

The Sieve and its Effects

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 16, 1849

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:31, 32

God's ways are not our ways; neither are his thoughts our thoughts. This is applicable to a variety of things. In fact, there is scarcely a single circumstance connected with the things of God to which these words do not apply. But there are two special instances to which, according to my mind, they apply particularly. One of these respects the growth in grace of the child of God; the other, the necessary qualifications for a minister of Christ. If we were asked, (supposing that we were ignorant of the way, and that we had the educating of a Christian), what was most conducive to a growth in grace, and how we should set about it, perhaps some such scheme as this might occur to our mind. Place him in the country, in a quiet and retired spot, where he would have no business nor worldly anxieties to distract his mind; there let him read his Bible, be surrounded by religious friends, fix certain hours to meditate, watch, and pray. Such might be a faint sketch of what we should consider the right mode of educating a Christian in the things of God. This scheme has been acted upon. By it men have been driven into the cave of the hermit; monasteries and convents have been formed upon this plan; and instead of being the abodes of religion, they have eventually proved little else but dens of wickedness. But suppose we were also called upon (I still presume we are ignorant of God's mode) to fit and educate a minister for the work of the ministry. We

might propound some such scheme as this. Give him a good education; instruct him in the original languages; furnish him with a well-selected theological library; place him in a circle of brother ministers; let him spend his time in reading, meditation, watching, and prayer. Upon this scheme men have endowed Universities. Colleges, academies, and institutions of various kinds have sprung up on this system. And what is the result? Instead of nurturing servants for God, they have ended in bringing up servants for Satan. This is man's way. And we see the result; that instead of conducing to the growth of grace in a private Christian; instead of fitting a minister for the service of God, all ends in confusion, and a departing from the right ways of the Lord.

I have thus simply sketched out man's ways and man's thoughts. Let us now come to the fountain head of all truth and all wisdom, and see whether God's ways do not differ from the ways of man, and the thoughts that dwell in the heart of the Creator from the thoughts that lodge in the bosom of the creature.

What those ways and what those thoughts are, I shall endeavour this evening to lay before you from the words of the text. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

We may observe three leading features in the words before us.

I.—*First*, the *sieve*; "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat."

II.—*Secondly*, what it is that *fails not* in the sieve; "I have

prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *benefits and blessings* that spring out of the sieve; "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

I.—The Lord was approaching the close of his sojourn upon earth; he was drawing near the solemn hour when he was about to be baptised with the baptism of suffering and blood. And it seems that Satan took this opportunity to see whether by his infernal arts he could not draw away his disciples. He was not ignorant that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, nor what he came upon earth to do. He knew that he came to build up a church against which the gates of hell should not prevail. But if he could succeed in drawing aside into temptation, or into perdition, any of the Lord's disciples, what a victory he would obtain! He, therefore, seems to have reserved his great strength for the last hour, and to have looked with a watchful eye upon every one of the Lord's followers. There is an expression in Job (1:8), which, I think, throws great light upon the way in which Satan marks out his prey. The Lord said to him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Now, if we look at the margin, we find it runs, "Hast thou *set thine heart on* my servant Job?" The Lord saw that he had set his heart upon Job; not a heart of love, but a heart of enmity; that he was like a butcher fixing his eye upon a lamb, and saying, 'Here is one for my knife!' or like a wolf surrounding a flock of sheep, and singling out the fattest for his greedy maw. Therefore, God said to him, "Hast thou set thine heart on my servant Job?" 'What! must he be thy prey? Will nothing satisfy thee but to glut thy malice upon him?' But what was the reply of the adversary of God and man? "Hast thou not set a hedge about him?" He did not deny that his heart was set upon Job; that he longed to embrace his hands in his heart's blood; but he complains that God had set a hedge round about him; that there was a

fence through which he would, but could not break. Thus, though he could look over the hedge, the prey was safe from his infernal malice until God took the hedge away. But the Lord did twice take the outer hedge away, and twice reserve the inner, saying, at last, "Behold, he is in thy hand; but save his life." The Lord kept that; the rest he gave to Satan. And thus, when the outer hedge was taken away, we find Satan bursting in upon him, first stripping away his property and his family, then afflicting his body, and doing everything but what he was not allowed to do—to touch his life. So it seems to me in these last days of the Lord's sojourn upon earth, this wolf was surrounding the pen in which the Lord had placed his sheep, setting his heart upon one and another, and desiring to glut upon them his infernal maw. And God permitted him in one instance; he allowed him not only to set his heart upon one, but to gratify his infernal malice upon Judas, the son of perdition, who not being kept by the mighty power of God, was allowed to fall into Satan's hands, and to be destroyed body and soul for ever.

The Lord comprehends in our text *all* his disciples. It is a mistake to think it is only applicable to Peter. The words run thus: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have *you*; not only *thee*; (it is in the plural in the original;) "to have *all* of *you* that he may sift you as wheat." What follows is special: "but I have prayed for *thee* that *thy* faith fail not; that is thee, Simon. As though Satan viewed them all, and longed to sift all in his sieve. And so he did to a certain extent. But there was one in particular. It is almost as though Satan spake thus: 'I have picked off one of the lieutenants; let me see if I cannot shoot down the colonel. I have got Judas; I will have Peter next.' And so he would, if the Lord had not prayed for him, and strengthened his faith. Judas he might have; he was one of his own. Peter he might not have; he was one of the Lord's. Encouraged by the fall of Judas, he

was determined to have Peter next. But how the Lord overruled it all, and made it a blessing to Peter, and the rest of the disciples! And this shows us that *all* must have the sieve. All professors—all that call themselves *by* the name of the Lord, and all that call *upon* the name of the Lord—all must be put into the sieve; and thus be proved who are God's and who are not.

But what is a *sieve*? First, let us view the figure literally and naturally; for unless we understand the figure literally, we cannot expect to understand its spiritual signification. What is the object of the sieve? It is to separate the corn upon the barn-floor, mingled as it is with dust and chaff, small seeds, and rubbish. It must be separated from all these before it is fit to make bread. And what is that instrument used for this purpose? A sieve. This is the leading idea represented. The sieve is riddled backwards and forwards to separate the sound grain from the unsound; dust and small seeds thereby drop through the meshes of the sieve, while the good corn remains behind. This agrees with the words of the Prophet, "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." (Amos 9:9.)

Now to apply it, let us see its spiritual interpretation. It signifies, then, being put into those circumstances whereby our profession is tried to the utmost. Whatever it be whereby our profession is tried, our religion sifted, and the dust and dirt separated from it; whatever it be, whereby that process is performed, it may be called a sieve. And I would say, there are for the most part *four* sieves employed. There may be others; but there are four especially which occur to my mind—wherein professors of religion, and all that call themselves by the name of the Lord, are to be tried, sifted, and proved, whether they are the Lord's or not.

1. *First*, there is the sieve of *prosperity*. The effects of this we read in the 73rd Psalm, and in the 21st chapter of Job, where we find the fruits of professors being in prosperous circumstances. This sieve we find also hinted at in the first epistle to Timothy, where the Apostle says, "The love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many **arrows**." [**sorrows in the KJV**] (1 Tim. 6:10.) Who that has eyes to see, has not seen this plainly again and again? There shall be a member of a church, and he shall be, whilst in poor circumstances, a humble, contrite, broken-hearted character; his conversation shall be savoury, sweet, and profitable; he shall be watching the hand of God in providence, and receiving many marks of God's favour, mercy, and love. But he shall have money left him, business shall prosper, or he shall marry a rich wife. And what is the effect? He becomes lean, barren, dead, and unprofitable; and instead of his conversation being as before, savoury and sweet, and upon the things of God, the world and the things of it seem to eat up every green thing in his soul. By this sieve God also sifts out professors, and often manifests whether there be the true life of God in the soul or not.

2. But again. There is the sieve of *adversity*. And the sieve of adversity tries some who have not been tried in the sieve of prosperity. Poverty, depressed circumstances, losses in business, a sinking trade, anxieties in the family, and sickness of the body, form a part of this sieve; and a very trying one it is.

3. Another sieve is the sieve of *soul tribulation*. Exercises concerning our state before God; painful discoveries of the evils of our heart; the workings up of the unbelief and infidelity, rebellion, blasphemy, and obscenity of our depraved nature; no light upon our path, no sweet answers

to prayer, no manifestations of mercy and love, no appearances of God to our heart; groans and cries, sighs and tears, exercises, burdens, afflictions, and sorrows—in this sieve how many of God's people are tried to the uttermost!

4. The fourth and last sieve I shall speak of, is the sieve of *temptation*; such as Peter was placed in, and such as all the people of God are more or less put into. For Satan desires to sift *all* as wheat; and there is not a child of God, nor a professor either, whom Satan does not desire, more or less, to sift with the sieve of temptation. Now of these temptations, some are very suitable and pleasing to our flesh, and some are very dreadful, cutting, piercing, and wounding to our spirit. For instance; look at the way in which Satan sifted the saints of old. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the fear of man; and Aaron by the same temptation. Look how he sifted in his sieve Noah by strong drink; Rachel by envy and jealousy; David by lust; Hezekiah by pride; Asaph by fretfulness; Solomon by idolatry; and Moses by impatience. Look through the records of old, and see whether we can find a saint in God's word who has not been in some way or other sifted in the sieve of temptation. But, besides those suitable and alluring to the flesh—besides the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—besides ease, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, and a thousand alluring besetments, there are other temptations whereby Satan is allowed to sift the people of God. Temptations as to his very being; temptations as to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; temptations as to the inspiration of the Scriptures: temptations as to the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb; temptations as to whether God hears and answers prayer; whether we have a soul, or our souls exist after death; temptations about heaven and temptations to blaspheme, to give up all religion, and plunge headlong into the world; temptations to curse God and die; temptations to murmur,

fret and repine under every painful dispensation; temptations to pray no more because God does not manifestly send an answer to prayer.

Who that knows anything of the things of God, or of his own heart, does not know what it is to be in one or other of these four sieves; sometimes elated by prosperity; sometimes depressed by adversity; sometimes exercised by tribulation; sometimes riddled backwards and forwards in the sieve of temptation?

II.—But we pass on to our *second* branch,—what *does not* fail when put into the sieve. "I have prayed for thee that thy *faith* fail not." The Lord did not pray for Judas; he was the son of perdition, and therefore he fell through the sieve, and fell into hell, where he now is, and where he will be to all eternity. And you and I must fall through too, unless we have an interest in the love and blood of the Lamb. You may escape for a time; but if you have no interest in the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; if you have no part in his atoning blood and grace; if he is not pleading for you by virtue of his presence at the right hand of the Father, sooner or later you will fall through the sieve and will drop into hell, and that perhaps speedily.

Now in the spiritual sieve there are things that *fail*, and there are things that *fail not*; just as in the literal figure, there are things that drop through the natural sieve, and there are things that drop not through it. Dirt, small seeds, rubbish drop through; good, sound, solid grain remains. So in the Christian's soul, there is that which drops through the meshes of the sieve, and there is that which is left behind.

But what is it that drops through? I will tell you.

1. *First, self-righteousness.* That drops through; for if a man be put into the sieve of tribulation, and in it there be to him a discovery of the evils of his heart; or if Satan be allowed to riddle him backwards and forwards in the sieve of temptation, it will riddle out his self-righteousness. It must drop through. A man cannot be a self-righteous Pharisee who is well sifted in the sieve of temptation. It is impossible. Self-righteousness drops out of his soul as the dirt drops through the meshes of the sieve.

2. *False confidence* is another thing that drops through. How vain-confident some men are! What strong language they make use of! What a high position they occupy! Is there one of the heights of Zion on which they will not stand? Why, if you judge them by their words, they would seem ready to fly to heaven; but watch them in their deeds, and you will see them grovelling upon earth. In words, they seem very near to the throne of God; in actions, not very far from the spirit of the devil. Now this vain confidence drops through. If I am sifted in the sieve of temptation; if I know the evils of my heart; if I am riddled backwards and forwards in the sieve of soul tribulation and exercise, how can vain confidence stand? It all breaks up and flies away like the mist before the sun, or the thistledown before the wind. It drops through, and I sink to my right place—a poor needy wretch.

3. *Creature strength* is another thing that drops through the sieve. Creature strength! That was Peter's strength when he trembled before a servant girl; when he could not stand the brunt of a house-maid, but cowered like a chicken before a hawk. That was the strength, the prowess, the courage of this boastful mighty Peter, who was going to prison and to death, who could draw his sword and cut off the high-priest's servant's ear, but was now shivering and trembling before a silly maid of all work. Let our creature strength be put into

the sieve of temptation; let the devil riddle us backwards and forwards; let God hide his face; let darkness cover the mind; let trouble seize the soul—where is all our strength? Let temptation come to allure, to bewitch, to ensnare, to entangle, to draw aside, can we stand? No; we are gone in a moment. Let the devil come in, can we stand? Could Job stand? Could David stand? Could Aaron stand? No, not for an instant; our creature strength gives way when we are put into Satan's sieve.

4. *Fleshly wisdom* is another thing that drops through the sieve. Our boasted acquaintance with God's word; our deep views of *this* chapter, and our deep views of *that* passage; the doctrinal knowledge that perhaps we have stored our heads with for years, all drops through, affords no comfort, brings no relief, communicates no support; all that we have learned in our judgment fails us in the hour of trial. We cannot make use of these things; they all fall through the sieve.

Others I might mention; such as fleshly prayer, creature holiness, legal observances. Everything of an earthly nature, everything not of God's own implantation in the soul, fails us in the hour of trial. You know it, if you have been in the sieve. It was a sieve to me to be laid aside from the ministry, and my enemies saying, 'God has shut his mouth; we hope it will never be opened again!' Was not that a sieve? I know it was to me. Affliction, trouble, sorrow, and tribulation; the fiery darts of hell; snares and besetments laid for our feet;— a man that does not know these things to be a sieve, never has been in them. But if he get into this sieve, it will riddle out all his false religion, and make him feel he has nothing but what God himself has put into his soul, breathed into his heart, and made known to him by the power of the Spirit. Nothing else will stand in the sieve; "for every plant which

my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."
(Matt. 15:13.)

All these things, then, and others which might be mentioned, fail us in the sieve.

But is there not something which *does not fail*? Blessed be God there is. The Lord said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy *faith* fail not." And what a mercy that Peter's faith never failed; for if his faith had failed, he would most assuredly have gone down through the sieve. But the Lord had prayed for him; and his faith did not fail. It did not leave him in the day of trial; there it was where God himself had first implanted it. But how does faith act in these circumstances? Why, to lay a firmer hold upon God's truth; a firmer hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the only refuge and Saviour of sinners; a firmer hold upon his atoning blood, glorious righteousness, and dying love. Faith does not fail; no, it is only more strengthened by being put into the sieve; for the false religion, the carnal faith that had surrounded it, as the ivy clasps the trunk of the tree, being cut away, faith grows stronger in the soul. Faith does not fail, and never will, where it is really implanted by God. And *hope* does not fail. False confidence fails; creature strength fails; fleshly reliance fails. All fall through; there is not one of them left. But hope never fails; for it is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast; and does not fail because it enters into that within the veil. It stands the trial; it remains in the sieve, as the good grain does not, cannot fall. *Love* does not fail. Peter never ceased to love the Lord Jesus Christ; he could appeal to him as a heart-searching God, and say, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Let us be in the sieve of tribulation, temptation, adversity, and distress, does this blot out the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, where once it has been shed abroad in the heart? No; it draws it out; it cannot

die; the soul is going out in affectionate desires after Him as "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." It cannot, does not fail. Does *prayer* fail? O no; where once the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon a soul, it never fails. I have never known this to fail. We may have long seasons of deadness and barrenness; but the more we are tried, the more we pray; the more our soul is exercised, the more we cry unto the Lord; the heavier the trial presses, the more we groan out our desires. We cannot do without it. Does sorrow oppress our labouring breasts? Prayer, supplication, cries, groans, desires? What! these fail? Never. There may be stunning blows for a time; I have felt it so. The blow seems so heavy we can scarcely utter a word; but prayer rises, springs up again, is poured out again, drawn out again to the Source and Fountain of all good. Does *looking* to the Lord fail? Dependence upon his word fail? *Hanging upon* his promise fail? No. These are God's own implantation in the soul; these do not fail. False prayer drops through, true prayer abides; false hopes perish, true hope remains behind. So we might run through the whole work of grace, and shew that none of the graces and fruits of the Spirit ever fail when we are put into the sieve of temptation, but are all strengthened thereby.

III.—But we pass on to our *third* leading feature, which is a very remarkable one; for it throws a blessed and gracious light upon the whole, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Some have drawn a very strange conclusion from this, that Peter was not converted before. That is not the meaning of the word; the meaning of the word is this, "when thou art *restored* strengthen thy brethren." "When thou art brought back; when thou art recovered." Peter was converted before. Before this, the Lord had said to him, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;" (Matt. 16:17); and Peter could

say, "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:69.) Men must be strangely misled by the sound of a word to think that Peter was not converted before. But he fell away, and denied his Lord. Under the temptation he was not able to stand; but mercy restored him, and brought him back; the Lord had pity on him; and he came out of the furnace like pure gold. But when he was thus converted, restored, recovered, brought back, this was the benefit, this was the fruit of his having been sifted in the sieve of Satan; he was to strengthen his brethren. This was the way in which Peter was made a minister. He was not sent to the academy at Capernaum, nor to the university of Nazareth; he was put into the sieve of Satan; and in this sieve he learnt those lessons whereby he came forth to strengthen his brethren. I am bold, then, to say that a man who has not been more or less in the sieve is scarcely worth the name of a Christian and I am sure that an unexercised preacher is scarcely worth the name of a minister. In fact, what are such fit for? Pretty much like the salt which has lost its savour—only fit for the dunghill.

Take for instance, an unexercised *minister*; what is he fit for? To eat, drink, and sleep; to build up hypocrites in deception; to crush the poor, needy, exercised people of God; and to shoot the arrows of contempt and scorn against those servants of the Lord that feed the flock of slaughter. That is all he is fit for. To build up the church of God; to cast up the highway; to take up the stumbling blocks; to strengthen the weak hands; to confirm the feeble knees; to lift up a standard for the people; he does not know, he is not fit for these things. And no exercised child of God will long listen to his ministry. Take an unexercised *hearer*, what is he fit for? Half the time asleep, and the other half looking at the clock; or dreaming away the time about something he did on the Saturday, or occupying his thoughts with something to be

done on the Monday. That is all he does, except to make a minister an offender for a word, or pick up something from the pulpit that he may go and make a tale about. That is all he is fit for. What is an unexercised *member* of the church fit for? To breed strife, and make others as dead as himself. What are unexercised *deacons* fit for? To fill the church with empty professors. Not being exercised themselves in the things of God, not being riddled themselves in the sieve, not knowing how to distinguish between the work of God and the work of nature; how can they, when candidates come to them, discern what is of God in their soul? If they cannot discern it, (and discern it they cannot, except they have been well riddled in Satan's sieve), they will fill the church with empty, superficial professors. In fact, what is an unexercised professing man fit for? For nothing; his profession unfits him for the world; and his want of exercise unfits him for the church of God; he is only fit to be cast out by both.

But take the other side of the case. What is an *exercised Christian* fit for? He is fit for God and glory; fit for heaven and eternal bliss, **wherever [where?]** the billows of trial and sorrow shall no more beat over his troubled soul; fit for conversation with the exercised people of God; fit to hear the truth as it is in Jesus; fit to live a life becoming the gospel he professes; fit to shine as a light in the world. What is an exercised *hearer* fit for? He is fit for crying and sighing as he comes to chapel, that the Lord would bless the word to his soul; he is fit to hear an experimental ministry; fit to sit under an exercised servant of God; fit for the promises, mercies, and blessings of the gospel; fit for the sweet manifestations of blood, grace, and love to his soul; fit for every good word and work. And what is (I must go through it all; I have shown one side of the case, I must shew the other) an exercised *deacon* fit for? Fit to find out the real state and case of the candidate; to know the experience of

the members; to see where the work of God is; to prove what the servants of God preach from personal experience; to discern what is truth, and what is error; what is the teaching of the Spirit, and what the teaching of man; what is the wisdom from above, and what is the wisdom from beneath. And what is an exercised *minister* fit for? To strengthen the brethren; that is what he is fit for. Nobody else is fit to strengthen the brethren but he that has been in the sieve of Satan. If false religion has not been riddled out of the soul, he must build up false religion in the soul of others; if he has not proved what will stand, and what will not stand, how can he build up a real work of grace in the hearts of God's people? or how can he take forth the precious from the vile?

But how does he strengthen his brethren? He is not to strengthen the hands of evil-doers; he is not to strengthen the hands of ungodly professors; he is not to strengthen dead assurance, vain-confidence, empty presumption, superficial and outside religion; he is not to strengthen one of these things; but to pull them to a thousand pieces, as God shall enable him, and not leave one tatter remaining. All is to be torn away; and he will do it, if God has pulled away these rags from his own back. But he will strengthen the brethren; the dear children of God; the tried, exercised saints. He will strengthen them; for they are often weak, and need strengthening.

But how will he strengthen them? In various ways.

1. He will show them the way wherein God leads his people. There may be, for instance, a child of God here this evening who has never heard the various trying leadings and dealings of God described. But he now says, 'I have felt temptations for years; but I have always been told that this was not

religion; that we ought to put away all these things; that we ought never to have a doubt; that we should never entertain a fear; but put them all under our feet. I have been told to look to Christ, to live upon him, to claim a share of his mercy and love, and to mount to heaven as upon eagle's wings. I have been instructed again and again that this is religion; and that temptations, trials, exercises, conflicts, groans, sighs, tears, dejection, and depression—that all this is never to be entertained, never to be thought of for a single moment; that a child of God has no trials and exercises, but walks in the light of God all the day long. But now,' (I suppose a tried child of God here to speak) 'I can see I have experienced all this for years; but I have been tried because I could not be what I thought a child of God ought to be, and could not put away those doubts and fears that made me such a poor dejected creature, or overcome those temptations that have so pestered me.'

2. He will also strengthen the brethren by pointing out more clearly *the fulness of grace* that is in Christ, and thus lead them to look to and lean more upon him, and less upon themselves.

3. Or, a servant of God may shew from the sieve *what is opposed* to the work of God in the soul; and in this way the brethren may be strengthened to fight against it.

4. Or, again, when the Lord is pleased to bring us up out of our troubles, and bless us with any discovery of his mercy, we can say to the people of God, 'I have been in trouble, and the Lord appeared for me, and blessed me and delivered me.' When we come forth in this way out of the furnace, we can strengthen them by saying, 'Wait, look, sigh, cry, and pray; and the Lord in his own good time will appear.'

5. Again. We strengthen the brethren by showing them that in the sieve all false hopes give way; all creature righteousness comes to an end; and everything of an earthly nature perishes. And thus, by taking away these things, the life and power of God are strengthened. Suppose that you were a farmer, and in early spring you took a walk in your fields, and saw the charlock, the poppy, and all kinds of weeds springing up, 'O,' say you, 'I shall lose my crop: these filthy weeds will choke the corn.' You set to work to pull up the weeds, root them out, and to cleanse the crop; and when it is done, when the weeds are pulled up, and thrown upon the dung-heap, what is the consequence? The wheat flourishes. It is so spiritually. The exercised servant of the Lord comes and shows you the rubbish in your heart; that which is not grace, but only nature. 'Here is the corn-cockle of self-righteousness; there the couch-grass of covetousness; here the charlock of fleshly holiness; there the red poppy of pride and ambition: pluck them up; do not leave one remaining.' What is the consequence? When these things are plucked up, the life of God begins to flourish in the soul: and a crop begins to spring up to the honour and glory of God. They were before half suffocated by the weeds: but now the weeds are plucked up, grace thrives.

Now in this way the man who has been in the sieve of temptation will be able more or less to strengthen his brethren. But he will strengthen nobody else: and in his right mind he does not want to strengthen any one else. Suppose I were to come to Eden Street with a view to strengthen the hands of evil-doers; to encourage careless professors; to strengthen those who know nothing of the life and power of godliness—should I be doing God's work? should I have a clear conscience in the sight of God? should I this evening lay my head upon my pillow, and say, 'I have been doing God's work to-day? I have been strengthening the hands of the

ungodly? I have been making them bolder, stouter, and stronger than they were before.' Could I, if I had any conscience at all, lay my head upon my pillow, and say, 'Bless God, I have strengthened the hands of the ungodly today?' No; I could not do it. But if God should bless my feeble words, and cause this visit to be a means of strengthening the brethren, and comforting the poor, dejected children of God, by showing the work of God in their souls, and cheering their hearts, what other reward do I want? Why should I leave my people and family, and come here with a weak body, with many trials and exercises of mind, except in the Lord's hand to strengthen the brethren? If the Lord has put me in the sieve, (as he has again and again) and has brought me forth out of the sieve, and enables me so to speak, that I may strengthen the hands of the brethren—God's tried and weary people—and thus be made an instrument of blessing to their souls, I want no more and if God will, I would have no less. This can bear up my soul, let men say what they will, or think what they will. If God give me a testimony in my own conscience; and if God approve me to your conscience, that is a sufficient testimony. It is what God is pleased to do in me, and what he is pleased to do in you by me that will stand. Let my soul; let our souls who fear God, stand on the testimony of God. "If I pleased man," said the apostle; and every true servant of God will add his hearty amen, "I should not be the servant of Christ." I leave this to your consciences.