

The Hope and Saviour of Israel a Stranger in the Land

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"O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not." Jeremiah 14:8, 9

True religion is a mysterious thing. It is, therefore, called in the word of God a "secret." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." (Psalm 25:14.) "The secret of the Lord is with the righteous." (Prov. 3:32.) "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen." (Job 28:7.) "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," said the Lord Jesus Christ, "that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Luke 10:21.) Now, this secret, mysterious religion is the sole work of God upon the soul. We have no more, and we have no less than he is pleased to impart.

But when we come to look at the nature of this mysterious, yet only true religion, we find it to consist chiefly of two branches; a knowledge of sin, and a knowledge of salvation; an experience of self, and an experience of Christ; an acquaintance with hell, and an acquaintance with heaven. However varied, deep, or diversified our experience may be, yet, as far as it is of God, we shall find it very much to be summed up in the knowledge of these two distinct things.

Now of these two distinct things, God has said that they are

both alike unsearchable. Describing the human heart, God gives this testimony concerning it; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; *who can know it?*" The Lord here gives a challenge, declaring that the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart are so deep, that no man can, that no man does, know it to the bottom; for *that* he challenges as his own prerogative; "I, the Lord, search the heart;" implying that we cannot, that we have no line sufficiently long to fathom its boundless depths. And again, speaking of the love of Christ, which is the ultimatum, the sum and substance of the other branch of vital godliness, the Lord pronounces *that* also to be unsearchable. For Paul prayed that the Ephesian church might be led into a knowledge of "the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ *which passeth knowledge*, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Thus, if religion consists, as I believe it does, in a personal, spiritual acquaintance with these two distinct branches—a knowledge of sin, and a knowledge of salvation: in other words, a knowledge of the heart, and a knowledge of Christ; and if these two are equally unsearchable; it follows, that we can only have at best but a bare superficial acquaintance with either. For as we have no line sufficiently deep to sink to the bottom of human depravity, so we have no line sufficiently high to reach to the summit of the love of Christ. Thus, all our knowledge of self, us well as all our knowledge of Christ, must be, from the very nature of things, defective; and he that knows most of self, and he that knows most of Christ, will be the first to confess it.

But any knowledge of these two things will always bring with it a spiritual exercise. We do not learn religion as we learn a trade, a science, a language—by dint of human study.

Religion is not to be learnt so; it is wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit of God; and, for the most part, it is "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." We grow in grace as we grow in nature; first, a babe, then a child, then a youth, then a man, then a father. But in proportion as we are divinely taught, shall we be exercised in the things of God; and it is mostly by long and continued exercises that we come to any real, satisfactory, spiritual knowledge of either Christ or ourselves.

But you will say, 'What connection has this with your text?' Why, it has this connection, that in proportion as our souls are exercised with these two things shall we enter into the experience of the saints as revealed in God's word. We know nothing of the prayers of the saints, except so far as the same prayers are written in our souls; we taste nothing of the sorrows of the saints, except so far as those sorrows are felt by us; and we share nothing of the joys of the saints, except so far as those joys are brought by the power of God into our heart.

Now, looking at the general experience of the people of God, we must say that the church is now in a low state; that the bulk of God's people are exercised as to their eternal state and standing, and know for the most part much more of sorrow, of sin, of temptation, and of trial, than of the sweet manifestations of the love of God. And therefore, the dark parts of experience, those parts of scripture wherein we find the sorrows and exercises of the heart laid bare, are for the most part those which seem to fit most closely into the feeling of God's people now.

In our text, which is one of this character, we may observe *three* things.

I.—*First*, the *titles* that the church bestows upon God. She calls him, "The Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble."

II.—*Secondly*, we may observe her *affectionate expostulation*, "Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?"

III.—*Thirdly*, we may remark her *tender plea*, "Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not."

I.—We shall, *first*, then, with God's blessing, notice *the titles* of God that the church here takes and lays as it were at the Lord's feet.

1. Now there is something very significant and suitable in the titles that the church here makes use of. It is not a taking of the Lord's name into her lips, and giving him titles as mere titles of honour, in which she has no heart concern; but they are titles that she gives to the Lord as really descriptive of what he is to her, and of what she is to him. "*O, the Hope of Israel!*" she cries, clearly implying that she had no other hope. Her soul, when she used the words, was sinking into deep despondency. The Lord had withdrawn himself from her; she could not get any comfortable and blessed access to him; she could not call him "Abba Father;" she was not enjoying the manifestations of his love; he was not visiting her with the sweet assurances of her interest in his blood and righteousness. And yet, she could not give up her hope. She could find no solid ground in self to rest on; that had all fled away; she therefore looked out of herself, as souls in sinking circumstances are compelled to do, that she might find and

found her hope in the Lord. She here resembles a drowning man. As long as he has full command of his limbs, (supposing he is a swimmer), he will strike for land; but let him be sinking, he no longer trusts to the power of his limbs, but lays hold of some friendly help. So with the soul: as long as she has something to trust in, in that something she will trust. But when all her strength is gone, and she has nothing whatever in self to rest on; when all her hopes, as regards her own strength, wisdom, or efficiency, are cut off, she must needs look out of self, that she may find somewhat on which to rest her hope. Now this she finds in the Lord; therefore, he is "the Hope of Israel." This is casting anchor within the veil, looking unto and hanging upon the Lord, and the Lord only, and experiencing him as "the Hope of Israel;" implying thereby that Israel is compelled to hope in him, because there is no other ground for Israel to hope in: hoping in his blood, hoping in his righteousness, hoping in his love.

But you will say, has the soul no hope in self? We must here draw a distinction. In one sense of the word, a soul taught of God has no hope in self, in another sense of the word, it has hope in self. As far as regards any hope in our ruined nature, in our vile heart, in our desperately wicked and helpless self—in *that* there can be no foundation for a sinner's hope. God never meant a sinner to hope in self. He always sooner or later, cuts that hope in pieces; He will never let a sensible sinner rest there. If he hope in self, he hopes in a lie. But, in another sense, there is an inward hope. When the Lord is pleased to let down into the soul a manifestation of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, a revelation of his mercy, a discovery of his love, a visit from his presence, a word from his mouth, a smile of his countenance, a glimpse of his favour, the inward testimony of the Spirit raises up a hope in the heart. But this "good hope through grace" is different

from a hope in self. The one is natural, the other spiritual; the one is of self, the other of God; the one a lie, the other a truth; the one a delusion, the other the solid teaching of the Spirit. Yet, this very internal hope enables the soul to look out of self, and hope in Israel's God; and therefore she calls him by that endearing appellation, "the Hope of Israel."

1. To prove this, take away what the Lord Jesus is and has; what he has done and suffered; and where is your hope? If there be no blood shed to put away sin, where is any foundation for hope? If there be no righteousness brought in, where is there any ground for hope? If no glorious Mediator, no risen Saviour, where any standing for hope? So that the soul is graciously compelled to look out of self with all its miseries unto Jesus with all his mercies, and thus cast herself on him who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. In this sense he is "the Hope of Israel."

2. But the church uses also another tender and beautiful appellation; she calls the Lord (we must evidently understand the Lord Jesus Christ here) "*the Saviour thereof in time of trouble.*" He is not only "the Hope of Israel," but "the Saviour of Israel," and a complete Saviour too. Not a Saviour in part, but a Saviour wholly; a Saviour to save to the uttermost. None but such a Saviour will suit Israel. For Israel is utterly lost. She has not a thread of righteousness. She has not anything which can stand; her condemnation must be complete without Jesus; nor can she lift up a finger to save herself from the bottomless pit. He must be, therefore, and is a complete Saviour, a sufficient Saviour, a suitable Saviour, a Saviour worthy of the name. He is called such because he saves; and if he do not save perfectly, fully, finally, if he do not save thoroughly the vilest and the worst, we cannot call him a Saviour.

But how hard to believe this! how impossible to believe it, except as brought into the soul by the power of God! We use the words; they are in everybody's mouth; but are they in everybody's heart? And when are they in any heart? When we despair of mercy from every other source; when hopes of salvation are cut off from every other quarter; when we look within and without, and see and feel ourselves perishing, but have in self neither refuge nor help. Then, when the blessed Spirit is pleased (and at times he is pleased) to bring some sense of this blessed Saviour into the soul; anoint our eyes with divine eye-salve to see his person, obedience, suitability, love, and all-sufficiency; when he raises up a special faith whereby he is laid hold of, embraced, felt to be precious, enjoyed in the soul, and sweetly and blessedly received into the heart, then and there he becomes "a Saviour;" more than a name, a word, a title, a Bible appellation, more than an ornament of a discourse, or a tag-end to wind up a prayer. He becomes, as one of my people said lately on a deathbed, 'a blessed reality;' a Jesus that saves his people from their sins; yea, "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory."

But observe: "*in time of trouble.*" We do not want a Saviour for the most part, except "in time of trouble." As I say sometimes, we can do very well without God when we are at ease, in health, and prosperity, and the carnal mind is uppermost. It is a sad thought, a dreadful thought, that we can often do so well without God; live without him, think without him, act without him, speak without him, walk without him, work without him—just as if there were no God. All this we can do when self, and sin, and the world are uppermost. It is an awful thing that it should be so; it shews to me almost more than anything the desperate alienation of the heart—that a man, and a living man too, a man with grace in his heart, a man with the fear of God in his soul, a

man loving and beloved of God, a man who hopes one day to be with him in glory, a man who without him is really and truly a wretch, a man who owes everything unto him, and cannot exist in being a moment without him—that a living man, who has all these mercies and blessings, can for hours perhaps in a day live without God! How desperate must the heart be! how deep the alienation! how awful the wickedness! how wretched the case, that a living man can live for hours without any sensible realization of the power and presence of God!

But *when* can he not live without God? When his soul gets into "trouble." And therefore, the Lord, so to speak, is obliged to send "trouble" to flog us home. We are like truant children. Here is a truant child playing about in the street, taking up with every dirty companion, forgetting all about home, unmindful of his mother who is all anxiety about him, and his father who is all solicitude. The father and mother have then to go and flog him home. So the Lord sees us, his truant children, wandering away from home, taking up with every foolish vanity, forgetting all we profess to know. He has to come with his rod and flog us in; and this by trouble. "The Saviour thereof in time of trouble." Thus, when we get into "trouble," we remember there is a God; we think once more of the Lord; we want him to help us; he must come immediately, or we sink. We say, 'Lord come; come now: I cannot do without thee; my soul is troubled; my mind distressed; Lord, thou must come; do come, Lord, and speak a word to my soul!'

Now what brings all these cries and desires, breathings and utterings unto the Lord? Why, the Lord taking the rod down, laying it about us, and flogging us with some "trouble," as affliction in the family, sickness in the body, trials in circumstances, chastisement in soul, lashes of conscience.

And thus, the Lord by various "troubles" brings us to cry and sigh and feel our need of him as a Saviour. And he is so kind and compassionate; he is not offended, because we only make use of him when we want him. Anybody else would be offended. I should not like to have *you* for a friend who only came to me when you wanted me. I should not care much for your friendship, if you merely valued it for what you could get. Yet we are such base, rebellious wretches, as at times to treat the Lord in this way—a way in which we should be ashamed to treat our earthly friends: only coming to him when we can get something from him; only fleeing to him when we cannot do without him; only visiting him when we are in some distress. When the world smiles, and things are prosperous, and all is pleasant and comfortable within, it seems (such wretches are we) that we can do without the Lord. But when "trouble" comes, then the Lord is pleased often to make us feel that none but he can do our souls good. Him we must now have; him we cannot now do without; he must save now, and bless now, for there is none can help but he.

Now you see the church of old was very much in this experience. We are not the only rebels and wretches that have ever lived; we are not the only deep-dyed monsters that ever crawled; others have been as bad as we in their feelings, as base, as black, as hell-deserving, as ungrateful, as careless and forgetful of all good. And this is the reason why we find the confessions of the saints in the word of God so suitable; they come so into our heart, and they so describe our state and case when similarly exercised.

"O, the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble." Can you take these titles into your lips from a feeling experience of them? Can you tell the Lord he is the only hope of your soul? Can you tell him that you have no

other; that you have long ceased to hope in self, and all your hope is in him? And do you feel from soul experience that the Lord has been, and is the Saviour of your soul "in time of trouble?" If you cannot come with me thus far, I must drop you here; I cannot take you a step further; but if you can walk with me thus far, now we will go on a little further, and get, if the Lord enable, into the very bowels of our text.

II.—Which is the *affectionate expostulation* of the church with "the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble." And a very tender and feeling expostulation it is. It does my heart good to read its various branches. She first asks,

1. "*Why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?*" I love those "*Whys.*" Oh, how many whys does my soul put up! '*Why am I thus? Why is it so? Why does the devil tempt? Why am I so weak? Why so foolish? Why so vile? Why so base? And why art thou so far off? Why dost thou not appear? Why dost thou not speak? Why dost thou not come?*' You know something of these *whys*, do you not?

The church, you see, has a "why" as well as you and I; and says, "WHY shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?" She does not tell the Lord he was "a stranger," but asks "why" he should be "as a stranger?" Now what is "a stranger?" Why, a foreigner. We can scarcely walk the London streets now without hearing and seeing foreigners, with their black beards. Now these foreigners are not at home as we are in this country; they do not speak the sweet accents of our native tongue. When we pass them in the street we hear a foreign language; they are not citizens of this metropolis; they are only here for awhile.

Now the church seems to feel as if the Lord were all this.

"Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land?" 'O Lord, why shouldest thou be thus a foreigner?' The church wanted the Lord to make his home in her heart; not to be a foreigner to her, one who had no home to dwell in, who did not take up his abode in her soul as a citizen, a native of the land. She could not bear this distance; she wanted the Lord to come and take up his home in her heart; and because the Lord did not come and take up his home there, and manifest himself to her soul, he was to her as "a stranger in the land."

But the "stranger" or foreigner, speaks a distinct tongue from ours: he does not converse in our language. This the church complains of—that the Lord did not converse with her as in times past; he spake a strange language which she could not comprehend. She had got separated from him through sin, temptation, backsliding; and the Lord leaving her to herself, she had learnt too much the language of the world, and the "pure language" of Zion which the Lord spoke had become a foreign tongue in her ear. This she could not bear when her soul was brought to see and feel where she was. She tenderly expostulates, she feelingly complains, "Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land?" She wanted the Lord to speak to her, and converse with her in accents and a language that she could understand and feel at home with, to express that which she could enter into, could enjoy, could receive, and could really believe to be the native language of affection and love.

But there is another mark of a foreigner (for the words 'stranger' and 'foreigner' are doubtless the same); he does not know our customs; he has ways of his own, and does not practice ours. Now the church had got into such a state that the Lord's ways and manners differed as widely from hers as the ways of a foreigner from the ways of a country wherein he for a time dwells. The fault was not in the Lord; the fault

was in her. She had got too much entangled in the customs of the world; she had fallen too much into ways that the Lord did not approve of; therefore his ways were out of her sight; foreign to her; and his manners and mode of dealing such as she did not enter into and understand; and this through her own perverseness. Being, therefore, now brought to feel that the Lord was a stranger to her, had no communion with her as in times past, and did not treat her with tenderness, affection, and kindness as he had been used to do, she could only expostulate in a tender and pathetic manner, and ask, why it should be so?

2. But we pass on to consider another branch of her expostulation, where she says, "*Why shouldest thou be as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night?*" "A wayfaring man" is a traveller, one passing hastily through a country. He turns aside from his journey to tarry for a night, because he does not choose to travel in the dark. The idea is of a person receiving this wayfaring man into his house, and the wayfaring man tarrying there during the night. This wayfaring man we may suppose to be a stranger, received on the principle of common hospitality, as is the case in Eastern countries where there are no inns. Strangers are received into houses there merely on the footing of general hospitality. Under such circumstances the wayfaring man would be shy. He was a stranger; he would not communicate his business to the inmates of the house where he was lodging; he was only tarrying for a night; he was forming no friendship; he was taking no interest in the affairs of the family, nor they in his; he was but to remain for a few hours, and then all intercourse to terminate. The church uses this figure, and tenderly expostulating with the Lord, asks, why he should be so to her as this "wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?"

Let us look at the figure more closely. The wayfaring man would be very reserved; he would not speak much; he would take his meal and go to bed. Now this reserve is what the church could not bear on the side of the Lord. There was a time when, so to speak, he was one of the family; when he would sit at the head of the table; when he would speak to her as her Husband, Friend, and Beloved. But now a strange alteration has come over him; he is reserved; silence marks all his demeanour; he does not drop honied words as before. She was chilled and repelled by this distance. He wraps himself up in a cold reserve towards her; and this cold reserve chills her feelings, so that she dare not, cannot break through it.

Now does not this very much express the feelings of the heart when the Lord hides his face, when he will not speak, when he will not smile, when he will not give some testimony that he is listening to us, when he will not appear to our soul's comfort? There is a reserve in him; he does not open his lips; he chills us by his coldness. We pray, perhaps cry, desire, knock, seek, supplicate. He wraps himself up (I use the word with all reverence; but it is necessary to enter into these things to open up the beauty of the figure) in an atmosphere of coldness that we cannot break through. If (to carry out the figure) you were to receive some distinguished person into your house for the night, you would see by his manner that he was a person of consequence. His very air carries dignity and authority with it; he is not familiar. He speaks rarely, and only a few words. You cannot break through that. Wrapped up in this atmosphere of reserve, you are repelled. So it is spiritually. When the Lord speaks, we can talk; when the Lord draws, we can run; when the Lord hears, we can pray; when the Lord blesses, we can praise. But if the Lord hide himself, withdraw, wrap himself up in a chilling atmosphere of coldness and reserve, we are dumb;

we have nothing to say; we are shut up, and cannot come forth; our very hearts drop and droop, our mouths are closed, and our feelings thoroughly chilled. You know naturally nothing chills us like a reserved manner. We cannot take liberties with a person who is very reserved in his manners and conversation. My own natural manner has, I know, much of this cold reservedness, and is often mistaken for pride. But I cannot help it; it was born with me; it was my father's before me; and I cannot shake it off. But "the wayfaring man that tarries for a night," would, like myself, be reserved; he would not talk much. Now this is what the church complains of, 'Lord, why shouldest thou be as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? No sweet conversation, no gracious words. What, not one smile on thy countenance? Wilt thou not give me one kind glance, one look of love, one tender intimation? Do speak, Lord; whisper into my heart some word that may comfort and bless. O, "why shouldest thou be as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?"'

But we may take the words in another point of view—to express the transitory nature of the Lord's visits. "The wayfaring man tarries for a night;" he is gone in the morning; perhaps before dawn the wayfaring man has left the house. And so with the Lord; his visits are very transient; his words very few; his smiles very rare; they are soon gone; and there is a long interval before they come again. He is like a wayfaring man too often that tarries for a night; and before morning is come, the blessed guest is gone, has withdrawn himself, and only left an aching void which none but himself can fill. Do you know anything of this? If you do not, you do not know much about vital religion. If you have known something of the Lord's blessedness, you will know something of wretchedness and misery when the Lord does not appear to visit your soul. You cannot have too much of

him. If you have had him at all, you will want him again; and you will sigh and mourn that your sins have driven him away, and that now he comes so rarely to visit and bless your soul. 3. But her heart being full, she adds a *third* tender expostulation, "*Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished?*" Strange words! But not more strange than true. "Astonished!" At what? Why, at the people he has to do with, the heart he has to dwell in, the sins he has to behold, the iniquities he has to search. Astonished that his people should be such a people, that their hearts should be such hearts, and that they should be such wretches. Well may the church say, "Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished?"

Now mark, the church does not say that the Lord *is* all this; that the Lord *is* "a stranger in the land," *is* a wayfaring man, *is* a man astonished. No: the church puts an "*as*;" and that *as* is a very safe word; it takes away all irreverence from it, and all that might be construed wrongly in it. The church does not say, "Thou *art* a stranger; thou *art* a wayfaring man; thou *art* astonished." No; thou art *as* one; thou seemest to deal with us *as* though thou *art*. We are very apt to measure the Lord by ourselves; and when we are astonished (as well we may be) at what passes within, we may well think that the Lord is so too, and say unto him, "Why art thou as a man astonished?"

But there is another meaning of the word; and that is, a man astonished not only with the scenes that his eye looks upon, but also at the amazing difficulty of the case. Let a physician go into the wards of a hospital, and see some very mysterious disease; he would stand astounded; he would say, 'This is not a common disease; I am completely baffled; I am perfectly astonished.' He would as it were, at first, be stunned with the strange disease that came before him, and would seem as though he hardly knew what to say, or what

to do. This is what the church represents the Lord to be. "Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished," that does nothing, because so thoroughly baffled? And have you not thought sometimes that your case was one which would baffle the Lord himself? that there were sins in you, lusts, evils, iniquities, hypocrisies, and devilisms, which seemed as though they would baffle the skill and wisdom of the Almighty Physician? that there was something in your case desperate, something worse than in anybody of whom you ever heard, read, or spoke with; and that the Lord seemed as if he looked on and did nothing? He knew what was in you; saw the evils of your heart; all was open before him; and yet like a man astonished, he stood still, and did nothing, for the case was hopeless.

4. *"As a mighty man that cannot save."* Now this seems stranger still; that when the church had been telling the Lord he was "the Saviour of Israel," she then tells him that as far as her case was concerned he was as "a mighty man that could not save." She knew he was "a mighty man," for she knew he was the mighty God. He must needs be a mighty man, because he is Immanuel, God-Man; but though he was this mighty man, this God-Man, this Immanuel, this complete Saviour, yet, as regards her, it seemed as though he could not save her; that her case was beyond his reach. That she had sinned beyond all hope of mercy; that her sins were too bad and black for his blood to wash out; that she had so transgressed against light, conscience, conviction, and knowledge, that her case was altogether desperate; and that, though he saw all that she was, and all that was in her; yet he was as "a mighty man that could not save," her case being beyond his reach. She does not say that it was so; but these were the feelings of her soul; this was the tender expostulation which she addresses to him. It is very clear that she had not cast away her hope, for she says, "The hope

of Israel;" and, therefore, in the tender expostulation of a feeling heart, she says, 'Why, Lord, should it be so? O, why is that distance betwixt thee and me? Why am I thus? and why art thou so far from us? "Why, O Lord, shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for the night, as a man astonished, and as a mighty man that cannot save?"'

III.—Well, is she going to give all up for lost? Is she running to the pond to throw herself in? Is she looking at the beam to tie a halter round her neck? Is she stealing to the dressing table to take a razor out of its case? No; she cannot give it up; she will not give it up either. Though the Lord is not to her what she wants him to be, and is not blessing her soul with the enjoyment of his love, yet she still goes on with her last affectionate plea: "*yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.*"

i. The first plea she makes use of is, that the Lord was "in the midst of her." How was he "*in the midst*" of her?

1. By his *preached gospel*. The gospel was preached in her ears; the gospel still held forth a Saviour; still proclaimed salvation to the lost. The gospel still sounded the sweet tones of mercy, still invited backsliders to return, still called upon sinners to look to the Lord. The Lord is "in the midst of her" in the preaching of the gospel. Has not the Lord sometimes been thus in the midst of you? When you have heard the gospel preached, you have felt a sweet witness in your soul that you knew what the gospel was when you have heard the experience of God's saints described, you have had a corresponding experience in your soul, and there have been melting, comforting, and blessed seasons when your soul had a sweet testimony of your interest in the precious blood of the Lamb. The Lord was "in the midst" of you thus.

2. The Lord was "in the midst of her" in *the ordinances* of his house. When you have sat at "the Lord's Supper," or witnessed its celebration without partaking of it, or seen the solemn ordinance of "Baptism," have you not sometimes felt the Lord was there?

3. The Lord is "in the midst of her" in *spiritual conversation*, when heart responds to heart, and sweet love and union are felt. Has not "your heart burned within you," like the disciples journeying to Emmaus, in conversation with a Christian friend?

4. And not only so. Have there not been times when the Lord has been in your heart, in the feeling enjoyment of your soul, *when all alone*; and thus "in the midst" of you, not merely in a preached gospel, and that gospel reaching your heart with sweetness; not merely in the Lord's ordinances; not merely in Christian intercourse; but you have felt the Saviour "in the midst" of you, inasmuch as you have been enjoying a sweet sense of his presence in the heart with none but God to witness it.

ii. Her *second* plea was: "*We are called by thy Name.*" Thy Name has been sweet to us, it has been "like ointment poured forth;" we have been enabled to say, 'Precious Jesus! my soul loves thee; I have no hope but in thee. "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" Precious Jesus! thou art my all.' Then you called yourselves by the Name of the Lord, and had the name of the Lord called upon you. For this is the meaning of the Name of the Lord being called upon you, as it is in the margin, and stands in the original—receiving into your heart the Name of Christ as ointment poured forth: and thus being enabled to call yourselves by the Name of the Lord, by

believing yourselves to be Christ's.

iii. *"Leave us not."* This was her final request. 'If thou leave us, we shall have no more feeling, no more desire, no more longing after thee. Our hearts will get harder and harder, our consciences become seared; our strength will be gone, and no hope left. O, "leave us not;" do not abandon us; give us not up; let not sin obtain dominion; let not the world fill our heart. Whatever thou doest with us, "leave us not," give us not up; carry on thy work; bring us to thyself. Abandon us not to sin, Satan, the world, and our own evil hearts.'

And what brings about all these troubles? Is it not our own sins, our backslidings, our departings from the Lord? These things go deep; they lie at the root. You will find that your backslidings, departings from the Lord, inward adulteries and idolatries—lie at the root of the Lord's hiding himself, withdrawing his presence, shutting up the throne of his mercy, not smiling upon your souls. And this, too, lies at the root of all real complaints, real expostulation, real desire that the Lord would return—a feeling sense of what our iniquities, sins, and backslidings have procured unto us, and yet looking unto the Lord that he will heal our backslidings, accept us freely, pardon our sins, bless our souls, and manifest to us again and again that where sin hath abounded, there his grace doth and will much more abound.