experimentally and feelingly to our soul, yet have much unbelief as an infirmity, crippling and maiming us in our petitions for them at a throne of grace. Now the prayer of unbelief is not acceptable to God: it is the prayer of faith that he hears. But we cannot in the first instance raise up that faith or draw it forth afterwards into living exercise: it is God's gift and work to do both. We need, then, the Holy Spirit to help this infirmity, which seems of all infirmities that which most hinders the promised blessing, as we know it was the sin which kept the children of Israel out of the land of promise. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." (Heb. 3:19.) But sometimes faith and unbelief seem struggling together in the heart, like Jacob and Esau in the womb of Rebekah; or, as in the case of the man in the gospel who cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9:24.) The Spirit, then, helps this infirmity by raising up and drawing forth a spirit of faith. And when helped by his grace, influenced by his operations, and drawn by his power, we can approach the throne of grace in faith, utter the prayer of faith, and have our eyes fixed upon the Son of God in faith, is not this infirmity blessedly helped?

4. But again, we are too often *slack* in our spiritual movements, *and faint and tire* under the length of the journey, the difficulties of the path, the weight of the cross, and the roughness of the road. We are like a man rowing against wind and tide: he may pull against them well for a time, but eventually he is beaten by the continual opposition he meets with; and then gradually his hands slacken and he is borne down by the strength of the stream. Thus what makes us faint and tire is not only the amazing strength of sin in our carnal mind, but that it never ceases to act as an opposing weight. We are like a man climbing up a steep and rugged mountain. It is not only the loose stones that make him slip and stumble, but the whole road is one continued ascent, which wearies his limbs, tires out his strength, and exhausts his breath. To persevere, then, in the ways of godliness, to hold out and to hold on, to endure to the end, and

not drop off by the way—this is the great difficulty, and one which none overcome but those who are helped by the special power of God; for he, and he only, "who endures to the end shall be saved." Perseverance in well doing is a blessed gift and grace. As the apostle urges, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." (Gal. 6:9.) But it is especially in the grace of prayer that the blessed Spirit helps the infirmity of growing slack and weary by communicating strength to persevere. This grace of perseverance the Lord has blessedly opened up and enforced in those two striking parables—that of the importunate widow, who would give the unjust judge no rest, night or day, until he had avenged her cause; and of the man who goes to his friend at midnight, when he is in bed, for three loaves, and though denied them at first obtains them at last by sheer importunity. By those two parables the Lord would encourage us to persevere in asking, to be importunate at the throne of grace. But this we cannot do except as the Spirit helps the infirmity of drooping hands and feeble knees. He must lift up for us the hands which hang down, as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses. Without persevering prayer Israel could not overcome his foe, so that when Moses drooped his hands Amalek prevailed, and when Moses held up his hands then Israel prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy and were therefore held up for him. Aaron and Hur thus helped his infirmity. So we need the Holy Spirit to help us at a throne of grace by holding up our praying hands—not suffering them to droop and flag, for it is with us as with Israel: when we droop our hands in prayer and supplication, then sin prevails, and when the blessed Spirit holds them up, then grace prevails.

5. But as an almost necessary attendant on this infirmity of weariness in well doing, there is the infirmity of *coldness* in the things of God. How often do we feel cold, lifeless, stupid, chilled as it were with wintry frost; and how at such wintry seasons we need some reviving warmth to warm our cold, our frozen hearts, and thaw and melt them down into a flow of faith and love. This infirmity, then, of coldness and icy chilliness the Spirit helps by taking of the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and warming by

them the winter of the soul into spring. Under the genial operation and divine influence of these dissolving rays, the soul, melted down into life and feeling, pours forth a flood of warm desires, a holy stream of affectionate petitions, which gush forth as a flowing brook. This is turning the dry grounds into watersprings (Ps. 107:35) and the flint into a fountain of waters (Ps. 114:8), opening rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of valleys. (Isa. 41:18.) It is by these warm and earnest petitions that the soul gains the ear of God, for he loves that the heart should be engaged in his service.

"Formal service is his loathing;
He requires pure desires;
All the heart, or nothing."

He who is a Spirit and seeks and requires spiritual worshippers, turns his face away from formal, cold petitions; but the cry of hunger and thirst after righteousness; the warm, loving, importunate petition of a believing heart ever enters the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. In this way the Spirit—and how condescending it is in him so to do! as an inward Intercessor helps our infirmities; and well it is for us, since but for his helping grace, our infirmities would so overpower us that the very breath of prayer would cease in and die out of the soul. As sleep weighs a man down until he can no longer resist its overwhelming influence; as weariness overcomes muscle and sinew until the foot falters, the hand drops, and the whole body loses its power of exertion and motion; so our infirmities, but for the helping power of the Blessed Spirit, would gain such ascendancy over the inward life of God, that the very breath of prayer would drop out of the soul as a weary man drops asleep in his chair, or a fainting woman if unsupported falls on the floor. But as a provision of the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, the Blessed Spirit helps our infirmities, sustains our weary souls, and by his inward breath keeps alive the holy fire which he himself first kindled in the heart.

II.—But he does something more still. To come to our second

point, he intercedes himself for us, and that *"with groanings which cannot be uttered."*

1. His mode of teaching us how to pray I may perhaps compare to that of a schoolmaster teaching a boy to write. He sets before him a copy and puts the pen into his hand; but the boy is scarcely able to hold the pen properly, much more to make a right stroke. Then the master takes the boy's fingers into his own and makes two or three strokes for him: still the pupil's hand trembles and his fingers cannot properly clutch the pen; the stroke, however, is attempted to be made, but it has not the right proportions. It is crooked where it should be straight; perpendicular where it should be aslant; and the turn at the bottom of the line is a rude angle instead of a neat curve. Then the master with his own hand makes two or three letters in the copybook for him, which stand permanently in his book, but are so beautifully executed that the pupil despairs of ever imitating them. So it is with this gracious Spirit as our blessed writing-master, the inward inditer of all spiritual prayer. He first sets before us what true prayer is—the inward breathing of the heart after God. We try so to pray, but cannot. All our attempts fall short of the copy that he has set. Then he takes, so to speak, hold of our fingers, and helps our infirmities by clasping our trembling hand in his, and thus guides us in making strokes of prayer, such as in some measure may resemble that holy copy which the Lord set in the garden of Gethsemane. Still, our infirmities prevail: the fingers are clumsy, stiff, and awkward, and cannot make the stroke in the proper direction, or in the right proportion. Then this gracious Teacher makes some letters of his own for us, intercedes himself with us, and if I may make use of the expression, mingles his own breath with ours. He is not satisfied with helping us to frame thoughts, conceive ideas, and utter expressions—to feel our wants and misery, and beg for relief; but he himself with his own pure, holy breath, making our bodies his temple, intercedes for us before the throne of grace with groanings which cannot be uttered. As the promised Comforter, the heavenly Paraclete, the inward Advocate, one with the Father and the Son in essence and power, love and mercy,

grace and glory, the Holy Spirit is ever mindful of our soul's good,—is ever desirous that our petitions should be heard, knowing that all blessings are given in answer to prayer. But seeing how weak and feeble we are in this seeking and suing for them, that we may not utterly fail before the throne of grace, he himself mingles his praying breath with ours, and thus intercedes himself for us and in us, that our prayers may reach the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and bring gracious answers down into our breast. But you cannot, you say, always discover when the Spirit is interceding within you; and this often makes you doubt and fear whether he really is your Intercessor. There are, I believe, times and seasons when the spirit of prayer is so strong, and we are so lifted up above ourselves by it, that we can hardly doubt his interceding grace. But, as I have already explained, he usually so mingles his breath with ours, that sometimes we can scarcely tell whether it is he that prays or we. Yet have we not experienced at certain seasons a strange incoming of divine life and feeling, as if a new and unwonted power were given to us at the throne of grace to plead with the Lord? I have felt so at times, I believe, especially when praying in public, or with two or three believers alone. Such new, and yet gracious thoughts have been given, such warm, and yet soft and humble feelings raised up, such earnest desires experienced, and such suitable words communicated to express them, that, to speak with all humility, I have been astonished at myself, that such power should have been given to lead the utterance of the church of Christ. When we are thus favoured at the throne of grace, then we may well believe, or hope that the Spirit himself is interceding for us. It is his breath, not ours, which is then poured forth; his thoughts, not our ideas; his words, not our expressions. Thus the Lord said to his disciples in reference to another work of the Blessed Spirit, "Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." (Mark 13:11.)

2. But he is said to intercede for us "*with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" I think we may explain these striking words in two different senses. First, look at the expression in this point of view. There are thoughts and feelings in the heart which cannot be put

into words. All language is to a certain extent defective, and never so defective as when it attempts to express deep and powerful feelings. What words can adequately express a widow's grief as she lies awake at night thinking upon her departed husband? Sobs and sighs and a whole flood of impassioned tears—even these but feebly express the grief which seem to be tearing the very strings of her heart. Thus even in nature, when feelings are very strong, words are utterly insufficient to express them; much more so then in grace where the feelings are so much more deeply seated, and which human language, as framed to express natural conceptions, cannot adequately utter. When the awakened sinner is pressed down almost to despair with a heavy burden of guilt upon his conscience; when he has very deep and striking views of the awful realities of eternity, and fears lest his portion be to be cast into the lake of fire; when the wrath of God and the curse of the law are burning like a fire in his bones and drying up his strength like a potsherd, what mere words can express his feelings or his fears? He groans being burdened; yet his sighs and groans themselves but feebly and imperfectly express the feelings of his soul. The Holy Ghost, therefore, as helping the infirmities of utterance, which cannot find expression in words, intercedes in the heart with groanings which cannot be uttered; there being no other way of giving utterance to the feelings under which it labours. Have you not had some experience of this? When you have been lying under a heavy burden of sin; smarting under pangs of guilt and alarm; been distressed by the hiding of God's face; been shaken to the very centre with a whole host of doubts and fears whether you have not been deceived altogether; stood, as it were, on the very brink of eternity, with scarcely a hope in your soul: what words could give expression to feelings like these? The soul, then, under such and similar exercises, must have recourse to groanings; but even these cannot be uttered as spoken language, because they express feelings which cannot be put into so many words, any more than you can explain to a person the pain of a sharp attack of tic, of the cutting off a leg, or even of a violent toothache. This, then, is one meaning of the expression, "groanings which cannot be uttered."

But there is another meaning of the words, which is, that these groanings or sighings of the Spirit are not so much unutterable as unuttered, for thus the word may be rendered. As there are mute prayers, so there are silent groans. Thus Hannah prayed in the depth of her soul, yet not a single breath issued from her lips. So deep were her feelings that her hands trembled, her limbs shook, her very face was convulsed as of a person staggering through strong drink, as is evident from Eli's rebuke; but as we read, she "spake in her heart: only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." (1 Sam.1:13.) So Moses at the Red Sea speaks confidently to the children of Israel. "Fear ye not," he says, "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." But his own heart all the while was full of secret cries; for though we hear of no word uttered; or groan poured forth, yet the Lord said to him, "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" (Exod. 14:15.) So Nehemiah, when he stood in the presence of the king, was secretly lifting up his prayers to God, yet no word escaped his lips, no sigh reached the king's ear; but inwardly he prayed to the God of heaven. (Nehem. 2:4.) In all these instances the Holy Spirit, as their prevailing Intercessor, offered up his holy breath; for he was interceding in them with groanings not uttered. Their inward groans and sighs expressed their wants; but inaudibly to human ears, for they were suppressed, kept down, not suffered to get vent. The same blessed Intercessor often intercedes in the same way in the hearts of the saints now; in fact, there is often more depth, power, and prevalence in the inward sigh and cry of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, than in the vocal expression of the lips, or even in the uttered groan. It is the deep river that makes the least noise: the babbling brook it is that runs noisily over the stones. The voice of the Holy Spirit is not to be heard by mortal ear, or if it be so powerful as not to be suppressed, privacy will be sought. Under the pressure of eternal realities, the child of grace will go into some secret corner, where none can hear his voice, and there call upon the name of the Lord. When the Lord was first pleased to give me the Spirit of grace and of supplications, I was living near the sea-side in a mountainous country, and was usually in the habit of riding every day for

exercise on horseback. There, sometimes amongst the lonely valleys, and sometimes by the silent sea-shore, where there was no eye to see or ear to hear, I used to pray and cry unto the Lord. I was not for allowing the feelings of my heart to men. I had God to deal with, and to him in secret I used to pour out the desires of my soul. So to this day would I ever continue. Let my religion, let yours, be in the depths of our heart. Let us not make a noisy profession before men, like the ancient hypocrites whom the Lord condemns, who loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might have glory of men. (Matt. 6:5.) Let men rather see, by our life and conduct and conversation, by our Christian spirit and consistent deportment, that we are followers of Christ; for this is all they can see. If it be the work of God, it lies deep; too deep for human ken, for it is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen. But what a mercy it is for the saints of God, that however inwardly concealed their religion be from the eyes of men; however buried often in confusion, and thus hidden even from themselves, it all lies naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. There are those amongst the living family of God, who have at present no evidence of a work of grace being begun in their hearts except some secret feelings of sorrow, guilt, and trouble which they can scarcely explain; or the sighs, cries, prayers, and groans that they at times utter, because in no other way can they find relief for their burdened consciences. But what an unspeakable mercy it is that there is an eye above that marks all; that he who sees the sparrow's flight, counts the hairs upon the head, and without whom not a blade of grass can grow, or a leaf expand—that he, the great Searcher of hearts, knows every thought and every feeling that lie hidden from every other eye in the inward depths of the bosom.

III.—But this brings us to our third point, the knowledge which God has of this inward intercession, *"He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit."* Deception and hypocrisy may prevail with man: they may last for a time, though for the most part the plating is very thin, and the corners soon show the base metal underneath. The world and sin soon rub off the mere

outside wash, for with all its glitter, it is not the gold of Ophir or the plates of Uphaz. Or if for a time they glitter and shine before men, hypocrisy and deception can never avail in the courts of heaven. We may deceive ourselves and we may deceive one another; but there is one whom we cannot deceive—a heart-searching God. Now this truth the Lord himself writes with his finger upon every regenerate heart. Two lessons he teaches every soul in whom his powerful hand works: first, that he cannot be deceived; secondly, that he must not be mocked. This teaching from above makes a man sincere before him; and if not sincere, what is he, what is any man in a profession of religion? Nothing. Nothing, did I say? He is worse than nothing; because to be insincere before God is to add hypocrisy to our other sins; is to insult the Majesty of heaven: is to tie, if it were possible, a double millstone round our neck to sink us in the depths of hell. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." Remember this in your approaches to the footstool. God, the all-seeing, the omniscient Jehovah, searcheth the hearts, and he searches them for good as well as for evil, for both lie equally naked before his penetrating eye. There is not an evil thought, a licentious desire, a covetous wish, or an ungodly imagination framed in our mind that does not lie open before the eyes of a heart-searching God. Like the ostrich, you may bury your head in the sand, and think yourself unseen, but your whole body stands exposed to the bow of the unerring archer. He sees, then, all the evil which is in us; and well may that thought cover us with shame and confusion of face. You could not tell to your nearest, dearest friend what daily and hourly takes place in the depths of your carnal mind; but all is open before God. And this should make you watchful and prayerful, as living under the eye of an omniscient Being who reads every thought, hears every word, and spies out every action. It may well make you fearful to offend, and desirous to please the Majesty of heaven.

But he that searches the heart searches not only for evil, but also for good. He is full of compassion, mercy, love, and truth. He is not to his children a rigorous Judge, or a hard Master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed.

But he is a kind, affectionate Father, and Friend; and as a parent looks with very tender eye upon the unavoidable infirmities of his children, and deals with them accordingly, so does the great Searcher of hearts in the case of his spiritual family. "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." If you had a crippled child, would you rudely push him down, because he could not walk with a firm and vigorous step? Or if he were afflicted, as children are sometimes, with any bodily or mental infirmity—would not that very affliction commend him all the more to your tenderest affection, and anxious care? How you would shield him to the utmost of your power from the rudeness and unkind treatment of others, and could scarcely bear him out of your sight, lest he meet with any injury. So their heavenly Father looks down with pity and compassion upon the infirmities of his children. He regards their woes with eyes of holy pity. And he can do what we cannot: he can separate the good from the evil. When we pray, sin is so mingled with all our prayers that we can scarcely believe they are acceptable to him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon iniquity. But he reads his own work upon the heart; he deciphers his own writing. What is obscure to us is not obscure to him; for he can distinguish between the breath of the Spirit, and the breath of the flesh. In a crowd of strange voices, you who are a mother could distinguish the cry of your own child. So in the crowd of voices that often distract and confuse the mind when we pray, God can, and does distinguish the cry of his own Spirit. We therefore read, "He that searcheth the hearts *knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.*" "The mind of the Spirit" means what the Spirit thinks, desires, breathes after, and seeks; and to that the Lord has especial regard. Why? Because that, and that only, is unattended with sin. Nothing unholy can ever enter God's presence; no sinful prayer can ever reach God's ears. There must be purity and holiness in it to make it acceptable to the pure and holy Majesty of Heaven. The Spirit's breath is pure; the Spirit's mind is holy; the Spirit's intercession is according to the will of God; for as the Holy Ghost is one with the Father and the Son in essence, being, and power, so is he one in mind, will, and grace. The mind of the Spirit must be the same as the mind of Christ, and as such he will

ever seek the glory of God, and the good of the soul; for in these two preeminently shone the mind of Christ when here below. This holy and blessed Spirit will never then sanction the indulgence of anything carnal, sensual, or sinful. If we indulge ourselves in such things, ours is the sin, and ours be the shame. The Holy Ghost, though he helps our infirmities, will never help our sins; and though he bears with weakness, will never countenance iniquity. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth the mind of the Spirit," and pays regard thereto; but he will never regard the mind of the flesh. There may be many petitions for earthly good which you might put up; but these may be, and probably are, contrary to the mind of the Spirit. We see this eminently in the case of Solomon. The Lord gave him his choice what to ask. Solomon made a right choice. He chose wisdom. He did not choose riches, nor honor, nor length of days, nor the life of his enemies; but he chose spiritual wisdom, and an understanding heart to discern between good and evil. That prayer was acceptable. The Lord gave him a wise and understanding heart, and added to it what he did not ask—both riches and honour. (1 Kings 3:11, 12.) Solomon imitated God's example. For he gave the Queen of Sheba not only whatsoever she asked, but added much more of his royal bounty. And so will he deal with us. He will give us all that is good for us, so as to fill our hearts even to overflowing with love and joy. But it must be prayed for after the mind of the Spirit. You may have afflictions, and you may pray for their removal, because you feel them a burden too heavy for you to bear. This removal may not be, and probably is not the mind of the Spirit. Pray, rather for submission to them, that they may work in your soul some profit—that they may redound to the glory and praise of God. That may be the mind of the Spirit, instead of his interceding for their removal. Or deeply exercised with a body of sin and death, painfully feeling the struggles of sin in your carnal mind for the mastery, you may be praying, as some have prayed, to be made perfectly holy, so as not only never to feel the guilt and power of sin again, but to be freed even from its very presence and being. But that is a prayer not according to the mind of the Spirit. It is God's will that whilst we are in the flesh, we should have the body of sin and death to

struggle against. We are bidden to fight the good fight of faith. But if we had no enemies to contend with, were we wholly freed from the attacks of the world, the flesh, or the devil, where would be faith's fight or faith's victory? Instead of asking for such present impossibilities as freedom from trouble, and removal of crosses, let us rather seek for submission to the will of God under them; and instead of fighting against sin in our own strength, or sinking down hopelessly under its attacks, let us rather beg of the Lord to keep us from evil that it may not grieve us, and remind him of his promise that sin shall not have dominion over us. In all our prayers, in all our approaches to the throne, our mercy and wisdom will be to seek to possess the mind of the Spirit; to desire to know the will of God, and to do it; to look up more believingly and continually to the Lord Jesus, that he himself would teach and guide us; that he would by his Spirit and grace conform us more inwardly and outwardly to his suffering image; that he would grant unto us to know him more, and serve him better; that our prayers may day by day be more and more fervent, earnest and sincere, more spiritual, more in accordance with the will of God: that thus they may be more and more manifested as the interceding breath of the Spirit of God in our hearts, and as such may bring more clear and evident answers down. Pray for the manifestation of Christ to your soul, for a revelation of the Person, blood, righteousness, and love of Jesus; seek to have your signs and evidences of divine life more cleared up; your Ebenezers and tokens for good more brightly shone upon; your doubts and fears more plainly dispelled, and a fuller and sweeter assurance of personal interest given in the finished work of Christ. Desire also to have the promises applied to your heart, the word of God brought with divine power into your conscience, and a living faith raised up and drawn forth to mix with the truth which you read or hear. Above all things, seek to know the will of God, and do it. Beg, as the Lord may enable, for submission, patience, resignation, brokenness, contrition, humility, godly sorrow for sin, heavenly affections, and that sweet spirituality of mind which is life and peace. Such and similar prayers are much more agreeable to the mind of the Spirit, because in stricter accordance with the revealed truth of God and the experience of

the saints, than any bold claim on the one hand as if God were our debtor in grace, or any self-righteous confidence on the other, as if he were our debtor in nature. Seek then to be delivered, not only from Antinomian presumption, but from Pharisaic self-righteousness, from formality and superstition; seek to be set free from mere vocal prayer, from a dead and dry repetition of phrases in which the heart is not, where there is no life, nor feeling, nor power, and therefore no prevalence with God. Above all, seek an inward assurance that your prayers are heard and accepted, and then watch for the answer. This will give you the surest and best of all evidences that the blessed Spirit is himself interceding for you with groanings which cannot be uttered.

IV.—And this consideration brings me to my last point, that the Spirit "*maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*" The will of God is two-fold, revealed and secret. According to which will does the blessed Spirit intercede? Clearly not according to the secret will of God, which as being secret is necessarily hidden from our eyes; and therefore cannot form the subject or the guide of our petitions. It is therefore according to his revealed will that the Blessed Spirit makes intercession. But where is that revealed will contained and made known? In the Scriptures of truth. How then are we to know what that will is? By searching the Scriptures. Is that enough? Many search the Scriptures who never know the will of God, for we read of those who are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim. 3:7); and the apostle tells us of the Jews in his day that when Moses was read, which he daily was in the synagogues, the veil was upon their heart. (2 Cor. 3:15.) Thousands read the Scriptures to whom it is a sealed book. We must beg then of the Lord to illuminate the sacred page, to cast a divine light upon the Scriptures of truth, and thence into our heart, for "the entrance of his word giveth light;" and then we shall understand the Scriptures by the same inspiration under which that holy word was written. This is being a disciple indeed, and to such the promise is, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31, 32.) "Open thou mine

eyes," cried David, "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" and again, "Give me understanding, and I shall live." (Psalm 119:18, 144.) When then we are favoured in any measure with the light of God in our understanding, and the life of God in our soul, then the Scriptures become to us a new book; we read them with new eyes, handle them, as it were, with new hands, hear them, as read in the house of prayer, with new ears, and feel them, which is a grand point, with new hearts. This indeed is not always the case. You take up the Scriptures at times, and not a word is there for you. Your very understanding of it seems gone; you read it without faith, and without feeling. Darkness covers the sacred page: darkness is spread thickly over your heart. You lay the book down self-condemned at your miserable hardness, darkness, and carnality; but you cannot give yourself light or life. But you take it up again on another occasion: power comes from on high to read with faith and feeling; you believe what is thus commended to your conscience, as the word of inspiration; the finger of God touches your heart; eternal realities press with weight upon your spirit; hope anchors in the truth revealed to your soul, and love flows out to embrace them. Almost every page seems illuminated with sacred light; every verse is filled with beauty and blessedness, dropping its rich contents into your heart like honey and the honey-comb; and you wonder how you can have read over and over again the same words, and never seen their meaning in the same light, nor felt their influence with the same power. Led under this Spirit to the throne of grace, and seeking the Lord's face with these feelings warm in your breast, then you pray according to the will of God, for his will as revealed in the Scriptures and thence to your heart has now become your will. He has made you willing in the day of his power, and his will and your will are one. This is true prayer for the heart and lips now move together in sweet and harmonious concert. In this way is wrought submission to his will. Hard and rugged may be the path which you are now treading; grievous afflictions may be your painful lot; powerful temptations may beset your stumbling steps; and you may think, in much self-pity, that none is so hardly dealt with as you. But cannot you pray for submission to those crosses, which God does not seem

willing to remove? Seek then for submission; to see the hand of God in and under the affliction; look if there be no silver lining to the dark cloud that seems spread over the face of the sky; examine the edge, or view the centre, to watch for some beam of heavenly light breaking through to show you that the Sun of righteousness will soon arise upon your soul with healing in his wings. This will give submission; and as this is granted, and you begin to find what benefit you have already received by the trial and affliction which you have been called upon to pass through, a sense of gratitude springs up, and you are able to praise and bless the Lord for bringing that trial upon you. You have now an evidence that the Spirit has been interceding for and within you according to the will of God; been moving in harmony with this will as revealed in the Scripture. Bear in mind, then, that God's will must ever stand: and that it is as unchanging and as unchangeable as God himself. Our wills are ever fluctuating: God's will fluctuates not. And as that will must ever live and rule, it will be our highest wisdom and richest mercy to submit to, and be conformed unto it. Now the will of God to you who desire to fear his name is not your destruction, but your salvation; your profit now, your happiness hereafter; your present grace, and eternal glory. And the Spirit is making intercession for you according to this will of God; for is it not your earnest desire and prayer that your soul should be saved and blessed, that you should serve God and live to his glory, and when you die be with him for ever? Lie, then, at his feet. Be the clay, and let him be your heavenly Potter. Think not of saving yourself, or of putting your own hand to God's gracious work. Be content to be nothing. Sink even lower than that: be willing to be less than nothing, that Christ may be all in all. Covet above all things the Spirit's interceding breath; for in possessing that you will have a sure pledge that he will guide you in life, support you in death, and land you in glory. With his guidance we can never err; with his supporting arms, we can never fall; taught by him we shall see the path of life plainly; upheld by his strength, we shall walk in it without fear. Without his light we are dark; without his life we are dead; without his teaching we are but a mass of ignorance and folly. We cannot find the way except he guide; but if he do guide,

we cannot but find it. The more we confide to his teaching and guidance the better it will be for us; and the more under this teaching we can lie submissively at the Lord's feet, looking up to him for his will to be made known in us and perfected in us, the more it will be for our present peace, and the more it will redound to his eternal praise.

The Spirit of Power, of Love, and of a Sound Mind

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, Oct. 4, 1857

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

Every Christian man who is at all acquainted with his own heart is conscious of possessing two distinct sets of feelings. He feels, for instance, that there dwell in him anger, pride, self-righteousness, carnality, worldly-mindedness, with a host of other evils; and that these are neither dying nor dead, but are alive in him to his sorrow; for he has more or less daily reason to groan under their burden, and to feel their miserable power and influence. But on the other hand, so far as light and life are given to him to see and feel, he cannot but be conscious that he possesses another set of feelings, quite distinct—such as faith, hope, love, patience, humility, repentance, godly sorrow for sin, prayerfulness and spirituality of mind, with heavenly affections that often carry his soul upward to God. For though these gracious and divine feelings may be obscured and buried for a time in clouds of mist and darkness, yet are they again and again revived and brought to light. Now as he is conscious that he possesses those two distinct sets of feelings in his soul, so he has little difficulty in deciding of what nature those feelings are and whence they take their rise. He knows one set of them to be altogether bad, and the other to be altogether good; that one set proceeds wholly from sin and self, and the other wholly and solely from the grace and power of God.

But there are certain feelings in his soul of which he is doubtful what is their source, to what influence he is to ascribe and to whose account he shall place them. For instance, such feelings as guilt of conscience, distress of soul, bondage of spirit, slavish fear, perplexity and darkness, with many exercises that arise in the mind out of trial and temptation—what shall he say of these? What name shall he give them? Are they evil or are they good? Come they from heaven or come they from hell? Do they spring from grace or are they rooted in nature? How can he call them evil when he had them not in a state of nature, and when they seem—if not grace, at least to accompany grace? For he must

come to this conclusion, that if he had no religion he would have no such exercises. On the other hand, how can he say that they are good? They are not faith, nor hope, nor love, nor anything like these heavenly graces. They communicate no present enjoyment to his soul, nor do they seem to bring any glory to God. So he does not know what to make of them nor where to place them. Shall he call them good or evil? Shall he put them down to the flesh, or ascribe them to the Spirit? He hangs in uncertainty where he shall place them and what he shall think of them, and still more what he shall think of himself as under their power and influence.

I think the words before us may contribute, with God's help and blessing, to throw a little light upon these perplexing points.

The apostle declares, in the most plain and positive manner—"God hath not given us the spirit of fear." He here lays down, with divine authority, that a certain spirit, which he calls the "spirit of fear," God has *not* given us; and he lays down by its side certain blessings that he says, with the same decisive authority, God *has* given us. Now what shall we say of anything in the heart which God has not given us? Can we say that it is good, spiritual, heavenly, saving, or divine? We cannot say so, for if "every good and perfect gift cometh from God," then what God has not given us is neither good nor perfect. On the other hand, what shall we say of those things which God *has* given us—such as "a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind?" We must say of them that these are blessings indeed—choice gifts from the God of all grace.

I shall endeavour, with God's blessing, in opening up the words of our text, to cast a little light, as the Lord may enable me, upon those feelings which I have been speaking of as so puzzling and perplexing to the child of God, and shall endeavour to trace their source, how they arise, and to what they tend; why they are permitted, what good they bring about; and how, though not from God, they are made still to work for the soul's good. That will form with God's blessing, the *first* branch of my discourse this afternoon. I shall *secondly*, as the Lord may enable me, pass on to show what God has really given by his grace to those who fear his name, which I find the apostle sets down under three distinct heads:—"A spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind:" the

word "spirit" being carried on from the word "fear."

I.—Fear, as spoken of in Scripture, and as felt in the experience of God's saints, is two-fold: there is a gracious, godly fear, and a slavish, carnal fear. Of gracious fear, we read thus:—"I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me;" that it is "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death;" and that it is "the beginning of wisdom." In fact, it is, as an old divine has called it, "a grace of the largest import;" for it contains in its bosom all other graces; and is of this peculiar nature, that the more the other graces of the Spirit flourish, the more does this grace flourish likewise. It lives in the closest union with faith; it thrives with a growing hope; flourishes with an increasing love. The more the Lord appears in his grace, the more does filial fear (for that is its best and truest name) flourish and abound in the soul; the deeper it sinks into the heart, the firmer root it takes; and the firmer the root, the nobler stem it rears, and the larger, more spreading, and more fruitful branches it sends forth on every side. It is not, therefore, of this holy, this filial fear that the Holy Ghost speaks by the pen of Paul, when he declares that God has not given it to us; for the Lord *does* give us that spirit of fear: it is one of his choicest graces; it is eminently good for him to give and us to receive, as being that grace whereby we are preserved from departing from him. But there is a fear that does not come in the same way from God, which is not a new covenant grace, and yet is in the heart of those who fear God. What does this fear, then, spring from, for it must have some origin? Why, it springs from a sense of guilt, and is found to exist where the grace of God is not. We see it in Adam immediately after the fall. When Adam was in his unfallen condition, he could meet his Creator cheerfully and walk and talk with him as a man talketh with his friend. But when Adam sinned and fell, fear, servile fear, became at once made manifest. He hid himself from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees in the garden. And why did he do this but because he feared to meet him? When Cain slew his brother, this fear fell upon him, for he feared lest every one that found him should slay him. So it was with Saul, when he "fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel;" so it was with Ahab; so with Herod, so with Judas; and so it will be to the end of the world; for to most men Death is the king of terrors. And what is this but a slavish, servile fear? God has not given a fear that hath torment. And

such is ever the mark of this slavish spirit of fear.

But not only have such characters as I have alluded to this servile, slavish fear, but the saints of God are also much under its influence; for as they are often under the influence of unbelief, so are they frequently under the influence of this, its bosom friend and partner.

1. But whence springs, what is the source of this kind of fear? It evidently arises from *guilt of conscience*. Were the conscience not guilty there would be no room for this fear in the heart. A guilty conscience is produced by the law, and therefore the law both generates and feeds this slavish fear. The law is ever telling us to "do and live;" and when it has thus set before us a task to perform which we can never execute, then it begins to curse us for not doing all that it requires, ever saying—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Not being able, then, to perform what the law requires, we fall under the wrath that the law reveals, come under the curse that the law thunders out, and thus fall into bondage, darkness, and slavish fear before God.

2. Again: this spirit of slavish fear that God has not given to us is very much mingled with, as, in fact, it is much grounded upon, *unbelief*. Before our eyes and in our hands is the Gospel; *there* is Jesus Christ set forth in his blood and righteousness; and *there* are the promises, all full of mercy, grace, and truth. Here they all are—the table, as it were, spread with delicacies and luxuries. Why not come and eat? Why not approach and feast upon the gospel banquet? Why not sit under the shadow of Jesus with great delight and find his fruit sweet to your taste? Unbelief forbids. Unbelief keeps the soul back. Unbelief says, "It is not spread for you. You have no interest in this precious blood. True it is that it 'cleanseth from all sin;' but it does not cleanse *you* from *your* sins. You have neither part nor lot in the matter." Therefore, though you may see the righteousness of Jesus revealed in the word of truth, you cannot get under it; though you see the atoning blood, you cannot feel its application to your conscience; though you behold mercy and grace shining forth in the glorious person of Christ, yet cannot you bring that mercy and grace with divine power into your own soul; and while you cannot obtain pardon and peace, you feel your mind full of

unbelief. Now wherever there is the presence and power of unbelief, there will be a spirit of fear, of this slavish, guilty fear, that holds the soul down in bondage, darkness, and death.

3. But again: this spirit of fear is often very much connected with *backsliding* and departing from the right ways of the Lord. There is not an individual under the influence of grace who does not more or less backslide in heart, lip, or life; in fact, every step we do not take forward, we really take backward; and every moment we are not enjoying the sweet presence of God, we are living to sin and self. To do this is to backslide. Whenever we cease to come to the Fountain of living waters and begin to hew out for ourselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water"—this is to backslide. We may not be given up to great, grievous, and open backslidings. The Lord may and usually does keep the feet of his saints, and preserves them from the commission of sins that might grievously injure their character, wound the cause, and bring much distress upon their own souls. But apart from this, all do more or less wander or backslide in their feelings from God. A sense of this produces guilt of conscience; and from this guilt comes slavish fear.

4. But again; *worldliness of mind*, being too much occupied in business, or unduly carried away with the cares and anxieties of life, producing a neglect of seeking the Lord's face and calling upon his name, and getting as a necessary consequence into a cold, lifeless, stupid state of soul, when all the life and power of godliness seem for a time buried and lost—all these things, as they produce guilt of conscience, so they open the door for this spirit of slavish fear. In this state there is little or no access to God, the Bible is a sealed book, the company of God's saints little sought, the Lord himself much forsaken, his presence seldom felt, and his love rarely or scarcely ever shed abroad. Many of the saints of God seem to go on for much of their lives under the continual influence of this spirit of fear, and rarely feel any enjoyment of the things of God. And so they go on sometimes year after year without any liberty, sweetness, or spiritual consolation; pressed and kept down by the slavish fear that works in them, and brings forth fruit unto death.

Now God has not given us this spirit of fear. It does not proceed from his grace. It is not the fruit of the Spirit. It is not wrought by

his own divine hand in the soul. And yet though it is not a grace or a gift, the Lord in a wonderful way over-rules it and makes it work for spiritual good. It is the same with this as with some other kindred feelings. Who can say that he has not derived benefit from guilt of conscience? What made you first pray—seek the Lord's face—cry for mercy through a Saviour's blood? Guilt of conscience. What made you first come to hear the gospel, or at least receive the truth contained in it as suitable to your wants and woes? What made you mourn and sigh in secret, and hang down your head overwhelmed with gloom and trouble? What made life a burden to you, what stripped the world of all its fancied charms, dissolved all its magic, and showed you in its true colours what this scene was and what happiness it could give? Guilt of conscience. What kept you from resting upon a name to live—on an empty profession—on a mere doctrinal acquaintance with the truth? What made you long for something that you never had felt, experienced, tested, or known? What made you feel dissatisfied with all your own experience and everything that others seemed so well satisfied with? Why was there in your mind a secret condemnation of the whole of your religion, first and last? Why were you afraid at times that you were a hypocrite, and had been deceiving others, or were deceived yourself? And why did you feel miserable, and wretched, so that you thought none could be burdened like you? Guilt of conscience. What, too, made you to give the Lord no rest till he began to appear in love and mercy to your soul, and what made you ply him with his own promises and come to the throne of grace with earnest desires that he would show mercy to you? Why guilt of conscience. So you see that guilt of conscience, though it is the parent of this slavish fear, yet does produce in the hands of God good effects; and you have had the evidence of it in your own hearts.

In the same way, servile fear, though it makes a man who is under its influence very wretched and miserable, debars him of much comfort and peace, and robs him of much that other Christians seem to enjoy, yet has this good effect—*it keeps him from false liberty*. There is a presumptuous liberty, much of it in our day—a liberty God never gave and which he will never own—a liberty of the flesh, arising out of a mere notional and doctrinal acquaintance with God's truth. Now servile fear, though it produces bondage and darkness will keep the man who is under

its influence from taking hold of this presumptuous liberty, because false liberty and slavish fear can never reign and rule together in the heart. One must go down before the other. Either presumptuous liberty will turn slavish fear out of the house, or slavish fear will be the death of presumptuous liberty. They cannot both dwell as friends and brethren in the same heart; they cannot both be masters. If you are under the influence of slavish fear, you cannot be under the influence of presumptuous liberty. If presumptuous liberty rule and reign in your heart, it will never tolerate the presence and power of slavish fear. So that if you have been kept from presumptuous liberty, it may have been in a good measure owing to that wretched fear that has worked such bondage, and darkness, and death in your soul.

And yet the apostle tells us, "God has not given us the spirit of fear." Then how can we view the spirit of fear as a benefactor or a friend if it does not come from God? Well, do you think God has given you unbelief? Has God given you temptations? Has God given you infidelity? Has God given you darkness of mind? Has God given you bondage of spirit? None of these things God has given you; and yet, in God's mysterious way, these things are continually over-ruled by his grace and made to work great benefits in the soul. Who sent Job his temptations? Was it God? It was indeed with the permission of God; but they were not sent directly or immediately from his hand. They came from Satan, as we find in the 1st and 2nd chapters. And yet they were made a great blessing to Job. So a spirit of fear—the slavish bondage that your soul may perhaps even now be under—the fears of death that you may be terrified with—the terrors and apprehensions of eternal wrath—your dread lest you be a hypocrite in the things of God,—God has not revealed these things as mercies and blessings that flow from his gospel, nor has his Spirit wrought them in you by his grace. Yet there they are; and the Lord may and does work by them, and out of this evil bring forth good, as he does out of a thousand other things. Here is this terrible rebellion in India. At present all is dark. The tempest is still roaring, and we cannot see clearly through the storm; but after it has passed away, we may see great good come out of it. We may see England's power established there as it never was before. We may see idolatry put down to an amazing extent and the devil defeated and outshot with his own bow. I do not say that it will be so. We cannot prophesy in matters of this nature. But if we

cannot prophesy as regards temporal things, we may as regards spiritual. You may have had a little India in your own heart. War and fire and massacre may have been going on there; and you may have thought, "What good can ever come out of all this scene of confusion and trouble?" Yet good has already, could you see it, come out of it, and still further good will come out of it; for God's prerogative is to bring good out of evil. Therefore, though God has not given you by his Spirit and grace the servile fear which the text speaks of, yet there it is; and God may and does work by it and bring good out of it. It is called, I may just remark, "the *spirit* of fear," because it is so subtle, so energetic, and so penetrating into all the corners of the heart; this being the character of spirit as opposed to flesh. Flesh is lumpish and heavy, does not easily move; but spirit, like the wind after which it is called, acts and moves everywhere. So the *spirit* of fear is used to denote that subtle energy and that penetrating activity which servile fear exercises in a man—possessing him, as it were, and piercing into every secret recess and corner, and bringing him under its direct and powerful influence, as the wind acts on the sails of a ship.

II.—But I pass on to consider what I proposed to speak of in the second place—*What God HAS given us*. Three things are spoken of in our text, all of which are meant by the apostle to stand in opposition to the spirit of fear. The three blessings that God has given us, and which are direct opposites to the spirit of fear that we have been considering, are—1, *Power*; 2, *Love*; and 3, a *Sound Mind*. These we will view separately.

I. "*Power*" is the grand distinctive characteristic of the gospel of the grace of God. It is therefore declared to be "the *power* of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of Christ administered here below in and by the gospel, is said to be "*not in word but in power.*" "I will know," the apostle says, "not the speech of them which are puffed up, *but the power.*" The apostle was very jealous over his own preaching, as he tells us he was with the Corinthians "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;" and this was a part of his godly jealousy, lest their faith might not "stand in the power of God." But you will ask—"What is power?" To answer this question, we may put another—What is power as we usually understand the term? It is some movement, force, or influence,

put forth by an agent, whatever that agent be. We speak, for instance, of "water-power." Running in yonder valley is a stream of water; as this approaches the town, it is penned up and a wheel is put in a certain direction to meet the current. The water now acts upon the wheel; the wheel turns; and we call the moving cause "water-power." Or we see a locomotive move upon the railway. Our fathers would have stared with astonishment to see a train moving, as it were, of itself. They would have thought it little else than a miracle. We know the cause. We know that steam has been controlled and brought under man's direction so as to exert a certain power, which power is made manifest in dragging an enormous weight at an enormous velocity. This we call "steam-power." Now if the water never turned the wheel—if the steam never moved the locomotive, how could we say that there was power in either water or steam? Take the idea into grace. Here before our eyes and in our hands is the Scripture, the pure word of God. Now unless the word of God act upon a man's heart as the water acts upon the wheel, or as the steam upon the locomotive, there is nothing done. And that is the case with hundreds and thousands. They read the Scripture or hear the Scripture read, but nothing is done, at least as regards salvation. There is no divine power put forth, and no power being put forth nothing is produced of a divine nature. But God acts by his word upon the hearts of his saints, and he acts with power; for his work is a powerful work, produces powerful effects, and leads to powerful results. This, then, is what God is here said to have given us—"the spirit of power."

1. We will now, with God's blessing, examine a little more closely how this power acts; for it is the power of God's Spirit—the operation of his grace; or, to speak more correctly, it is the power of God himself upon the heart of man. For as the water acts upon the wheel, as the steam acts upon the locomotive, so does God, through the word of his grace, act upon the soul of man. "Of his own will begat he us through the word of truth." "The word of God is quick and powerful." "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." Let us apply this. Here is a poor guilty sinner, in his own feelings justly condemned to die. Burdened by guilt, he is under the influence of that slavish fear of which I have spoken—for you must take the two in opposition to each other as the apostle places them, power and fear. *He cannot believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, or in his own interest in him,

though he would fain do so, nor can he lift himself up or out of that sunken state into which he has been cast by guilt of conscience. He trembles at the wrath to come. He fears death and hell; but he cannot deliver himself from the fears that work in his guilty conscience. Now what does this man want? He is helpless and almost hopeless. He therefore wants the Lord to put forth a power in his soul that he himself cannot exercise; and when the Lord is pleased by the word of his grace to put forth this power and to raise up a living faith in that man's heart, then he can believe. Nor can he believe to any effectual purpose until the Lord give power; for his faith, if it be genuine faith, is "to stand in the power of God," and it cannot *stand* in the power of God unless it first *be* in the power of God. You must be in a place before you can stand in it. God gives that soul power to believe, and then he does believe; and that is power.

2. But his servile fears have almost kept him down even from *hoping* that matters would one day be otherwise with him—from hoping in the grace of God. Nor can he, so long as he is in slavish fear, raise up "a good hope through grace" in his soul; for if it come through grace, and he has not any sensible communication of grace, he cannot have a good hope. He may have a hope, but he can hardly be said to have a good hope; and whilst under the influence of slavish fear, he often does not dare to hope. Though he is not in despair he is in despondency; nor can he get beyond a dim and distant hope that his soul may be saved. But when the Lord puts forth power by applying a promise to his soul, or by giving him strength to believe in the Lord Jesus, he raises up a good hope; for grace, that is, the free favour of God, comes into his heart, and then he has power to hope in the Lord of life and glory. He is now enabled to loose the anchor from the bow and to cast it forth into firm holding ground. The anchor was there before, but he had no power to let it go; and thus it could not take hold of the wounds of Jesus or enter within the veil.

3. Nor had he power *to love*. He would love, but could not. We cannot love the Lord until we know that the Lord loves us; nor can we love him with all our heart and soul until he tells us that he loves us with all his. When he says "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," and sheds abroad his love in the soul, this gives power to love him. When, too, he sets himself before our eyes in his divine beauty and blessedness, this makes us fall in love with

him. For beauty kindles love. It is so often in natural love, and always so in divine.

4. *Nor can we submit to God's will, if that will cross our own.* Many a dear saint of God would be reconciled to his heavenly Father's will, but cannot, for he feels a rebellious heart; and whilst his heart is full of rebellion there is no power to submit. This power must be given of God; and the Lord sometimes does in rich and tender mercy give it. He has but to speak and it is done; he has but to touch the heart and it softens; he has but to appear and the soul melts at the sight. Thus is power given to submit to God's will in opposition to our own.

So might I run through the whole list of divine graces, such as a spirit of prayer and supplication, spirituality of mind and heavenliness of affections, fighting against sin and Satan, crucifying the lusts of the flesh, putting off the old man, putting on the new, and with him the whole armour of God, and remaining faithful unto the end. We have no ability to do any of these things, except as God gives us inward power; and this strength he makes perfect in our weakness. When we are come to the end of all our own power, we are only come to the beginning of God's. When we see an end of all our own perfection, then only do we begin to see the beginning of Christ's beauty and glory. And when all creature comeliness and all native goodness fade and come to naught, then the beauty and blessedness of the person, work, love, and blood of Jesus begin to open to our admiring view.

II. But I pass on to show the second thing which the apostle tells us God has given us in opposition to the Spirit of fear; and that is the *spirit of love*. Now love is a grace that may be counterfeited, like all other graces; but to give a real spirit of divine love and affection is as much beyond the power of Satan as it is beyond his will. There is no sweeter or surer mark of being interested in the blood of Jesus than *to love him* with a pure heart fervently; for we certainly never can truly and spiritually love him unless he has first loved us. This is the express declaration of the Holy Ghost:—"We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). This made Paul say, "Who loved me and gave himself for me." Nor will our affections ever flow unto his glorious person, blood, and work, until we have had some divine discovery of these

blessings to our heart and conscience. We may try to love him; we may think it our duty to do so, and may be exercised and perplexed in our mind for our want of it; we may be secretly ashamed of our miserable coldness, and may lament our barrenness in this blessed grace. But no power of our own can raise up true love to Jesus and to what he is in himself. The spirit of love and affection to the Lord comes from the power of God put forth, springs immediately from the communications of his grace, and especially from the visitations of Christ to the soul. He always comes with love in his heart and hands, and never departs without leaving love behind him. We read, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as the ointment poured forth, therefore the virgins love thee." When once the ointment is poured forth, the box that held it may be taken away, but the smell of the ointment still remains; as it was in the case of the woman who anointed the Redeemer's feet, when the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. So wherever Jesus has come in his Spirit and grace, when he departs he still leaves behind the savour of his presence, as the ointment poured forth. If, therefore, the virgins love him because his name is "as ointment poured forth" when he visits them with his presence, they love him no less for the sweetness he leaves behind when he departs.

2. Nor can we love *the saints of God* except the Lord lay them upon our affections. Our hearts are by nature cold and selfish; we have no knowledge who the saints of God are, nor have we any sympathy with them, any delight in their company, any feeling towards them in their distress, or any union with them in their joy. We must love first him that begat, and then we shall love those who are begotten of him. We love the Master and then we love the servant; we love the head and then we love the members; we love Jesus and then we love those whom Jesus loves and who love him. Thus to love is of grace, God's special gift, as the text declares; and by this as a sure evidence "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." You may think yourself a great Christian—you may boast of your deep experience; but if you do not love the saints of God, there are no present marks of the grace of God being in your heart. And if you love the saints of God, you will manifest it in your words and actions, and will show that you do love them by manifesting that brotherly affection, tenderness, forbearance, and sympathy, without which Christian love is but a name.

3. Nor can

you love *the Word of God* except as it is made precious to your soul. You cannot love the *preaching* of the gospel unless it be commended to your conscience, unless it is full of sweetness and unction, and fall like dew upon your heart. If the preaching of the gospel bring peace to your soul, fill your heart with sweet and blessed feelings, melt your spirit in humility and love, make Christ precious, dispel your doubts, remove your fears, and shed abroad a little heaven within, you will love it because, as the power of God, it does all this for you. Otherwise you will be cold and indifferent towards it. It will be to you as it is to hundreds—a mere sound of words that neither sanctifies nor saves. So in *reading* the Scriptures. If you love the Scripture, you will be reading it; if you love the promises, you will be searching how you may find more and more power, sweetness, and life in them. If you love prayer, you will be much in prayer; if you love meditation and secret communion with the Lord, you will get away from everything else that you may enjoy more and more of it. You may know a man by his friends. A man will keep the company he loves. And so you may know a saint of God by the company he keeps, by the books he reads, by the people he loves, and by those fruits of righteousness which alone are found upon the gospel bough.

III. The last thing spoken of in our text as the special gift of God, is the spirit of "*a sound mind.*" What a mercy it is naturally to have a sound mind! It is one of the greatest temporal blessings that God can bestow upon a man. It is far better than intellect, imagination, poetical gift, or reasoning power. And how wretched it is to have an unsound mind! a mind in the least degree diseased, eccentric, or in any way tainted with those delusive fancies which mar all comfort and often lead to the worst of consequences. "A sound mind in a sound body," the heathen used to consider, in one of their proverbs, the greatest blessings their gods could give. But however great be the blessing of a healthy body, a healthy mind as much exceeds it in value as it is superior to it in nature. How you see men ruining themselves every day for want of a sound mind! What extravagance, what folly are they daily committing! What embarrassments they bring upon their families, upon their property, and upon others also—what havoc and ruin from being crazed with some fancy or wild delusion! But the apostle is not here speaking of a sound mind in natural things, because though that is a most valuable temporal gift, it is

not spiritual grace: it is a sound mind in the things of God that he joins in union with power and love. And I must say that I look upon this gift from heaven as an inestimable mercy to the church of God. We are often reproached with being fanatics, enthusiasts, and people of a wild imagination, carried and led away by airy flights, without any sobriety of judgments or soundness of mind. I consider that no charge was ever more false or more misdirected. I consider that those of us who know the truth of God by divine teaching are eminently persons of a sound mind eminently free from superstition, fanaticism, enthusiasm, or wild imaginations and delusive fancies. I never had sounder mind in my life than I have at this moment, and I am sure my religion has not made my mind unsound. It has made my mind sound naturally as well as spiritually, for it has cured me of a thousand airy fancies and wild ambitious desires, and given me sobriety in natural things as well as in spiritual. To possess, then, the spirit of a "sound mind" is to have a sound judgment in the things of God—not to be drawn aside by every passing opinion—not to be allured by every novel doctrine—not to be charmed by every fresh device of the wicked one—not to be caught by every one of his flesh-pleasing snares; but to have that sobriety of judgment and holy wisdom in the things of God, with that fixedness of heart upon the Lord Jesus, and that solid experience of his Spirit and grace, as shall keep us from errors and delusions on the right hand and on the left. Unless we have this spiritual sobriety, this ripe and matured judgment, and this firm establishment in the truth of God, we are almost sure to be drawn aside into some error or other. Satan will somehow deceive us as an angel of light. He will impose upon us some of his heresies and present them to our minds with such plausibility that they shall appear to be in accordance with the scriptures; he will puff us up with pride and presumption; he will draw us off the firm and safe ground of spiritual experience, to entangle us in a maze of confusion and error; he will beguile our minds with some of his subtle deceits, and lead us off that foundation which God has laid in Zion, and upon which all his saints have ever stood; and by working upon our Pharisaical or Antinomian mind, withdraw us away from the glorious truths that all the preachers of righteousness have ever taught. If we have not the spirit of a sound mind, we shall mistake a false experience for a true one—natural feelings for spiritual—the workings of pride and self-righteousness for the workings of the Spirit of God—and the deceits of the devil for the teachings of the

Holy Ghost. But where there is a sound mind—and that there ever will be, more or less, where there is spiritual light, divine life, gracious feeling, and a conscience made tender by God's fear,—there will be a sound faith, a sound hope, a sound love, a sound repentance, and a sound work of grace upon the heart from first to last. To have a sound mind is to have a mind deeply imbued and vitally impregnated with the truth of God; and as that truth is the only really solid and enduring substance under the sun, it follows that those who know it experimentally for themselves are the only persons really possessed of soundness of mind; for they only take right and sound views of all things and all events, natural and spiritual, and have, as the apostle says, "the mind of Christ."

You see, then, what God has not given, and what he has given. The gospel does not give us slavish fear, bondage, darkness, and death. The gospel does not preach to us wrath, condemnation, and hell. The gospel does not hold out curses and punishment and misery. This is not the gospel message, the gospel tenor, or the gospel spirit. The law does this, but the gospel does it not. The gospel holds forth and reveals Christ. The gospel proclaims pardon and peace, salvation and deliverance through atoning blood and justifying righteousness. And the gospel when applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, becomes "a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." To possess these three signal blessings is to possess true religion, vital godliness, real spirituality—a religion such as will save the soul from death and hell. To have this made vitally known is to have the religion of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Moses, of David, of all the ancient martyrs, of all the apostles and prophets, and of that innumerable company that John saw in vision, "with palms in their hands," who had "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." All these had a religion given them of God; and though they may have had, as we may have had or still have, their servile fears, their slavish doubts, their miserable guilt of conscience, their dark and gloomy hours of bondage, yet they all possessed the "spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." And such is ever the effect of God's grace, as wrought by his own divine power in the heart.

The question for us to ask ourselves is, how far we are partakers of this divine religion? We may have slavish fear, guilt, bondage,

darkness, and death. Though these are felt by many a child of God, and by all during different periods of their spiritual life, yet are they not evidences of our being partakers of grace? Have we "the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind?" Have we any reason to believe that God by his grace has wrought anything in our hearts of a saving nature? If we have, it will be proved as such. We shall have the enjoyment here, and to him will be rendered here and hereafter all the praise, honour, and glory due to his glorious and blessed name.

The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Christ

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Morning, September 16, 1866

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Ephesians 1:17, 18

Where there is little prayer, there is little grace. Where there is much grace, there is much prayer. I mean, of course, spiritual prayer; for there may be much prayer which is not spiritual. When, therefore, I lay it down as a religious maxim, a spiritual test, that where there is little prayer there is little grace, I cannot similarly adduce the converse of the proposition and say, "Where there is much prayer there is much grace;" for there are heaps upon heaps of prayers made every day throughout this land in which there is not one grain or atom of grace. Of such prayers I take no account. Like "the sacrifice of the wicked," they are "an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 15:8); and God himself has testified of them and of their offerers, "When ye make many prayers I will not hear." (Isa. 1:15.) The Pharisees "for a pretence made long prayers," and they even thought that "they should be heard for their much speaking." Much prayer, therefore, is no index of the grace of God, or of the acceptance of its offerer as a spiritual worshipper. But where there is much of the grace of God, it will much manifest itself in prayer and supplication. If I may use a figure—and you know I am fond of figures—we may call prayer the thermometer of the soul. The heart we may compare to the bulb, and prayer to the spirit in it which rises and sinks within the tube. Now, when the beams of the Sun of righteousness play round and upon the heart, the spirit of prayer expands and rises upwards in earnest supplication; and the height to which it rises and the length of time during which it

continues at a certain height manifest the warmth and the duration of the power of God in the soul. But in nature the sun does not always shine; clouds gather over the sky; chilly nights come on; and there are wintry frosts as well as summer days, the effect of all which is soon seen in the thermometer, for the spirit gradually sinks in the tube, and in very cold and severe weather seems almost to retire out of sight into the bulb, and rises but a few degrees in the scale. So in grace, when the Sun of righteousness withdraws his cheering presence, dark clouds come on, and damp, chilly night often gathers over the soul. The Lord, we read, "has made summer and winter" (Psa. 74:17); and thus even in grace there is a winter as well as a summer season. "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?" (Psa. 147:15, 16, 17.) "Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word." (Psa. 148:8.) We thus see that in giving snow like wool, and casting forth his ice like morsels, the word of God runneth very swiftly; and that snow and vapours and stormy wind are as much a fulfilling of his word as preparing rain for the earth, and making the grass to grow upon the mountains. Do we not see in all this a lively representation of the dealings of God with the soul as well as of his dealings with the earth? When, then, these wintry seasons come on and succeed the summer days, the Spirit of grace and of supplications seems to sink almost into the bulb of the heart, out of which it is not able to expand itself and rise till some warm ray again shines upon it, and the Beloved says, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." (Song Sol. 2:10, 11, 12.)

But I will not this morning give you a sermon upon prayer, nor indeed should I have dwelt even thus long upon that subject had it not been so closely connected with our text; for you have probably observed that the words of the apostle which I have read, and from which I hope to preach to you contain a part of

the prayer of that man of God.

Now, there are several things very noteworthy in this man of God viewed as a praying man, and especially as so continually engaged in prayer and supplication for the churches, which I wish to bring before you.

1. And first, have you ever noticed the striking fact that there is scarcely a single epistle written by him in which the apostle does not make *special mention of his prayers* for the church or the individual to whom he addresses his weighty letters? He was not content, as perhaps some of us are, with praying for himself. His large heart embraced all the family of God, and was almost more fervent on their behalf than on his own. Have you not also found as a matter of gracious experience, that the more you can pray for yourself the more you can pray for the family of God; and that there are times and seasons when you can pray for others almost more fervently than you can pray for yourself? It is good to mingle prayers and supplications for the saints, and for those especially with whom we are personally connected by family ties or church relationship, with prayer and supplication for ourselves.

2. Mark another thing: the union of *thanksgiving* with prayer in the breast of this man of God. "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Thanksgiving gives, so to speak, wings to prayer. It is like the incense which the priest carried into the tabernacle that filled the house of the Lord with sweet savour. We therefore read, "They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord." Praise especially glorifies God,—"*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.*" (Psa. 50:23.) And if we were under the Divine blessing, more to mingle thankfulness for mercies passed with prayers for mercies to come, it might make our petitions more of a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Like the union of the different spices in the incense, it might give additional influence to our prayers, and they might enter more effectually into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

3. But take another feature so visibly stamped upon the prayers of the apostle in the chapter now before us: the *cause* that drew forth thanksgiving and prayer out of his breast. It was "when he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints." No sooner were tidings brought to him that these Ephesian believers were living in the blessed exercise of faith in the Son of God, and abounded in love to all the saints, than it touched the springs of prayer and thanksgiving in his breast, and the water welled forth in a stream of praise and supplication. So it will be with us when we read or hear of those who believe in the Son of God, and manifest their love to the Lord Jesus by loving his people, if we have any of Paul's grace; for such blessed tidings create a sweet union of heart and spirit with them, so that we can bless the Lord for his grace in them, and beg of him to manifest himself more and more both unto them and unto us.

4. Nor must I pass by another feature in this prayer of the apostle almost more worthy of notice than those which I have mentioned. I mean the *subject matter* of his desires and supplications; for this is a point especially worthy of our consideration that we may examine our prayers in the light of his. The Holy Ghost guided him how to pray for others as well as for himself, and has placed upon permanent record two solemn prayers in this epistle, that they might be, so to speak, patterns of what prayer is, or should be, on behalf of others and ourselves. It would be well, then, if we were to examine the prayers we offer for ourselves and for others by these sacred patterns, and see how far they correspond with them in spirit and in substance, if not in letter and word.

But in order to do this more clearly and effectually, I shall endeavour to bring before you the prayer of the apostle as contained in the latter part of this chapter. And as the subject is too long for me to handle fully in one discourse, I shall take up a portion of his prayer this morning in connection with my text, and reserve the remaining for the afternoon service.

After, then, this long introduction, we will now come to the

special subject of this morning's meditation. Observe, with me, three prominent features in it.

I.—*First*, the *titles* by which the apostle calls the God to whom he directs his prayer. He calls him "the *God of our Lord Jesus Christ*," and "the *Father of glory*."

II.—*Secondly*, the special blessing prayed for,—"*the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation*."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *fruits and results* of those blessings when they are so freely given, which we shall find to be these four:—1. They *enlighten the eyes* of the understanding. 2. They give us a *knowledge of Christ*. 3. A knowledge of the *hope of his calling*. 4. A knowledge of the *riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*.

As I open up these divine realities, and you follow me with your usual attention, I venture to hope that before I have finished my discourse they may be made clear to your mind, and if the Lord be pleased to seal them with power upon your soul, and give you a testimony of your personal interest in them, you will, I am sure, freely give him all the glory.

I.—I shall first then, call your attention to the *titles* which the apostle gives to God.

You will observe that they are two, and that he speaks of him first as "the *God of our Lord Jesus Christ*," and secondly as "the *Father of glory*." I shall endeavour, with God's help and blessing, to open the meaning of both of these titles, and especially to show their connection with our text.

You have, perhaps, observed in other parts of Scripture, the Epistles especially, that certain titles are ascribed to God, and that these titles often stand in close connection with the blessings spoken of or prayed for. Let me open up this point by naming a few examples. In 1 Peter 5:10, we find the apostle thus speaking,

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." You will observe that God is there termed by the apostle "the God of all grace," and that this special title stands in close connection with his making the Church of God perfect, stablishing, strengthening, and settling her. Do you not see the connection, and that because he is "the God of all grace" he is able and willing to strengthen and establish the Church through suffering? If you will examine in the same way Rom. 15, you will find in it various titles ascribed to God, and you will find a connection between the special title given to him and the grace which he communicates or the blessings which he imparts. Thus in verse 5 he is called "the God of patience and consolation," which connects it with the preceding verse, where we read "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." If then we have patience and comfort, the God of patience and consolation must be the author of all the patience given, and all the consolation felt; and if blessed with this patience and this consolation, we shall be "like minded one toward another according to, or after the example of Christ Jesus;" for nothing more enables us to bear with others than a feeling sense how God has borne with us, and every sip of gospel consolation will strengthen us to walk after the example of Jesus. In the same chapter, 13th verse, God is spoken of as the "God of hope," and the connection is that "the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." In the last verse of that chapter he is spoken of as "the God of peace," and the prayer offered in connection with that title is that he "would be with them all," that he might be with them all, viz., to give them that peace which would be felt by his presence with them. In 2 Cor. 1:3, he is spoken of as "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations," thus connecting what he is as "the God of all comfort" with the communication of it to his afflicted people. We thus see that the titles of God, given to him in the word of truth, are not mere arbitrary descriptions of his grace or of his glory unconnected with the communication of special blessings, but contain not only

sweet and general instructions, but such as are suitable to particular circumstances. They are thus meant not only to instruct us into the character of God and give us right views of his divine Majesty that we may know who and what he is, but also to show how suitable every distinctive character is to our particular and individual wants. Do we want grace to save, grace to sanctify, grace to keep, grace to bless; grace to be with us all through our life, and grace to support and comfort us in the arms of death? He is the God of all the grace that we can ever want or he can ever give. What limit can you put to "all grace?" and if he is "the God of all grace," where else shall we look for it, and who else can bestow it on us? There is not a grace you need, nor a blessing which grace can give which is not contained in the words "all grace," and as the God of all grace, he holds it in his bounteous heart and hands to bestow it freely according to the good pleasure of his will. Do we want patience to bear us up and support us under all our trials and afflictions? He is "the God of patience," and therefore can give us all that is needed in every tribulation. Do we want consolation under heavy afflictions, cutting sorrows, and deep trials? He is "the God of consolation." Nay, "the God of all comfort," so that all the consolation and comfort which we can need or he sees fit to bestow so dwells in him that he has but to communicate it out of his own fulness, and it flows forth as a stream out of a fountain. Do we want hope, that anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast? He is "the God of hope," and therefore can let down that blessed anchor into our breast to hold us up amid every storm. Do we want peace, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, the peace which flows like a river, peace in believing, peace to accompany us through life, and peace to calm and compose us in death? He is the "God of peace," and being the God of peace can at once speak peace to the afflicted soul or wounded conscience, and set up his own blessed kingdom in the heart, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." We thus see that these titles of God, as used by the inspired writers of the New Testament, are not mere arbitrary designations used without intention or discrimination, but are intended to unfold to us the diversified character of God, and

more especially to instruct and assure us that as being the God of all these blessings as indicated by his titles, he has but to speak, and the blessings come in rich abundance out of his gracious and glorious fulness into our breast.

Now, view the titles ascribed to God in our text in that light. Look at the two titles to which I have called your attention with a special reference to their connection with the blessings prayed for by the apostle. I have already observed that they are 1. "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" and 2. "the Father of glory." I shall, now then, consider each of them with a view to this connection.

i. As "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." How is God "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Is he the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as regards his Sonship and Deity? Or as regards his humanity? Or as respects his complex person, God-Man, Immanuel, God with us? Let us look at these points in the light of divine truth.

1. God is essentially invisible. He "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see." How then can we know him? How then can we see him? That we might both know and see him he has been pleased in the depths of his wisdom and mercy to manifest himself in the Person of his dear Son. This is John's blessed testimony: "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The same witness also declares, "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" (1 John 1:1); and that this essential Word might be manifested, John also testifies, "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.) This, then, is our unspeakable mercy, that we have not to go far to find God; for having revealed himself in the Person of his dear Son, when we see Christ we see God. As the Lord answered his unbelieving disciple when he said unto him, "Lord, show us the Father:" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known

me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?" Here, then, is our chief blessedness, that the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the great and glorious self-existent I AM, who fills heaven and earth with his glory, is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. We want a Person to be the object of our faith; for faith needs an object, and especially in the matter of worship or service, a personal object. Do you not feel that you want some personal object to believe in, to hope in, to worship, to adore, to love? The feeling of this want has been the source of idolatry. When men had lost the knowledge of the only true God and could not look forward in faith to the Messiah who was to be revealed, they set up a visible idol that they might have a personal object to worship—a visible representation, as they conceived, of invisible Deity. A personal God, then, is an object with us of prime necessity, for we cannot worship what is unknown or wholly invisible. The invisible God therefore has made himself visible in the Person of his dear Son; and when he is pleased to shine into the heart, he makes himself known there in his personal glory, as the apostle beautifully 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.) It is in the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, that God is thus seen and known; and when the Lord the Spirit takes the veil of unbelief and ignorance off our heart, then is fulfilled that inward transformation into the same glory of which the apostle testifies: "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.)

Now it is most necessary for our faith and hope to believe in this glorious gospel which thus makes known the glory of God in the face, or, as the word might be rendered, the Person of Jesus Christ; for we cannot worship or serve God under a sense of his burning displeasure in a broken law. We cannot draw nigh to the Majesty of heaven as a consuming fire, any more than the children of Israel could draw near to Sinai's blazing top. But he

has come near to us when we could not come nigh to him. He has come near to us in the face of a Mediator; "for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Thus he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if we believe in his name he is our God also. As our Lord blessedly said by Mary to his disciples, "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Why your Father? Because my Father. Why your God? Because my God.

But you will be desirous to hear more clearly and particularly, in what sense the God of all our mercies is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is then, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" in various ways.

1. First, he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal Father of the eternal Son. In that sense therefore, as regards his *Deity and Sonship*, he is the God of Our Lord Jesus Christ; the second Person in the sacred Trinity being the true, proper, and eternal Son of the Father in truth and love; in that highest, truest, noblest sense therefore he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst we firmly hold the essential co-eternity and co-equality of the Son with the Father, we fully accept that peculiar relationship which he bears to him as being his only begotten Son; and though reason cannot understand or explain the nature of this relationship, yet faith receives, and love embraces the divine testimony that he is "the Son of the living God," and as such, God is his God.

2. But in his *human* nature, in what he is as God's servant he bears that peculiar relationship to the Father whereby God is his God. Nor will you fail to observe a peculiar blessedness in this circumstance that in every relation which the Lord Jesus bears to his heavenly Father, God is still his God. The Son of God lost nothing of his Sonship and Deity by taking our nature into union with his divine Person. Though he was God's servant ("Behold my servant whom I uphold," Isai. 42:1) he was still God's Son; and though reduced so low as to say of himself, "I am a worm and no

man," yet God was still his God; for in his lowest humiliation, in the hour of his bitterest agony, he could still cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." It is beautiful and blessed thus to trace what our Lord was before he came into the world, and what he was when he was in the world, and to see by the eye of faith, that as he was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his Person when he was in heaven, so though he humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, he lost not an atom of his eternal glory, but still possessed the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

3. He is also "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" as the *God-Man Mediator* at the right-hand of the Father. God has exalted Jesus with his own right-hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, and in this sense therefore he is his God. Nothing is more strengthening to faith than to view the Son of God in his present glory as the great High Priest over the house of God. This gives us a holy confidence to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. We see in a crucified Christ, a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and in a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ, an Intercessor, an Advocate, a Mediator ever presenting to the Father the virtue and validity of his finished work. We are thus encouraged, "to 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." (Heb. 10:22.) This view of Jesus in his mediatorial glory at the right hand of the Father, gathers up our roving thoughts, guides and influences our conceptions of God, and restraining all those vague, wild, and delusive ideas which our natural heart might frame of him, which have ever been the fruitful root of error and false worship, draws up our faith and affections to him as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and teaches us to worship him acceptably in the Son of his love. The connection of this title with the blessings prayed for, I shall have occasion presently to explain.

ii. The second title by which the apostle calls him, is "*The Father of glory*," which may mean, according to a common Hebraism, the glorious Father. But I prefer to take the words in their natural and literal sense, and to understand that by "the Father of glory," is meant, that God is the Author of all glory. As he is the Father of mercies by being the Author of all mercies; so he is the Father of glory by being the Author of all glory. From him all glory comes; to him all glory flows. Hence, heaven itself would not be glorious unless God were there in his essential glory; earth would not be glorious unless it were the creation of God's fingers and bore upon every object the impress of a divine hand. All glory comes from him who dwells in essential glory, and out of him and without him, glory there is none. Thus, of all the glory that fills heaven and earth, of all the glory that will ever fill the souls of the redeemed to all eternity, God is the Father, as its essential Source and only Fountain; and as giving it forth to the creatures of his hand, that illuminated with its light and possessed of its life, they may show forth that glory here in its beginning, hereafter in its ending, if that may be called ending, which will be the blaze of an eternal day, where neither sun, nor moon, nor stars will be needed, for "the glory of the Lord will lighten that heavenly city and the Lamb will be the light thereof."

But now take these two titles in their connection with each other, and as bearing upon our personal experience.

As "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," he draws forth our faith, our hope, and our love; as "the Father of glory" he impresses our mind with a solemn reverence of his great name, and gives us a foretaste also of the glory which shall be revealed. Thus would we worship him in spirit and in truth, would we draw near to his throne with some measure of holy confidence, would we love his name, we do so as viewing him by faith the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Would we be impressed with a solemn reverence of his dread Majesty, and yet look forward with a good hope through grace to the glory to be revealed, we bow down before him as "the Father of glory." Thus these titles are not mere arbitrary

names, but lessons pregnant with most instructive and establishing truth. When you approach the throne of grace, the Lord the Spirit give you a view of him whom you worship as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of glory; and you will find that one of these titles will draw forth your faith upon the Son of God, and the other will aid in solemnising and sweetening your earnest petitions for spiritual blessings.

II.—But I now pass on to the special blessing prayed for by the apostle. This was "*the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.*"

Wisdom is bounded by the confines of earth, and never can rise beyond it. Needful for time, it is useless for eternity. It would be foolish to disparage and cast contempt upon human intellect, and what it has achieved not only in matters of pure science, but as providing in various ways for the daily necessities and conveniences of life. What but intellectual science, combined with practical skill, has built and navigates our ships, constructed our railways, devised and made our telegraphs, not to say, raised our crops, furnished our houses, and filled the land with wealth and abundance? Daily to enjoy all its benefits, and yet to cast contempt on human science and wisdom is to abuse the hand which feeds and clothes us, warms our houses, and lights up our streets. Nor would we disparage mental intellect when rightly guided by the blessed Spirit, or human learning when duly sanctified to the glory of God and the good of his people. It is only when it steps out of its place, and claims to understand divine things without divine teaching, that it is to be thrust aside as an intruder. No man by natural wisdom ever knew God. Well, therefore, and wisely does Zophar speak, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." (Job 11:7, 8, 9.) So high, so deep is the knowledge of God, that it is out of the sight and out of the reach of man's natural understanding; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." There is, then, a wisdom which earth

knows not, and of which the only wise God is the Author and Giver. This is the wisdom spoken of in our text.

But you will observe that the blessing prayed for is not wisdom, even heavenly wisdom simply and nakedly, but "the Spirit of wisdom," by which I understand the Holy Ghost, who is the Author and Giver of all spiritual wisdom. But this ascription of the gift of wisdom to the blessed Spirit may seem, at first sight, to clash with what I have just advanced, that God, that is, God the Father, is the Giver of all wisdom. But not so. Each person in the Trinity being alike God, each may be said to be the Author and Giver of all grace and glory. Thus, not only is the Father the Giver of all wisdom, and the Holy Ghost the Author of it by his teaching and inspiration, but our blessed Lord, the Son of the Father in truth and love, is said to be of God "made unto us wisdom," and this is not so much by imputation as by all wisdom dwelling in his fulness, and his giving out of that fulness wisdom to supply all our need and make us wise unto salvation. When our gracious Lord went up on high, he received gifts for men, and especially the gift of the Holy Ghost, as was made manifest on the day of Pentecost, as Peter testified on that memorable occasion, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:32, 33.) When, then, the apostle prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto the Ephesian saints the Spirit of wisdom, it was the expression of his heart's desire that God would fulfil in their experience, the promise which he had given to his dear Son by bestowing upon them the Spirit of wisdom to lead them into all truth.

Now, what is the first lesson which the Spirit of wisdom as thus given, writes upon our hearts when he is sent to make us wise unto salvation? Is not his first lesson that which teaches us to flee from the wrath to come? Is it not his first gracious work to show us what we are as sinners before a holy God, by planting convictions of sin in our breast? And does he not with those convictions, communicate a secret power whereby there is a

fleeing from the wrath thus apprehended? Until the Spirit has given us wisdom to flee from the wrath to come, under that cloud of wrath we must needs be; for the wrath of God abideth on him who believeth not in his dear Son. (John 3:36.) Similarly, until he give us wisdom to flee from the curse of the law to the blessing of the gospel, we are still under the curse and bondage of the law. Until he has given us wisdom to see, and faith to believe in the Son of God so as to embrace him in faith and affection as revealed in the word, we are still under guilt and condemnation. Putting these things therefore together, we may say that the Spirit of wisdom thus given, instructs us mainly in these two important lessons: what we are by nature and what we are by grace; what we have to flee from and what we have to flee unto; what sin is and what salvation is; what is man's misery and what is God's mercy. Let this suffice for the present to show what the Spirit of wisdom is, for I shall have other points to touch upon before I finish my subject.

ii. He is also called in our text, "*the Spirit of revelation.*" There is much divine truth and gracious experience couched in these words. However men may hate and despise the doctrine of inward revelation to the soul now by the power of the Spirit as distinct from the outward revelation in the word of truth by the same Spirit, I am thoroughly satisfied in my own mind, that no man can rightly and savingly know the things of God but by the Spirit of revelation. Nor do I believe that Christ can be effectually known until revealed unto and in us by the Spirit. Is not this the Lord's own testimony? "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21.) Is not Christ manifesting himself the same as Christ revealing himself? And does not Paul speak of God's revealing his Son in him (Gal. 1:16), of Christ being formed in us (Gal. 4:19), and of being in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27)? Surely these revealed and inward blessings are something more than the outward revelation of Christ in the written word.

But there is sometimes a misunderstanding of what is meant by

the word revelation. Misled by the current meaning of the word, and not exactly knowing or attending to its true signification, whilst most are deriding all idea of inward revelation in these days, some are looking for and expecting something mysterious which God has never promised in the word, and which he rarely or scarcely ever gives; and others by such expectations lay themselves open to the delusions of Satan as an angel of light. We are not to look for dreams, visions, voices, supernatural appearances, sights in the sky, open and outward views of Christ in his glory, or of Christ hanging upon the cross. We are not to expect or even desire any thing that is visible, something which the eye of sense might almost apprehend or the bodily finger almost touch. I cannot, I dare not, limit the power or the wisdom of God: and I doubt not that some, if not many of the Lord's people, have been so powerfully impressed by what they have seen and heard of and from the Lord, that it was to them as if they had actually seen his bodily shape or heard his spoken voice. But we walk by faith, not by sight, and if we seem to see invisible things, we see them only by the eye of faith, or if we hear gracious words, we hear them only by the ear of faith. God in his word has given no promise to the natural eye or the natural ear; nor are we saved by what our natural eyes see or our natural ears hear. It is by grace we are saved through faith, and not by seeing supernatural sights or hearing audible words. The apostle Paul was indeed caught up to the third heaven, and there heard unspeakable words, and doubtless viewed ravishing sights; but the Holy Ghost has drawn a veil over them, for the apostle says of them, that they were "things not lawful for a man to utter."

But I do not know a better explanation of the word "revelation" than is contained in the signification of the term itself. It means, literally, uncovering, or taking a veil off an object. There are two of those veils which the Spirit of wisdom and revelation takes off. There is a veil by nature upon the heart and a veil upon the word, and revelation is a removing of these two veils, and that at the same time and by the same power. When, then, this double veil is graciously taken off by the Spirit, he becomes a Spirit of

revelation. You will find this double veil spoken of in 2 Cor. 3, where the apostle is speaking of the veil which Moses put over his face. When, then, we turn to the Lord by the power of his grace, the veil is taken away both from the heart and from the word. Thus, as we are to believe nothing except what is written in the word; so we can know nothing, vitally, spiritually, savingly, except what is revealed in the heart. God does not speak with a new revelation from heaven, nor give us something with his own voice from above, as though he would furnish us with a new Bible, or reveal to us some fresh truth not contained in it. All truth is in the Scripture; but though truth is in the Scripture, there is a veil over the book of God, so that we can neither understand nor believe it until it is removed. But when the Lord the Spirit is pleased to take the veil of unbelief and ignorance from off the mind, and to remove the veil from off the word of truth, and thus gives us power to receive and believe what God has there written, this is a revelation, or an uncovering of the word without, and the heart within; and the Spirit who works this, is a Spirit of revelation; for it is the Lord the Spirit who takes the veil away, as the apostle declares: "Now the Lord is that Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:17.) It is thus that Christ is revealed in the heart, as he is revealed in the word. Do we see by faith his Deity? It is because in the word he is revealed in the Scriptures as God, and the Son of God. Do we see by faith his humanity? It is because he is spoken of in the word as the Son of man. Do we see his complex Person as the God-Man? It is because he is revealed there as Immanuel, God with us. Many of the dear saints of God, when they hear or read of a revelation of Christ, are tempted to look for some supernatural sight or mysterious manifestation which God has never promised to give. He will reveal his dear Son in them and make him known unto them; but it will be in his way, not in theirs, in harmony with his word, and not with the fancies or expectations of their own mind.

III.—Having thus far, then, spoken of the blessing prayed for by the apostle, I shall now endeavour to bring before you, as I proposed, what he knew would be the *fruits* and *results* of this divine gift of wisdom and revelation. I mentioned that they were

four.

i. The first of these fruits is to *enlighten the eyes of our understanding*.

Our understanding was darkened by the fall; so darkened that no ray of light remains in it of that knowledge of God which Adam possessed when made in his likeness and after his image. Unless, therefore, God is pleased to cast a ray of light into the soul to remove this native darkness, it still remains in the very shadow of death. Now, one of the first fruits and effects of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, is to enlighten the eyes of the understanding. You will recollect that I was speaking just now of the veil of ignorance and unbelief which is spread by nature both over our heart and over the word of truth, and that this double veil was taken away by the Spirit of revelation. As, then, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation takes off this veil, he at the same time and by the same act of divine power, enlightens the eyes of our understanding. The blessed Lord, we read, after the resurrection, opened the understanding of his disciples that they might understand the Scriptures. When Paul was called by grace, and Ananias came unto him as sent by the Lord, that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost, there fell from his eyes as it were scales. It is true that his natural eyes had been blinded by the brightness of the light which shone into them at Damascus' gate; but we may view this point also as a representation of the enlightening of the eyes of his understanding. The scales of ignorance and unbelief which before had sealed his eyes in blindness, dropped from them when he received the Holy Ghost. Then he saw light in God's light. So you, so I, though not called so powerfully or so miraculously as he, like him, once had our eyes sealed with the thick scales of darkness, ignorance, and unbelief. We read the word, but understood it not; we might even have heard the word preached, but we knew nothing of the truths sounded in our ears. There was a veil of ignorance over our heart, over the Scripture, and over the truth preached from the Scripture. We did not, could not understand what was addressed to our conscience in the clearest,

plainest manner; nor did we care to understand it. But there was a memorable time when the Lord was pleased to shine with a ray of light into our dark benighted mind; and life and power attending that heavenly ray, there was communicated thereby a measure of spiritual understanding of divine truth. It might have been a word of conviction or a word of sharp rebuke and reproof. God does not limit himself nor tie his hands to work in the same way upon the hearts of all his people. He speaks, and that with power to each and all of them through his word; and when he thus speaks with power his divine voice, as in creation, says, "Let there be light, and there was light." The apostle, therefore, runs a parallel between the light given in creation and the light given in grace. "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.) We cannot indeed tell *how* it was done, though we may know in some measure *when* it was done. Does not our Lord say of regeneration? "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.) But the effects of the wind are seen, though not the wind itself; and it is the effects which make manifest the cause. So we can, I hope, some of us, look back to the time when the eyes of our understanding were sensibly enlightened; when a mysterious light was cast into our souls, for we saw things as we never saw them before, understood them as we never understood them before, believed them as we never believed them before, felt them as we had never felt them before. It was then, for the first time, we began to apprehend the things of God as personal matters, as divine realities which concerned our own soul and our own salvation; and eternal matters were then laid upon our mind, which before we had neither thought of nor cared about. Now, I believe I may say, that until this be done, nothing is done. Until the eyes of the understanding are enlightened, no truth can reach the heart with any power; for it is clogged and obscured by a darkened understanding. The heart is like a piece of thick, opaque, or darkened glass, through which no light can enter, and it thus offers an effectual obstruction to the entrance of God's

word. But God makes his own way for his own truth; "The entrance of thy words giveth light." When God then speaks by his word, light enters with it, and this light shining into the dark recesses of the breast penetrates into those remote corners which hold the very roots of sin, those dens and caves in which every unclean reptile crawls and breeds.

Now, all the way through our journey heavenward, we shall find our continual need of this enlightening of the eyes of our understanding. Many persons, and amongst them, even some ministers who profess to know and preach the truth, cannot distinguish between the gracious enlightening of the eyes of the understanding and what is called head knowledge; and therefore, sillily and almost stupidly put down as carnal and worthless that divine gift which they cannot understand. But, in judgment, it is a great blessing to have a clear, enlightened understanding in the precious things of God. It is a great blessing to be able to read the word of God with an understanding eye; for an understanding eye ever goes hand in hand with a believing heart. Can I believe God's truth if I understand not God's truth? Can I believe a promise if I understand not the meaning of a promise? Can I obey a precept if I understand not the meaning of a precept? Can I believe in the Son of God unless I have some gracious understanding of his Deity, humanity, and finished work, atoning blood and justifying righteousness? I must have an enlightened understanding that I may apprehend God's truth as God has revealed it, or else how can I believe, experience and realise it? This enlightened understanding dwells in a regenerate soul. It is "the light of life," which the Lord has promised to give, that we should not abide in darkness; and was a part of the work given to Paul as an instrument, for he was sent to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light."

ii. The next blessing is a *knowledge of Christ*, for the apostle prays that God would give them "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

We cannot know Christ except by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. But the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation

communicated to the soul as a divine blessing, is given for the express purpose of leading us into a gracious, spiritual knowledge of the Son of God. You perhaps are mourning and sighing under a sense of your darkness and ignorance, and take that as a very bad mark against you, especially when you hear how grace enlightens the eyes of the understanding. Most of God's people have to lament and sigh under the burden of a darkened mind and an understanding not illuminated to the degree that they would desire. But this very sense of your ignorance shows that you have some light to see it, and the complaint you make is a proof that you have some life to feel it. The eyes of our understanding are for the most part only partially enlightened; the knowledge we have of Christ is but faint and feeble, scanty and imperfect. We only get glimpses, glances, and passing rays of his gracious Majesty. The Sun of righteousness has not risen in its full orb; it is not yet his day. The morning may have dawned, and the day-star may have risen; beams and rays may have shot athwart the air, and given us some knowledge of the Son of God; yet we may have much to complain and mourn over in our weak understanding, in our narrow minds, in our unbelieving hearts, and the difficulty and perplexity which often beset us through want of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. If the Ephesians had all the wisdom and all the revelation that they could have had, why should the apostle offer up this prayer for them? If the eyes of their understanding were so enlightened that they needed no further teaching, why should he pour his soul out before God on their behalf, that he would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and enlighten the eyes of their understanding? It is because we sensibly feel our deficiency in these matters that we beg of God to give us the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation; as so desirous to know the Son of God for ourselves, and yet knowing so little of his Person and work, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory. It is because we feel so much of the old veil of ignorance upon the word and upon our heart, that we desire to see light in God's light, and that he himself would enlighten our darkness that we sleep not the sleep of death. It is because we know so little of the darling Son of God, and feel the scantiness and imperfection of our knowledge, that we long for a clearer,

brighter, and more blessed revelation of him to our soul. Write not therefore bitter things against yourself because your understanding is so weak and your knowledge of Christ so feeble, and you have not attained to that degree of faith and hope and love you desire. Who in this life sees but through a glass darkly? Who in this life has those clear and bright views of the Son of God with which he would desire to be favoured? And yet we are brought to this point to say with the apostle, "Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

iii. But the apostle speaks of another fruit of this gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation—that *"they might know what was the hope of his calling."*

Calling is a special blessing of God, for it leads to every other blessing. "Whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Divine calling is the beginning of divine life. But there is a blessed hope stored up in the bosom of this calling which cannot be realised till the calling itself is made plain. We are therefore bidden to make our calling and election sure, because in the bosom of the calling there is lodged a hope which can only expand itself as the calling is made clear. We may compare it to a rose, or any other flower just in bud. In the bosom of the rose there are petals enfolding themselves leaf over leaf; but when the rose expands itself in full bloom, then the bosom of the rose comes up to view. So in the bosom of calling there is lodged every blessing that God can give for time and eternity, especially what the apostle calls the "hope of eternal life." Now, what the apostle prays for is, that the saints of God might know "what is the hope of this calling;" in other words, that they might clearly and fully realise their calling as being of God; be able to look back upon the first work of grace upon their soul; and by believing *that* to have been wrought in their heart by the special power of God, see what the bosom of that calling contains and gradually unfolds. This the apostle calls "the hope," by which I understand the hope of eternal life; the hope of salvation by the Son of God; the hope that all things shall work together for their

good; the hope that Satan shall be defeated and all his arts and arms put to the rout; and that when they have journeyed through life's lonely, sorrowful vale, they shall at last be welcomed to the mansions of the blest. In fact, every thing which hope embraces, and in which it anchors, may be considered as embosomed in our call by grace; and as the hope thus engendered is made more and more clear, it becomes more manifestly "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

When then, the eyes of your understanding are enlightened to see your calling plain and clear; when the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to you in the knowledge of Christ; when the Lord himself manifests himself in his beauty, blessedness, grace and glory, it casts such a ray of divine light upon the first work of grace upon the soul, which might have lain long obscured; and it so sweetly assures the believer that God has called him by his grace, that every blessing which God can give seems locked up and enfolded in it. This part of gracious experience is very desirable to be able to realise, for we often do not know what is the hope of our calling. We grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys, swallowed up it may be by carking cares and worldly anxieties, and covered over with the folds of time and sense. But there are times and seasons when the Lord is pleased to enlighten the eyes of the understanding, and give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. And what is the effect? To see what is the hope of his calling, and that by it God has called us to his eternal glory; to the knowledge and enjoyment of himself; from sin to salvation, from law to gospel, from misery to mercy; from hell to heaven; for this calling is a special token of God's everlasting love to our souls. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

iv. The last fruit and result of the gift of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ is to know "the riches of the *glory of his inheritance in the saints.*" I wish that time and strength were allowed me to unfold all the blessedness contained in these

words; but I can only give you a sip out of this rich, overflowing spring.

God is the inheritance of his saints, and what is more astonishing still, the saints are the inheritance of God, and especially of God's dear Son; and so delighted is he with his inheritance that he says in one of the Psalms, in the language of prophecy, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psl. 16:6.) That these are the words of Christ is evident from the connection, for he says in the same psalm "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." All the delight that the church takes in Christ is but a drop compared with the ocean of Christ's delight in her. We can only love to the utmost of finite power; he loves to the utmost of infinite power. Our love, therefore, is finite and human; his love is infinite and divine. The delight therefore that Christ takes in the church as far exceeds the delight which the church takes in him, as what is infinite exceeds what is finite, as God is greater than man. The church, then, is Christ's inheritance; and as his mystical body consists wholly of saints, his inheritance is said to be in the saints. O, what must have been the love of Christ's heart to his beloved bride to move him to come down from heaven to earth and wade through a sea of suffering and blood to redeem her from the lowest! O what love was there? And what an inheritance! How glorious in his eyes, though so mean and worthless in the eyes of man. Nay, glorious in his eyes, even amidst all the depths of the fall; for our gracious Lord saw and loved the church, not in her filth and rags, but resplendent in all the beauties of holiness. He saw her as his darling bride, radiant in all the splendours of heaven, clothed in a robe of righteousness, and decked with those resplendent jewels with which he himself had adorned her. Hear her language as thus decked and adorned: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for 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." This glorious church, then, is Christ's inheritance; and the apostle prays that

we may know the riches of his glory in this inheritance, that we may look beyond a few poor dying men and women, look beyond the wrappings of the creature, and see what a saint of God really is as dressed in immortal robes, and made meet to sit down at the supper of the Lamb. We now see men and women wrapped in the miserable rags of our fallen humanity; but we do not see in them what they will be when resplendent with all the glories of heaven. But Christ sees them as we do not, comely in his comeliness and complete in him. If, then, we were able to look a little beyond these mere trappings of humanity and these creature rags, which wrap up a mortal body and contain in the rags of mortality an immortal soul, and could realise that one day these rags of mortality will be changed into a glorious body, according to the pattern of the glorified body of Christ, we should enter a little into Christ's love for the church, and the certainty that every saint would be brought to see him as he is and to dwell with him in the matchless perfection of his own glorious splendour.

How these things should lift us up out of the mud and mire of this wretched world. If the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would but give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; if he would but enlighten the eyes of our understanding; if he would give us to know more what is the hope of our calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, we should not be such muck-worms, raking and scraping a few straws together, and running about like ants with our morsel of grain. We should have our affections fixed more on things above; we should know more of Christ, enjoy more of Christ, be more like Christ, and walk more as Christ walked; we should love the saints of God more, esteem them more, honour them more, and bear with them more; and we should look forward to an eternal inheritance, when mortality would be swallowed up of life. If these things were brought into our hearts with divine power, how they would sweeten every bitter cup and carry us through every changing scene, until at last we were landed above to see the Lord as he is in the full perfection of his uncreated glory.

Spiritual Apprehension and Deficient Attainment

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, June 4, 1865

"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." Philippians 3:12

Possession and enjoyment—personal possession, and spiritual, experimental enjoyment of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the love of God, and of the communion of the Holy Ghost, and in possessing and enjoying these to possess and enjoy all that can be known of a Triune God here below, as it is the peculiar privilege and supreme blessedness of the living family of God, so it is the soul of all true religion, and the sum and substance of all vital godliness. Our blessed Lord therefore declared, "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21.) So also testifies the apostle: "The kingdom of God," that is, this internal, spiritual kingdom, "is not in word but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20); and again, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) There is a solid reality, an enduring substance, in the divine teachings and gracious operations of the blessed Spirit in the heart. Wisdom, therefore, cries aloud, "at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors:" "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." (Prov. 8:20, 21.) It is this inheriting of substance, even in the present life, which distinguishes a living from a dead faith, for "faith," that is, living faith, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1.) To possess this faith, therefore, is to possess substance, and to find a solid reality in the things not seen; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." (1 Cor. 2:9, 10.) And it is this

spiritual revelation of these prepared things to the soul which makes them substantial realities. Now just in proportion as we are led to see the reality and blessedness of the kingdom of God thus set up with a divine power in the heart, we shall desire more and more to possess and enjoy it; for desire for possession almost always goes before possession. Take one or two familiar figures to illustrate this point. A man ardently loves a woman, who warmly and tenderly reciprocates his affection. They are both young, and their situation and other circumstances in life are favourable for their union in marriage. Now what can satisfy either of these tender and affectionate lovers but mutual possession of each other, and that for life? Thus desire precedes possession; but desire without possession, or the prospect of possession, is but torment and disappointment. Take another illustration. A man is heir to a fine estate; but the mere bare fact of heirship, the knowledge, however clear or certain, that he is entitled at a certain person's death to come into a large property, will not satisfy him. What he wants is possession—the enjoyment of the property as his own. The same things hold good, and indeed with greater strength and force, in divine and eternal realities. If we are espoused to Christ, as the apostle speaks, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2), if we are espoused to Christ, and, as being his chosen bride, if we love him and he love us, nothing will content either Christ or us but to come into mutual possession and enjoyment of each other. This indeed will not be fully accomplished until that great and blessed day, when "there will be heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and 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. 19:6, 7.) But before this blessed day it is in heavenly as in earthly espousals; there are love visits, love kisses, love smiles, tender loving conversation; and yet, as long and dismal seasons of absence often intervene, there will be no full satisfaction until this poor wretched body, the seat of sin and sorrow, is dropped.

Similarly with the inheritance. We read of "the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14), which is yet future; for the Church is still to be, in one sense, redeemed, that is, by power; for she has been already fully redeemed by price. But there are earnest of this; for there is a being "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." (Eph. 1:13, 14.) Thus even in this life there are spiritual and heavenly blessings to be enjoyed, real, solid, and substantial. This is in the word largely set forth. Do we not read of "the love of God being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 5:5); of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind through Jesus Christ" (Phil. 4:7); of "rejoicing in Christ with joy unspeakable and full of glory?" (1 Pet. 1:8.) Now all these blessings are to be tasted, felt, handled, realised, and made our own; and as they thus come into vital possession and are made matters of personal enjoyment, then we are enabled, as the apostle prays, "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, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God." (Eph. 3:18, 19.)

But there is one special feature of vital godliness distinct from possession, and yet necessary to possession; which precedes enjoyment, and yet is necessary to enjoyment, viz., *desire*. If you look all through the range of Christian experience, whether you take the least and lowest stage, or the highest and greatest, you will find desire more or less stamped upon every such state and every such stage. Let me show this. Take, for instance, a soul in its lowest state. Take Jonah in the whale's belly; Jeremiah in the low dungeon; Hezekiah on his bed of sickness; Job sunk into all the depth of his soul trouble. You will find in all these saints of God the expression of desire; or, if the word "desire" do not occur, there is that which is tantamount to desire—the language of crying, groaning, earnest prayer. Look first at the case of Jonah: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." (Jonah 2:1, 2.) There we certainly have the

desire of Jonah's soul venting itself in crying out of the very belly of hell: as low as a saint could sink, as deep an extremity as that into which any vessel of mercy could fall. Now look at Jeremiah's case, and see whether we cannot trace the same thing in him. "Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry." (Lam. 3:54-56.) Is there not desire there? Look next at Hezekiah on his bed of sickness, when death stared him in the face, and the prophet came to him with that solemn message, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." What does he say in that deep extremity of soul but, "I am oppressed: undertake for me?" (Isaiah 38:14.) Is there not desire there? And what said Job when he was in that depth of sore perplexity? "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" (Job 23:3.) Is there not desire there? Do we not see in all these instances that however low the child of God may sink, there is still in his soul a cry or sigh on which we may say that desire is stamped?

Now take what I may perhaps call a medium stage, that is, a state of experience not in the lowest depth, nor yet in the greatest height—not one of severe trouble and exercise, nor of much enjoyment, but much such an experience as you will find in Psalm 119. Do we not see that in this state and stage desire forms a very prominent feature? How the whole psalm is a praying psalm, a pouring forth of simple desire. Take as a sample such petitions as these: "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes." Is not the whole psalm the expression of desire to know and feel the power of God's word upon the heart? As similar instances take the experience of David in many other Psalms: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me." What desire, what earnest ardour we see stamped upon such expressions!

Now take a higher stage of experience still; for desire mounts up as the soul mounts. Take the case of the bride in the Song of Solomon; hear her say, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." There we see her in possession, in enjoyment; yet she still cries, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." How she begins with desire, and how she ends with desire: "Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." (Song 1:2; 8:14.)

But to apply this to our subject. Take Paul the man of God, who had been in the third heaven, and been blessed with most unspeakable revelations of the love of God to his soul. Read Phil. 3, and especially that part which stands in connection with the words before us, and see how it breathes the language of desire: "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. What desire, what ardent desire is stamped upon almost every syllable. Then follows our text: "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." In opening up these words, I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First*, endeavour to show you what it is to be *apprehended of Christ Jesus*: for that is the foundation on which the text stands—the pivot round which it turns.

II.—*Secondly*, what it is to *apprehend that for which we also are apprehended*.

III.—*Thirdly*, what it is to *follow after*, that we may apprehend it.

IV.—*Lastly*, the confessed *falling short* and deficiency—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."

I.—I must ask your attention this morning. I don't preach to lazy, inattentive hearers. If I am worth being heard at all, I require my hearers to give me their best attention; for the things which I lay before them are full of weight and importance. Besides which, my sermons for the most part are a train of continuous thought, as being a working out of my text from beginning to end, and therefore need attention; for if you lose some of the links, you have not the discourse as one connected chain. And I think you will find this morning, if I am able to unfold it, a beautiful connection of every part of our text from first to last. Give me, therefore, your attention, and endeavour to travel with me, step by step, as I go on. God enable me to guide you right. God give me grace to go before you, that you may walk as I step on, and put your feet in the footprints which I make, comparing the whole with your own experience and the work of God upon your soul, that you may have some testimony that I preach according to the oracles of the living God, and that you know the power of divine truth in your own heart.

i. I shall lay the foundation of my discourse by explaining to you the meaning of the word "*apprehend*;" for that is the basis of the whole. Nothing is more common than for people, even good people, to go on reading the Scriptures without understanding or even trying to understand their precise meaning. But how can we believe what we do not understand? How graciously the Lord "opened the understanding of his disciples that they might understand the Scriptures." Let me explain to you then the meaning of the word "*apprehend*." To apprehend signifies to seize, to take hold of, to get into one's possession. We find it familiarly used so. The policeman, for instance, apprehends a criminal. He puts his hand upon his shoulder; he grasps him by the collar; he takes possession of his person. That is apprehending. Or take another simple use of the word: "I don't apprehend your meaning;" that is, "I don't catch your meaning; I don't seize it with my mind: I don't lay hold of what you are saying so as to take it into my understanding, and make your idea mine." From these two illustrations, the one an act of the

body, the other an act of the mind, you may easily gather a simple idea of what the word apprehend means, viz., to seize, to lay hold of, and to make one's own. Excuse me, if this morning I have turned myself into a dictionary, but I have often found that the simplest words are least understood, or least attended to.

Now carry this idea of taking hold into the things of God as presented to our view in our text. The apostle speaks of himself as being "apprehended of," or, as the word rather means, "by Christ Jesus;" in other words he tells us that Christ Jesus had apprehended him, seized him, laid hold of him, and that for the purpose of taking eventually full possession of him. As this point is of such vital importance, it will want some careful opening up. We will look at it therefore in its length and depth and breadth too, if the Lord enable. But bear this carefully in mind, that what Paul said of himself is applicable to us also, if we are partakers of the same grace. Paul with all his grace and gifts was only one member of Christ's mystical body; and the same Christ who apprehended him, in apprehending him as a member, apprehended at the same time and in the same way the whole body. If therefore you and I are members of the mystical body of Christ, the same Christ who apprehended Paul apprehended you and me; the same Christ who laid hold of him, laid hold of you and me; and the same Christ who meant to bring Paul into full possession of himself, has taken, or will take that same possession and firm hold of you and me. Do you see and believe these things—that Christ has a Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all? (Eph. 1:22, 25.)

ii. Go with me a step further. Look back: take your stand upon the word of truth, and look back into heaven's settlements where the solemn transactions began, if we can use the word "beginning" to what was from all eternity, but in which all our salvation here, and all our blessedness hereafter are wrapped up. Christ in eternity apprehended the Church; that is, he took hold of her. But how and why did the Son of God apprehend and take hold of the Church? As the Father's gift. The Church was God's property, so to speak: he chose her in Christ before the

foundation of the world, and presented her as a beautiful bride to the Son of his love. I do not like to put words into the mouth of God which the Scripture has not; but it is almost as if the Father said to the Son, "Wilt thou have her? She shall be thine. Here is thine inheritance; here is thy bride: here is thy possession. Wilt thou have her?" "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." Then it was that Christ first apprehended the Church, that is, took hold of her. According to my view—I am not a man to split hairs in divinity, though I love Scriptural truth, our Lord received her unfallen, as a spotless virgin bride—not indeed without a foreview of the fall; but as presented to him in all her virgin innocency. I think we may gather this from two significant types. The first is the giving of Eve to Adam in Paradise, which all will admit was a typical representation of the gift of the Church to Christ and of his union with her, for the apostle most evidently alludes to it as such: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. 5:30.) The marriage took place in Paradise, before the fall, not after. Eve was taken out of her husband's body, presented to him in an unfallen state, as such received, as such wedded. But observe secondly, that the high priest, who under the law was an eminent type of Christ, was not allowed to marry a harlot or divorced woman. He was to marry a bride in her virgin purity. (Lev. 21:13, 16.) Now I gather from these two striking types that our gracious Lord took the Church unfallen—not without a foreview of the fall, or of what he would suffer for her, and the necessity of her being one day washed in his blood and clothed in his righteousness. But primarily he accepted her unfallen. According, then, to my view, and I may add it is the view of many of our greatest divines, the Lord Jesus thus first apprehended or took hold of the Church as his virgin bride.

iii. Now pass on. The fall takes place; we were all involved in it; and this unfallen bride fell in Adam into the lowest depths into which he himself sank. But shall the Son of God let her go? Had he not apprehended her? Had he not made her his own? Was she not his by covenant engagement and eternal ties? Was she to

sink, and he to let her go without a desire or effort to save her? If your child were walking with you along the canal bank, and it suddenly fell in, would you stand quietly by and let it be drowned? If you and your wife were walking some summer eve along the river side and she tripped and fell in, and got entangled among the weeds, would you pass on when you could save her, and let her die there? "No," you would say; "I should not be a man to do that; I would risk my own life to save either my wife or child, for I dearly love them both." Was there less love in the heart of the Son of God when from the heights of his glory he saw his bride sink and fall, get overwhelmed in the waters of corruption, and the weeds of sin, as Jonah speaks, "were wrapped about her head?" No, he must go down into her very state and case, into her lowest condition, to pluck her out; take her nature—not her fallen, not her sinful nature, and yet the very flesh and blood of the children, sanctified by the Holy Ghost in the very moment and act of conception when he became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary; and thus he apprehended or took hold of at once the whole of his bride by taking her flesh into union with his own divine Person. Here was the second instance in which he apprehended the Church by becoming one with her, and making her a participator of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

iv. Now we come to more personal matters, not more real, not more vital, not more important, but more experimental. There is the apprehending of each individual member by Christ through the *power of his grace*; for many have an interest in the electing love of God and in the blood of Christ, who have as yet no saving knowledge of either. We had before we were born. Does not Paul say? "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) But who and what was Paul, when Christ gave himself to die for him? Still in his sins—a Pharisee and a persecutor. But there must be a time when this love and blood are brought into the heart so as to give a vital knowledge and possession of them. Now comes the apprehension of the soul by Christ Jesus. He sends forth his holy Spirit to quicken the dead sinner into life. The arrow flies from the unerring bow; it strikes the sinner's conscience. Now what is the

effect? He is *apprehended*. The law which thus apprehends him, is almost like a policeman—like a detective. He goes into one of those places in London where thieves and burglars meet to recount their past exploits and plot their future crimes, and says to one man sitting among them, perhaps the merriest and loudest of the whole company: "You're wanted; come out; there is no use making any resistance; officers are at the door and every outlet guarded." Out the man comes at once all trembling, for he knows there is no use resisting the police, and off he goes to prison. How glad he would be to escape; but it is impossible. So when the law comes and puts its hands upon our shoulder, we are singled out from our companions—our associates in mirth or sin. We may dread going to prison; but as the detective will never lose his grasp of the prisoner till he lodges him safely in the cell, so the law will never lose its grasp upon our conscience until it brings us to the prison house. But let us trace out this more in detail. The first thing which the Lord does is to apprehend our conscience. His word catches us by our conscience: that is the tender part. The arrow of conviction is shot into the conscience, the feeling part of a man. Just as when they shoot a buck in the park, they aim at a vital part—not at the horn, not at the hoof, nor even at the head, but just under the shoulder at the very heart, that it may drop at once; so God the Spirit, when he aims an arrow, aims it at a vital part—the conscience, the heart; and down the sinner drops. Even though the poor wounded buck may not fall at once, but seek to hide itself among the fern, or try to leap off with the rest of the herd, yet sooner or later it drops. So with the poor sinner. Sooner or later he sinks and falls under the power of the word. Has it apprehended you? Was there ever a time when you felt your conscience laid hold of, so that do what you would, go where you would, say what you would, there was that condemnation in your conscience which you never could get away from? Like the wounded buck, the further you ran the weaker you got; the more you tried to escape, the sooner you tripped and fell. Here was the first experimental apprehending of you by Christ Jesus.

v. One more instance and we pass on; and that is the

apprehension of us by Christ Jesus through *the Gospel*. Don't think there is no apprehension but by the law; there is an apprehension also by the gospel. When the hand of grace comes out of the dark cloud; when the voice of the gospel sounds charmingly in the believing ear and heart, draws the poor sinner to the footstool, reveals Christ, manifests mercy, whispers peace, is not that a blessed apprehending of him by Christ Jesus? Now this apprehending of us by the gospel, is to apprehend us, not only by our conscience, as by the law, but by our understanding, our will, and by our affections; for these are the four things by which we are effectually taken hold of. The blood of Christ, applied to the *conscience*, takes hold of the conscience to purge it from filth, guilt, and dead works to serve the living God; the light of the gospel entering the mind takes hold of the *understanding*; the power of Christ takes hold of, and thus bends the *will*; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psa. 110:3); and his love takes hold of the *affections*. Thus these four anchors, as in Paul's ship, hold the soul fast and keep it from falling on the rocks. (Acts 27:29.) Here, then, we see the soul experimentally apprehended by Christ Jesus; apprehended by his power, his Spirit, his grace, and thus made believingly, feelingly his.

II.—Now we pass on. The apostle prays in the text that he might *apprehend that for which also he was apprehended*. He wanted to lay hold of, to realize, to enjoy, and to enter into possession of that for which he had been thus apprehended by the Lord himself. Let us look at these things a little more closely.

When Christ apprehended the Church, that is, as I have explained, took hold of her in eternity by covenant engagement, and subsequently in time by his incarnation, he apprehended her that she might be eternally his; that he might enjoy her; that she might enjoy him; that they might be for ever happy in each other's company. If, then, we are to apprehend that for which also we are apprehended, we must know something in our souls of what there was in the mind of Christ when he apprehended the Church, and for what purpose he apprehended her. This is the grand object of this chapter. It is indeed all condensed in our

text, yet the breathings and longings of the man of God in this chapter all point in the same direction. How ardently he longs that he might know Christ, win Christ, suffer with Christ, be conformed to Christ here and hereafter at the resurrection, and be found in Christ. If, then, we too are to follow after, that we personally, experimentally, feelingly, and blessedly may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended, we must have some understanding, some conception, some knowledge of what it is that we are following after, or we shall run a fool's chase. Paul says of himself: "I, therefore, so run not as uncertainly." (1 Cor. 9:2G) To run uncertainly will be to miss the prize. Our only hope of winning it is by pressing toward the mark for the prize "of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14.) But a little further explanation may throw light upon these points of blessed truth.

i. When Christ apprehended the Church, it was that she might be conformed to his image, behold his glory, and for ever reign with him. How blessedly did our Lord thus speak in his intercessory prayer: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24.) The expression of his will here chiefly regards two things: 1. First, that those whom the Father had given him should be with him where he was; 2, secondly, that they might there behold his glory, and share it too, according to those words: "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them." (John 17:22.) The glory thus given already is a conformity to his image, which is, as manifested here below, begun in grace and consummated in glory. Thus, therefore, there is a being conformed to his likeness upon earth, and there is a being conformed to his likeness in heaven; a likeness to him here in grace, and a likeness to him hereafter in glory. The first is a spiritual conformity to the image which he wore here below; and this is mainly affected through the gospel, by the blessed Spirit, as the apostle so clearly testifies: "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 glass of his grace is the gospel, in which, with open or unveiled face we behold the glory of the Lord shining forth. This beholding of his glory produces a change into the same image. This view is by faith, as Christ is pleased to reveal himself to our souls; for it is by faith only that we can see the glory of the Son of God, as those did who received him when he was on earth. (John 1:14.) He being invisible, it is only by faith that we can see his glorious Deity, his divine and eternal Sonship, and his pure, spotless humanity in union with it, as Immanuel, God with us. This is the most ravishing sight that God can give to a soul upon earth, and has an assimilating effect in producing a conformity to the image of Christ. Now as Christ is revealed to the soul by the power of God in his complex Person as Immanuel, God with us, we get a view of what his real and personal glory is, and what will be seen and enjoyed when the body shall drop into the grave and eternity open to view. This, then, is one thing which the soul follows after to apprehend that for which it is apprehended by Christ Jesus. If you have an earnest desire to see the glory of Christ as revealed to your heart, to have the manifestations of his glorious Person to your soul, with the visitations of his love to your spirit, you are following after that you may apprehend that for which you have been apprehended by the grace of Christ. These desires show that the Lord Jesus has apprehended or laid hold of your heart by his Spirit and grace; and it is for this reason, that he may in his own time manifest his glorious love to your soul.

ii. But as without holiness no man can see the Lord; as heaven itself would be no heaven to a man who had no internal or external meetness for that eternal inheritance, the blessed Lord has to make us partakers of his holiness, that we may be conformed here below, in some measure at least, to his gracious image. The apostle therefore says, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. 3:9, 10.) This image is the image of Christ, which the same apostle explains as being "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24.) "For God has

predestinated us that we should be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29.) If you take this key with you, it will open well nigh every expression of the desires of Paul's heart, as we find them uttered by his own pen in this beautiful chapter. (Phil. 3.) Now as we get a view in our soul of what Christ is to the Church, and what he has done and suffered to redeem her by his most precious blood, we seek to realize, to enter into, to feel the blessedness, drink of the sweetness, and know experimentally the power of what Christ thus is, and what he has thus done. We are brought to see that a profession of religion, without a real experimental knowledge of Christ, is but a deceit or a delusion, and are made to feel the emptiness of mere words and notions unless there be vital realities. As then we see by faith who Christ is, what Christ has suffered, what Christ has done to redeem us from the depths of the fall, and get some faith in our bosom so as to embrace him as revealed in the gospel and made known to our soul by the power of God, there is on our side an apprehending, a taking hold, a bringing in of that for which we are apprehended. I before pointed out that the main object for which Christ apprehended his Church was to bring her into the enjoyment of himself.

Now as nothing can satisfy Christ but the enjoyment of the Church, so nothing can satisfy the Church but the enjoyment of Christ; for as the bridegroom delights in the bride and the bride in the bridegroom, and they are only happy in each other's company and in the possession of each other, so it is with Christ and his people. Christ is only happy in the enjoyment of his Church, and the Church is only happy in the enjoyment of Christ. If, then, we personally are members of the mystical body of Christ, we shall have in our bosom the feelings which the Church has; for otherwise, the Spirit which teaches the Church has not taught or is not teaching us. The same desires therefore which we find so beautifully portrayed by the man of God in this chapter will be more or less felt in our soul. If the same Christ is made known to us who was made known to him, the same things which Christ did and suffered which were revealed to him are also or

will be revealed to us; the same faith, though in smaller measure, is given to us which was granted to him, with the same hope to anchor within the veil, and the same love toward the same loving Lord. Just in proportion then as these divine realities are brought before the eye of faith and warmly impressed upon our spirit, is there an apprehending of them, a taking of them by the hand of faith, a bringing them by the power of the Spirit into experimental possession and felt enjoyment. Bear in mind, however, that it is the love of Christ which we have chiefly to apprehend. Thus the Apostle prayed for the church at Ephesus, that they "might comprehend" (or as it should have been translated, for it is precisely the same word in the original "apprehend") "with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." (Eph. 3:18, 19.)

III.—Now I pass on to our third point, which is "*following after*."

i. We know or should know what we are in pursuit of, or what can the end be but disappointment? Were any of you this morning ignorant of the place to which you were coming, or what you came for? Some of you have come many miles; but how foolish it would have been to have set out without knowing where the place was or the road to it. I have known, indeed, instances of country people who have come up to hear me in London, and after walking about all the morning could not find the chapel. But this was because all their inquiries were useless. Had you not also a purpose in coming here? Was it not to hear me preach the word of life? Similarly, if I set out on the way to heaven I must walk in a certain path and follow a certain road; I must know to what point I am bound and what I want in going there. I must have some object in view, or I am but playing a child's sport, and putting my soul on the game. Now so far as I am a spiritual man and know Christ by any manifestation of him to my soul, I have a certain object proposed to my view, as set before me in the gospel of his grace. Paul plainly tells us from his own experience what this object is: "I follow after that I may apprehend that for

which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus." I have already explained what this apprehending of you by Christ is. But as a further elucidation of its meaning, compare with it some of Paul's desires, as expressed in this chapter.

1. The first thing he desired was an increasing *knowledge of Christ*: "That I may know him," that is, that I may be favoured with greater, more powerful, sweeter, and deeper revelations of his Person and work, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory. This knowledge of Christ is indeed inexhaustible. Paul therefore calls it the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

2. Connected with this knowledge of Jesus Christ, is a knowledge of "*the power of his resurrection.*" This includes more than I can now enter into, for it takes in everything which consists in raising the soul up from a state of carnality and death, either before or after calling, as well as investing it with, and putting it in possession of all the blessings and benefits of Christ's resurrection; such as full and free justification, free access to the throne of grace, deliverance from the power of sin, victory over death and hell, and a glorious resurrection in the great day.

3. Another thing which Paul followed after that he might know in knowing Christ was "the *fellowship* of his sufferings." What depths of agony it cost Jesus to redeem his soul from the bottomless pit; what seas of blood and love he had to wade through; what conflicts with Satan; what hidings of his Father's face; what a weight of unutterable woe; what an indescribable pressure of imputed sin, and yet endured as none but he could endure when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

4. With this is also connected his desire of "being *made conformable unto his death;*" in other words, that he might be conformed to the suffering, dying image of the Son of God, as his daily experience and portion. As he elsewhere speaks: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. 4:10.)

5. And as the end of all his race that he might "*win Christ and be found in him*"—win him as his own Lord and husband, and be found in him, clothed in that glorious righteousness which he calls "the righteousness which is of God by faith." I have indeed but touched on these things, though each expression contains a mine of the richest, deepest experience. Now if we are taught by the same Spirit that the apostle was taught by, we shall want to apprehend, to enter into, to embrace, to know, in some measure at least, these same blessings for ourselves in sweet possession and felt enjoyment.

ii. But we have to "*follow after.*" These things are to be sought for, not to be picked up lazily on the road, as an evening saunterer picks a violet from a bank or a dog-rose off the hedge which he smells at and then throws away. These are vital realities. Salvation is in them and damnation out of them. My soul is to be saved or lost; heaven or hell is before me; advancing years and an opening grave solemnly bid me, warn me to be in earnest. To meet death without fear, I must have a religion that can save my soul and hold me up in a dying hour. If Christ has apprehended me, laid hold of me in eternity, and taken hold of me by law and gospel to bring me into the eternal possession of himself, I must know whether he has done all this or not. I must be able to know and feel in my own bosom that he has done that for me which has saved my soul from the depths of hell. This is apprehending, embracing, seizing, laying hold of that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. But if I am not enjoying this I must follow after. I must not sit lazily upon a stile and think I shall get home by stopping there and looking about me. You will never get home tonight after hearing me by lying down on the road or sitting upon a gate. You may rest there awhile, but you will never get home if you have a long way to go, unless you put your best foot forward. To do this is to follow after. Sometimes we are *driven*; for sharp necessity urges: "O, my poor soul will be lost." Guilt presses hard upon our conscience; Satan thrusts with his fiery darts; a host of sins come to view; base backslidings rise up like ghosts from the dead. O what earnest desires, confessions

of sin, longing entreaties, sighs and groans will now issue out of the heart and mouth, that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended—salvation by free grace, salvation by the blood and love of the Lamb. "O for one view of Christ; O for one look of his love; O for one sweet promise applied to my soul with divine power; O for a blessed manifestation of his Person and work to my heart." Now this is following after. This is not sleeping under the hedge, nor sitting on the stile; but following after, like Paul, pressing on. But sometimes we are *drawn*. Sweet encouragements drop in, an inward whisper, a kind word, a gentle touch, melt and move. This draws. "Draw me, and we will run after thee." Then we follow on. We feel that there is something worth getting at the end; something worthy of all the labour and suffering bestowed upon it. Even in this life there is something to be enjoyed, which makes ample amends for all the trouble, temptation, perplexity, exercise, and sorrow, which we may have to wade through. This makes us follow after, that we may get possession of the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear him, have it in sweet enjoyment; and know its divine blessedness. But sometimes, alas! we have to follow on as Pharaoh's chariot wheels after Israel, dragging heavily through the sand, as cold, dark, and dead, as stupid, lifeless, and unfeeling, as if we never had known, as if we never should know anything for ourselves about real religion, vital godliness, the love of Christ, or the mercy of God. Yet every inward sigh, every groan, every feeling of complaint, every bitter thought, every cutting reflection, is a following on. This is not tarrying at Mount Sinai, looking for salvation there; nor weaving a spider's web to cover our nakedness; nor getting together a few filthy rags to hide our shame; nor entrenching ourselves in nature's strength and wisdom. Nay, every inward grief of the mind, trouble of soul, self-condemnation, crying out against ourselves, all are a going out of self-righteousness, self strength, and self-dependence; all are following after if that we may apprehend more and more of the Person of Christ, the work of Christ, the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, what Christ is to the poor and needy. Sometimes in *reading* the word, there is a following on to get something out of it for ourselves; to find some sweet promise

here, some opening up of truth there; a word in season to suit our case. And sometimes we are not disappointed: the word of God is sweetly opened up and sealed upon our heart with living, loving power. So in attending diligently upon the *ministry*: coming up to the house of prayer, hearing the preached word, following on through many a stormy day, many a rough road, many a muddy path, and many a dark winter's night, as some of you have followed on year after year to come and hear me when I laboured amongst you. This was a following on to apprehend that for which you had been apprehended. You came hoping, longing, sighing, seeking, suing that something might be dropped which might be a blessing to your soul. You were following on to know the Lord, and to such the promise is made. (Hosea 6:3.) O to look back to a profession of thirty or forty years, and to see how the Lord has kept us on, never suffered us, with all our slips and falls, to turn away from God and truth. I have reason to bless God that ever since he opened my mouth to speak in his name, I have never taught false doctrine, never preached false experience, never inculcated false practice. God may have enlarged my mind, led me more into his blessed truth, and given me more of the experience of it. I hope he has. But I have reason to bless his holy name, that ever since he opened my mouth to speak I never preached error, never encouraged evil, never set up any experience as genuine but the work of the Holy Ghost upon the soul. I have many things deeply to lament between God and my own conscience; and yet it is my mercy that by his grace I can say, I never handled his word deceitfully; but ever sought by manifestation of the truth to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Cor. 4:2.) And I still desire to follow on in the same way: to know nothing in my own soul but what God is pleased to teach me out of the Scriptures by his blessed Spirit, that I may apprehend, firmly grasp, inwardly seize, blessedly realize, and experimentally enjoy what Christ is to every soul that believes in his name.

IV.—And yet, to come to our last point, O how *defective* am I, are you, are all! O how hampered by unbelief, by sin, by Satan! O our short-comings in every particular. O the inability and helplessness

of the soul that longs to be right, desires to walk in the strait and narrow path, and is following on, through brake and briar, mud and mire, darkness and light, sun and storm, fair and foul, winter and summer. O the short-comings, O the deficiencies of one that would be honest at heart, would be right at the last, and therefore follows on amidst every discouragement. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." This man of God, perhaps the greatest saint that ever lived upon earth, had to confess that even he had not attained. There was that in Christ more than he had ever seen, ever known, ever felt, ever tasted, ever handled, ever realised. There were heights in his glory, depths in his love, in his sufferings, in his bitter agonies in the garden and on the cross, which passed all apprehension and comprehension. Therefore he says, "Not as though I had already attained." I am a child still, a learner still, as weak as ever, as helpless as ever to obtain what I want. Though I follow on; though I forget the things which are behind and reach forward to the things before; though I know what I am aiming at, what I am seeking; though my eye is single, my heart earnest, yet it is not with me as if I had already attained. Now just put yourself in that scale; and to measure yourselves aright, just look at these two things. 1. First, are you following after? Do you see that there is something which is to be tasted, handled, felt, and realised of the precious things of God? Have you ever had any sips, tastes, drops, foretastes? Has your heart ever been melted, softened, warmed by the goodness and mercy of God, by the love of Christ? Did you ever feel that there was a sweetness, blessedness, and happiness in the things of God to which nothing else could be compared? Has your heart ever been opened and enlarged by the love of God, so that you felt that spirituality of mind which is life and peace; and could you have continued in that spot it would have been to you all that you wanted to make you look death calmly in the face? Now it is these sips, tastes, and drops, these sweet discoveries of what the Lord is to believing souls, which draw forth the desires of the heart and enable it to follow after. But darkness supervenes; the Lord withdraws himself, sin works, Satan tempts, trials perplex your mind, unbelief rises up—begins to question everything. Then

there is no following on. Everything looks so dark, so gloomy; divine things are so out of sight; doubts and fears so possess the mind; and it seems as if we came so short, so very short, that the question arises whether we may not come short at last; whether we may not have deceived ourselves; whether all we have felt may not have been an awful delusion. And yet see how this works. How it stirs the mind up; how it makes us seek again and again to possess realities; how it seems to open the eyes afresh to see what true religion is, and that it consists in the teachings and operations of the Holy Ghost upon the heart. Thus our very short-comings, deficiencies, and complaints are blessedly over-ruled and made to work graciously to stir us up to run again the race set before us. But depend upon it, the most highly favoured saint upon earth will have reason to say with Paul, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;" that is, matured and ripe. Not perfect in understanding, nor perfect in heart, nor perfect in lip, nor perfect in life. Every saint of God will have to confess imperfection, imperfection stamped upon all that he has and is; imperfection, imperfection upon everything but the work of the Son of God upon the cross and the work of God the Holy Ghost in the soul.

Now what does the apostle add? and I must add it before I close. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect (that is, grown out of childhood into some ripeness of Christian experience), be thus minded." It was the desire of his soul that every matured Christian might be like himself, seeking to win Christ, and know him. But he very graciously, kindly, condescendingly adds, "And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." There might be those amongst them, and they sincere Christians, who might not see these things to the same extent nor feel them with the same power; whose eyes were not so far enlightened, nor whose heart so powerfully wrought upon. They were otherwise minded. They did not see and feel the deep necessity, nor realise the sovereign blessedness of these divine things as they should do. He says then to such, "If you are a child of God, God will reveal even this unto you; he will make it known to you in due time. He will not leave you in your present state of

ignorance and indecision. He will reveal even this mystery unto you." And yet he adds, if we have attained any experimental knowledge of the things of God, "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Let us all walk by the same rule of God's holy word, and all mind the same thing, which is to have the mind of Christ, to be taught of the Holy Ghost, and know the things which make for our everlasting peace. He does not allow two rules for men to walk by, and two minds for Christians to indulge. They all walk by the same rule—the rule of God's word, the rule of the gospel, the rule of divine teaching in their soul. And they all mind the same thing: they are all seeking for the same blessed realities. They are all of one mind in the things of God as to vital things, whatever difference there may be on minor points.

Then comes the solemn warning against those who walk otherwise. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you." Paul had his mixed congregations; all to whom he wrote were not children of God; the man of God therefore drops a word of warning, and I would drop it too—"Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Now what is the character of these men? That their god is their belly; that is, the lusts, whether of gluttony or drunkenness or any other vile abomination is their god whom they really serve. They glory in their shame; instead of confessing their sins and forsaking them, and being grieved for them, they rather glory in their shame, their hardness of heart, and searedness of conscience.

But now hear and attend to the last mark, which cuts off thousands of nominal Christians, and take heed lest any of you be among those that "mind earthly things." This means that they have no taste, no appetite or relish for divine things, no affections fixed on things above. They mind earthly things—mere muckworms, ever groping and grovelling after money and gain. But O the difference of the living family of God. "Our conversation is in heaven." There is the conversation, the walk of a living soul: it is in heaven, dealing with heavenly realities, and fixed upon

what heaven is in its blessedness and glory. "From whence also we look to the Saviour." And what shall he do on his appearing? He shall change our vile bodies, the seat of every sin and every corruption, and fashion them like unto his glorious body, "according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Spiritual Blessings in Heavenly Places

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Morning, June 18, 1865

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Eph. 1:3, 4

As the Person, work, and glory of Christ are the main object, so the grand distinctive truths of the gospel are or should be the main subject of the Christian ministry; for, as He, who is the Bread of life, is their sum and substance, they only are the real, solid, substantial food of every believing heart. You will observe my expression, "are or should be;" for what the Christian ministry is, and what the Christian ministry should be is not exactly the same thing. It is not for me, who am less than the least of all saints and the chief of sinners, to cast any reflection upon my brethren in the ministry; and yet I cannot help making this observation, that the grand discriminating truths of the glorious gospel of the grace of God are not brought forward so prominently as they should be by some gracious men of God of whose spirituality, ability, and usefulness we cannot doubt. Many good men, in the exercise of their ministry, confine themselves almost wholly to the tracing out of the first work of grace upon the heart, and to confirm and strengthen it by bringing forward the chief scriptural evidences of divine life in the soul, so as to encourage those who are full of doubt and fear as to the reality of what they would gladly hope has been wrought in them by the mighty power of God. This is good. It is an important part of the work of the ministry to comfort those who are cast down, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and to say to those who are of feeble heart, Be strong, fear not. (Isaiah 35:4.) Nor can there be any doubt that one gracious means of doing this is by tracing out every mark of divine life, even the feeblest and smallest that is in harmony with the word of truth,

and will bear strict scrutiny as given by God himself for the comfort of his doubting, fearing family. But it is a great mistake to think that this is the whole, or even the most important part of the ministry of the gospel. We certainly find something beyond this in the sermons recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and still more so in the Epistles of the New Testament, which, though not sermons, we may well consider to be the fullest and completest instruction which could be furnished by the Holy Ghost for the Church of God. May we not also well ask whether, in furnishing the gospel table, meat should not be provided for men as well as milk for babes? Are there in the congregation this morning before me none but little children? Surely there are or should be in it fathers who know him that is from the beginning, and young men who are strong, in whom the word of God abides, and who have overcome the wicked one. Are these to be passed by, and none spoken unto but the little children, the babes in grace, the youngest and weakest of the family? Our gracious Lord, in his farewell charge to Peter, said, "Feed my lambs;" but he also twice said to him, "Feed, my sheep." He would not be thought to be a good shepherd naturally who devoted all his care and attention to the lambs, and neglected the ewes and the wethers. So should the gospel shepherd feed the whole of the flock, whether young or old, for much of his business lies among the lost, the driven away, the broken, and the sick. (Ezek. 34:4, 16.) It is therefore a great mistake, and what the apostle strongly condemns, to be always "laying the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God." We should leave these principles or first elements of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection, that is, to some maturity in the divine life; for otherwise that reproof is suitable to us: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong drink." (Heb. 5:12.) The Christian ministry, therefore, must go beyond describing the first work of grace and tracing out the signs and evidences of divine life; for this part of the ministry should be considered merely as the elements, its lowest and weakest portion, and that there is something far beyond this to make the preaching of the gospel

what the Holy Ghost declares it was intended to be, "for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:12, 13.) A good foundation is necessary; but we want the building to be reared as well as the good foundation to be laid. Now this can only be done by holding forth to the Church the Person and work of Christ in all their various bearings and relationships, and by bringing before the people the grand distinguishing truths of our most holy faith. Nay, in my judgment, such preaching, if it spring out of a sweet and gracious experience of the truth of God, and drop from the lips of the preacher with that unction and savour which the Lord only can bestow, is much more likely to bring doubting souls out of fear and bondage than the tracing out of evidences of the life of God within; for often, in looking for those evidences, the more they look the less they find; and thus instead of looking out of themselves to the Lord of life and glory, to receive of his fulness grace for grace, they are ever occupied with self-examination—good in its way, but which often leads only to self-condemnation.

There is also another disadvantage, not to say evil, in so continually dwelling upon the first work, that it leads people to rest upon evidences instead of blessings. Now these two things are widely distinct, and should be ever kept separate. Evidences I compare to milestones or direction posts, or, if you like the figure better, to stiles or gates, all which are very good, and needful to point out the road and securely fence it; to show how far we have come; and a stile or gate by the wayside is useful and convenient sometimes to sit down upon and rest when we are tired; but one would not like to sleep all night under a milestone or by the side of a gate, or think, gipsy-like, that even a tent by the roadside with a little broken victuals was all that was necessary to give us food and lodging for the night. It certainly would not be the same thing as a warm, comfortable resting-place, were it but a roadside inn, where we might get food, warmth, and shelter, and go on our way next morning with recruited strength. Evidences, then, as evidences, be it ever borne in mind, are not and were

not intended to be rest, food, and shelter. They are excellent waymarks; but try to feed upon or rest for any time in them, and you will soon find them crying out, "No food, no rest here. You must go further on for food and lodging. These are only to be had in the house of blessing where Jesus himself makes the bed, spreads the table, and entertains the guests." Whilst then we do not despise or overlook evidences, for they are most useful in their place, let it ever be our main object and desire to obtain blessings, such as some application of the word of truth with power to our heart, some manifestation of Jesus to our soul.

These thoughts you may perhaps find to have some connection with the subject which this morning I hope to bring before you, which will be chiefly to open and establish this grand point, as so beautifully brought forward in our text, that God hath blessed us, already blessed us, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that these blessings, therefore, are not for the first time given when we believe, but that even before we believe, if we are amongst the chosen in Christ, we were blessed beforehand with every blessing which we shall enjoy for time or eternity. I can say for myself that I have seen and felt great beauty and blessedness in the truths laid down so clearly in the word before us, and have been desirous, from what I have seen and felt in them, to bring them before you, for there is everything in them for the encouragement and consolation of you who are looking and longing for the visitations of the mercy and love of God. And if indeed, as being amongst those who believe in his dear Son, God himself has already blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and stored them up in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, how we are encouraged thereby to come to him in faith and prayer, to receive out of his fulness such communications of heavenly grace as shall bring us into a heartfelt enjoyment and sweet experience of the blessings themselves.

Bear then in mind three things: 1, that we are blessed, already blessed, with every spiritual blessing in Christ; 2, that there must be a manifestation and a communication of those blessings to our soul; 3, that it is through faith those blessings are laid hold of

and realised as our own.

In opening up the words of our text, I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First*, direct your minds to that most blessed *fact*, which I have already named, that God "*hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

II.—*Secondly*, the *end, aim, and object* of God in thus blessing us: it is "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

III.—*Thirdly*, according to *what fixed purpose* God has done this: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

I.—But before I dive into the bosom of my text, to bring out of it, if the Lord enable, some of its choice treasures, it will be desirable to gain some clear conception of the meaning of various expressions in it as used by the apostle. Unless we start with some clear conception of the meaning of the words which he has employed to set forth the grand truths which he brings before us, we shall hardly be able to get into the mind of the Spirit in the text. Nor is this a word of counsel only for the present occasion. Whenever we read the Scriptures we should always seek to understand the exact meaning of the words employed by the blessed Spirit in his revelation of heavenly truth. It is sad to see how many even of the dear family of God go on reading the Scriptures from year to year, and yet, with all their reading, seem at the end to know as little of the mind of the Spirit in them as at the beginning. This may partly arise from natural dulness of intellect, but may much more frequently be traced to indolence and carelessness. The word of God is not to be read, at least to any profit, in this indolent, careless manner. In order to yield up its treasures, it must be sought and searched into, prayed over, and meditated upon, as the wise man speaks: "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; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. 2:3-6.) I shall, therefore before I dive into the depths of the text to bring out what the Lord may enable me to lay before you, just draw your attention to a few words or terms which the Holy Ghost has here made use of by the pen of Paul, which I shall endeavour to explain as simply and as clearly as I can.

i. First, then, what is the meaning of the word "blessing," which forms so prominent a feature in our text? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." (Eph. 1:3.) You will observe that the apostle blesses the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as having blessed us with spiritual blessings. Does he not use the word "bless" here in more than one sense? for we cannot say that we can bless God in the same way as God blesses us. *Ours* is a mere ascription of praise to God; for how can we, by any words or deeds of ours, add anything to his bliss who is blessed for evermore? But *his* blessing us puts us into the possession and enjoyment of what will make us happy for evermore. He would still be the same, whether we blessed him or not; but not so with us. Nothing is added to the light, heat, and splendour of the sun by the millions of acres of waving corn which it ripens; but where would be the food of a nation but for his glorious rays? So all our praise and thanksgiving cannot add anything to the bliss and blessedness of God; for he would still be what he is had we all perished under his curse. And yet he condescends to listen to our feeble lispings of thankful praise, and to glorify himself by blessing us.

But to return; what are we to understand by the term "blessing?" It is a word often in our mouth, but how many words we make use of as found in the Scriptures, and hear others use too, of which we form no adequate conception, and even will not give ourselves the trouble of enquiring into; satisfying ourselves with some vague, loose idea, which after all is but the shallow refuge

of our willing ignorance. What then are "blessings" in the Scriptural sense of the term? The word literally means things to be well spoken of, things worthy of excellent mention; and, as applied to divine realities, things well spoken of by God himself, who sees the end from the beginning, and knows all things with the utmost perfection of knowledge. We may therefore consider that the word "blessing" means those things of which God himself speaks well. Whether therefore the word "blessings" refers to the view that God takes of them or to the view that we take of them, as enlightened by his grace, the simplest meaning of the term is things to be well spoken of, things worthy of adoration and praise. God speaks well of them; for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with these blessings, knows their value, perfectly understands the surpassing excellence of his own gifts; and we may be well assured that when he gave his only begotten Son, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him, he well knew the depth of his own love, the fulness of his own wisdom, the riches of his own grace, and that eternal state of glory into which he had determined to bring us. We may also observe that he is said to have "blessed us with all spiritual blessings *in Christ*." The blessings in the mind of God were worthy of, and corresponding to the Son of his love in whom all these blessings centre. We cannot raise our thoughts too high upon this point; for whatever we may think or even desire, God's purposes of love outrun them all; for it is as the apostle has declared, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. 2:9.)

But take the word "blessings" as applicable to our thoughts and expression of them. They are things to be well spoken of by man, that is, regenerated man, and form a subject of grateful adoration and praise, not only for time but for eternity. These divine realities are indeed far out of the sight and out of the reach of the earthly mind of man. So far from speaking well of them, men for the most part rather speak ill of them; and instead of pronouncing sovereign grace, discriminating favour, electing love, atoning blood, justifying righteousness to be blessings, would

rather denounce them as pernicious notions, licentious opinions, and dangerous doctrines.

ii. But having given this glance at the meaning of the word "blessings," let us now look at the expression "spiritual." The apostle speaks of God having blessed us with all spiritual blessings. Fix your eye and heart therefore on that one word "spiritual." There are natural blessings, and these also are the gift of him in whom we live and move and have our being. Thus we find a distinction between the blessings which Isaac gave to Jacob and to Esau. To Jacob he gave spiritual blessings: "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed." But he gave him also temporal blessings: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine." But you will observe that when Esau came, and cried out, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father," there was no blessing to give; for all his answer was, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above," and a promise of deliverance at some future time from Jacob's dominion. It is frequently said, and I said so myself a few minutes ago, that Isaac blessed Esau; but if you carefully examine the passage you will not find a word of blessing in it. (Gen. 27:27, 28, 38, 39.) Esau thus had favours without blessings—a part of the portion of Jacob, his earthly portion; for the dominion given to Jacob over peoples and nations, and the lordship over his brethren, with the attaching of a curse to all who cursed him and of a blessing to all who blessed him, put him, as heir, into possession of the spiritual blessings of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. (Gen. 12:3.) But Esau had his portion without the blessing of God upon it. Thus, in a sense, the very "fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven" are only blessings to God's people. Others may have health and strength, worldly prosperity, and success in life; but they are not blessings in the true sense of the word, because God's hand is not seen or acknowledged in them. Nay, rather, the more they have of them, according to Job's description, the more they become mighty in power, the more their houses are safe from fear, the more they take the timbrel

and harp and rejoice at the sound of the organ, and they spend their days in wealth, the more do they say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job. 21:7-14.)

And yet temporal blessings, though ever to be received by us with a thankful heart, are not those spoken of in our text. These are "spiritual blessings." What then may we understand by "spiritual blessings," as distinct from temporal? We may view them such, either as regards God the Giver or ourselves the receivers. Viewing him as the Giver, they are such as he who is a Spirit gives; blessings consistent with the character of God as a pure and holy Spirit, and therefore in themselves pure, holy and heavenly, suitable to our spiritual mind; and thus distinct from any sensations of the body, or any thoughts, desires, and feelings of our natural intellect. They are also spiritual in this sense, as being blessings which the Holy Ghost reveals to the soul and gives us a meetness to enjoy. But when we view them as regards us, the receivers, we may say that they embrace all the blessings and sure mercies of the everlasting covenant, all things that pertain to life and godliness; nor is there a single blessing stored up in the fulness of Christ not comprehended in them. Life eternal, pardon of sin, adoption into the family of God, sanctification, peace in its foundation and effects, and justification in all its blessedness, are folded in the bosom of these "spiritual blessings." O how short of all these heavenly and abiding blessings are the greatest mercies and favours which we can receive in providence. What are health and strength, houses and lands, riches and honour, and all that earth can give of good or great—what are all compared with a good hope of eternal life, when our poor, vile body shall drop into its native dust?

iii. A word or two more to bring you into our text, though I shall have occasion to open it more fully as I go on: "*In heavenly places.*" We are said to be "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." It is in the margin, "or *things,*" the reason being, because, in the original, the substantive is absent, and we have simply the adjective "heavenly," leaving us at liberty to

supply "places," or "things," according to the context or analogy of faith. I believe our translators have well and wisely put "places," and I will show you briefly why. Our blessed Lord is in the heavenly places; he is gone up on high to sit at the right hand of God in the highest heaven; and as all our blessings are in him and he is in the heavenly places, and will be there till he comes a second time without sin unto salvation, all our spiritual blessings are in heavenly places, because they centre in him who is seated there in the fulness of his glory as the High Priest over the house of God.

Having thus taken you by the hand and led you to the brink of our text, let us now, with God's help and blessing, attempt to descend into these waters of Shiloah, which go softly, and drink of them as flowing full of sweetness and blessedness before our eyes in it.

Its main beauty and blessedness is, as I before pointed out, that God hath blessed us, already blessed us, with all spiritual blessings. Whatever spiritual blessing therefore there is in the hand of God to give or for the heart of man to receive, with that spiritual blessing you have been already blessed if you are a saint and one of the faithful in Christ Jesus; for it is to such the epistle is written, and of such the apostle speaks in using the word "us." Now these spiritual blessings we may divide into two different classes. There are some blessings which are antecedent to the fall of man, and others which follow upon it.

iv. We must not suppose that God began to bless the church first when Adam fell, because we read in our text of his choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world. The spiritual blessings therefore with which God has blessed his people in heavenly places he gave to them in Christ before the foundation of the world; and therefore were evidently antecedent to the fall. Let me endeavour to explain this a little more fully, as the distinction which I have made may not at first sight be sufficiently plain. God the Father for ever loved the Church. Is not this evident not only from his own immutable character and the eternity of his Being,

but from those wonderful words of our most gracious Lord in his intercessory prayer, "And hast loved them, as thou hast loved me?" (John 17:23.) The word "as" implies not only measure but duration, whether before time or after. When did the Father begin to love his dear Son? To that love there was, there could be, no beginning, for he was his eternal Son, and eternity knows neither beginning nor end. If God then loved the Church with the same love wherewith he loved his dear Son, it must have been a love from the same eternity. This love therefore was quite irrespective of what the Church might be or should be in a time state, unless you think that time alters, I might almost say, the very Being of God, for as "love," he is one pure Essence of love which knows neither variation, nor decline, for "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.)

1. Love, therefore, the love of God, irrespective of all issues and consequences, was the first spiritual blessing wherewith he blessed the Church in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

2. But love, whether in God or man, is operative, that is, it goes forth and displays itself in fruits and effects. What then was the first effect and fruit of this love of God? Was it not this that he gave the Church to his dear Son, to be his bride and spouse? for God in loving the Church determined to make her a partaker of his own glory, to bring her to the enjoyment of himself; and the way that he chose to do so (and how faith approves of and embraces the way), was by making her a partaker of the glory of Christ as his only begotten Son. Is not this gospel doctrine, and in the fullest harmony with the words of our blessed Lord, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me?" "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." (John 17:9, 10.) Must we not then say that this love of God to the Church in his dear Son was a gift or blessing, antecedent to the fall and irrespective of it?

3. But there flows from this another consequence, if not altogether another blessing. When the Father had given the

Church to his dear Son, and he had accepted her at his hands and loved her with the same love, for the Father and the Son are one in mind as much as they are one in essence, claiming her as his spouse and bride, the favour and approbation of the Father flowed forth to her, not only as he viewed her before he gave her to his dear Son, but as his bride and spouse. Let me illustrate this by a figure—a scriptural figure too, for our Lord speaks of "a certain king who made a marriage for his son." (Matt. 22:2.) A man of noble descent and large property wishes that his son and heir should marry for the continuation of the peerage and the maintenance of the estates. Now there is a noble damsel in his eye, whom he would wish his son to have as the partner of his life; and as such, he loves her with the prospective view of her union with him. But it so happens, you will perceive that I am still continuing my figure, that the affections of the son fall upon the same object. He loves the very damsel whom his father had in his mind chosen for him. They meet, they love; a wedding takes place; she becomes his spouse. But now the love of the father flows out to her, not only as before from viewing her to be a suitable companion for his son before the marriage, but he loves her with an additional love as now brought into a more tender relationship to him as the wife and spouse of his own son. Is there not some analogy between this illustration and the love of God to the Church? He loves her because she is Christ's. She has become a daughter, as he addresses her in Psalm 45: "Hearken, O daughter." (Psa. 45:10.) We therefore read of God's making us "accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:6.)

Putting therefore these things together, you may see that there were three spiritual blessings antecedent to the fall and irrespective of it. The first is the love of God to the Church; the second is the gift of her to his dear Son; and the third is his love and approbation of her as his accepted spouse and bride.

v. But now let me point out some of those "spiritual blessings" which cannot be said to be altogether dependent upon, and yet are most blessedly suitable to, the reparation of the breach which the fall made between God and us; for we must ever bear in

mind, that the fall of Adam broke asunder, so to speak, all intercourse and communion between man and his Maker. None who know the holiness of God and the evil of sin, can doubt that the Adam fall brought an awful bar between God and the Church; which had to be repaired, made up, and the breach entirely and thoroughly healed, or the God of holiness and truth could never have received us into his own loving bosom, that we should spend in his presence a glorious eternity. God, therefore, not only blessed us with the spiritual blessings which I have described as antecedent to, and irrespective of the fall, but with those which are intimately connected with redemption—redemption, I need not intimate, being not required but by the fall. These blessings, therefore, are based upon the incarnation of his dear Son, and on the sacrifice which was to be offered on the cross by his precious bloodshedding and death.

Now as the work of grace upon the heart begins with a conviction of sin, these, though not the first in order, are the first spiritual blessings which are apprehended and embraced by faith. We come in by necessity. "God be merciful to me a sinner." "What shall I do to be saved?" "How shall I escape the wrath to come?"—these are the first feelings, these are the first anxious enquiries of an awakened sinner.

1. But what is the first blessing which we want to know? Is it not the full and free *forgiveness of sin*? Now see how kindly and graciously the Lord meets us with the very spiritual blessing so adapted to our mournful case, so suitable to our misery and woe, as justly condemned sinners before him: "In whom," that is in Christ, "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7.) So then if we belong to that happy number who are "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus," they being the "we" to whom the apostle speaks, God hath blessed us, already blessed us with the forgiveness of our sins. All our sins were laid upon the head of our Surety: he bore them all in his body on the tree. He suffered here, that we might not suffer hereafter; he endured the pains of hell, that he might give us the pleasures of heaven; he died in

time, that we might not die to all eternity; and he rose again from the dead, that we might rise with him and sit down together with him in heavenly places. All this we have if we have union with Christ; for it is "in him," that is, by virtue of union with him, that we have "redemption through his blood." And observe how it all is, "according to the riches of his grace." O how rich that grace, how full even to overflowing with a tide of superabounding favour, that redemption, through the blood of Christ, should be as full and as complete as the fulness of the favour of God! If his grace be rich, how rich the redemption; if the redemption be rich, how rich the forgiveness which comes through that redemption; and O how suitable are these three rich blessings, grace, redemption, and forgiveness to hearts robbed, spoiled, and plundered by sin and Satan of everything that is good. But O how many of the dear family of God are deeply tried and sorely exercised upon this point, to believe in the remission of sin, that is, so to believe it as to have a sweet personal, experimental assurance that all their sins are pardoned. They seem able to receive and believe smaller favours, if I may use the expression, a less gift of grace; but they cannot rise up into the sweet persuasion that the great grace of forgiveness is theirs; nor can they, nor will they ever believe it till the Holy Ghost assures them of it, by bringing the testimony of pardoned sin into their heart. And yet could they but see, believe, and enjoy it, they are blessed, already blessed, with this best and greatest of personal favours, as one of those spiritual blessings with which God has blessed them in Christ. God has already forgiven them their sins, already put them away, already cast them behind his back, and will remember them no more. I know the weakness of our faith, and the miserable unbelief and despondency of our heart under the guilt of sin; nor would I lead any one a step further than God has led him, or say a word to tempt any to presume; but this I may say to every one of you who has any spiritual mark of being a saint and a believer in Christ Jesus, that God has already blessed you with the forgiveness of sin, by giving you an interest in the redemption of his dear Son.

2. But now look at another spiritual blessing with which God has

blessed his dear people in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has *freely justified* them. Our blessed Lord wrought out for them a robe of righteousness. He obeyed the law on their behalf, bearing its penalty and enduring its curse, and has thus redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. (Gal. 3:10.) Yea, God himself "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2. Cor. 5:21.) They are thus freely justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3:24.) His name is "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6); and "in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. 45:25.) It was a sense of this which made the Church of old rejoice and sing: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for 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." (Isa. 61:10.)

3. But what is the fruit and effect of these two spiritual blessings? The pardon of our sin and the justification of our persons, is to *give us peace* with God. There is no peace with God except so far as there is some sense of forgiven sin, and some gracious persuasion of being in a justified state. But these two blessings we cannot experimentally realise until God is pleased to reveal Christ to our soul, and to set him, so to speak, before our eyes as the Object of our faith. Then, according to the measure of that faith, there is a reception of his precious blood into a living conscience, a taking hold of his righteousness, and thus having peace with God in believing. Does not the Lord say "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me?" To take hold of God's strength is to take hold of the strength of his grace in the work of redemption; to see and feel that the love displayed in it was, as the bride speaks, "strong as death"—so strong that "many waters could not quench it, neither the floods drown it." (Song Sol. 8:7.) Peace, then, as the fruit and effect of justifying righteousness, is also a spiritual blessing which God has blessed us with in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The apostle, therefore, in all his epistles

prays for "grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a part of that kingdom of God which, as set up in the heart, is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) It is called "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7); and the apostle prays that "God would fill his saints with all joy and peace in believing;" for "he has called us to peace." (1 Cor. 7:15.) He is "himself the author of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33), and "would have it reign and rule in our hearts." (Col. 3:15.) It is indeed a most precious blessing, the dying legacy of our gracious Lord, of which he himself is the sum and substance, and which "he came and preached to us who were afar off." (Eph. 2:14, 17.) It is also the choicest fruit of justification: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.) In some respects it seems almost the crown of all blessings; for if there be more in love to enjoy, there is more in peace to possess, a more tranquil happiness, which in its calm passiveness is almost sweeter than love in its warm activity.

4. Another spiritual blessing with which God has blessed us in heavenly places in Christ Jesus is *reconciliation* unto himself. How strongly, how clearly, how blessedly does the apostle declare this vital truth: "And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight." (Col. 1:21, 22.) And again: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:18.) How rich the grace, how wondrous the mercy, that God should have devised and accomplished the reconciliation to himself of enemies and aliens. And O in what a way! By the cross; thus slaying the enmity which had been introduced by sin: "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Eph. 2:16.)

5. Now from this flows another blessing, a being *brought nigh unto God* by the blood of his dear Son: "But now in Christ Jesus

ye who were afar off"—and O how far off! could any be farther than we?—"are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. 2:13.) We thus obtain *access* unto God; "for through him, that is, Christ, we both (that is, Jew and Gentile), have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. 3:18.) The word "access" means liberty to approach him with all holy boldness, and come into his presence with acceptance. The word properly and literally signifies "introduction;" as if we were taken by the hand and led into the court to see the king face to face, and this without chilling fear: "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." (Eph. 3:12.) What an unspeakable blessing it is to have access to God, so as to come into his presence with some measure of sweet freedom, holy liberty, and some intimation of his gracious favour; for without some degree of this, all is darkness, condemnation, and death. But our blessed Lord having gone up on high, through the rent veil of his own flesh gives access to God, that we may venture into the holiest through the blood of Jesus; and thus find liberty of speech and power of utterance before the throne of grace. How blessed it is to have some measure of gracious 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.)

But may I not well adopt the apostle's words? "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell" of all the spiritual blessings with which God has blessed his people in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

6. Yet must I mention one more: the sum and crown of all, *eternal life*. This God "promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2); and by the gospel he brings the hope of it into the heart. And may we not well say this is a spiritual blessing in heavenly places? for that is the very ground in which hope anchors, as entering into that within the veil. (Heb. 6:19.)

vi. But I now come to those striking and most expressive words, "*heavenly places*." You will not fail to have observed that we are

blessed with all these spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and that therefore they are all safely stored up in Christ, far above the reach of all earthly vicissitudes. No storms ever reach that celestial atmosphere; no waves of time ever beat upon that glorious shore. Many are the storms which assail the saints of God here below; and the worst are from within. But these blessings are placed out of the reach of all these storms. The world with all its combined force, persecution in all its forms, Satan with all his assaults and all his temptations cannot touch these blessings.

But observe also that they are all stored up in *the Person of Christ*, and therefore are where he is—at the right hand of God. What an effect, what an influence have these things upon the heart when they are received by faith. What a fixing there is of the eye of faith upon the grand Object of faith at the right hand of the Father. What a looking to, what a believing in, what a laying hold of the Son of God in the highest heavens as the great High Priest over the House of God. What a daily, sometimes hourly, Object for faith is this risen, this glorified, this exalted Christ; and how at various times our faith is enabled to enter through the veil of earthly things, to pass through the clouds and mists that hover over this world, and to reach upward to that blessed spot where our great High Priest sits in his Deity and in his humanity, Immanuel, God with us. What a tendency this has also to raise up our affections to things above. This is the very spirit of the apostle's exhortation: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of the Father." (Col. 3:1.) If we look up to this risen, exalted, glorified Jesus, we see that God has blessed us already with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him. How, as favoured with a living faith, we see them stored up in the Person of the risen Son of God far beyond all the attacks of sin and Satan, all the malice and hatred of the world, and all the darkness and confusion of our miserable selves. As thus we view these things by the eye of faith, the heart goes forth in affection towards him in whom all these blessings centre; for they derive all their blessedness from being in him. What is love without the

lover? What the marriage without the man? Thus, as if instinctively, as if intuitively, we know, we feel that as being in him they must come down from him. They are all stored up in him; they all centre in him; he is their giver; from him they must all be bestowed upon his poor, needy recipients; and there is, as it were, a double sweetness in them as being in him and coming from him. There is thus established a blessed link of communication between the Lord and our souls, a spiritual intercourse, a holy communion, like Jacob's ladder, a going up and a coming down; an ascent of prayer and affection, of faith, hope, and love, up to the throne of God, and a coming down of his gracious presence and favour into the breast. We cannot look too much or too frequently, too prayerfully, too believingly, too affectionately to the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God; for he is there as our Advocate, as our Priest, as our Representative, as our King. Faith, in order to act, wants an Object to whom it may look, in whom it may believe, on whom it may hang, to whom it may cleave. Without this Object on which to fix its eyes, faith seems to wander about without purpose, end, or object; and all its labours and toil bring nothing into the heart but darkness, barrenness, and death. But when it fixes its eyes upon the Lord of life and glory in the highest heavens, and goes forth in living actings upon him, it has that upon which it can feed, embrace, and enjoy. And as all spiritual blessings are stored up in him in these heavenly places, out of his fulness we receive them through this medium—the medium of faith. We have not then to muddle and grope here below to seek after and look for blessings in ourselves or others, but we have to look up by the eye of faith; see every spiritual blessing which our souls can desire stored up in the fulness of the risen Son of God, and by faith and prayer draw them down into our breast.

But the margin reads, "things," "heavenly things;" and I have already intimated that both "things" and "places" are admissible, though I prefer the textual rendering "places." Yet we may devote a few words to the expression "heavenly things." The word implies that every spiritual blessing is of a heavenly nature, redolent of the very breath of heaven. From heaven is their

origin; for like the beams of the sun and the showers of the air, from heaven they come down. "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." (Isa. 45:8.) "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven." (Isa. 55:10.) And as they come down from heaven, so they rise up to heaven. The apostle puts them both in one verse—lodges both in the bosom of one exhortation: "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1.) What are "things above" but "heavenly things?" What is "Christ, at the right hand of God" but Christ in the "heavenly places?" Is not all heavenly where he is, and with which he has to do? Through them also, as brought into the heart by a divine power, there is communicated a meetness for heaven; and as heavenly things are only in heavenly places, whether we adopt the rendering "things" or "places," either word has heaven for its substance, its element, and its eternal home.

II. But let me now pass on to show what was God's *aim, end, and object* in blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It was "that we should be *holy and without blame before him* in love."

i. God means to make us partakers of his holiness, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is impossible for an unholy soul to enter the courts of heavenly bliss. There dwell in the light which no man can approach unto a holy Father, a holy Son, and a holy Ghost, Israel's Triune God. There dwells holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. Holy is heaven's air, holy are heaven's employments: all there is one eternal, unmixed atmosphere of holiness. Unless therefore we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light by being made partakers of God's holiness, we never can enter that celestial atmosphere: we shall never dwell in the presence of God for evermore. Into that celestial city "there shall in no wise enter anything which defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." John tells us what he saw in vision concerning this holy city: "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.) The Church is here represented, as "a bride adorned for her husband;" and that she may be adorned for such a bridegroom she must shine forth not only in all the splendour of his glorious righteousness, but, according to the promise, in all "the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." (Psa. 110:3.) Our own holiness is not sufficient. The holiness which God requires and the holiness which he gives is one "without blame." Now who can say of any man, whatever his life and conduct be, whatever be his spiritual aspirations, godly walk, consistent conversation, affectionate desires, living faith, or tender love, that he stands holy and without blame before God? Can you say so of yourself? And if this be true of you, as you know it is, so is it of all the people of God. In order, therefore, to give them that holiness in which they might stand without blame before him, God did three things for them.

1. First, he sanctified them by separating them unto himself from all eternity and giving them to his dear Son that he might be their holiness. Thus the Lord, speaking of Israel of old, says, "Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness which I had put upon thee." (Ezek. 16:14.) We are, therefore, said to be sanctified by the will of the Father: "By which will we are sanctified" (Heb. 10:10); and Christ is declared to be "of God made unto us sanctification" as well as "wisdom, righteousness, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.) This runs in accordance with Paul's word: "For if the firstfruits be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches." (Rom. 11:16.) Christ is the firstfruit, for he is become "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20); and Christ is the root, for he is "the root of Jesse, which is to stand for an ensign of the people." (Isa. 11:10.) God's will determined everything. God willed that we should be holy, and by that will he made us holy. Just as when God willed earth into being, earth came into being; so when God willed his people to be holy, he made them holy by the power of that will; and thus, by being separated unto himself to be a holy people, they were sanctified by the will of the Father.

2. But, secondly, they are sanctified also by the blood of the Son:

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 13:12.) Thus Jesus sanctified his people by his own blood, that is, effectually cleansed them from all their pollutions, freed them from all their guilty stains, and presented them before God spotless and without blame, as being perfectly washed in the atoning fountain opened in him for all sin and uncleanness.

3. But this does not give them personal holiness, holiness of heart. There is, therefore, a holiness which the Holy Ghost gives at regeneration, by renewing them in the spirit of their mind, communicating a new nature, and sanctifying them inwardly by the communication of divine life. This is "the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (1 Cor. 3:10.)

We thus see that they are holy by the will of the Father by election, holy by the blood of the Son by redemption, holy by the work of the Holy Ghost by regeneration.

ii. And as they are thus holy, so are they "*without blame before him.*" As the work of a Triune God, each and every part of this holiness is perfect, and therefore without blame before God. Perfect in his own eternal will; perfect in the work of redemption; perfect, as far as it goes, the work of regeneration. God views his people in Christ. Though he sees our sins and chastises us for them, yet he views our persons as we stand "accepted in the beloved;" and viewing us as we stand not in ourselves, but in Christ, he views us without blame before him.

iii. And that, "*in love,*" his own love, wherewith he hath loved us; and in that love which he himself sheds abroad in the heart; for love is the fulfilling of the law, and therefore an eminent branch of Christian holiness. And in that great and glorious day when Christ who is our life shall appear, and all his saints shall appear with him in glory, then will the love of the Church be fully perfected, and she will stand before the throne holy and without blame before him in love.

Have you ever considered these things? Were you ever led into them, into their meaning, their spirituality, their power, their personal effect and influence? What does your religion consist in? Is it merely in finding in yourself a few shallow evidences, or does it spring out of any manifestation of the Son of God to your soul, any application of his blood and love and grace to your heart? Do you ever rise up out of the refuse of self into the goodness, mercy, and grace of God as manifested in the Person and work of Jesus? Do you never find a solemn taking up of your soul into the arms of mercy and a laying of it upon the bosom of a risen Christ? a breathing into your heart of the very Spirit and presence and grace of Christ, so as to give you a measure of sweet enjoyment of the things of God in your own bosom? Now you may look and look again at your evidences; you may try to take the very best of them, such as loving the brethren, receiving the truth, walking consistently, being a member of a church, the opinion that good people form of you; and you may keep looking and looking at, and into these evidences, some of which are true and Scriptural, such as loving the brethren, receiving the love of the truth, and leading a godly life, but others shallow or even deceptive, till your very eyes fail. With all your looking you will never rise much beyond doubt or fear. Have you not then something beyond evidences, some living faith in the Son of God, some love to his dear name, some anchoring within the veil, some love of God shed abroad in your heart, some manifestation of Christ, some union and communion with the Son of God? Evidences are good in their way: they are, according to my figure, like milestones upon the road; we are glad to see and count the milestones, especially when we are weary. It is good to see that the road we are travelling on is the right road, and how far we are advanced in it. But a man would be sadly deceived if he mistook a milestone for his own home, or lay down to sleep under it. Press on, press on; don't be satisfied with a few evidences. Let nothing satisfy you but the blood of Christ sprinkled upon your conscience, the love of God shed abroad in your heart, peace and joy in believing, with blessed views of the Son of God as of God made unto you wisdom and righteousness

and sanctification and redemption. And see the blessedness of our subject; God hath blessed you, if indeed you believe in his dear Son, with all spiritual blessings already in Christ Jesus. If you are a saint and a faithful one, he has only to open his hand to satisfy the desire of you as of every other living thing. The blessings are all in Christ: they are in him already. They have to be received out of him; and we receive them by the hand of faith. Instead then of sitting down contented with your evidences, and making a Christ out of them, worshipping them as if they were your God, is it not more consistent with the experience of living souls, with the directions of God's word, with the preaching of the apostles and of all godly men of all ages, nay, I might add, even with the secret, inmost convictions of your own conscience to go to the fountain-head to receive of his fulness and to drink pure streams out of him, who hath said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink? He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

III.—But to pass on to our third and last point. All this is in sweet *accordance with God's eternal choice* of his people to the enjoyment of these heavenly blessings: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

This firm, immutable purpose of God gives a fixedness to the tenure. Fixity of tenure gives value to an estate. Who would buy an estate upon an uncertain tenure or an unsound title? Fixedness of tenure, soundness of title, give that stability which constitutes worth. So it is in these divine realities: they are eternal fixtures, not depending upon the changeable concerns of time, but fixed by the absolute decree of God. In this consists their main blessedness. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Observe, it is "*in him*." All is in Christ. If you are blessed with all spiritual blessings, it is only "in Christ" you are so blessed. If you were chosen before the foundation of the world, it was only "in Christ" that you were chosen. He is our covenant Head. What we are we are only in him. There is nothing in self: no fixedness there. All is fluctuating here below; all is uncertain as regards man. Certainty is with

God; and the fixedness of God's purposes is our grand, our only support. Thus the doctrine of election received into the heart diffuses a sacred blessedness over the whole truth of God, for it gives stability to it. It is not a dry doctrine which men may toss about from hand to hand like a tennis ball; it is not an article of a creed written down in church articles, or a theory to be argued by divines. Nor is it a mere loose, floating idea gathered from a few dim and doubtful passages of God's word. It is no ignis fatuus, no meteor light dancing over morasses and swamps. It is a steady light set by the hand of God in the Scriptures, as he set of old lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth. It therefore diffuses its rays over the whole of God's truth. For it is "in Christ" his people were chosen, and therefore election being in Christ, it is reflected with all the beams of the Sun of Righteousness upon every gospel truth. There is not a single gospel truth, or a single spiritual blessing, which does not derive its blessedness from its connection with the Person and work of the Son of God; and what is true of all, is true of this, that the blessedness of election is because it is in Christ.

But some may say "these things are hard to believe." They are very hard to believe, for our unbelieving heart finds it very hard to believe anything that is for our good. We can believe Satan's lies with great readiness; we can give an open, willing ear to anything which our evil heart suggests. But to believe God's truths so as to enter into their beauty and blessedness, to feel their quickening power and live under their cheering, invigorating influence, this is another matter. But where is the life of our religion when these things are taken away from it? Take, if you could take—God be praised it is beyond the reach of human hand!—but take away that solemn fact, that God has blessed the Church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, where would there be room for any blessing to rest upon our soul? How could I be blessed to you this morning in speaking, how could you be blessed by a word falling with power in hearing? Why, any sweet promise that comes rolling into your breast, any lifting up of the light of God's countenance in seasons of darkness and adversity, any liberty in prayer, any looking up

and receiving out of Christ's fulness,—all hang upon this grand point, the blessings wherewith God hath already blessed us in Christ Jesus. So that all we have to do—and it is a great thing to do—God alone can enable us to do it—is to receive what God has been pleased so mercifully to give; and as he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, to feel their power, to enjoy their sweetness, and to know for ourselves by the sealing of the Spirit that he has blessed us, even us, and that with life for evermore.

THE SPIRITUAL CHASE

Preached on Thursday Evening, July 27th, 1843, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

"My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me." Psalm 63:8

Did the question ever arise in your mind, how David composed the Psalms? Of course, the answer would be, "He composed them by divine inspiration." But that is not my meaning. We will put the question in another form. Do you suppose that David wrote his psalms, as the college clergy and Dissenting academics prepare their sermons on a Saturday evening; that is, that he sat down with his pen in his hand, for the express purpose of composing a psalm? I think not. I believe that David composed his psalms in this way. The Lord led him into some experience, it might have been a mournful, or it might have been a joyful one; He might plunge him into some depths, or He might raise him up to some heights; but whichever it was, the Spirit filled his soul with some deep feelings, and when these had begun to ferment, so to speak, in the Psalmist's soul, he straightway gave them utterance; as he himself says, "While I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue" (Ps. 39:3). Thus he seized his pen, and as the Lord the Spirit brought the thoughts into his mind, and dictated the words, he penned them down. Now that will account for this circumstance, that in David's Psalms notes of mourning are so intermingled with strains of rejoicing; that he is sometimes crying after an absent God, and sometimes enjoying a present Lord; sometimes overwhelmed in the deep waters, and at other times standing on a rock, singing the high praises of his God. And being written in this way, they have become such a manual of Christian experience. The feelings flowing out of a heaven-taught heart, and the words being dictated by the Holy Ghost, they suit the experience of all Christians, more or less, at all times. Would we, then, know whether the same God that taught David is teaching us, we have only to compare our

experience with that of David, as recorded in the Psalms; and then, when laying it side by side with his, we find it to agree, we may, if the Lord the Spirit shine into our heart, gather up some testimony that we are under the same teaching as that highly-favoured man of God enjoyed in his soul.

In the words of the text we find David describing his soul as being engaged in a divine pursuit; he says, "My soul followeth hard after Thee;" and yet that pursuit was not free from difficulties, but one which required all the support of God; he therefore adds, "Thy right hand upholdeth me."

I. We will look then, *first*, at the *pursuit of David's soul after God*; and let us see if you and I can trace out in our hearts any similar pursuit from time to time going on within.

Pursuit implies *want*; that the soul engaged in it is seeking to overtake and obtain some object. Spiritual want, then, lies at the foundation of spiritual pursuit. Were there no object to obtain, there would be no purpose in the pursuit. Thus spiritual want is the key which unlocks the text, and is the root of the experience contained in it. But whence comes spiritual want? It arises from the quickening work of the Spirit in the soul. Until we are divinely enlightened to see, and spiritually quickened to feel our lost, ruined state, we are satisfied with the things of time and sense; our hearts are in the world; our affections are fixed on the poor perishing vanities that must quickly pass away; and there is not one spiritual longing or heavenly craving in the soul. But when the Lord sends light and life into the conscience, to show us to ourselves in our true colours, and as the Psalmist says, to "see light in God's light," then spiritual wants immediately commence. The eyes of the understanding are spiritually enlightened to see God, and the heart is divinely quickened to feel that He alone can relieve the wants that the soul labours under; and thus there is set before the eyes of the mind, not merely certain objects of anxious pursuit, but the Person also, who alone can give us that which the soul craves to enjoy. "My soul followeth hard after *Thee*."

But what does it follow hard after God to *obtain*?

1. The first thing that the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain is, *righteousness*. The first teaching of the Spirit in the conscience is to convince us of our own unrighteousness—that we are sinners in the sight of a holy God; and to make us feel that unless we have a righteousness in which we can stand accepted before a pure and a holy God, we can never see Christ in glory. Now when a man begins to feel his want of righteousness, when his sins and iniquities are opened up to him, and laid as a burden upon his conscience; when he knows that he has to do with a God that cannot be mocked, and whose justice cannot "clear the guilty," he feels that he must have a righteousness which at present he has not, or perish in his sins. And most persons, in order to obtain this righteousness, seek it by "the works of the law." Like the Jews of old, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." The Lord having certain purposes to answer, allows them to set off in this vain pursuit. And what success have they? What does this vain pursuit do for them? For every step which they think they have taken forward, they find that they have slipped two backward; so that instead of obtaining this righteousness, they have only found a deeper discovery of their own heart, and are more and more convinced that in themselves, that is, in their "flesh, dwelleth no good thing," and that all their "righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

Now when a man is brought experimentally, in the feelings of his soul, to groan under the weight and burden of sin laid upon his conscience, the Lord the Spirit, sooner or later, enlightens his eyes to see, and brings into his soul a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness. The reason why so many stumble at the imputed righteousness of Christ is because they have never seen their sins in the light of God's holy law, have never felt condemned before Him, have never had the deep corruptions of their heart turned up from the bottom, so as to loathe

themselves in dust and ashes. Men therefore mock and scorn at imputed righteousness, because they are so deeply enamoured with their own. But when a man is brought to stand on the brink of eternal ruin, with but one step betwixt him and death; when he is brought to see and feel that he is nothing, and has nothing in himself but sin and guilt, then when the Lord begins to set before his eyes, and bring into his heart a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness; when He shows him the dignity of Christ's Person, and that his righteousness is that of the God-man, he is anxious to stretch forth the hand of faith, and "lay hold of eternal life." Thus the soul "followeth hard after God," that it may obtain this righteousness, and stand accepted and complete in the Beloved.

2. Again; in following "hard after the Lord," the quickened soul followeth hard after *pardon*. None of God's people can live or die happily without the manifested pardon of their sins; and they cannot be satisfied without receiving it from God's own lips. It is not merely having some loose, floating ideas about it; it is not taking it up as a doctrine, or learning it from the experience of others; but every child of God must sooner or later feel the pardon of sin manifested in his conscience. And when he feels guilty and condemned, then he "followeth hard after" pardon, the manifested forgiveness of his sins, through the blood of sprinkling applied to his conscience. But if a man never knew what it was to follow hard after God, nor the many difficulties he has to press through before he can obtain it, he has never had pardon yet manifested to his soul.

3. *Grace* is another thing which the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain. Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings. Thus no one can really want to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of manifested grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and that "God's law is exceeding broad;" and is brought to know and feel in the conscience that his good works would damn him equally with his bad works. When grace is thus opened up to the soul, when it

sees that grace flows only through the Saviour's blood; that grace superabounds over all the abounding of sin; that grace heals all backslidings, covers all transgressions, lifts up out of darkness, pardons iniquity, and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under; when grace, in the sweetness and blessedness of it, is thus spiritually opened up, there is a following hard after it in order to lay hold of and enjoy the happy and peaceful effects of it in soul experience.

But let us look at the expression "*Thee:*" "My soul followeth hard after *Thee.*" Not only does the quickened soul follow hard after the blessings which God has to give, but the great and ardent object of its pursuit is God Himself—the Giver. The Lord has made Himself in some measure manifestly known; He has discovered to the soul the dignity of His Person, with the beauty and comeliness of His countenance; and thus He has secretly drawn up the affections unto Himself, and the soul desires to know Him, and Him only. In following, then, hard after the Lord, it is that it may obtain possession of Him—that it may, as the apostle says, "win Him," that is, clasp Him in the arms of faith, and embrace Him with spiritual affection, so as to be mutually loved and embraced by Him.

Now there is something in the expression "*hard,*" which demands a little attention. It does not say merely, "my soul followeth after *Thee,*" but "*hard* after *Thee,*" which implies the intensity of the pursuit. It is not merely a simple following, but a following with eagerness and ardour. And the expression also shows that the object sought after is very difficult to be overtaken. It is not a slothful pursuit that will attain the object desired; it is not a mere wishing after something that will bring down the desired blessing; but the pursuit in which the soul is engaged is a most intense and eager one. There is also implied in the expression that the object retires, so to speak, as we pursue it; that it is not only overtaken with great difficulty, but that the Lord, the object of the soul's pursuit, so withdraws Himself as we advance towards Him, that it requires all the intensity, and I was going to say, agony of the soul to pursue, and if possible to overtake and gain in Him all that

it longs to enjoy.

But *how* does the soul thus "follow hard" after the Lord? Chiefly in longings, breathings, earnest cries, and intense pantings after Him. The Psalmist has expressed this in one short sentence, and a most emphatic and beautiful one it is: "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." He there represents the hunted stag panting and thirsting after one refreshing draught from the water-brooks; panting as David himself once panted by the well of Bethlehem, when he uttered that poignant desire, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!" Thus it is by the panting and longing of the soul after God in intense desire and vehement longings of the soul to enjoy His presence, that this "following hard" after the Lord is chiefly manifested. And God's people know this experimentally. How many times do they stretch themselves on their beds, and pant after the Lord as though the last breath were going out of their body! How often as they are engaged in the daily pursuits of life is there a cry going up out of their heart after the Lord, pleading with Him, and telling Him that they cannot be satisfied without His manifested presence! How often, perhaps, when for some time you have felt cold and dead, a sudden spirit of grace and supplication has come into your hearts, that has vented and breathed itself forth in cries to the Lord! And thus your soul has gone forth with the most intense desire to enjoy the sweet manifestations of His Person and testimonies of His covenant love.

"My soul followeth hard after Thee." The Lord (we would speak with reverence) does not suffer Himself at first to be overtaken. The more the soul follows after Him the more He seems to withdraw Himself, and thus He draws it more earnestly on the pursuit. He means to be overtaken in the end—it is His own blessed work in the conscience to kindle earnest desires and longings after Himself; and therefore He puts strength into the soul, and "makes the feet like hind's feet" to run and continue the chase. But in order to whet the ardent desire, to kindle to greater intensity the rising eagerness, the Lord will not suffer Himself to

be overtaken till after a long and arduous pursuit. This is sweetly set forth in the Song of Solomon (5:2-8). We find there the Lord coming to His Bride; but she is unwilling to open to Him till "He puts His hand in by the hole of the door." She would not rise at His first knocking, and therefore He is obliged to touch her heart. But "when she opened to her Beloved, He was gone;" and no sooner does He withdraw Himself, than she pursues after Him; but she cannot find Him—He hides Himself from her view, draws her round and round the walls of the city, until at length she overtakes, and finds Him whom her soul loveth. This sweetly sets forth how the Lord draws on the longing soul after Himself. Could we immediately obtain the object of our pursuit, we should not half so much enjoy it when attained. Could we with a wish bring the Lord down into the soul, it would be but the lazy wish of the sluggard, who "desireth, and hath not." But when the Lord can only be obtained by an arduous pursuit, every faculty of the soul is engaged in panting after His manifested presence; and this was the experience of the Psalmist, when he cried, "My soul followeth hard after Thee."

II. But we observe, *secondly*, that there are certain obstacles and impediments in the way of this arduous pursuit; and therefore the Psalmist adds: "Thy right hand upholdeth me."

These words imply our need of divine strength, in order that the soul may not merely commence, but also be strengthened to keep up the pursuit. We soon grow faint and weary after the heart has been a little drawn forth to the Lord; and like Abraham, "when the Lord left off communing with him," we "return to our place." This strength is from time to time mysteriously communicated. Perhaps after the soul has been going forth in earnest pantings and intense longings after God's manifested presence, a deadness and coldness comes over the mind, as though we had neither a God to find, nor a heart to seek Him. In order, then, that we may not utterly faint by the way, there is a continual reviving of God's work in the soul, enabling it to follow hard after Him. And this is implied in the expression, "Thy right hand *upholdeth* me." Just in the same way as the Lord

strengthened Elijah to run before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46), a race he could not have performed unless the Lord had girded him with strength, so we can only "run with patience the race that is set before us," and follow hard after the Lord, as He blessedly and secretly communicates strength to our souls.

1. But *unbelief* will sometimes damp this arduous and anxious pursuit. Unbelief, when the power of it is felt, seems absolutely to unnerve a man's limbs, and to paralyse every spiritual faculty. When he would run, unbelief hamstringing him, so that he cannot "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now the Lord in upholding him with His "right hand," secretly weakens the power of unbelief, by kindling and communicating faith. Thus, as his soul finds the power of unbelief sensibly weakened, and the power of faith sensibly increased, he is enabled to press anxiously on, and follow after the Lord.

2. Sometimes *doubts* and *fears* and heavy despondency lie as a burden on the soul, and keep it back from pursuing this arduous chase. Doubts whether the heart is altogether right with God; killing fears as to whether He will receive us when we draw near; painful apprehensions and suspicions as to whether our religion be God's work in the soul—these things lying as weights and burdens upon a man's soul, check and impede him in running the race set before him. The apostle therefore says, "Let us lay aside every weight" (Heb. 12:1). These weights lie heavy on the shoulders, and keep the soul from following "hard after the Lord;" nay, under these weights and burdens it would sink, did not the right hand of the Lord uphold it; but He secretly communicates strength, so that these burdens do not altogether press it down; and enables it, in spite of all its weights, to run patiently and perseveringly on.

3. But *carnality*, *worldliness*, and *earthly affections* will at times also damp the soul's earnest pursuit after God. Heavenly things lose their savour, spiritual affections are not sensibly felt, and the heart grows cold Godward, and warm earthward. The Lord seems

to be at a distance; the world and worldly things fill the thoughts, and almost banish spiritual feelings from the mind. The Lord, then, must again revive His work in the soul, and bring it out of this carnality, deadness, hardness, and carelessness; He must stir it up again and again into desires after Him. But directly He leaves us to ourselves, we relapse into our former carnal state. Only so long as he keeps us near Him do we overcome this wretched carnality; and when He leaves us to ourselves, our hands hang down, and we sink again into our former deadness and worldliness.

4. Sometimes *presumption, vain confidence, and fleshly security* act as hindrances, so that the soul is unable to follow "hard after the Lord." When this feeling of carnal security comes over a man's mind, he is not anxious about his eternal state, his soul is not looking to God; and secure of reaching "the world to come," the world present lays such fast hold on him as to bury him in its cares and pursuits, and take away his heart from following after the Lord.

All these things, then, conspire as so many hindrances; and the soul is often so encumbered and entangled by them that it is not able to follow "hard after the Lord." But God will not leave a man here; He will not suffer him to be altogether swallowed up in the things of time and sense. He stirs up his mind, and by stirring it up He more and more engages him in this pursuit after Himself. Sometimes, for instance, *He sends heavy afflictions*; and when these fall upon a man they show him where he has been; they are often blessed to lay bare his secret backslidings from God; and to open up to him how he has been content with only a name to live, how he has been secure in a form of godliness, whilst his heart was not alive to God, nor eagerly pursuing after the power and savour which he once felt. When affliction, then, embitters to him the things of time and sense, he begins to look out for solid comfort, and he finds none but in the Lord, for everything else is full of labour and sorrow. But the Lord has been provoked by his backsliding conduct to withdraw Himself, so that the soul cannot find Him, though it can find solid satisfaction nowhere else. This

stirs it up only the more earnestly to follow after the Lord as the only source of true consolation.

But again. *Temptations* coming suddenly into the mind, and sweeping away all false evidences, removing vain hopes, and laying bare the corruptions of the heart, will often at first plunge the soul down into the depths of creature helplessness. But the Lord mysteriously works by these very temptations, that we may follow "hard after Him;" for when we are thus tempted and exercised in our minds, we want immediate relief. It is like a patient afflicted with an acute disease, or like a man with a fractured limb; he wants to send for the doctor at once, it will not do to wait till to-morrow; he must come immediately, for the case admits of no delay. And so, in the case of powerful temptations, when Satan attacks the soul with all the malice and craft of hell, it does not do to wait till tomorrow, or the day after; the relief must be immediate, the case is pressing, and the remedy must be at hand. Thus powerful temptations are overruled to make us follow "hard after God."

Sometimes the Lord *lays a man on the bed of sickness*, and brings death, the king of terrors, before his soul in all its ghastliness. And the heart being made honest before God, and alive in His fear, he begins to examine his religion, to overhaul his evidences, and to look back on the way in which the Lord has led him from the first. But in so doing he looks not only at the Lord's dealings with him, but how he has requited the Lord; he calls to mind his idolatries and spiritual adulteries, his continual backslidings, his vile ingratitude, with all the baseness and rebelliousness which his soul has been guilty of. All these things are brought to light in his conscience, and laid upon it; and he must now have the Lord Himself to speak peace to his soul. Death stares him in the face; his sins rise up to view in clouds, and his conscience bears testimony against him. He must now have the Lord Himself to acquit him; he must have His blood sprinkled upon his conscience; he must have His righteousness revealed, and His love and manifested presence sensibly felt. But to obtain this, his soul "followeth hard" after the Lord. These

mercies being delayed, he is made to see and feel more and more the solemn reality of his state; and under the teachings of the Spirit, he wonders how he could go dreaming on through so long a period, without panting more after the immediate presence of the Lord. Thus, through these painful exercises, his soul follows hard after the Lord, as though he would take no denial.

Now the man that thus follows hard after the Lord, knows what he wants; he is not undecided as to what vital godliness is; he is not resting on refuges that thousands shelter themselves in. He has a determinate object, and no one can put him off from that object. He cannot be flattered into a belief that he has what his conscience tells him he has not; nor is he to be persuaded that he has the enjoyment of what he wants, when all within is one mournful, solitary blank. Thus, whatever darkness of soul a living man may be plunged into, however he may be harassed through the workings of Satan's temptations, whatever he may feel of the sinfulness of his corrupt nature; and whatever carnality of mind he may seem to sink into, so as sometimes to appear to himself, or even to others, to have scarcely a spark of grace in his soul, yet in his worst state, in his darkest hours, in his most confused and self-condemning moments, the child of God, taught by the Spirit, will differ from everyone else on the face of the earth. Nothing but God can really satisfy his panting soul; nothing but the Lord's smiles, and the manifestations of His presence, can comfort his heart; and to all others he says, "Miserable comforters are ye." He can take up with no hope but what the Lord communicates to his soul, nor rest in any other testimony but that which he receives from God's own lips.

Thus the child of God, in whatever state he may be, carries certain marks which distinguish him from the dead professor of the highest doctrines, and from the lowest groveller in Arminianism. The grand distinguishing mark of a living soul is this—that he alone either is in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence, or is panting after the manifestation of it; that he alone is either happy in God, or restless and dissatisfied without Him. I do not mean to say that a living man always feels unhappy when

he is without the manifestative presence of God; for sometimes he seems to have not one spark of feeling in his heart at all, and there is no more going out after the Lord than if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, or as if we had no immortal soul to be saved or lost. Such a deathlike stupor, such a complete paralysis, such a benumbing torpor seems to creep over the soul, that it seems at times as if it were altogether dead Godward. But the Lord from time to time revives His own blessed work. In the midst of all this deathliness, He brings a secret testimony into the conscience; and thus, by the teachings of the Spirit, in the midst of all this worldliness that the soul gets buried under, and all the carnality it may be overwhelmed by, there is an inward feeling of self-condemnation. In the midst of the world, or in company perhaps, a secret groan bursts from the soul, an inward pang of self-loathing is felt on account of its carnality, and a secret desire goes forth to the Lord that He would come down into the heart, and bless it with His presence.

But there are special seasons when the soul "followeth hard after" the Lord. We are unable to produce them, and we are unable to recall them. We can no more kindle in our own soul a holy panting after God, than we can make a world. We can no more create a spiritual desire, than we can create a new sun, and fix him in the sky. We may indeed take up the Word of God, and try to peruse its pages; but we can find no comfort from it—it is all a dead letter. We may fall on our knees, and utter words; but we have no power to cause the heart to go with them. We may come to hear the word preached; and as we come through the streets, perhaps a secret sigh may go forth that the Lord would bless it to our souls; but when we have got to chapel, and are sitting to hear, Satan may come down, like a foul bird of the air, and spread his baneful and blighting wings over the soul, so as to fill it with the miserable feelings that dwell in his own infernal mind. And thus we know by painful experience that it is out of our power to kindle this panting after God. But we know also, at times, that the Lord is pleased to work in us breathings after Himself. It may be, when we walk up and down our room, sit by our fireside, or are engaged in our daily labour, that our soul will

be panting after the Lord; there will be a going up toward Him, and a telling Him that nothing on earth, and nothing in heaven can satisfy us but Himself. There is a secret turning away from our relations and friends, and everything else, to go only after God; and thus the renewed soul pants again and again after His manifested presence.

Now, my friends, if you know these things experimentally; if you know what it is, time after time, as the Lord works in you, to "follow hard after" Him; and yet with all your following find little else but obstacles and difficulties, feel burdens placed upon your shoulders, and impediments continually presented in your path, you have the experience of David; you are in the path which many of God's saints have trodden before you. And the Holy Ghost has left upon special record this and other parts of David's experience, for the comfort and encouragement of those who have the same Spirit, and are called to walk in the same footsteps. Thus it not only shows that the soul must have tasted something of the goodness of God, but that in thus following hard after Him, it has but one object of pursuit, but one desire to obtain.

When a man is diligently engaged, early and late, in his business, does it not show he has an object on which his heart is fixed? In whatever pursuit a man is engaged, does not his anxiety clearly show that he earnestly desires to overtake the object he pursues? When a man, then, can honestly say, "My soul followeth hard after Thee," it shows that he experiences an earnestness and intensity of pursuit after God. There is perhaps someone here who is grievously perplexed and harassed in his mind to know whether the Lord has really visited his soul; and he says, "Are my sins pardoned? Do I stand accepted in the Beloved? Am I an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ? Has the blessed Spirit begun a work in my soul? has He indeed quickened me into spiritual life?" There would be no following hard after the Lord, my friend, unless God had done something for thy soul; there would be no panting after His love, and desire to realise it, unless you had tasted something of it; there would be no desire to feel the

efficacy of atoning blood to purge your conscience from sin, unless you had seen and felt in a measure the vileness of your sins, and had seen by faith the fountain once opened; nor would there be any longing cry and sigh to the Lord that He would reveal Himself in your soul, unless you had seen some beauty in the Lord Jesus, and felt in your heart that nothing but His presence could really content and satisfy you.

If, then, you really and experimentally know what it is, in the secret pantings of your soul, to be following hard after the Lord, let me speak this for your comfort—you are sure to overtake Him. The Lord has not kindled this panting in your soul to disappoint you; He has not made you feel your misery and wretchedness here to give you a foretaste of misery and wretchedness hereafter; He has not made you to feel out of love with your own righteousness, that you may be disappointed in receiving Christ's righteousness; but, on the contrary, when He makes you to fall out of love with yourself, it is to make you fall in love with Him. He has disappointed your false hopes only that He may implant in your soul "a good hope through grace." Your very thirst after Him, your anxious desire to overtake Him, is a pledge and a sure foretaste that you will obtain Him, and clasp Him in your arms as all your salvation and all your desire.

But if a man can go on for weeks, months, and years in a profession of religion, satisfied without the Lord's presence; without either having urgent wants, or longing to have those wants gratified; if his soul never pants after the Lord, or is never satisfied with manifestations of the Lord's favour, I would not stand in that man's religion for a thousand worlds; for however high his assurance may rise, his religion is not worth having, for it is neither life nor power. The man who can thus go on for months without any ardent longings, earnest pantings, or fervent cries after the Lord, shows that he is dead in a profession; that he is satisfied with the mere husks, and knows not the savoury kernel; that he is content with being thought well of men, without seeking and craving after the valid testimonies and inward approbation of God in the conscience. But it is not what we think

of ourselves, it is what the Lord thinks of us; "for not he that approveth himself is commended, but whom the Lord commendeth"—still less is it what others think, for their opinion, good or bad, will affect us but little. We shall not be judged by man's opinion, but stand at the bar of God. And if He is pleased to drop in some testimony to the conscience, and assure us of our interest in the Son of His love, we shall care little either to court the smiles or to fear the frowns of men; but having tasted the riches of His grace, we shall be satisfied with it, and require nothing further for time or eternity.

The Spiritual Conflict

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 30, 1843

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Galatians 5:17

If I loved, or courted popularity, I might feel some pleasure in seeing so crowded an assembly this evening. But, on the contrary, it rather raises questions in my mind. The first question that arises is, "What can I say to profit or edify this body of people?" And the second, "Am I faithful? Do I speak to men's consciences? Do I rightly divide the word of truth? Do I draw a separating line of distinction between the living and the dead?" If so, would not my hearers be fewer?

On seeing so many assembled together, I feel that the Lord must give me strength in body, soul, and spirit for the work; that he must supply me with thoughts and words and set before me a door of utterance, that I may speak a word for his glory and for your profit. And sure I am, if the Lord be not in our midst, you will go away disappointed, and I shall leave this pulpit pained and mortified.

When the Lord takes his people in hand, he gives them all to know and feel the evil of sin. He lays an effectual blow by his own unerring axe at the root of sin in us. But though this is the case, yet we generally find that when the Lord first begins his work on the heart, the fountains of the great deep are not at once broken up, the recesses of our hearts are not immediately laid bare, the awful secrets of the charnel-house we carry about with us are not opened up at first to our astonished view. When God is pleased first to indulge the soul with some manifestations of his mercy, gives to feel his presence, and draws up the heart into some communion with himself, sin receives a stunning blow, and lies for awhile dead and torpid in the carnal mind. But oftentimes

when the Lord withdraws his gracious presence, those hidden evils which lay at first concealed from view, which had been seemingly torpid and asleep, rise up once more with redoubled power, and make us painfully feel what enemies we carry in our bosom. Thus the people of God, instead of getting (as they are told by men ignorant of divine truth) gradually holier, purer, and better in themselves, by having their hearts more anatomized and dissected by the keen knife of the Spirit, sink more and more deeply into the conviction of their nature's vileness; and thus they learn to abhor themselves "in dust and ashes" before God, and to be clothed with that becoming robe of which the Apostle speaks, "Be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. 5:5) An inward and experimental conflict now commences, which is known, in a greater or less degree, by all the people of God, and is in fact that of which the Apostle speaks in the text: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

In speaking upon these words, it will be desirable, before we enter into their experimental meaning, to define, with some degree of accuracy, the terms of the sentence, and to explain, as clearly as the Lord may enable use, the words of the text before we proceed to the experience contained in it.

The first word, then, that meets our eye, is, "*the flesh.*" What does the Holy Ghost intend by this expression? He means, I believe, that corrupt nature which we derive from Adam, the whole natural man, our mind with all its faculties, the whole of our intellect, passions, and propensities; in a word, every thing that we are and have as fallen children of a fallen parent. Thus the Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3:6.)

The next thing that demands a little explanation, is, the word "*spirit.*" What is to be understood by the expression? Are we to understand thereby God the Holy Spirit, who is one in essence, power, and glory with the Father and the Son? I believe not; but

that by *spirit* in the text is meant that new nature which is breathed into the people of God when the Lord quickens their souls into spiritual life; according to the following passages of Scripture: "That which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*." (John 3:6.) "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our *spirit*." (Rom. 8:16.) "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your *spirit*." (Gal. 6:13.) "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole *spirit* and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Jesus Lord Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23.) In all these passages, the word *spirit* signifies the "divine nature," the "new man," the "heart of flesh;" in a word, that "new creature," or "new creation," which is given to us when the soul is quickened by God the Spirit; according to those words, "If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature* (or "new creation"), old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17.)

The last term that demands a little explanation is the word, "*lusteth*." We must not take this expression in the gross idea usually attached to it. The word means simply, to desire, to covet; in fact, we have the identical word in Romans 7:7, where we read, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not *covet*." The word translated "*covet*," is precisely the same expression as is rendered in our text, "*lusteth*;" and it means simply an intense desire, an ardent thirsting or longing after the attainment of any wished-for object.

Having seen then the scriptural explanation, as I believe, and definition of these three words, we shall be the better prepared, if the Lord shall be pleased to lead us, to enter upon the experimental meaning of the text:

I.—The first grand truth, then, which the Apostle lays down in it is, that "*the flesh lusteth against the spirit*." The whole bent of "the flesh" is earthward; the whole bias of "the spirit" is heavenward. The entire affection, the exclusive desire, and intense coveting of "the flesh" is after the things of time and sense; the whole bent, the ardent desire, and internal panting of "the spirit" is after the things of eternity. These two dispositions then being so opposite; the one tending earthward, the other

heavenward; the one fixed on time, the other on eternity; the one on God, the other on self; the one formed for heaven, the other fitted for hell,—the disposition of these two principles, being so directly contrary, an opposition necessarily takes place. "The flesh" within us does not lie torpid, neither does "the spirit" within us lie torpid: but both are active principles in a man's bosom; they have each their desires, and each thirsts with intensity after its peculiar objects. Being so diametrically opposed, they of course, contradict and fight against each other; and thus there is a perpetual and mutual clashing, collision, and conflict going on between them.

But, with God's blessing, we will go a little into particulars; for truth is apt to be lost in generalities. What God's people want is something that comes into their heart, and touches their conscience;—something that points out the hidden workings of nature on the one hand, and the secret operations of grace on the other. It is not, therefore, sufficient to state in general terms, that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit" unless we enter, more or less minutely, into the particulars of this opposition.

The whole bent of "the flesh," as I have before observed, is earthward; it never can rise beyond itself, however high it may mount; self being the only object of all its pursuit. "The spirit," on the other hand, being born of God, created by the hand of God in the soul, and being the very image of Christ in the heart, soars, as the Holy Ghost operates upon it, heavenwards: hence flows the opposition.

1. "The spirit," for instance, is *prayerful*, seeking from time to time, as the Holy Ghost works upon it, the Lord's face, and pouring itself out in secret into the bosom of a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. Being born from above, it covets the presence of God as its heaven, and the favour of God, as its true happiness, mounting up in pantings, longings, and aspirations towards the holy fountain whence it originally came. "The flesh," being earthly in all its lusts and covetings, hates and opposes this soaring and mounting upward of the spirit. When the spirit, for instance, would lead a man to seek the Lord in prayer, the flesh

counteracts and works against it, suggests excuses, raises up carnal and sensual thoughts, and damps, as far as it can, the holy fire that is burning on the altar of a broken heart.

2. Again. "The spirit" is *watchful*. Its eyes are illuminated to observe sin in things considered by most persons harmless and innocent. Like a watchful sentry, it descries, under God's teaching, the first approach of an enemy. It watches the secret movements of the heart, and observes the snares set for the feet. The spirit is alive to see and feel the secret workings of sin, in sleeping or waking, in eating or drinking, in the daily business of life, or in the worship of God. "The flesh," on the other hand, being altogether earthly and sensual, lusts against this watchfulness. The flesh loves sin. Sin, in one shape or another, is its natural element, and it never can love any thing else. As the fish lives only in the water, so the flesh lives only in the element of sin; as the element of a bird is the air, so the flesh lives in an atmosphere of evil. And as we only live by drawing the air by which we are surrounded into our lungs, so the flesh only lives by drawing in to itself the air of sin. As the spirit therefore loves watchfulness, the flesh on the other hand hates it: and in this, as in all other cases, whatever the spirit desires, that the flesh opposes. The flesh would walk not merely on the brink of temptation; but, if God did not hold us in with a powerful hand, it would plunge headlong into it; it would swim in sin, like an active swimmer amid the waves of the sea; yea it would dive down into iniquity, and wallow in all its filthy and vile abominations. All its tendencies, all its desires are towards sin; and what God loves, it hates with intense abhorrence.

3. "The spirit" is *meek* and *lowly*; it has "the mind of Christ," the image and likeness of Christ. And having the mind, image, and likeness of Christ, it is in its measure, meek, lowly, and gentle as Christ was. Pride, on the other hand, is the very being of the flesh; it lives in pride, for to exalt itself is all that the flesh loves and lives for. As the spirit then breathes forth, and suggests humility, the flesh rises up in pride against every thing that tends to humble it. Does the spirit seek to be humbled down at God's

footstool? The flesh, with daring rebellion, spurns at all self-abasement, and will approve of nothing but what gratifies that pride which is its very being.

4. "The spirit" *bears injuries*, submits to ill-treatment, puts its mouth in the dust, "endures all things for the elect's sake." But the flesh cannot bear that a straw should lie in its path: it cannot endure a look, or the least thing which mortifies it; and rises up full of wrath against every person or thing that vexes it, thwarts its inclination, or hinders its desires.

5. "The spirit" *seeks the glory of God as its grand object*. It desires to live to God's glory, and to walk in the light of his countenance. "That God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus," is its desire and aim, under the influences of the Holy Ghost. But the flesh, in all things, seeks its own exaltation and glory. Instead of aiming at God's glory, it would rather pull him down from his throne, if it could stand an inch higher thereby; and would be willing that God should be nothing, if it could be every thing. The flesh, in its awful presumption and horrible arrogance, would rise up against Jehovah, and sit on his seat enthroned as God. This was the original temptation, when the devil said to Eve, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" and this imaginary godship has ever been in the heart of man since the fatal day when that poisonous speech was drunk in by Eve's ear, and brought into the world sin and death.

6. "The spirit" is for *crucifixion and mortification, and for being conformed to the image of a suffering Jesus*. The flesh is ever for the gratification of self: in some persons, for the gratification of the basest lusts; in others, of intellect; in others, of covetousness; in others, of worldly respectability; but, whatever form it takes, it is that self may be gratified in some shape or another. As to being conformed to the image of the meek and lowly Jesus, to "know him and the power of his resurrection," to walk in his footsteps—the flesh spurns at the idea, and will have nothing but the gratification and indulgence of self.

7. "The spirit," as God the Holy Ghost is pleased to work upon it,

seeks *communion with God*, to delight in his smiles, and to enjoy the manifestations of his presence and love. The flesh has no conception of, and no relish for heavenly visitations, divine comforts, or spiritual manifestations. It loves only an outside, formal, hypocritical, and pharisaical religion, and is abundantly content with "a name to live." It can never rise beyond the mere form; this is amply sufficient to gratify its pride, and feed its self-righteousness.

8. "The spirit" is *sincere, honest and upright before God and man*. It knows it has to deal with a God who cannot be mocked; it is deeply impressed with the conviction, that "the eyes of God are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." The flesh loves hypocrisy; it is a part of its "deceitfulness above all things." It will therefore assume any shape, wear any mask, or put on any disguise, so long as it can play the hypocrite.

Now, in all these instances, (and if time would suffice, I might mention others,) "the flesh *lusteth* against the spirit." It does not lie broken and shattered in our hearts as a conquered enemy, but it fights and struggles for victory. And when it cannot obtain what it thirsts for with intense longings, it is filled with rebellion at the disappointment.

II.—But the Apostle has also said (and it is our mercy that he has said it), "the spirit *lusteth* against the flesh."

The word *lust*, as I have before hinted, must not be taken in any gross sense of the word; for who would dare to impute any thing impure to the Holy Spirit of God? But it means, as I have already explained, to *covet* or *intensely desire*. Now, as the spirit coveteth, or desireth *against* the flesh, it thwarts, mortifies, and works against it, in all its secret and subtle actings.

1. Does "the flesh" then lay some subtle scheme to glorify, honour, or exalt itself? "The spirit" breathes out its solemn protest against such God-dishonouring conduct. As a secret monitor, whose voice though gentle will be heard, it whispers its

condemnation against every step the flesh takes to gratify itself. It is no silent spectator of the awful enormities going on within; it is no blind, deaf, or dumb judge, who has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no tongue to speak against the criminal. It cannot be bribed or muzzled: it is God's vicegerent; and, therefore, it stands up for the honour of God, and testifies for him in a tone of authority that must be heard. Bunyan sweetly sets this forth in his "Holy War," where he says, "that when the judge spake, he made the whole city tremble." And I believe, when "the spirit" speaks, as the Holy Ghost dictates, he makes the soul bow down beneath it, for he speaks with a voice clothed with authority and power.

2. Does "the flesh" make excuses, and carnalize, so to speak, the whole man? When we would seek the Lord's face, does the flesh make a thousand pretexts why it should not be done there and then? "The spirit," wrought upon from above, desires communion with God, and to seek his presence; and as these desires work, from time to time, against the flesh, it will often sweetly overcome the opposition. And thus the Lord's face is sought after, whatever excuses the flesh may make.

3. Again. Does the flesh say, "Away with all watchfulness and carefulness! If you are a child of God, you cannot perish; if you are of the election of grace, you cannot be lost. What harm is there in this thing or that? It is not a great sin; and, if God has pardoned your sins, he has pardoned this amongst the rest." When the flesh comes with these hellish suggestions, the spirit will bear a secret testimony against such vile reasoning, as it did in the case of Joseph, when he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.) You will say, when these thoughts arise, "Shall I take occasion from pardoning love to sin against it? Shall I be so base as to trample the blood of the Redeemer under foot, and crucify to myself the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame? Far, far be it from me!"

4. Again. Does "the flesh" *lust after sin*? Does it wallow in

imagination in the vilest iniquities? Does it lay plots and plans how its desires may be gratified? Does it, in its filthy cravings, bury itself in those sinks and mud-holes where it loves to grovel? "The spirit" speaks for the honour of God; "the spirit," armed with authority from God himself, pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy, bears a secret testimony against all the plots and plans the flesh may lay down to indulge itself; it accuses the traitor, arrests him in the very council-chamber, and denounces his meditated crimes.

5. Does the flesh want to *resent injuries*; to draw the sword that hangs at its side, and smite down the first that insults it? Does it say, even when a Christian brother is the offender, "I will never forgive this injury; I will never overlook that offence; I will die rather than not satisfy my revenge for that wrong?" There is a gentle monitor within, speaking not in accents of anger, but in soft and mild tones, yet with a voice that makes itself heard amidst the thunders of the flesh, "Is this as a Christian should act? Is this as the Lord would have his people walk? Has he not forgiven you your sins, and will not you forgive your brother his?" The spirit speaks in these soft and gentle remonstrances, and thus overcomes all the fiercest workings of the flesh, when it would madly rend asunder the dearest and nearest ties rather than be reconciled. It calmly takes the sword out of the hands of the flesh, and brings us once more to peace and union with those to whom a moment before perhaps we were resolved never to speak again.

6. Does "the flesh" seek to *lift itself up against the authority of God*? Does it, like Antichrist, "oppose and exalt itself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped?" (2 Thess. 2:4.) The spirit, "clothed with humility," bears a secret witness against this self-exaltation and arrogance of the flesh, and points the eye of the soul to a suffering Christ.

Thus these two principles are in continual collision; and scarcely a day passes without the quickened family of God knowing and feeling the conflict of these two distinct principles within them.

My friends, what does religion consist in? Is it in coming to chapel, reading the Bible, having family prayer, and kneeling down night and morning with due regularity? Is it in being called a Calvinist, a Baptist, or an Independent? This is but the shell; and he who has nothing but the shell is destitute of vital godliness. Religion consists in the blessed teachings of God's Spirit in the conscience, in the work and witness of the Holy Ghost in the soul. If, then, you have a religion worth a straw, if yours is a religion that will stand by and save you when you need it most; when you are stretched upon a dying bed, and are passing into an opening eternity; if you have such an internal, experimental religion, as God has described in his word; you know something of the conflict I have been attempting to describe, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" and you feel what it is, by personal and painful experience, to have in you the "company of two armies."

III.—But the Apostle has added, "So that ye cannot do the things that ye would;" and a blessed addition it is. Now, as "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," we must apply this last clause of the text to both sides of the question. To make my meaning clear, you have two opposing principles, and therefore two distinct wills in your bosom: *the will of the flesh* and the *will of the spirit*. Because then "the flesh lusteth against the spirit," you cannot do the things that you would *spiritually*; and because "the spirit lusteth against the flesh," you cannot do the things that you would *naturally*.

First. We cannot do the things that we would *spiritually*.

1. We would, for instance, *spiritually believe on the Lord of life and glory*, and feel, from time to time, the actings of faith upon his blood and righteousness. That is a branch of our spiritual will; but "we cannot do the thing that we would." Why not? Because "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." Lusting against the spirit, it lusteth to unbelief, unbelief being the very element in which it lives. We cannot therefore believe, and by believing do the thing

that we would, because "the flesh lusteth against the spirit," and works unbelief against it.

2. Again. *Spiritually* we would *love the Lord*. We would have our whole affections fixed on him; we would have our hearts so given to him, and so entirely his, that there should be no room for a rival. But "the flesh lusteth against the spirit;" the flesh can only love itself; it cannot love God, nor the things of God. All it can do is to go after idols; to "hew out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water," (Jer. 2:13); to seek its own gratification. When, therefore, we would, according to our spiritual will, love God, we find a rival come forward; the flesh claims its share of our hearts; the wife, the husband, the children, the world, the things of time and sense around us, all creep in, and steal away our affections from God.

3. Again. We would, according to our spiritual will, *be heavenly-minded*; we would have our thoughts fixed on eternal things; we would sweetly meditate, comfortably read, powerfully and unctuously pray; we would have our hearts where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, and feel the world under our feet: but we cannot do the things that we would. The world within us will intrude, which is ten thousand times worse than the world without. We may shut and bar our doors, and exclude the world without, but the world within cannot be so shut out. Nay, we might go and bury ourselves in a hermit's cave, and never see the face of man again; but even there we should be as carnal and worldly as if we lived in Cheapside. We cannot shut out the world; it will come in at every chink and crevice. When, therefore, we would be heavenly-minded, think only on God, and enjoy some spiritual meditation, this wretched world will intrude itself into every thought and every imagination, so that spiritually we cannot do the things that we would.

4. We would, according to our spiritual will, *walk as becometh the gospel*. We would "make a covenant with our eyes" that we would not lust after forbidden things; we would walk before God as conscious of his presence; we would never wish to do a single

thing that has not the approbation of God; and we would have the testimony of God in our conscience that our hearts are right before him. But we cannot spiritually do the things which we would. We cannot walk through the street, but Satan tempts; we cannot look or speak, but sin intrudes; nay, let us shut our eyes, and close our lips, evil will still come in. I know not how it may be with you, but I have no more power to keep out the workings of sin in my heart, than I have power by holding up my hand to stop the rain from coming down to the earth; sin will come in at every crack and crevice, and manifest itself in the wretched workings of an evil heart.

But, *in the second place*, we must not forget to look at the blessed converse. If we cannot do the things that we would *spiritually*, we cannot do the things that we would *naturally*. To have this, as well as the other side of the question, is our great mercy.

1. What would we, then, do *naturally*? *We would cast aside all our religion*; at least we would have nothing to do with experimental and vital religion. The flesh hates what is vital and spiritual; it may and does love the form; but the power and reality of vital godliness the flesh hates. Thus, if we could have had our natural will, we should long ago have cast away our profession. Have you not been often tempted to do this? Have you not sometimes felt the way so rough, and found so many contradictions and obstacles, that you have said, "I cannot go on any longer in it;" and have felt sorry you ever made a profession at all? And would you not at times fain throw it all aside if you could? You have, perhaps, made the attempt to do so; and have said, "I can go to Chapel no more." But when the Lord's day came, you have found a secret cord within you that drew you there. You might have secretly said, "I will read the word of God no more; I will never pray again; I will not speak with the people of God." But there has been a secret compulsion in your heart that has made you do the very things which you wished to abandon. Thus *naturally* we cannot do the things that we would; and it is our mercy that we cannot.

2. Again. Could you do the things that you would *naturally, you would wallow in sin*; not merely take a drop or sip of sin; but, were your hearts unrestrained by God's grace and your carnal mind left to do what it would, you would lie down and roll in it. But it is our mercy that we cannot "do the things that we would;" for, thanks be to God, there are spiritual checks in the conscience; there is the fear of God springing up in the soul, as a "fountain of life to depart from the way of death;" and these inward flashes of the Spirit, producing convictions of the dreadful evil of sin, keep a man from doing those horrible things which he would do, if God did not thus powerfully restrain him.

3. Again. Could you "do the things that you would *naturally,*" *you would be the most accomplished hypocrite* that ever entered the doors of either Church or Chapel. If you could be just what your flesh would wish to be, you would have all the form of godliness, but not a grain of its power; and thus would be the most varnished hypocrite that ever stood up to disgrace a profession. But you cannot do or be what you would. A spiritual sincerity and godly simplicity is wrought in your soul, so that you cannot put into action that which your hypocritical flesh would live in; the workings of sincerity in your heart oppose it. It is in the thorough hypocrite only that the flesh can have its full swing.

4. But again. Could you "do the things that you would" *naturally,* there would not be a *more proud, presumptuous, arrogant, self-exalting, and self-conceited wretch* than you would be.

Now, my friends, if I have painted you in very black colours, remember that I have dipped the brush in my own heart. I have not gone from Zoar pulpit into the purlieus of London to find out and describe the flesh. I feel all the workings that I have been describing. Do not think that I stand up in the pulpit as some holy being, who knows nothing of the workings of sin; that I have been imagining what evil might be in others, and then painting it out in the blackest colours I could devise. Be assured that every line in the picture I have been tracing of human wickedness is

taken from myself. Not that God permits me, thanks to his blessed name, to do those evils that I know and feel by painful experience daily working in my heart. The seeds of every crime are in our nature; and therefore, could your flesh have its full swing, there would not be a viler wretch in London than you, or one that puts into practice more evil than you imagine. But God's blessed Spirit works in your heart to counteract these evils, so that you cannot be what you would, nor do the things that you would.

Let us look, then, at both sides of the question. You "cannot do the things that you would" *spiritually*, and that is your misery; and you "cannot do the things that you would" *naturally*, and that is your mercy. If you cannot be altogether holy, you cannot be altogether vile. If you cannot be wholly swallowed up in the love of God, you cannot be wholly swallowed up in the love of the world. If you cannot be entirely spiritual, you cannot be entirely carnal. If you cannot be daily and hourly prayerful, heavenly-minded, meditative, and have your affections fixed on God, you cannot go on day after day in carnality, without a single lash of conscience, or without the secret remonstrance of the Spirit bearing its witness in your spirit.

Let us take the question, then, in all its bearings. If we cannot do the things that we would *spiritually*, neither can we do the things that we would *naturally*; so that we are preserved, as the Lord manages it, by the action and reaction of these two principles. For, as in nature so in grace, action and reaction are mutual. By action and reaction, the world and all things in it stand in their place: and so spiritually, by action and reaction, contradiction and opposition, working and counter-working, we are kept in an even path. God has so wisely ordered things, and so tempered matters, that we are preserved in that place which is most for our good and his glory.

Thus, we learn two important lessons. First to ascribe to the grace of God and to his unmerited mercy everything in us that is spiritual; hence springs matter of thankfulness and praise. And,

we learn on the other hand, to ascribe to our wretched selves all the sinfulness, vileness, and evil that is working in our bosom; and hence spring humility, self-abhorrence, and godly sorrow. Thus, by watching the movements of "the flesh," we learn to hate ourselves; and by watching the movements of "the spirit," we learn whence come our help, hope, and strength. So that, whilst on the one hand, we have sufficient to thank, praise, and bless God for; on the other, we have sufficient to condemn and loathe ourselves for. And on the one side, if we cannot do spiritually the things that we would, through the opposition of our flesh, we are kept on the other walking humbly before God, and avoid those shoals on which many gallant barks have made shipwreck.

There are two sandbanks on one or other of which all but God's people run—licentiousness, and pharisaism. We are kept instrumentally from pharisaism by having our vile and wicked hearts laid bare by the Spirit, and thus painfully learning the opposition of the flesh; and we are preserved from licentiousness by the work of the Spirit leading the soul up to Jesus' blood and righteousness, and thus opposing the flesh. And thus, in a strange, mysterious, and often to us inexplicable way, we are preserved in a right path, and are kept from error on the right hand and on the left. O may we be enabled ever to trust in God's mercy, and hope in his grace, that he will guide us every step of our life, until ultimately he shall bring us to the eternal enjoyment of himself, in that blessed kingdom where tears shall be wiped away from all faces, and the only employment known, shall be to ascribe eternal honour, power, salvation, and glory unto God and the Lamb!