

THE SACRIFICE BOUND TO THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR

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

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

It is very sweet and blessed to trace in the Old Testament saints the same experience which God the Holy Ghost works in the hearts and consciences of the saints now; and I believe there is no one gracious feeling, whether it be in the depth of spiritual distress, or whether it be in the height of spiritual enjoyment, which we cannot find, if the Lord is pleased to give us light to see it, traced out in the experience of the Old Testament believers. In fact, it cannot be otherwise. There is but one God and Father of all; there is but one Lord, one faith, one Spirit; there is but one Teacher of the Church of God; and therefore all the saints in all ages have been taught the same lessons, and instructed by the blessed Spirit in the same divine mysteries. Now there seems to be one feature which is common to every saint in whatever stage of spiritual experience he may happen to be, and that is an absolute renunciation of self, and an absolute dependence upon the Lord to work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Let men talk about the wisdom of the creature, or boast of human righteousness, or human merit, or any other such vain figment, you will never find any of the Bible saints breathing forth any other language than a complete renunciation of the creature in all its bearings, and a simple hanging and dependence upon the Lord of life and glory to manifest Himself to them, to bless them, to teach them, and to lead them into all truth. Thus the experience of the saints stamps the lie upon the whole fiction of human

merit, creature wisdom, and fleshly righteousness. Nor do I believe that any spiritual man ever came before a holy God to pour out the desires and breathings of his soul before Him, and to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ, who came in any other frame than a complete renunciation of creature righteousness, wisdom, and strength, and a simple, sincere hanging and dependence upon God "to work in him that which is well-pleasing in His sight." "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

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

I. The Psalmist was clearly possessed of light, for he says, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." He was evidently, then, possessed of light; and this light was in him as "the light of life." This light had shone into his heart; the rays and beams of divine truth had penetrated into his conscience. He carried about with him a light which had come from God; in this light he saw light, and in this light he discerned everything which the light manifested. Thus by this internal light he knew what was good and what was evil, what was sweet and what was bitter, what was true and what was false, what was spiritual and what was natural. He did not say, "This light came from creature exertion, this light was the product of my own wisdom, this light was nature transmuted by some action of my own will, and thus gradually rose into existence from long and assiduous cultivation." But he ascribes the whole of that light which he possessed unto God the Lord, as the sole author and the only giver of it. Now, if God the Lord has ever showed you and me the same light which He showed His servant of old, we carry

about with us more or less of a solemn conviction that we have received this light from Him. There will, indeed, be many clouds of darkness to cover it; there will often be doubts and fears, hovering like mists and fogs over our souls, whether the light which we have received be from God or not. But in solemn moments when the Lord is pleased a little to revive His work; at times and seasons when He condescends to draw forth the affections of our hearts unto Himself, to bring us into His presence, to hide us in some measure in the hollow of His hand, and give us access unto Himself—at such moments and seasons we carry about with us, in spite of all our unbelief, in spite of all the suggestions of the enemy, in spite of all doubts, fears, and suspicions that rise from the depths of the carnal mind, in spite of all these counter-workings and underminings we carry about with us at these times a solemn conviction that we have light, and that this light we have received from God. And why so? Because we can look back to a time when we walked in no such light, when we felt no such light, when everything spiritual and heavenly was dark to us, and we were dark to them.

If God the Lord, then, hath showed us light, He hath showed us light both with respect to Himself and with respect to ourselves. He hath showed us with respect to Himself who He is; He has stamped something of Himself upon our consciences; He has brought some testimony concerning Himself into our hearts; He has discovered something of His glorious character to our souls; and brought us, under the operations of the Holy Ghost, into His presence, there to receive communications of life out of Christ's inexhaustible fulness. Thus in this light we see and feel that we have to do with a heart-searching God; in this light we see and feel that we have to do with a sin-hating God; in this light we see and feel that we have to do with a God who will not be mocked

nor trifled with; in this light, as He is pleased to reveal it to us, we see and feel that every secret of our heart, every working of our mind is open before Him; and in this light, so far as He is pleased to manifest it, we see what we are in His holy and pure eyes—a mass of sin, filth, and corruption, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without righteousness, without creature comeliness, without anything of which we can say that it is spiritually good.

Again, God the Lord showing us light hath showed us more or less of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. He has not only showed us what we are by nature, but He has in a measure condescended to show us what we are by grace; not merely brought into our hearts some acquaintance with Himself as a God of perfect justice, but He has also brought, more or less, into our souls some acquaintance with Him as a God of mercy; and has thus brought us in some solemn measure to know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent; and thus to have the springing up of spiritual life more or less, each according to his measure, in our souls.

II. But if we look at the text, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light," it seems to be connected with the latter clause, "Bind the sacrifice." There is a connection betwixt the two clauses of this text. "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." He hath. And He hath showed us light in this way—that there is a binding of the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. This is the chief reason for which the light is given, the main object on which the light is cast, the hidden mystery which the light discovers. As Moses turned aside to see the great sight of a bush burning and not consumed; as Abraham on Mount Moriah lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, so the great object, to see which light is shown, is the

sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar. What sacrifice is this which is bound to the horns of the altar? This sacrifice, primarily, no doubt, signifies the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered Himself as a propitiation for the sins of His people; who according to eternal decree and covenant engagements, yielded up Himself as a spotless sacrifice, that, by the offering of Himself once upon the cross, He might for ever put away the sins of the elect. Now this sacrifice is said in the text to be "bound unto the horns of the altar." The "horns of the altar" were four prominences or projections at each corner of the brazen altar, to which the victim was attached; and the very circumstance of the intended sacrifice being bound by cords to these horns of the altar shows that there was a repugnance in the victim to be there offered; that the struggling animal was bound by cords to the horns of the altar lest it should escape the knife, and burst away from the hands of the priests.

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

But again, not only was He bound by covenant engagements, but He was bound also with the strong, the equally strong

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

wrath against sin, and bound there to bear that weight of wrath to the uttermost.

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

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

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

But there is not only the strong cord of necessity; there is also the strong cord of *affection*, or rather, faith working by affection, as the apostle speaks, "faith which worketh by love." The real cord is faith, both in necessity and in affection, but I call these cords the cords of necessity and

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

But as remarked before, the expression "Bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar," implies that the victim needed to be bound. Why was the victim bound literally? The knife was to be applied to the throat, pain was to be endured, blood was to be shed, life was to be yielded up; and, therefore, the victim naturally, literally, was bound to the horns of the altar that it might not escape—that it might not get away, but that it might bleed and die upon the spot. Now this implies spiritually and experimentally, that there is that which would drive us from the cross of Christ—that as the victim would gladly break away from the knife held out to its throat, that as it trembled and shrank from suffering and death, so there is in the children of God a struggling, a shrinking, a flying back from the suffering which is to be endured, an endeavouring to break away, if it were possible, from the cross to which they are attached. Who would not willingly escape convictions? Who would not evade

the pangs of guilt? Who would willingly wade through seas of trouble? Who would groan and sigh under a body of sin and death? Who would smart under wounds that "stink and are corrupt because of his foolishness?" Who would have the leprosy break out in his forehead, and stand before God full of "wounds and bruises and putrifying sores?" Nature shrinks from it; the flesh abhors it: the carnal mind will have none of it. And, therefore, the strong cord of necessity is wreathed round the soul that it may not get away from the cross. Are we not continually, my friends, trying to find out some smooth flowery path in which to walk? Are we not in various ways seeking to evade and escape from trouble, sorrow, and difficulty, and endeavouring to chalk out a pleasanter, easier road? Yes, continually. We want to get away from the cross, we would gladly find some easier path in which to walk; but conviction, guilt, fear, condemnation lying as a heavy load upon the conscience, bind us to the horns of the altar, as knowing that only so far as we are attached to that altar, do we derive any efficacy in our souls from the sacrifice that was once offered upon that altar. There is a case that occurs to gracious men sometimes. They have had a good experience; they have been favoured with some testimony from God to the pardon of their sins; they have had some visitation of God's love in their consciences. When the savour of this has been lost, and no fresh trials succeed, they often get into a smooth easy path. The Lord suffers them for a while to walk in this path, and they retain their past confidence, they stand in their old experience, and thus they secretly get away from the cross, holding now in the hand of nature what they once held in the hand of grace, maintaining in creature strength that which can only be really maintained by the Spirit of God in them. Thus by getting away from the cross in suffering, they get away from the cross in spiritual manifestation; and stand in the letter of their old experience, not in the sweet renewings of the Holy Ghost. But in thus getting from the

cross they become light, trifling, frivolous, proud, presumptuous, worldly, covetous, high-minded. And why? Because they are not exercised in their souls, because they are not tried and tempted in their minds, because sin and guilt is no burden to them, and because the Lord suffers them for a while to walk in a way of their own devising. But he whom God is pleased to instruct by His blessed Spirit day by day never can long get away from the cross. His carnal nature shrinks from it, but the Lord so leads him into those paths which are connected with the cross of Christ that he is afraid, in his right mind, to get away from the cross, feeling that the moment he loses sight of the cross he falls into guilt and condemnation.

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

are bound with such strong cords of necessity, and, at times, with such strong cords of affection, that however repugnant it be to the carnal mind, however strewn the road be with thorns, however the knife glitter at the throat, the soul is still bound to the horns of the altar, and from the horns of that altar it cannot get away.

3. Again, those things which the Spirit of God enables a man to do, are in Scripture sometimes called sacrifices. "That we may offer," we read, "spiritual *sacrifices* acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ." The apostle speaks of "receiving of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from the brethren at Philippi; an odour of a sweet smell; a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God;" (Philippians 4:18.) So he says to the Hebrew church: "But to do good and communicate, (that is, to the wants of God's people,) forget not; for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased;" (Hebrews 13:16.) Well, then, these spiritual sacrifices which a man offers unto God are bound also to the horns of the altar. They are not well-pleasing in the sight of God, except they are bound to the horns of the altar, so as to derive all their acceptance from the altar. Our prayers are only acceptable to God, as they are offered through the cross of Jesus. Our praises and thanksgivings are only acceptable to God, as they are connected with the cross of Christ, and ascend to the Father through the propitiation of His dear Son. The ordinances of God's house are only acceptable to God as spiritual sacrifices when they are bound to the horns of the altar. Both the ordinances of the New Testament—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper—have been bound by the hands of God Himself to the horns of the altar; and no one either rightly went through the one, or rightly received the other, who had not been first spiritually bound by the same hand to the horns of the altar. Every act of liberality, every cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, every feeling of sympathy and affection,

every kind word, every compassionate action shown to a brother; all and each are only acceptable to God as they ascend to Him through the mediation of His dear Son. And, therefore, every sacrifice of our own comfort, or of our own advantage, of our own time, or of our own money, for the profit of God's children, is only a spiritual and acceptable sacrifice so far as it is bound to the horns of the altar, linked on to the cross of Jesus, and deriving all its fragrance and odour from its connection with the incense there offered by the Lord of life and glory.

But, from these sacrifices being bound to the horns of the altar, we gather that there is a repugnance, a struggling, a shrinking back, in the offering of them. To offer up carnal prayers is easy; to offer up spiritual prayers is difficult, nay, impossible, except so far as God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. To eat the bread and drink the wine with our mouth is easy; to eat the flesh of the Son of God is difficult, yea, impossible, except so far as it is spiritually revealed and made known to us, and faith is drawn out in our hearts to receive Christ as our soul-satisfying portion. To communicate to the wants of God's children in distress, merely from feelings of pity and compassion is easy; but to give unto them from feelings of love to Christ, and from a heart full of sympathy to them as members of Christ, is difficult, yea, impossible, except so far as the Lord is pleased to work that feeling in us. To be kind and compassionate and tender-hearted, and to have bowels of mercy for the poor and needy, the tried and exercised and distressed of God's family, so as to weep with them that weep, and mourn with them that mourn, may be easy to those whose natural tears readily flow at the sight of suffering; but to sympathise with them spiritually, and bear them on our hearts before God, when the spectacle of woe is removed from our eyes, and the fire of natural compassion is burnt out, is impossible, except

so far as the Lord works it in us. A man may make many sacrifices; but unless he is moved to make those sacrifices by some ties of affection to the cross of Christ, all such sacrifices fall short of any real value. A man may come before God, as he thinks sincerely; and yet, if he comes not through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, if his sacrifices are not bound to the horns of that altar, he has no spiritual access to the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. It was the solemn testimony of Jesus: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Thus, the Father only accepts His people's persons, as being bound to the horns of the altar by the eternal ties of electing love and covenant decree; and only so far accepts their words and works, as they are bound there by the Holy Ghost casting the cords of affection round their tender spirits and broken hearts.

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

same heavenly Teacher, that He would graciously condescend to bind every word and work spoken and done in the name of the Lord to the horns of the altar, that it might be a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

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

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

demeanour.

Are you, then, a poor broken-hearted child of the living God? Is there any measure of the Spirit of Christ in you? Is there any faint resemblance of His meekness and holy image stamped upon you? Then you feel yourselves bound with cords to the horns of the altar. You feel the strong ties of necessity, and you feel the strong ties of affection binding you there. But with this you feel also that you are a struggling victim; that you would gladly escape the troubles and trials that being bound to the horns of the altar brings upon you; you would gladly get into an easier path if you could; or if you dared, would willingly set up yourselves some altar made after the pattern of Damascus (2 Kings 16:10); and would gladly, like the Roman Catholic, worship with your body a material cross, instead of worshipping in your soul the adorable God-man who hung and bled there. You would gladly, if you could, step out of a self-loathing, tried, harassed, and tempted path, to get into the flowery meadow of doctrine and speculation, and there walk at ease without one pang in your conscience or one trial in your soul. But the Lord has said, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." You are bound to the horns of the altar. From those horns you cannot escape. You may fume, fret, and rebel against all or any of these cords, but you cannot break them. Aye, you may, in your strugglings, stretch to their utmost extent these cords; but they are too firmly fastened round your tender conscience, and too strongly wreathed round your broken heart for you to burst them. They would sooner cut your heart in two than you should break them, or escape from them. And in your right mind, you would not be otherwise than bound with cords to the horns of this altar. In your right mind, you want the cords tightened, and so to be drawn nearer and nearer unto it, and to have the blood that was shed upon it sprinkled upon your

conscience. In your right mind, you want to see with the eye of faith the Victim that once lay bleeding and writhing there; and as you look upon Him, to drink into His image, and to feel the melting power and softening efficacy of that sight.

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

O, friends, may the Lord keep us from a vain presumptuous confidence. If there is one thing more to be dreaded in this day than another, it is being plastered over with untempered mortar, walking in a vain show, resting in the doctrines of grace without feeling the power of those doctrines in our heart, and trusting in the letter of the Word without feeling the spirit and power of truth in our souls. It is the peculiar danger of the Calvinistic churches; and is, I believe, the peculiar temptation to which the children of God are exposed in this metropolis, to get under a presumptuous ministry, and sit under those preachers who are high in the letter, but know little of the savoury operations and humbling teachings of God the Holy Ghost in their souls. Christ in the letter will suit a whole heart, but Christ in the Spirit can only suit a broken heart. Christ in the letter will stand very well with worldliness, pride, and covetousness; but Christ in the teachings of the Holy Ghost, formed in the heart the hope of glory, can only stand in a tender conscience and a contrite

spirit. He will most surely humble every soul to whom He manifests Himself, and He will keep that soul more or less humble. He will bring it to the cross, and keep it at the cross; and as He keeps it near to Himself, He will stamp more or less of His own image upon it. Would you know, then, whether you are bound to the horns of the altar? What know you of these strong ties wreathed round your soul? What know you of anything of the preciousness and sweetness of Jesus in secret moments? What know you of coming to the Father through the application of His atoning blood? What know you of communion and sympathy with the Lord of life and glory? These are the marks to try our souls by, whether we have received Christ, whether we know Christ, whether He is really precious to our souls—what union and what communion we are seeking with Him as broken-hearted followers of Him, what we seek to know of Him as crucified for our sins, how much we desire to drink into His image, and how much we desire to be impressed with His Spirit, and how much we abhor and shrink from all knowledge and all doctrine and all confidence that is not connected with the cross as made experimentally and feelingly known to our consciences. "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." Hath He showed us this light, that we are ruined, lost, guilty, polluted, filthy, and undone? "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." Hath He shown us the cross? Hath He shown us light in His light so as to catch any glimpse of mercy in the face of the Mediator? Then if He has shown us any of these things, He has bound us with cords, and these cords He has attached to the horns of the altar, that we may cleave to this altar as our propitiation to atone, our righteousness to justify (Rom. 5:9), our food to satisfy, and our pattern to walk by. And then we shall desire to abide by this altar, not merely for the pardon of our deep-dyed and aggravated sins, but also there to feel and be experimentally blessed with the work of the Holy Ghost, in renewing our

spirits and reviving our souls. O that in all our approaches unto God, and in all our solemn dealings with Him, in what we are in the world, and in what we are in the Church of God, we might feel ourselves thus bound with these cords of love and bands of a man to the horns of the altar, that the world may be crucified unto us and we unto the world, and the life we live in the flesh may be a life by the faith of the Son of God. And O that we may not only live by the altar and in sight of the altar, but die in the sight of the altar, for he that dies in sight of the altar will rise one day to be with Him—with the King in His beauty, who though He once there suffered, is now risen and glorified. The sacrifice that is bound with cords to the altar below, and thus receives of the blood that falls upon his conscience from that altar, now stands before God accepted in the Beloved, and will surely rise with the risen Lord of life and glory; "for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him;" and "if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Yes, all such shall rise into a fruition of His eternal life, to see Him as He is, to enjoy His eternal presence, and to bathe in that river of pleasures which is at the right hand of God for evermore.

But to those vain presumptuous professors who live and die without having a broken heart bound with cords to the horns of this altar, whatever they may talk about Christ, however they may prate and chatter about the doctrines of grace, this solemn sentence will drop from the judge of all, in that awful day when they stand before His throne: "Depart from Me, ye cursed; I never knew you. You professed to know Me, but I never knew you; depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." May the Lord raise up in our hearts a sweet testimony that He has more or less, each according to the measure of our faith, bound us with cords to the horns of the altar, and

may He shed abroad in our souls a sweet love and affection to that altar; that in the sight of it we may live, and in the sight of it we may happily and peacefully die.