

The Anchor within the Veil

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

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

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

This leads him to shew the nature of those promises, and the character of the heirs of them. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." He then shews that

Abraham, like all his children, inherited this promise through faith and patience. "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I.—We will look, *first*, then, at *the persons* spoken of in the text. Their character we may sum up under two leading features; *one* is, that they are "the heirs of promise;" the *other*, that "they have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel."

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

2. But, besides this character, that they are "heirs of promise," the Holy Ghost has stamped a *second* upon them: "*they have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before*

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

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

To flee implies a *pursuer*, and a pursuer of that nature that unless we escape him, he will plunge his sword into our bosom. Such is the law with its awful curse. Such is Satan with his fiery darts; such is death with his sweeping scythe. If we do not flee from these pursuers, these avengers of blood, they will strike an arrow through our liver. So that by

these pursuers, these avengers of blood, we are compelled, whether we will or not, forced, driven out of every refuge of lies, to that which is set forth in the gospel.

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

But there are several things which must be wrought by a divine power before we can do this. We must, *first*, feel a *sense of our danger—that* is indispensable. We must, *next*, by a sense of our danger, be driven out of lying refuges—*that* is equally indispensable. We must *then* see what to flee to. Not to be running here; not to be turning to the right hand, not to be swerving to the left. But we must have a definite Object—know the goal to which our feet are tending; not looking back to the Sodom from which we have escaped; not hanging for help upon man, or on any thing in the creature: but with our eyes looking right on and with our eyelids straight before us, run as having a certain object in view; a goal traced out in the word of God, and held up before our

soul's eye. And this is Jesus, whom we embrace as set forth in the Scriptures as the only begotten Son of God—"Immanuel, God with us;" as having, by his sacrifice upon the cross made a propitiation for sin, destroyed death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and opened a way through the veil, that is, his flesh, into the presence and sanctuary of God.

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

But there is an expression, "to lay hold," that deserves notice. There is something to be touched, tasted, felt, handled, known, and enjoyed. It is not an object merely seen at a distance—a something to be viewed merely by the eye, and not grasped by the hand. But it is set forth as a tangible object, as something laid hold of, embraced, grasped, and experimentally and definitely felt. This vital and experimental laying hold distinguishes living from dead faith; the mere natural understanding speculating about Jesus, from the enlightening of the eyes of the spiritual understanding by the Holy Ghost. Natural faith may see Christ in the Scriptures; but it cannot see him by the eyes of the soul. Nor is there a laying hold. A living soul alone has power to embrace and grasp a living Saviour. Natural faith fails here; it may think, talk, reason, and argue; but it cannot lay hold, grasp, embrace, or bring in; it cannot enjoy a living union between a living soul and a living Lord. It is a withered hand, paralyzed and dead. But living faith reaches forth into eternity, stretches beyond the vale of transitory things to lay

hold, by a sensible act and appropriating touch, of the hope set before us in the gospel.

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

Now this Object of hope is set forth in the gospel. But you will observe, that the Apostle having spoken of the *Object* of hope transfers himself immediately to the *grace* of hope—"which hope," he says, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of

Melchisedec."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now the nature of true gospel hope is, to anchor in this glorious High Priest; not to rest upon anything in ourselves,

not to rest upon anything in others; but to pass through all these frail and perishing things into the very presence of God himself; so as to take firm hold upon the glorious High Priest within the veil.

But this we cannot do until we have a sight by faith of the King in his beauty—until there is a discovery to the eyes of our understanding, and faith be raised up in our hearts to look unto, live upon, and embrace with all our soul's affections this glorious Forerunner, who is entered within the veil. This looking unto him, is an act of faith; this anchoring in him is an act of hope; and this tender affection towards him is an act of love. These are the three grand graces in the soul—faith, hope, and love. And wherever there is faith to believe, there is hope to anchor, and love to flow forth in the breathings of tender affection.

This "Forerunner is made a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec." There are two points in which the order of Melchisedec differed from the order of Aaron. 1. The Aaronic priesthood was *hereditary*. It passed from father to son, and therefore was always in a course of mutation and change. But the Melchisedec priesthood is *permanent*, immutably fixed in Jesus. As the apostle argues, Heb. 7:23, 24, "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this Man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." Thus, as Melchisedec was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually;" so the priesthood no longer passes out of the hand of Jesus, as it did in the course of nature out of the hands of the Jewish high priest. It is not a temporary, nor transitory, but an eternal priesthood. The *second* feature of the Melchisedec, as distinguished from the Aaronic

priesthood is, that it is a *royal* priesthood. Melchisedec was "king of Salem;" and of Jesus it was prophesied, "He shall be a Priest upon his throne." (Zech. 6:13.)—Zion's King as well as Zion's Priest. Thus he not merely intercedes as the great High Priest within the veil, but he lives as a King to execute his own purposes. The hope of the soul anchors in and rests upon this royal High Priest, knowing that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him—standing at the right hand of the Father as an Advocate for the poor and needy; and manifesting the virtue of his intercession, by sprinkling his blood upon the conscience, discovering his glorious righteousness, and shedding abroad his dying love.

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

III.—But the apostle shews us, (and this is the third point which I shall endeavour this morning to speak upon) *the certainty and security of this refuge* that the Lords people flee to take hold of: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The Lord gave certain promises (and these are the promises to which the apostle alludes) to Abraham. He said, "Surely, in blessing I will bless thee." This was the leading promise, "Blessing I will bless;" that is, absolutely, unconditionally. But in giving this promise to Abraham, he gave it to all who have the faith of father Abraham. Every believing soul that walks in the steps of believing Abraham, God blesses with the same absolute,

unconditional blessing that he blessed his spiritual progenitor with—those rich blessings which God has blessed his children with in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. As the apostle declares, (Gal. 3:7, 9,) "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, forseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." Again (ver. 14,) "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promises of the Spirit through faith." And again, (ver. 29,) "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

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

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

counsel; they stand upon the same foundation with this counsel; and were given in the mind of God ere the world itself had any being, and when the "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure," was made between the Eternal Three.

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

But God has confirmed his immutable purpose *with an oath*. He adopts here the custom of men, knowing how weak, how feeble, how frail man's faith is. It was not sufficient to give a simple promise, to make a covenant, and bestow promises resting upon that covenant—he would do more, he would confirm it with an oath, as we find in Genesis 22:16, "By myself have I sworn." The margin of the text instead of "confirmed" reads, "he interposed himself;" that is, put himself by an oath, as between the promise and its fulfilment. And this he did, in infinite condescension, that Abraham's faith might be stronger as resting not merely upon the *word* of God, but upon the *oath* of God. Now, a man's word we trust to, if he be an honourable man; but if we have, not that man's word only, but the additional security and sanction of his oath, it creates double

confidence. So it is with the Lord. His word is enough; but he has, in condescension to human infirmity, knowing the weakness of his people's faith, not only given his word, but also his oath: *"Surely by myself have I sworn."*

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

blood for the pardon of their sins—to his righteousness as their only justification—to his sacred Person as their Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father—to the promises of the gospel as the breasts of consolation to which they desire for ever to cling, and milk out their sweetness and blessedness. This is their character.

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

Now the Apostle holds this out as *strong consolation*. He

says, "By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation." No: it is utterly impossible for God to lie. The earth may be dissolved, and all creation reduced to chaos before God could lie. He would cease to be God if the faintest breath of a change, or the shadow of a turn should pass over the glorious Godhead. But it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore this holds out strong consolation for those that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them.

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

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

an interest in and title to them, and have a manifest assurance of being "heirs of promise."

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

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

But, you will observe, that the Apostle speaks of this act of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ as an anchor; and he says, this anchor is "sure and stedfast, and entereth into that within the veil." In other words, that this hope acts the same part towards the soul as the anchor literally and naturally acts to the ship. Now, can we always see the ground on which the anchor rests? Is not the bottom covered by the dark, deep waves? And the deeper the anchor sinks, is not the ground

less seen? Is it not so spiritually? Is not this the mark and characteristic of a living soul—"to endure as seeing him who is invisible?" Is there not, must there not be, a laying hold of invisible realities in the soul? And is not this laying hold of, and is not this anchoring in invisible realities, a grand mark of faith? If I can see with my eyes, I do not want to see with my heart. If I can believe in my judgment, I do not want to believe in my conscience. If I can touch by the hand of nature, I do not want to touch by the hand of faith. These all fail, and come short. The child of God, I am well convinced, will be opposed at every step he takes. But he has fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him; and he believes, hopes, and anchors in an invisible Jesus.

Unbelief is always looking for something visible. Reason always questions 'how this thing can be consistent with that?' And thus all the reasonings and argumentations of our fallen nature will be bringing up strong artillery against living faith. But the Apostle says, "Hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24.) If we could see Jesus as plainly with our bodily eye as we can see the texts of Scripture in which he is spoken of, there would be no need of the special act of God the Spirit upon our heart to give us faith. If we could reason upon truth and receive it into our souls, as we reason upon and receive matters of science and human learning, there would be no need of the special operations of God the Spirit. Therefore, just in proportion as our hope enters within the veil, and anchors in this glorious Immanuel, will be the opposition made to it by nature, sense, and reason. And nature, sense, and reason, with the unbelief and infidelity of our hearts, will sometimes work so powerfully, that the anchor seems almost giving way. Nay, we scarcely at times seem to have any anchor at all. The ship is so beaten about by the waves, that there appears no firm hold of, no real anchoring in, the

Person, blood, and work of Jesus. And yet it holds. The ship is not beaten from her anchorage; it does not fall upon the rocks, is not cast away and lost. Still, by some invisible cable it holds, in spite of nature, sense, and reason. Therefore, the Apostle says, it is "sure and stedfast." It is firm and stayed; it may be out of sight, and seem giving way; the waves and billows may rise so high as even to hide the cable from our eyes; and as the cable dips beneath the waves, it may seem sunk and lost; and yet all the while there is a secret, firm, invisible hold. Have not a thousand temptations blown across us to drift us from Jesus? I am sure they have blown upon my soul. Have they not blown across yours? Have not a thousand waves of unbelief almost tossed us upon the rocks? Have we not sometimes been tempted by lust, and sometimes been driven almost by despair, to give up our anchorage? Have we not sometimes doubted and feared whether our hope was not all a delusion, and whether we ever really by an act of living faith cast anchor within the veil? Yet it will not, it does not altogether give way. There is still some coming unto the Lord, still some going up of tender affection, some actings of faith in his blood and righteousness, some pantings of heart after him, some love to him, some embracings of him as our only hope and help. Then it has not failed yet; nay, the more it is tried, does it not prove the anchor to be all the stronger? Does it not prove the anchorage to be all the firmer? What can fail? Can the anchorage fail? That cannot fail—it is the Person of Jesus. Can the anchor itself fail? That cannot fail—it is the work of the Spirit to create it in the soul. Can the cable fail—the mysterious connection there is in the heart between the soul and Jesus—can that break? No: that is twined by an eternal hand—that was woven by the fingers of God himself—that cannot, cannot break. Then what can fail? Shall the ship fail? If it be a ransomed soul—if the Lord of life and glory be the pilot, he knows all the shoals, and can steer it into the haven

of eternal felicity. If that infallible Pilot who never yet missed the harbour has purchased her, chartered her, and is guiding her upon her homeward destination, how can the bark itself, 'The Good Adventure,' be ever cast away?

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

Now, if God the Spirit has wrought these things in your heart in a measure, though a feeble measure, you are a heir of promise; and if you are a heir of promise, you have a title to strong consolation; for your soul rests upon the immutability of God's counsel, and the immutability of God's oath. Is it not

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

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