

## **THE MIGHTY PUT DOWN, AND THE LOWLY EXALTED**

Preached on Friday Afternoon, Dec. 25, 1840, at the Opening of Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." Luke 1:52, 53

It is a question often agitated, whether it be right to set up a certain fixed standard in religion. There are those who say that there can be no uniform standard of experience set up; and there are others who contend that there must be such an undeviating standard, and that without it all is confusion and perplexity. As to myself, I cannot for a moment doubt that there must be a standard set up, for without it we can have no guide to discern between the precious and the vile, and no rule of measurement amongst the members of the living family themselves. Without a standard, the living and the dead, as well as the babes, young men, and fathers, are all jumbled together in one mingled mass of confusion. Whether, then, there is to be a standard or not, is, to my mind, a question very easily disposed of. If a man denies there is a standard, I put to him these questions:—Can a man be saved without faith? To which if he answer, "No;" then I say, "Is not then faith a standard?" Or can he be saved without repentance? Then repentance must be a standard. Or is there any internal distinction between the living and the dead? Then such internal distinction must be a standard. So that, unless we deny the power of vital godliness altogether, we must commence at the very threshold with a standard. The real difficulty, to my mind, is, "What shall this standard be? how high, or how low?" I think we move on safe ground when we say that it should be so

high as to be beyond the reach of every hypocrite and self-deceiver, and so low as to take in all the quickened family of God. Now, if we look at the Word of God, I think we shall find there set up a standard of this nature. We see there a standard embracing two opposite extremes, a standard for depth, and a standard for height; and either extreme too deep, or too high for any, save the living in Jerusalem. This standard dips down into poverty, helplessness, beggary, bankruptcy, and thorough insolvency. Therefore we cannot do with any standard of experience that does not descend into the felt poverty, guilt, filth, nakedness, helplessness, condemnation, and self-abhorrence that lie at the bottom of a spiritually instructed heart. A standard that shall not measure the Spirit's teachings in the conscience must be radically defective. Again, if we are to have a standard that shall embrace things essential to salvation, it must be high enough to reach manifestations of mercy and love, testimonies of God to the soul, visitations of his presence, and the enjoyment of his kingdom set up in the heart. Both these extremes are equally out of the reach of all but the living family. But now we come to another question. Is there any fixed way in which the soul is to be brought down to the depth, or up to the height of this standard? Or is there any prescribed **time** for these truths to be learnt in? My firm persuasion is, that there is no such prescribed way, and no such fixed time. The question with me is not so much what has been the road, as what is the spot where the traveller has arrived. There were no roads tracked out in the wilderness, and yet the Lord "led forth the children of Israel by a right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." It is not so much whether a man has been three months, three years, or thirty years, learning that he is a poor needy insolvent, helpless, guilty, and filthy wretch, as whether he has really and effectually learnt it by God's teaching in his soul. Nor whether he has been three weeks, three years, or

thirty years, learning the mercy and love of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but whether he has been taught it by Divine manifestations. The Philippian jailor seems to have learnt more in three minutes, both of judgment and mercy, than some of us have learnt in three or thirteen years. "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The one Infinite Eternal NOW takes no note of time.

The chief standard set up in the Word of God is not a standard of way or time, but a **standard of character**. To explain my meaning more fully. I observe certain characters addressed in the Word of God as objects of mercy, and certain characters spoken of as objects of wrath. For instance, the poor and needy, the outcast, the broken-hearted, the captive, the mourner, the weary and heavy laden, the hungry and thirsting, the lost and undone, sinners without help, hope, wisdom, or strength—to such characters I see in the Word of God promises, invitations, and encouragements, addressed. Again, the proud and lofty, the stout hearted, the mirthful, those that are at ease in Zion, that put far away the evil day, that are settled on their lees, "that anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph"—against these, and the like characters, I see judgments denounced. With characters, then, not with persons, I have to deal, and therefore, if I follow the Word of God, my standard this afternoon must be a standard of character.

Thus in the text we find two opposite and distinct characters spoken of.

**First**, those whom God calls "**mighty**," and whom he is said "to put down from their seats;" and, **secondly**, those "**of low degree**," whom he is said "to exalt." We meet with the same two distinct characters in the second verse of the text,

where we read of "the **hungry**, whom he feedeth with good things," and "the **rich**, whom he sends empty away."

"The mighty," then, and "the rich," are the same characters, viewed in different points; and "the lowly" and "the hungry" are the same characters, viewed also in different bearings; and it will be my business, with God's help and blessing, to unfold these two distinct and opposite characters, and show the separate end of each.

1. We will begin, then, with "the **mighty**," whom the Lord puts down from their seat.

"The mighty," here, may be looked at in two different points of view. If we look at it with respect to the experience of her that used the words, the Virgin Mother of the Lord Jesus, she seems to have had a special eye to the great and noble matrons of Israel, whom the Lord had put down from their seats of pride and dignity, by passing them all by, and conferring upon her, a despised maiden, the glory of bringing forth the promised Redeemer. Thus we may apply the expression to all those mighty professors of religion, who deem themselves worthy of God's favour, and pride themselves upon possessing something in self which may conciliate the Divine approbation.

But there is another sense in which the word "mighty" may be considered, and that is as pointing out a certain unhumbled mightiness in the hearts of God's people.

**All** that are mighty are to be put down from their seat; for "the day of the Lord of Hosts is to be upon **every one** that is proud and lofty, and upon **every one** that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." **Isa 2:12** "The loftiness of man **carnal and spiritual** shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men **elect and reprobate** shall be made low; and the Lord

alone shall be exalted in that day." With this striking difference, that the one are put down in wrath and eternally, and the other in mercy and experimentally. The same observation applies to the characters called in the second verse of the text, "rich." There are those who are "rich" in self-righteousness and vain-confidence, whom the Lord has never beggared in the slightest degree; and there are those amongst God's quickened people who have never been thoroughly broken down into the depths of soul poverty. Both are sent empty away; the former, because the Lord never bestows upon them one grain of pure gold; and the latter, because whilst in this Laodicean state, the Lord never drops into their heart one smile to make them rich indeed.

Thus, in opening up the characters of "the mighty," and of "the rich," I shall endeavour to show, **first**, who they are strictly and wholly so, whom God puts down and sends empty away in judgment; and **secondly**, those who are partially and delusively so, whom the Lord puts down and sends empty away in mercy. This will be drawing a narrower line, and coming to closer quarters, than if we considered the mighty and rich reprobate only, and did not trace out the internal dealings of God, as well as the external.

Let us first cast a glance, then, at the mighty, as pointing out a large class of nominal professors. As the Virgin Mary was blessed with a spiritual blessing in being the mother of the promised Messiah, she, doubtless, viewed the mighty as such not in a worldly, but in a religious light. The mighty, then, are not necessarily kings and princes, but the strong, wise, religious, and confident in self, the unstripped and unhumbled, the unbeggared and unemptied. These having never felt the powerful hand of God in their heart, are strong in righteous self, in religious self, in professing self, in undiscovered, unmasked self. Their eyes stand out with

fatness, their heart is as hard as a piece of the nether millstone, and their tongue walketh through the whole earth. They have never had their heart brought down with labour, never abhorred themselves in dust and ashes, never tasted the wormwood and gall, never groaned under weakness, helplessness, guilt, and bondage. Sin and temptation, doubts and fears, and the plague of an evil heart have never sapped their strength, nor brought them down into the dust of death. Therefore waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

But these mighty ones are said to have "**a seat.**" "He hath put down the mighty from their seats." The word "seat" seems to carry with it various meanings. There is, **first**, an idea of **security and ease**. A sitting posture implies quiet and rest, an absence of labour and toil, a state of indolence and repose. Thus, these mighty ones are what some people call "established Christians." That is, not established in a sense of their own misery and God's mercy, of their own helplessness and Christ's strength, of their own folly and the blessed Spirit's wisdom; but settled down in a dry doctrinal establishment. They are not sitting at Christ's feet; no, nor sitting with the princes of his people, as being lifted up out of the dunghill, but seated in an easy chair of carnal security. Their vile heart does not plague them, there being in them no opposition between flesh and spirit; the devil does not harass them, because he holds them fast in delusion; the world does not hate them, because they are one with it; and God does not chastise them, because he reserves his rod for his children.

Again, there is the **seat of judgment**. To sit is the posture of the judge, to stand that of the criminal. Thus these mighty ones enthrone themselves on the judgment seat, and there pass their sentence of condemnation on all who differ from them, but especially on those of God's living family, who feel

themselves criminals at his bar. They have never stood at the felon's bar themselves. Their court of judgment never arraigned self. All God's people have "a Spirit of judgment and a Spirit of burning," which passes sentence first on self. For judgment begins first at the house of God; the sword is first undrawn in the sanctuary **Eze 9:6**; and "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." But these high and mighty judges never began, where God begins, **at self**. Therefore, having no internal sentence of death and condemnation to engross all their thoughts, they have abundant leisure to look at others; having no lawsuit at home to make them cry, "Let my sentence come forth from thy presence," they can quietly sit to pass judgment on their neighbours. But whom does the judge pass sentence upon? Not upon the nobles of the land, because they are privileged by birth to sit on the same bench; not on the bystanders and spectators, who are looking uninterestedly on; but on the trembling criminal. Thus these mighty ones pass no sentence on those that are at ease in Zion, or on the idle lookers-on, but on the poor children of God who stand as criminals. They pass sentence on their experience as wild and visionary, on their trials as of their own making, on their temptations as part lunacy and part delusion, and on their persons as troublers in Israel, perverters of the truth, and possessed with a bitter and bad spirit.

And there is also another seat, and that is **the seat of the scorner**. A man soon passes from the seat of judgment to the seat of scorn and contempt. Sentence is passed first, and execution follows. To condemn a man first, and scorn him afterwards, are steps not widely separated. Thus the Jews first condemned Jesus, and then mocked him.

But it is said in the text that the Lord "**putteth down** the mighty from their seats." How does he perform this act of

judgment on his enemies? Why, in various ways. Sometimes he enlightens the eyes of God's people to see through them, and clearly discern all their emptiness and hypocrisy. When a soul has been well plagued with internal temptations, and been much and long exercised and harassed with, a body of sin and death, it is often led into the sanctuary of the Lord's presence, and seeing light in his light, reads the end of all such characters. Thus Asaph **Ps 73:17**, after being long plagued with those "who were not in trouble as other men," learnt their real condition and awful end. And by their inward teaching God put down before the eyes of his mind these mighty ones from their seat of security, judgment, and scorn. Their first seat, then, he envied not, their second seat dreaded not, and their third seat he heeded not. He saw them fall whilst they were yet in slippery places.

The children of God, who have passed through temptations and trials, carry scales and weights in their hands. In these balances of the sanctuary they weigh up others as well as themselves, and they soon find these strong, self-confident professors, false weight. Having had their own religion well weighed up, they look to **quality** more than to **quantity**; and looking to find that in others which they want to find in themselves, they readily perceive a total deficiency. Thus the Lord experimentally puts down these mighty ones from their seat in the conscience and judgment of his people. He removes the film from their eyes, and gives them to see that a religion which does not stand in the power of God is no religion at all; that where there is faith, there will be the trials and exercises of faith; that those who have no changes fear not God; that where there is no humility, there is no spiritual exaltation; that those who have no fear are devoid of the beginning of wisdom; and that those who have no chastisements are bastards, and not sons.



Again, sometimes by solemn judgments, the Lord puts down these mighty from "their seats." Some he lets fall into sin, and some into despair. Some go into the world, and others fall into error. Some renounce their profession, and others walk so carelessly, that all men see their shame. Some become eaten up with covetousness, others with the pride of life, and others with their fleshly lusts. Thus concerning faith they make shipwreck, and tumble headlong from their seat into the jaws of eternal despair. And in this way the Lord makes manifest to all men the end of a religion which stands in presumption, and has not himself for its author and finisher.

But, as I hinted above, there is another and a very different class, who may in a certain sense be said to be "the mighty," whom the Lord puts down from their seat. And this includes those of God's people who are for a time internally infected with a similar disease. "Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled?" Thus some of God's own living family prove, by painful experience, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." They are, perhaps, connected in a church with those that are at ease in Zion. The Lord for a time leaves them to themselves that they may be filled with their own ways. He suspends the use of the rod. The world smiles; prosperity in worldly circumstances attends them; health is strong, and family affliction at a distance; trials and temptations in a measure cease, and all is calm without and within. Now is the time for them to drink into the spirit of delusion, and mistake this false peace for the assurance of faith. Thus "they cover themselves with a covering not of God's spirit, and add sin to sin"—the sin of presumption to the sin of hypocrisy. Now, then, they seem established in faith. And why? Because the storm is lulled, and they have a temporary ease. They have slunk out of the battle, and call that peace, which is really desertion. Tired with storms, they

creep into a little harbour, and think that the end of the voyage. And the Lord having a secret purpose in view, winks for a while, and disturbs not their ease. Now, no sooner has a living soul drunk down this intoxicating draught, than he becomes one of the mighty, and gets into a seat—first the seat of carnal ease and security, then the seat of secretly judging and condemning the tried and exercised family of God, and then the seat of secretly scorning all experience which does not centre in the unwavering assurance of faith. But the Lord has a rod reserved for this fool's back, and knows how to put down this mighty one from his seat. Thus, he brings some trouble into his soul, or breaks down the hedge, and suffers Satan to shoot his arrows at him, or causes fearfulness and trembling to take hold of him, or sets his secret sins in array before him, or afflicts his body, or takes away his property, or works a secret condemnation in his conscience. "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down." Under these sore and painful exercises, this mighty one tumbles down from his seat; first, from his seat of security. As Job says, "God thrusteth him down, not man," and he thrusts him down effectually. All his fake faith, hope, and confidence, vanish as a dream, and he falls into deep soul trouble. The same hand thrusts him down from the seat of judgment. He has now plenty of work to do at home. Like Ephraim, he is now "broken in judgment." **Ho 11** He has so much sin discovered in his own heart, that he cannot pick up stones to throw at others; and is so confused and baffled in judging what is his own religion, that he shrinks from passing judgment on his fellow-sinners. He has now some solemn transactions to carry on with him, "by whom actions are weighed;" and having close business between God and conscience, he leaps off the judgment seat, and takes his station as a trembling criminal at the bar. He had long dropped down from the seat of the scornful—a place which he will never occupy again.

The Lord's subsequent dealings with him, we shall see in that part of the text which speaks of his "exalting them of low degree," which I therefore pass over for the present, and proceed to his work of sending the rich empty away.

2. But who are these "rich?" Why, I believe, as we have seen in the case of the mighty, that two distinct characters are set forth, the mighty dead and the mighty living, so in the expression "rich," we have the rich amongst the reprobate, and the rich amongst the elect shadowed forth. Looking, then, at the rich in this light, we may say they are not such as are rich temporally. The Lord himself, indeed, said that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," though he added, that "though this was impossible with man, with God all things were possible." When the text, then, speaks of "the rich whom God sends empty away," it means those who are rich religiously, rich in self-confidence, rich in self-righteousness, in a good opinion of their own religion, and resting upon these things to save them. Like the rich fool in the Gospel, they say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry." Poverty has never come upon them like an armed man. Their houses are safe from fear; want and beggary have never entered into their souls, nor eaten and drunk up all their stores. But whence come they to be so rich? Because they have never had a glimpse of what real riches are. They are like a lunatic who has collected shells and stones, and thinks them money. So these have no inward consciousness of what Divine riches are, and know not that all is poverty and want which is not communicated and breathed into the soul by the Holy Ghost. If notions, opinions, doctrines, texts of Scripture, false confidence, consistency of life, and church membership can make a man rich, they are rich sufficiently. But when there is

no gold but that bought in the fire, and no religion, not an atom or a grain, but what God himself communicates, all their riches are but heaps of dirt.

Now, these the Lord in judgment "sends empty away." That is, he never feeds their soul with the bread of life. They do not go empty away with respect to that which they themselves call riches. They may have a clearer insight into gospel mysteries, a more accurate understanding of a text, a judgment better informed, a conscience somewhat more pacified, a vain confidence more strengthened, a self-righteousness more established. The Lord himself "chooses their delusions," and "feeds them with judgment." But they are sent empty away, with respect to power and Divine teaching. No filial fear, no humbling sense of God's love, no taste or sip of his mercy, no spiritual rebuke nor reproof, no unction, dew, or savour, no humility, tenderness, or brokenness, no contrition or godly sorrow, no meekness nor self-loathing, no breaking up or melting down, no ardent cries nor burning desires were ever let down from above into the heart of a reprobate. On these rich self-sufficient professors, the God of all grace never deigned to smile, nor did he ever let fall one drop of his love into their soul. He never did and never will sanction and crown with his presence a religion that stands in the flesh. He never indulged such with soul communion and the secret of his manifested presence; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and to them **and to them only** will he show his covenant." His presence never went up with his enemies, nor did his favour as a cloud of the latter rain ever drop into their hearts.

But there are those who are "rich" in another sense, as I before hinted, that is, those of God's awakened family who have never been reduced to soul beggary. That the children

of God may fall into this snare is clear from the Laodicean Church, who said that she was "rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, and knew not that she was wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." **Re 3:17** This was a Church of the living God, though sunk into this self-deceiving condition. Solomon speaks of "a making haste to be rich," and says of all such that they "shall not be innocent." He also says, "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." **Pr 28:20,22** Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and thus, unless powerfully restrained, we soon rush into error. Many of God's quickened family get impatient of the yoke, and grow wearied of ploughing always in the same toilsome furrow. They then begin to run after dry doctrinal preachers, who shoot their arrows at all doubts and fears, and set up a standard of unwavering assurance. As these men are abundantly furnished with texts, they soon preach them into what they call liberty, but which is really presumption. Thus they become rich and increased with goods.

But the Lord has his own mode of dealing with such. Having godly fear at the bottom, a dread of self-deceit, and a living desire after honesty and sincerity, they are not really easy in their consciences. The hardened professor, the old dead Calvinist, has no spiritual life at the bottom of his religion. There is therefore no secret lever turning him up from the foundation. But the living child, though he may be too rash in building hay, straw, and stubble, has the foundation right, though the superstructure is wrong. And as grace and nature, spirit and flesh, never really united, there was always a secret rent between the two. Now, the Lord sends these rich children of his empty away. Their hearts really desire something beyond texts and doctrines. There is a secret sigh after power and feeling, an inward longing after manifested

favour; but they are so covered up with false riches, that the Lord sends them empty away. Thus he never gives them a smile whilst in this state, nor a look of love, nor a token for good, nor a visitation of his presence, but sends them empty away of such favours. They have got, perhaps, into a cavilling, criticising, censorious mood, discontented with self, and with everybody else, and the Lord sends them empty away from the chapel, from his mercy-seat, from the table. Their only spiritual food from him consists in rebukes, reproofs, and frowns, producing a guilty conscience; but as to the rich savoury meat of the Gospel, of that they are sent empty away.

3. But we will proceed to the other characters, which are not only distinct, but diametrically opposite. The poor, and those of low degree, not merely differ from the mighty and the rich, but are poles asunder from them. These represent those of God's people, in whose hearts he has wrought a sense of poverty, beggary, and utter insolvency; and whom, having thus brought down, he proceeds to lift up and bless.

The first character that we will take notice of is, he who is called in the text "of low degree." "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." The translation here seems rather to have departed from the original; and I prefer the old rendering preserved in the Common Prayer-book, "the humble and meek." For the word here has a reference not only to degree and station of life, but to spiritual qualities. I would, therefore, rather call them "lowly," than of low degree,— "humble," as made spiritually so by God himself. These lowly souls, then, whom God exalts, are such as he himself has first brought down. For "the Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up." This humility, then, is not feigned, but real humility; not tongue humility, whilst all the time the heart is

as proud as Satan; not a humility of dress, or of countenance, or of manner and appearance, or of religious regimentals, still less of hypocrisy, can't, and whine; but a humility of soul, wrought there by the hand of God himself. If a man is humble, he must have had something to humble him, or else it is the worst covering of hypocrisy. Humility is not to be cultivated; no, nor plucked out of the Scriptures, as a man plucks a flower of the garden, but is to be beat, driven, and forced into a man. He that is really humble has had a true right of himself, and carries about with him a deep and abiding sense of his vileness and filthiness. The base pride, presumption, and hypocrisy, of his fallen nature has been turned up by the share of God's plough in his conscience. He therefore loathes himself in his own sight as a monster of iniquity, and feels that he has sin enough in his heart to damn a thousand worlds. He sees and feels himself one of the most abominable, carnal, sensual, earthly, and vile wretches that can crawl on God's earth. He feels that he contains in himself the seeds and buddings of those crimes that have brought hundreds to the gallows. And these feelings he carries about with him, not as a theory floating in his brain, nor as a doctrine gathered from the Scriptures, but as a solemn reality, lodged and planted by God himself in his soul, a conviction fastened and screwed into him by an Almighty hand. This is the way that a man learns humility, not as a cultivated grace or religious duty, but as a lesson spiritually taught him. Now, he sees what a base, helpless, needy, naked wretch he is. Such were David's feelings when he exclaimed, "From the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed." **Ps 61:2** As though he were the farthest distance possible from God—the whole width of the earth asunder from him. And what drove him thus, as it were, to the end of creation? It was the solemn sense he had of God's holiness, and of his own filthiness before him. This infinite disparity between a holy God and a

guilty soul, drove him, as it were, to the very limits of creature existence, the remotest spot where man could dwell. The Lord never throws away his favours. He will teach us to prize them before he bestows them. He never clothes the already dressed, sends bread to a full cupboard, or enriches those who have money in the bank. Nor does he give the Spirit to those who can do with the letter, nor communicate power to those who are satisfied with the word. But those who are nothing, and have nothing, who cannot stir an inch, nor lift a finger to help themselves—to these he freely communicates out of Jesus' fulness. "He exalts them of low degree."

But how does he exalt them? In self? Oh, no! not in self. He has dethroned that idol; he will not set it up again, as the image of jealousy in the holy place. But he exalts them out of self into Christ. He sets before their eyes Jesus and his great salvation, holds up in their heart his suitability, grace, glory, atoning blood, dying love, and justifying righteousness. He shows them that he is mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him. The Holy Spirit kindles faith in the soul to receive the testimony that he has given of Jesus in the Word, and thus exalts Christ in the affections, as all its salvation, and all its desire. In Jesus they see all that they want for time and eternity; and receiving him into their souls as their only hope, cling and cleave to him as their all in all. Instead of exalting this debases self. The vile monster self is never so low as when the soul is brought in faith and feeling to sit at Jesus' feet. Thus the Lord exalts the lowly, and lifts them up into a knowledge of Christ, into an experimental acquaintance with the treasures of his atoning blood and justifying righteousness. They are thus made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places, and they love him as the only salvation for their needy guilty souls.



4. But we find the living family of God set forth also under the character of **the hungry**, whom he feedeth with good things. Let us see what they are hungering after. Is it pleasure, honour, promotion, respectability? Oh, no; these toys and baubles cannot satisfy the spiritual hunger of a living soul. They cannot hunger after that on which they cannot feed. They hunger, then, after righteousness, as the Lord said—"Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness." They hunger after God himself in his blessed manifestations—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." **Ps 42:1** They hunger after the bread of life which came down from heaven, that a man should eat thereof and not die. They hunger after Christ and his manifestations of himself. Christ, in the letter of the word, cannot satisfy their keen appetite. They must feed upon him internally, or their famine still continues. Hunger implies desire accompanied with pain, an appetite after food which must be gratified or the body perishes, and this is, appetite after suitable food. To these hungry famishing souls, to have Christ in the letter is like a starving beggar standing outside a shop where there are plenty of provisions, and not to have a farthing to buy them with. What is Christ in the letter? Will a sight of Christ in the Word of God remove the burden of guilt, bring peace into the soul, purge the conscience, subdue the power of sin? Will the mere doctrine of Christ draw up the affections to him, cast out the world, dethrone self, or purify the heart? Alas! we say, by painful experience, not one jot, not one jot. But the presence of Christ in the soul can at once do all these things. Thus a hungry famishing soul can only be pacified by Christ coming into his heart, as the hope of glory.

I spoke of a standard in the beginning of this discourse with two ends to it,—the one dipping down into the felt misery,

ruin, and helplessness, that the awakened soul groans under; the other reaching up to the discoveries of mercy and love. Cannot you come in at one end, if you cannot reach the other? What are you hungering after? Can anything satisfy your soul but a revealed Christ, and are you not at times earnestly panting after the visitations of his blessed presence? Are you not longing after the dew drops of God's favour in your soul, to fill you with that peace which passeth understanding? What are all your sighs, cries, groans, tears, and midnight wrestlings, but after the coming down into your soul of a loving Jesus; and do you not cast aside all consolations but those which spring from him? Then you are one of the hungry whom the Lord will feed with good things. A child of God cannot do with counterfeit food, and his appetite soon teaches him to see through all deceptions.

But what are some of "the good things" that the Lord feeds the hungry soul with? Whatever he feeds them with must be good, as coming from the source and fountain of all good.

**Pardon of sin** is one of these good and perfect gifts. Guilt makes the soul hunger after pardon, and fits the conscience for the reception of it. A filthy conscience and atoning blood sweetly suit one another, just as a starving body and a loaf of bread are well met. None of God's children can die until fed with this good thing, for "he pardons all those whom he reserves." But he does not say how much, or how long they shall hunger after it before they are fed.

**A drop of God's love** is another good thing that he feeds, sooner or later, all his hungry children with. But what a previous longing, panting desire, what a stretching forth of the hands, what a reaching forth of every breath of the soul after it! "Oh," says the soul, "were it only a drop! I want no more. One drop! one drop!" And what anxious listening after

the voice that shall inwardly whisper it! what sinking down into the old spot of condemnation, doubt, and fear, when denied the eagerly sought favour!

**Communion with God** is another good thing that he feeds the hungry soul with. What is all prayer, falling down upon one's knees, and offering words to the Most High, where the heart is not engaged in the work? This will satisfy Pharisees and hypocrites. But living children are hungering after soul communion; to feel their whole heart and affections drawn upwards to God; to be enabled and privileged to drink at the fountain head; to feel able to walk with God and talk with God, as though they and he were alone in one solemn sacred spot, and there was no other believer on the face of the earth.

**Deliverance from temptation** is another good thing that the Lord feeds his hungry people with. Oh, the power of temptation over a man! Oh, his weakness and helplessness against it! Oh, the struggles, groans, sighs, prayers, and tears to be delivered from it! Oh, the importunate, almost angry, petitions to be saved from its power and presence! None but tempted souls know these conflicts. When the Lord delivers the godly out of these temptations it is a good thing; for none but he can break the hurtful snare, and let the poor prisoner free.

**A good hope through grace that we belong to Jesus** is a good thing that the hungry soul is sometimes fed with. When the Lord gives the tempest-tost soul to feel that there is for it a peaceful haven and quiet dwelling place after all the storms of life, and drops down some foretaste of it, and enables the soul to cast anchor within the veil, until that harbour is entered, that is indeed a good thing.

Time will not suffer me to enumerate all the good things that the hungry are fed with, as they include all the spiritual blessings that God hath blessed the Church with in Christ.

But, my friends, in order to get at any or all of these good things a certain path must be travelled in. There is no climbing over or creeping under the strait gate and the narrow way. It is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen, contrary to flesh and blood, opposed to human reason, and mortifying to all the pride of man. None are in the path of life but those that are, more or less, lowly, teachable, sincere, simple, hungering and thirsting, tender hearted, and feeling. Oh, it is a good thing, when inwardly, in the depth of soul extremity, in poverty and nakedness, we can feel and find something stirring in our hearts, which has been breathed there out of the eternal fountain of life and love. To have something brought into our heart that wears a spiritual stamp, and carries God's own impress upon it.

But he that will get at these things must get at them in God's way. And, therefore, the soul that is anxious after these blessings, so great, so unspeakable, speaks thus—"My flesh shrinks from the trials, but my spirit wants the blessings. Has God joined them together? let me not seek to put them asunder. Let me be made willing to walk in a painful path, not one strewed with flowers, but of the Lord's own choosing. Though my flesh may rebel, make me, O Lord, willing to be nothing. Let me only be favoured with thy smiles, and not be one of the rich whom thou sendest empty away."