

The Everliving Intercessor

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 15, 1866

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

There are two questions which deeply interest every one who is made alive unto God by regenerating grace. The first is, How are his sins to be pardoned—how is he to stand justified before God? This question I answered this morning. I showed you from the word of truth that a sufficient answer to all charges, true or false, made against the elect of God, and a complete reply to every condemning tongue, were given in that comprehensive declaration which I opened up: "It is God that justifieth;" "it is Christ that died." This point, therefore, I need not further dwell upon. But what is the second question which deeply interests, and often painfully exercises every quickened child of God? It is this: How shall the life of God be maintained in his breast? If he is, as he hopes he is, a partaker of the grace of God, how shall that grace be kept in living exercise that he may be brought through every trial, temptation, and affliction, and eventually landed safe in glory? To that question I shall attempt to give an answer this evening, in opening up and laying before you the contents of our text.

You are doubtless aware that the High Priest under the Law had two main offices to perform, and that both of these were clearly and beautifully represented by what he was commanded to do on the tenth day of the seventh month—the great day of atonement. These two offices were first, to offer sacrifice, and secondly, to make intercession, for his

own sins and for the sins of the people. The sacrifice for his own sins was offered when he slew the bullock for a sin offering. This was to make atonement for himself, and for his house, as we read, "And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house." (Levit. 16:6.) But to make atonement for the sins of the people he had to perform two distinct things, first, to bring the goat (for there were two upon which lots were cast) upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering; and, secondly, to lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, or the scape goat as it is usually called, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the live goat, and then to send it away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. The other part of his priestly office, that of intercession for his own sins and the sins of the people, he thus accomplished. He took a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small. With this censer he entered into the most holy place, as we read: "And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." (Levit. 16:13.) Thus, a cloud of perfume filled the most holy place at the same time that he was sprinkling the blood on and before the mercy seat. This was his intercession for his own sins and the sins of the people; and you will observe the beautiful connection between the sacrifice which atoned for sin and the smoking incense which typically interceded for the sinner. It was not common fire by which the incense was lighted, but by live coals taken from off the brazen altar upon which the sacrifices were offered. This established a connection between the sacrifice and the intercession; and the sprinkling of the blood on and before the mercy seat established another. This cloud of incense, then, filling the

most holy place with its odoriferous breath, represented the intercession of Christ, which, deriving its virtue, influence, and efficacy from his glorious Person, finished work, meritorious sufferings, and atoning blood, is still ever rising up to fill with its sacred perfume the courts of heaven.

It is clear, then, that the high priest under the law performed two works on the day of atonement—sacrifice and intercession. In both these offices he was a type and representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. Incense, in imitation of the Romish usage, is being revived in some of our parish churches; but it should be borne in mind that incense implies sacrifice, and is a part of it. He, therefore, who revives incense revives sacrifice; and he who revives sacrifice disannuls and pours contempt upon the one great sacrifice, and denies the efficacy of the atoning blood and present intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be consistent they should restore circumcision and the blood of bullocks and goats; for the smoke of incense has no more part in Christian worship than the Paschal lamb or the daily sacrifice. The first part then of his priestly office our gracious Lord performed upon Calvary. There he offered his holy soul and body, the whole of his pure humanity, upon the altar of his Deity; there he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; there the bleeding victim hung; there the precious blood was shed which cleanseth from all sin; and there the work which the Father gave him to do was completed; for he cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished," and then bowed his sacred head and gave up the ghost. But, in order to carry out the second part of the priestly office, to make intercession for the people, it was needful for him to rise from the dead, to ascend into heaven, and there to enter into the immediate presence of God with the blood and with the incense, that he might perpetually be at the right hand of the Father as the high priest over the house of God. Our text, therefore, says,

"He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And so testifies the apostle elsewhere: "Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34.) John also graciously assures us in almost similar language: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and connecting together the two parts of his priestly office, sacrifice and intercession, adds, "And he is the propitiation for our sins"—propitiation past by sacrifice once offered, advocacy present by intercession now offering.

In the chapter before us the various qualifications of our great High Priest, chiefly as compared with the Levitical priests, are beautifully and blessedly set forth, such as his being a priest of the order of Melchisedec, of a higher order than that of Levi; his priesthood not ever passing away and transferred to another, as was the case, in consequence of death, with the priests under the law, for he was made after the power of an endless life; and his being made a priest by virtue of an oath of God, which gave a greater sanction to his priesthood than that of the priests under the law who were made without it. But neither my time nor your attention will allow me to enter at large upon these points, however profitable it might be to consider them, and which you can do for yourselves, if the Lord should lead you into their spiritual meaning, in your private reading at home. I shall therefore at once come to my text, from which I shall endeavour, if the Lord enable, to set before you three courses; and may they be courses of heavenly food. May the Lord spread the table, and put upon it a banquet at which you may bountifully feed, whilst he kindly says to you, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

I.—*First*, I shall describe the character of the man to whom the text chiefly addresses itself: He is spoken of as one who

comes to God by Jesus Christ.

II.—*Secondly*, I shall show the ability of this blessed High Priest to *save*, and that *to the uttermost*, every such spiritual comer.

III.—*Thirdly*, I shall bring before you the scriptural reason *why* he is thus able to save all such to the uttermost:
"Seeing he ever *liveth to make intercession for them.*"

I.—There is one point in which I much admire the word of God, and especially that portion of it which falls under the name of the New Testament. Whilst it strongly insists upon repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ; though in almost every page it enforces or assumes that divine change which we call the work of grace upon the heart, it does not set up a rigorous standard as ministers are often disposed to do, squaring and levelling everything to fit exactly in with their own experience. Nothing can be more clear and distinct both in the gospels and epistles than that there are certain strong marks and evidences of grace in the heart, the possession of which is indispensable to salvation; and yet, if I may use the expression, the word of truth spreads a kindly hand to bring into the bosom of mercy all in whom there are such marks as are in our text, which may not at first sight appear so clear or conspicuous as other evidences of a divine work. Mistake me not. I am not against a standard of experience, but I am against a *rigorous* standard of experience. These two things widely differ. I myself am continually setting up a standard in every sermon which I preach; and so is every minister who preaches the truth from a feeling experience of its power; for every mark of grace which he sets up is so far a standard whereby he measures the family of God, and separates and distinguishes them from those who are still dead in sins, and walking after the course of this world. There must then be some standard

set up of a divine work upon the soul, or how are we to know the children of God from the children of the wicked one? How are we to discover the features of grace in the living family, and to point out, both for their encouragement and instruction, and as a word of warning or conviction to others, what are the true marks of divine teaching? Every sent servant of God must have a standard, or he cannot possibly take forth the precious from the vile, and so be as God's mouth. But this need not be a precise, rigid, cast-iron standard, which, like the standard of the army, will not take a man for a soldier unless he be five feet six in height, and so many inches round the chest. Our blessed Lord, for instance, declares, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins;" "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." Is there not a standard here, and that set up by our blessed Lord of the new birth, of repentance, and faith? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Is there not a standard there? "He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Is there no standard there? "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, 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." Is there no standard there? "A tree is known by its fruits: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down." Is there no standard there? Thus we see that there is a standard set up in the word of God; but it does not say that you must lie so many weeks, days, or months under the law, that you must sink down into death, hell, and despair before deliverance comes; that you must have faith given you just in a certain way and just at a certain moment. The word of

God, I say, does not square and level all Christian experience, or plane and turn every part of it according to precise rule, to make the whole fit as nicely and work as truly as the piston of a locomotive, or the valves of a steam engine. Thus, though the word of God sets up a standard, and a very true, accurate, and trying standard too, yet it does not set up that rigorous, precise, cast-iron standard which some ministers seem inclined to set up, referring everything to, and measuring everything by, their own experience, and cutting every thing and every body to pieces that do not exactly agree with it. But to recur to what I started from in this little digression, I said I admired much this feature in the word of God—the way in which it stretches forth a kindly hand to those in whom the Holy Ghost has begun and is carrying on a certain work, of which the end and intention may be much hidden from the very persons who are passing under his hands, and which might not appear very plain to others. Last Lord's day, for instance, I endeavoured to show you that God had furnished strong consolation to all who had fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. There all who had fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them were spoken of as heirs of promise, as those for whom God had designed strong consolation, and on whose behalf he had pledged both his word and his oath. Now take a corresponding mark and evidence from our text this evening: "He is able to save them to the uttermost who *come unto God by him.*" That is the evidence we have this evening; that is the sheep-mark, the broad stamp of grace which he has impressed by his divine hand upon every living soul, upon every gracious heart. Look at it again; see the handwriting of God; observe the man on whom he has set his mark. He is one who comes unto God by Jesus Christ. But you will say, "Why, this is simple enough, so simple indeed, and may I not add so weak and feeble, that I can scarcely receive it as sufficient to make and

manifest a man to be a Christian. Do you mean to say that all that is required for a man to be saved is to come unto God by Jesus Christ?" Yes, I do; and if I say that, I have God's word upon my side. But perhaps you and I when we come to examine matters a little more closely, might not exactly agree upon this point—what it is to come to God by Jesus Christ. You might view it in one light and I might view it in another. You might think it meant one thing and I might think it meant another. Now let me lay it down in my light, as I see it, as I feel it, as I know it, as I have experienced it, for I claim a right to do so, as standing up in the name of the Lord to preach his truth; and then do you look at it in your light, in your judgment, in your knowledge of divine things, according to the experience of your soul, and see whether you and I this evening can travel together in any harmonious concord. I hope never to attempt to impose my views upon any man's faith or conscience simply because they are my views. It is true that they were not taken up hastily, but are the result of the power of God's word upon my heart and conscience, and have stood the test of many years' experience of temptation and trial. But all I ask is, let them be compared with the teaching of the word without and the teaching of the Holy Spirit within; the testimony of God in the Scriptures and the testimony of God in the soul.

Let us then begin at the beginning; and first let us settle what is meant by the expression to come unto God by Jesus Christ. The phrase often occurs in the Scriptures, and has, for the most part, two meanings, being expressive sometimes of faith and sometimes of worship. Thus our Lord says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There it means faith, for we come to Christ when we believe in him. He therefore said to the Jews, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have me;" that is, "Ye will not believe in me, or come to me by faith." We see this

connection also in the words, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.) Here we find coming to Christ and believing on him to mean the same thing. So also in the passage: "Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learnt of the Father cometh unto me." Bunyan, in his Pilgrim's Progress, puts the same thing very nicely in the mouth of Hopeful, where he says to Christian, "Then I saw from that saying, 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst,' that believing and coming was all one, and that he that came, that is, ran out in his heart and affections after salvation by Christ, he indeed believeth in Christ." But sometimes to come unto God signifies access to him in spiritual worship, which is often expressed in the Old Testament, by "drawing nigh unto God," as James also speaks. "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you." This spiritual worship of God is a drawing near to him with a true heart, having, as the apostle speaks, "access by one Spirit unto the Father." I shall view the words in both of these senses; and to make the whole subject more plain, shall go back to the very beginning of the work of God upon the soul.

1. One thing is very evident, that no man comes to God of his own free will. Look at ourselves: for a man's own case will decide the matter for him better than a thousand arguments. What were we in times past before the Lord was pleased to touch our heart with the finger of his Spirit? Did we come to God by Jesus Christ? Did you come to God by Jesus Christ? Did I come to God by Jesus Christ? I did not; you must answer for yourselves whether you did. I did not want to come to God by Jesus Christ. I neither knew God nor Jesus Christ, and I did not want to know them; for I was very sure that anything like the spiritual religion which I saw in others would cut to pieces all my worldly plans and all my worldly

pleasures; and with these dearly beloved idols I felt I could not and would not part. I had no objection to a religion which left me their enjoyment; but to give up everything for Christ and his gospel lay neither in my will nor power. And is not this the experience of all? For is not this the language of the carnal mind? "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." There is something in coming to God, except in a formal way, which fills the mind with awe and apprehension, where there is any measure of tenderness in the natural conscience. Coming to God, when once we begin to see what it really means, seems to cut off and cut up all that we want naturally to enjoy; seems to bring us face to face with religion when we don't want to have anything to do with religion; to call us out of the world when we want to live in the world; to give up the lusts of the flesh when we delight in the lusts of the flesh; and abandon everything that nature loves for a God that we don't love, nor know, nor believe in, nor care for. I can only speak for myself, for I never could settle down in that formal, Pharisaical, self-righteous, ceremonial religion which I saw everywhere around me, and in which some of my friends very quietly ensconced themselves. I knew there was such a thing as true religion, very distinct from this dead round of Pharisaic formality and lip service. Then surely if we ever came to God by Jesus Christ something must have been done for us and in us quite distinct from all will and power of our own; something in which we had no hand, and yet was not done without our heart. Now we who know anything of divine things by divine teaching can look back to a memorable period in our lives when a mighty revolution took place, whereby we came unto God who had never come unto God before. Can you not look back upon such a marked epoch in your life, or some such change, if not sudden, more or less gradual in the experience of your soul? It is true that you did not there and then come to God by Jesus Christ, because you did not know Jesus

Christ nor the way of salvation by his blood and righteousness; yet there was a coming to God, and after a time, as the way of salvation was opened up to your heart, there was a coming to him by Jesus Christ. Did I not explain that by coming unto God the Scriptures sometimes meant believing in him? "He that cometh unto God," says the apostle, "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But to believe in God is to believe the testimony of his word, for we only know God through his word, and can only believe in him as he reveals himself in it to our conscience. This is beautifully expressed by the apostle: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when we received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2:13.) The way in which the Lord works is this: he applies his word with power to the conscience. It is then received, not as the word of men, but as the word of God; and as thus received "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," it effectually worketh in them that believe; that is, it produces certain marked effects in them. Now what is one of the first effects of this divine work? What says the Scriptures? "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." This is the way I came; that is the way you came. Sin charged upon the conscience, divine realities presented to view, the things of eternity weighing with solemn power upon the mind, so as much to absorb the thoughts, occupy the attention, and exercise the soul, combined, it might be, with other sources of anxiety and trouble, worked together to produce a mighty change within, and to bring us to seek relief from God and God alone. We could not stay away from him who alone could give us needed help: for these were the drawings of God, as the Lord speaks: "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him."

And be well assured that when God draws we must come; when he pours out the Spirit of grace and of supplication we must pray; and when he breaks the heart we must weep. When he gives repentance the stony heart will melt and the dry eye-balls flow down with tears. O it is a weeping time when God begins his work of grace upon the soul. How tender the conscience is, how soft the heart, how broken the spirit, how humble the mind, how prayerful the soul, how teachable, how willing to give up anything and give up everything to be right at the last. This is coming unto God. We did not know there was a God before, nor did we believe his word, either its threatenings or its promises; for we knew neither God in his mercy nor God in his wrath. But now we knew that there is a God, a holy God, a just God, a righteous God, a heart-searching God; and we came to this God because we could not, because we durst not, because we must not stay away from him. If we did stay away, he soon made us come again; for his Spirit gave us neither rest nor peace till we came unto him again and again with confessions of sin, with cries for mercy, with pleas for pardon, and with beggings for grace. And yet we knew little it may be of Jesus Christ all this time. Your mind was not, at least my mind was not, enlightened as it has been since. We came to the law to see what that could do for us. We tried our own righteousness, fleshly holiness, creature resolutions, promises, and it may be, even went so far as to bind ourselves with vows to do better and be better; yet found that all were broken through; guilt still increasing, conscience more heavily loaded, sin stronger, and power to resist it weaker. But by and by, in his own time and way the same God who convinced of sin by his Spirit let down into the soul a ray of divine light, in which light we saw the Son of God as the way, the truth, and the life, the Mediator between God and man; we caught a glimpse of his glorious Person, saw the efficacy of his atoning blood, beheld the blessedness of

his finished work; and the heart began to leap and dance for joy at the very thought and prospect of being saved by free, sovereign grace. As soon then as Christ is thus made known, it takes the veil off the heart, and we get glimpses, glances, little breakings in, not perhaps very clear or bright, and yet enough to draw out faith and hope and love toward him: not a full revelation, not a bright manifestation, not a glorious discovery and breaking in of the Son of Righteousness in all the blessedness of his divine Person, but beams and rays, glancings in of his presence and power, just enough to draw our hearts unto him and show us there is no salvation but in him and by him. Now as this is wrought with a divine power in the soul, there is a coming unto God by Jesus Christ. We see there is no coming unto God in a broken law, in the strength of the creature, in our own righteousness. A holy law with a tremendous curse attached to it cuts off all hope and all confidence in the flesh; but as the Son of God beams in upon the soul in his Person, blood, and work, beauty, blessedness and divine suitability, there is such a laying hold of him by the hand of faith. such a looking unto him, believing in him, cleaving to him, that there is a coming unto God by him.

2. I before observed that another meaning of coming unto God was, access to him by spiritual worship. Now until we came to him by Jesus Christ we had no access unto God, for it is by faith in Christ that "we have access into this grace wherein we stand;" and our Lord has positively declared that no man cometh unto the Father but by him. When, then, we came to God by Jesus Christ, we found no repulse. When we came to God in ourselves, in our own righteousness, we found nothing but frowns, anger, threatenings, wrath, guilt and bondage; but when we came by Jesus Christ, no repulse, no angry look, no forbidding frown, no terrible law, no awful curse drove us back, for God allows himself to be approached

unto, believed in, worshipped, adored, and loved in the face of his dear Son. Now this is coming unto God by Jesus Christ, both in faith and worship; for he is the way, and there is no other, of either true faith or acceptable service. He has given this as a special mark of his people, a special mark of divine teaching: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45.) Nay, he himself has opened wide his gracious arms in those tender words which have dropped the sweetest consolation into thousands of burdened hearts: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Nay, he kindly chides us: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." As his arms upon the cross were extended wide, so in his word he is extending his arms to receive every coming sinner. And do we not often find the benefit and blessing of this? In coming to God by Jesus Christ, we see by the eye of faith a living way, a door of mercy open in his bleeding hands and feet and side; and however desperate may seem his case, or forlorn his state, we have the testimony of his own word that God never has rejected and never will reject any sensible sinner who comes to him by Jesus Christ.

II.-But this leads me to my second point, which is, that he is *able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.*

i. I shall have several things to notice from these words; and, first, let us direct our attention to the expression, "*able.*" "He is able to save them." What ability is this? Is it his absolute ability, as the eternal Son of God, God over all, blessed for ever, or his office ability, that is, his power as the great High Priest over the house of God? It is the latter, for that is the power on which faith has to fix its eyes. Not but what he has

absolute power; not but what his power as High Priest mainly rests upon his power as the Son of God. But the apostle does not direct our faith so much to his absolute power as able to save or destroy, as to his office power as priest to fulfil that office with all the greatness and glory of his mediatorial character. He is able, then, to save them in the present exercise of his priestly office. It is a part of his present work to save them—what he is ever living to do for them, and in which he ever displays the greatness of his love and the fulness of his power. As he thoroughly and completely finished the work which God gave him to do upon earth by his sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death; so now he lives to make that work thoroughly and completely effectual in heaven.

ii. But now look at the expression, "*to the uttermost.*" What made the Holy Ghost pen such a word as this? Why did he put down such a wonderful, I might almost say extraordinary, out-of-the-way expression as "to the uttermost?" Because he who reads all hearts and knows all persons, things, and circumstances, well knew what the secret feelings and exercises of the blood-bought family would be, as they travel onward and homeward through their various paths of trial and temptation. He kindly, therefore, put in this word for their comfort and relief; and O what a word it has been to thousands of weary hearts and way-worn pilgrims—"to the uttermost." And as it has distilled its choice consolation into their breast, how they have blessed God for it, and laid hold of it as a golden cord let down from heaven into their hearts. Let us see, then, whether we can enter a little into this blessed word which the Holy Ghost has so kindly put in here.

The term, "to the uttermost," seems, first, to express something as regards ourselves; and, secondly, something as

regards the blessed Lord.

1. First, as regards *ourselves*. Sooner or later, every one who comes to God by Jesus Christ will find in his own experience the need and the blessedness of the expression, "to the uttermost." I say sooner or later, for it is not often at the first that we either need or can drink out of this cup of consolation. When, for instance, we are indulged with access to God in early days, in the day of our espousals when we go after him into a land not sown, and leave all for his name's sake, esteeming, with Moses, "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," we do not know the meaning of the word "to the uttermost." We may have felt the hard and heavy bondage of the law, and despaired of all hope and help from the works of the flesh, but we did not know our desperate case and state then, as we have seen and felt it since; nor what we should have to learn as we travel through the wilderness. We knew but little then of trials, temptations, afflictions, exercises, slips, falls, backslidings, and all that host of inward evil and all that array of terrible perils that we have had to struggle through, and are still struggling with, before we reach the heavenly shore. We did not see in those days that salvation is such a wonderful thing as it really is. Salvation without, by his blood and righteousness, seemed an easier work for Christ to have done for us, and salvation within, by his operations and grace, an easier thing for the Holy Ghost to do in us, than we afterwards have found to be the case. But as we journey on we begin first to meet with heavy *trials*, for "the Lord trieth the righteous." The gold he bids us purchase is "gold tried in the fire." It is "the trial of our faith which is more precious than of gold that perisheth." We shall not journey then far before we come upon a scene of trials, and it may be very heavy and painful ones. Trial ground will soon be the ground on which our feet will have to stand. Now when we get over

the pleasant fields and get upon trial ground, *that* stirs up the corruptions of our nature; that works upon the evils of our heart, and brings to light a host of undiscovered sins and corruptions which before lay slumbering in the dark; nestling like little chickens under the wing of the mother hen. But by and by, these secret and hitherto unperceived evils begin to manifest themselves; unbelief, infidelity, rebellion, murmuring, fretfulness, begin to work; and by and by, there comes upon the back of these despondency, and it may be almost a sinking into a state of despair. Then we begin to find that salvation is not such a light thing, such an easy thing, such a common-place thing, if I may use such an expression, as men speak about, when they are inviting everybody to come to Christ and be saved, just as if it were as easy to come to Christ and obtain salvation as to take a walk, or go home to dinner. We begin to find there is some meaning now in the word "to the uttermost," and that salvation is not a thing thrown down like a handful of corn for any and every bird to pick up, just as, when, and where it likes. The children of Israel found it no easy matter to get out of Egypt. It needed, so to speak, all the power of God, what the Scripture calls, "his mighty hand and his outstretched arm," to bring them out of the house of bondage. Pharaoh would not easily let them go; nor would the Red Sea easily let them cross it. And when they got into the wilderness, what a "great and terrible wilderness" they found it, to use God's own description of it—how waste, how howling, how beset with fiery flying serpents, how barren and desolate, how parched up with drought and heat. And is not their wilderness journey a standing scriptural figure of the way which the redeemed now tread, and whereby they learn what is in their heart, and what is meant by salvation to the uttermost?

But as we get a further acquaintance with the evils of our

heart, we begin to know something also about the *temptations* of Satan, his accusations, his fiery darts, his hellish suggestions, and how he sets on fire all the combustible material of our carnal mind. And this opens our eyes a little more clearly still to see the beauty, suitability, and blessedness of the words "to the uttermost." We find there is something in us, as well as in the text, which is an uttermost; and if we are ever allowed to slip, fall, and backslide—and all do so inwardly even if kept from it outwardly, and thereby bring great guilt upon our conscience and great bondage upon our spirit, this will effectually teach us the meaning of "to the uttermost." We shall then find the word not a bit too big a word, not too large an expression; but O how sweetly suitable and blessedly comprehensive! How it seems to take, and as if accompany us to the very end of the tether. Go to the uttermost of despondency to which a child of God may sink; go to the uttermost of trial; go to the uttermost of temptation; go to the uttermost of a knowledge of your heart; go to the uttermost as experimentally feeling that you are one of the most difficult persons to be saved of all God's people; and that if ever there were a case which seemed to exceed all others in extreme necessity and desperate circumstances, it is yours—go, I say, to the end of the tether, and see then and learn there what is meant by "the uttermost." But O what a mercy it is that God holds the end of the tether fast and firm in one hand, though you hang faint and trembling at the other; that his arm is long enough and strong enough to pull you out even of hell itself, I mean, of course, in soul feeling; that were you in the belly of the whale with Jonah, or in the belly of hell with the same prophet, his arm is long enough and strong enough to pull you out of the whale's belly and out of the belly of hell itself. Now it is only those who have passed through trials, exercises, and temptations in some measure, such as I have described, that can enter into the meaning of

"to the uttermost;" who will cling to it, embrace it, hang upon it, and blessedly realise it. It is not a word for light-hearted, lightheaded, light-heeled, light-tongued professors of religion, who never felt the solemn weight of eternity, the heavy burden of sin, the galling yoke of bondage, the daily load of the evils of their own heart. A light, easy, smooth, and pliable religion suits them—a salvation for anybody and a salvation for everybody, a salvation without guilt, fear, or bondage, a path without trial or temptation, distress or exercise, a Laodicean profession which they can slip on or slip off like a morning gown or an easy shoe. "Uttermost" was never meant for them. But O what an encouraging word for God's poor and needy family, those of them who feel that they have sinned to the uttermost, disbelieved to the uttermost, rebelled to the uttermost, murmured to the uttermost, and offended to the uttermost: who have been indeed as if miraculously held up and kept by the hand of God, but still in their feelings have gone to the uttermost to which any vessel of mercy could ever have sunk.

2. But now look at the words as they apply to *our gracious Lord*. He has an uttermost as well as we. And what is *his* uttermost? The uttermost of Godhead—can you measure that? The uttermost of grace—can you limit that? The uttermost of love—can you fathom that? The uttermost of power—can you define that? View him as the God-Man; see the work which he finished at Calvary; view him in his present glory at the right hand of the Father, and then say what is the uttermost of the risen Christ, the Immanuel, God with us. Put these two things together, for they fit in like mortice and tenon: your uttermost which is the uttermost of badness, and Christ's uttermost which is the uttermost of goodness; your uttermost the uttermost of helplessness, his uttermost the uttermost of help, for God has laid help upon one that is mighty; your uttermost the uttermost of misery

and wretchedness, want, and woe, and his uttermost the uttermost of pity, mercy, lovingkindness, and tender compassion. And when you have put together man's uttermost and God's uttermost, a poor sinner's uttermost and the Saviour's uttermost, then as you embrace this in your understanding, in your conscience, and in your affections, you will rise up to some spiritual knowledge of what it is for Christ to be able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. And depend upon it if you are a living soul, you will have to know some day, if you don't know it now, what it is for Christ to save to the uttermost. You may not have gone at present into much trial, temptation, soul-desolation, painful exercises, or desperate circumstances. But you have got to die, and who can tell what you may have to experience upon your bed of languishing? Who can tell what sins, backslidings, slips, and falls may then stare you in the face? Who can tell what accusations may be then brought against you by a guilty conscience, or an accusing devil? Who can tell what hidings of God's face there may be then for you to endure, and what dreadful sinking of your desponding soul in consequence? We hope it may be otherwise; and if we have passed through scenes of heavy trial, and got the blessing already beforehand, God does not usually lay on his heavy hand at the last. But we must have at some time or other, I believe, in soul experience in life or before death, a sufficient knowledge of what sin is, and of our evil case as sinners to prove what salvation is from sin, and that the salvation of a sinner is the salvation of him to the uttermost.

iii. But the words may admit also of another meaning, which we find intimated in the margin, and of which it may be as well to take notice, though I believe it is much inferior in meaning, and not so agreeable to the original as the rendering of the text. The words may be rendered "for ever

more." They thus may signify not only the perfection of the work, but its duration, in other words, that it is a durable, perpetual, and eternal salvation, as we read in the prophet: "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation" (Isa. 45:17); and similarly: "My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." It is blessed to see that this salvation is an eternal salvation; and not only eternal in its nature and end, but perpetual in its communication, reaching down from age to age as a successive crop of believers are raised up. In this sense the Lord says, "My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." This salvation, as thus perpetual, saved our believing fathers, saves us their believing sons, and will save our believing children until the last vessel of mercy is gathered in. How full, how glorious is a salvation like this—complete as to all parts, full as to all causes, perpetual in all succession, and eternal in all duration.

III.—But this brings us to our third point: "Seeing he *ever liveth to make intercession for us.*" That was the last step of the climax of which I spoke this morning. I told you then that there was in the text from which I was preaching a climax, which means a ladder, and there were four steps to it, of which the first was on earth and the last in heaven. Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, Christ's being at the right hand of the Father, and Christ's interceding for us—these were the four steps of this ladder of which his death, like Jacob's ladder, was set upon earth, but his intercession, its top, entered into the very heavens. I deferred the consideration of the last step this morning, because I intimated I might this evening have occasion to speak upon it, as I now hope and intend to do from the latter portion of our text: "Seeing he *ever liveth to make intercession for us.*"

But this thought might occur to your mind, because we have a reasoning mind, some of us at least, I have, for one, and cannot always bring the things of God to square with it as I would, though I have learnt to subject my reasoning mind to revelation, and bow to what God has spoken in his word, as Lord over my heart and conscience. But this thought might occur to your mind: "If Christ put away all our sins by his sacrifice and blood shedding, and if by virtue of his death all are blotted out and forgiven, what need is there that he should in heaven make intercession for us? If the work is done, it is done, and what need we any more? Is it not almost implying some imperfection in his finished work, that it is not finished as we are taught to believe, but that something remains to be done by him to render it complete in heaven now?" This is carnal reasoning, chopping logic, and arguing as men argue who know nothing and are convinced of nothing except what they learn by reason. I shall therefore endeavour to answer this objection, and to show, if not the absolute necessity, yet the blessedness of having an Intercessor and an Advocate at the right hand of the Father.

Bear then this in mind, that though God has forgiven all our sins for Christ's sake, and though his work is a finished work and his precious blood cleanseth from all sin, yet that he is a just God still, a holy God still, and a sin-hating God still; and as being such, our sins, though put away by the blood of Christ, are highly provoking to him. Do you think that God was not highly displeased with David's sin? The Scriptures tell us that "the thing that David did displeased the Lord." And yet upon confession Nathan said to him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Thus our sins, backslidings, slips, falls, and transgressions are put away, if we belong to Jesus, by his precious blood; but still God is highly displeased at them, as they spring up in our hearts or manifest themselves by our words and actions. They provoke

the eyes of his glory. He must hate sin from the holiness of his nature, and be highly displeased with it wherever and in whomsoever he sees or finds it. Now he has provided a High Priest at his right hand to make intercession for his poor, erring, wandering, backsliding, sinning people, that this everliving Mediator and Intercessor might be ever presenting before the eyes of his glory the virtue of the precious blood which he shed upon earth, the value of the obedience which he rendered to a holy law, and be thus ever perfuming heaven with the incense of his prevalent and availing intercession. We are therefore assured in the word of truth that "there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." How blessed the truth, how full the grace, how sweet the thought, how comforting the experience that we have in Jesus Christ, not only a propitiation for our sins, but a present High Priest at the right hand of God ever interceding for us who are in the body. It is this which gives such strength to the words, that "he is able to save them to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Observe the words, "*he ever liveth.*" It is a living Saviour whom we have to deal with, to come unto, to believe in, to look unto, to trust in, to hang upon, to cleave unto, to hope in, and to love. He is a living rock, which made David say, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Our sins are greater than we have any idea of. We know little of the holiness of God; we know little of the desperate nature of sin. God therefore, so to speak, needs ever before his eyes his dear Son in our nature, in his pure and sacred humanity in conjunction with his Deity as our all-availing Intercessor. And do we not need a Mediator, who can ever plead our cause before him, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may ever have the propitiation that Jesus wrought out before his eyes, and look

upon us through him, the Son of his love?

But let me open this subject a little further. Two points need here some little consideration: 1, The nature of the life which Christ now lives; 2, the nature of the intercession which he now makes.

1. We may say of the life which the Lord Jesus lives in the courts of heavenly bliss that it is a threefold life. There is, first, his *eternal* life, by which, I mean, the eternal life of God in his divine nature. This he lives in himself; for "as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given unto the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26.) He is hereby "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." And this life is the foundation of all his acts of mediation, as being God over all, blessed for ever.

But there is a life which he lives for himself, viz.: a life of inconceivable glory in his *human nature*. This is the life which he laid down that he might take it again. This life is the cause of, and is attended with all that ineffable glory which he now enjoys in heaven. This life he lives for himself, his reward, and the glory and honour with which he is crowned; as the Psalmist says: "Thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." (Psa. 21:3, 4.)

But there is another life which he lives: a *Mediatorial life*, a life for us. Thus we read, that "he was made a priest after the power of an endless life;" and he says of himself, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death." (Rev. 1:18.) Now this life does not differ essentially from the second life, of which I have spoken, the life of glory in the human nature; but it differs in this point, that when the work of mediation is

accomplished, he will cease to live a mediatorial life; for he will then deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. (1 Cor. 15:24.)

Now this is the life spoken of in our text: "he ever liveth." This is his mediatorial life; and he lives it as Prophet, in ever sending the Holy Spirit down to testify of himself; he lives it as King, to subdue all our enemies under his feet; and he lives it as Priest, for it is in the discharge of his priestly office that he makes intercession for us.

2. I must speak, therefore, a few words more about this intercession. I have before said that intercession was a part of the priestly office. The intercession of Christ was typified under the Old Testament in three ways: first, by the living fire ever burning upon the altar, which represented his intercession upon earth when "he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears:" secondly, by the daily sacrifice of morning and evening: and, thirdly, by the incense which I explained before as burnt in the most holy place. This, then, may give us some idea of the nature of Christ's present intercession. It consists, then, first, in his continual appearance for us in the presence of God—the presentation of his person before the throne on our behalf; secondly, in the representation of his death and sacrifice, as John saw "a Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne;" and, thirdly, in actual prayer or intercession. Of this we have a beautiful representation in John 17, which may, perhaps, give us some idea of the mode of his present intercession for us.

These points I grant are difficult and mysterious, nor need we necessarily believe that oral intercession is needful, though there seems no reason why in the holy communion

which subsists between the Father and the Son there may not be a vocal utterance of his desires and breathings on behalf of his redeemed people.

But let me now apply it experimentally to our own case. If the gracious Lord did not live to make intercession for us, he could hardly be said to save us to the uttermost. But as he ever lives at God's right hand and is ever interceding, ever presenting the perfume of his acceptable mediation, this gives us a certain pledge of his love, his pity, and his power. Is not this very encouraging to all who come unto God by him? and may we not say, "Such are we, O Lord; we do come, we daily come to thee by Jesus Christ." And do we not need all the encouragement that God may give us out of it? for we often sink very low through temptation and trial and the manifold afflictions of the way. How blessed then it is if you can only trace this mark of grace in your soul when others seem almost lost out of sight. I do setup a standard and hope ever to do so, but not a rigorous one, a cast-iron one; but I say this in the name of God to all you who have already come and are ever coming to God by Jesus Christ: Christ is able to save you to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for you. You must deal with your own conscience to determine for yourself whether you are the character. I can only preach the truth: God must apply it. I wish to speak to your conscience: let conscience listen, let conscience register the approving or condemning verdict. If you know anything of internal work, you know this—whether you have come, whether you are coming to God by Jesus Christ. It is very simple, yet very expressive. Have you come as an outcast? Have you come as ready to perish? for these are expressly spoken of as coming in that day when the great trumpet is blown, the great and glorious trumpet of the gospel, for its jubilee notes are sounded specially for them. Have you come in faith? have you come in hope? have you come in love? and have you found any measure of

acceptance and approbation in your own bosom? "Yes," say some, "with all my doubts, fears, and questioning, I can answer your question with an honest heart and a firm front, that I have come to God by Jesus Christ, and have felt the blessedness of so doing." Then you have known something or will know something about the uttermost; and the more you know about the uttermost the more you will prize salvation by grace, the more you will cleave to the Son of God, the more you will hang upon his finished work, and the more you will look unto him who has so kindly said, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."