

Walking with God

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stanford, on Lord's Day Morning, Jan. 23, 1859

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3

The Lord here, under the form of a question, enunciates a very important and pregnant truth. "Can two walk together," he asks, "except they be agreed?" What must be the inevitable reply? Surely not. Unless agreed in heart, how can they walk together in person? But do we see this agreement as a substantial fact, or as a general case? Look at man and his brother man. Take men as they exist in this present world. Can we say that they are agreed, or, that being agreed, they walk together? The very physical features of the world, in its original formation as well as present constitution, widely separate man from man. What lofty mountains, deep rivers, wide seas, and barren tracts, naturally, *physically* sever men asunder! But these natural barriers of division are as nothing compared with the way in which man is separated *morally* from man. What differences there are of language, habits, manners, customs, religion, modes of thought, so that, were earth a level plain and communication as free as in this island, separation and division would still exist. *Politically*, too, how man is dissevered from man. What wars and rumours of wars are now convulsing the continent of Europe: and though we in our sea-girt isle seem in some way removed from present danger, who knows how soon a volcano may burst forth abroad that may throw its burning ashes and boiling lava on our own shores. [This sermon was preached before the late war in Italy.] *Socially*, too, how man is separated from his brother man! Rich and poor; the educated and the uneducated; the peer and the peasant; Dives clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously

every day, and Lazarus at his gate, full of sores and picking up the crumbs which fall from the groaning table—are the poles wider asunder than luxury and poverty, fashion and rags, the square and the alley, "the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles, the wimples, and the crimping pins" of youth, rank, and beauty, and the squalid dirt, filth, and starvation of the outcasts of society? But even without taking in these vast extremes, merely viewing men as brought more nearly together in the different *relationships of life*, what wide differences everywhere exist! What little agreement there is betwixt the employer and the employed, the master and the servant, the mistress and the maid. What an unceasing strife between capital and labour—capital demanding more work; labour claiming more wages. *Families*, too, how often are they divided father against son, mother against daughter, brother against brother, sister against sister, and what is worse, man against wife, wife against husband. *Religiously*, what sects, parties, and divisions there are in the professing church; so that in religion itself, as generally professed, there seems to be neither peace, nor union, nor harmony. Our *churches*, also, that profess the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, how often are they split and riven asunder by contention and strife! What little real union there is in the very best churches; and even where there is the appearance of peace without, what secret jealousies, heart-burnings, suspicions, and surmises mar all peace within. Nay, among the very *saints* of God themselves, what little brotherly feeling, sacred union, or Christian fellowship are felt, or at least manifested. How soon the best men take offence, and how unforgiving when offended! How warmly the most unintentional slights are resented; and how those who believe they shall spend an eternity of happiness together are offended for months by an averted look, a hasty word, or a cold shake of the hand.

Wherever, then, there is this want of agreement the words of our text will apply. Thus we see what a wide scope the text embraces—how it enters into a vast number of different relationships, when under the pithy and pointed form of a searching question, it looks out as it were from a high tower upon the face of the world and the church, and asks, as in a voice of thunder, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

But this is the least of the matter. It would not be of such deep or lasting importance were man only dissociated from his brother man. Let that pass. That would not amount to much. It would only be for time: eternity, we might hope, would bury all these divisions, and reunite in a better and brighter world those who have almost fought to their last breath over the grave's mouth. But we come to a much more important breach, a much wider and more fatal separation, than any at which we have hitherto hinted. There is the fearful, fatal breach between God and man, which is not for time but for eternity; not a matter of earth but of heaven; not a momentary strife or passing quarrel, bounded by a few days or years, and limited to the narrow sphere of this transitory life, but stretching forward into revolving ages. Well then may God, from heaven his dwelling-place, look down upon earth, and addressing man, sound the startling appeal in his ears—"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Can I and you then walk together in friendship and amity—I so holy, thou so unholy; I so pure, thou so impure; I so enshrined in all the glory of my infinite perfections, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, and thou a child of sin and darkness, loathsome and vile as wrapped up in all the pollutions of thy sinful nature and actual crimes?

But is there not a way whereby God and man can walk

together? Do we not read in the word of truth that "Enoch walked with God?" (Gen. 5:24;) and have we not recorded of him that "before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God?" (Heb. 11:5.) Have not holy men in various ages followed Enoch's footsteps? Did not Noah "walk with God?" and why? because "he found grace [or favour] in the eyes of the Lord." (Gen. 6:8, 9.) Was not Abraham the friend of God? (2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23.) Did not Moses see God face to face? and did not the Lord "speak unto him as a man speaketh unto his friend?" (Exodus 33:11.) Of Levi, too, we read that "he walked with God in peace and equity." (Mal. 2:6, 7.) We see, then, that there have been men who have walked with God; and if they did walk with God, it was by virtue of being agreed with him. But is there no way whereby others also may now walk with God as these walked of old? Were they the only favoured children of the human race, and are none but they admitted to any communion with the Lord God Almighty? Why need we assemble ourselves this morning in the name of the Lord if there were no way whereby we could walk with him—if there were no reconciliation whereby we might come to an agreement with the Majesty of Heaven? I shall, therefore, with God's blessing—

I.—*First*, endeavour to show what was the *original cause*, and what have been the *subsequent effects of the breach* that formerly took place between man and his Maker; for a breach implies previous friendship.

II.—*Secondly*, how the breach has been healed, that thus God and man might be *agreed*.

III.—And *thirdly*, what are the blessed *fruits and effects* of the breach having been healed,—that now being agreed, God and man may *walk together*.

I.—At the first, in the original creation of man, there was no breach between man and his Maker. "God created man in his own image, after his own likeness;" and as "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good" (Gen. 1:31), he could not but be pleased with man as the creature of his hands. Man could then render to God a pure obedience, acceptable to him as the spontaneous, grateful offering of an innocent heart and spotless hands. I have thought sometimes what must have been Adam's feelings when he awoke out of his first sleep, as Milton beautifully describes him, lying upon a bank of flowers—

"As new awake from soundest sleep,
Soft on the flowery herb I found me laid
In balmy sweat."

How as he gazed upwards and saw the majestic heavens, or looked around and viewed the glorious earth, he must have wondered who he was, whence he came, and what power had brought him forth! For Adam was not created a babe but a man—a full-grown man with every bodily power and every mental faculty alike complete. Thought, reason, and speech did not come to him by slow degrees as with us, but were given him at the moment of his creation; or how could he have been made "in the likeness of God?" A babe that neither sees, nor thinks, nor speaks, is not the likeness of him "who seeth under the whole heaven" (Job 28:24); "the thoughts of whose heart are to all generations" (Psal. 33:11); and "whose voice is powerful and full of majesty." (Psal. 29:4.) Nor did God leave him in ignorance of his origin and of that great and glorious Being who had given him breath. We have reason to believe, from what we read in the book of Genesis, that God his Maker often communed with man his creature; for we read of his walking in the garden in the cool of the day, as if it had been the habit of God to come down and talk

with Adam face to face, as the day declined from the heat of noon, and the calm evening drew on in that happy garden in which he was placed to dress and keep it. There was no breach, then, no separation, no division between God and man. But Satan envied man's happiness, and secretly plotted his overthrow. To see man promoted to that nearness to God whence he had fallen, stung him to the quick. Fearing to succeed with man, he attacked, with subtle craft and infernal policy, the woman, man's partner, but from natural constitution a weaker and easier prey. In the depths of his inscrutable wisdom, God permitted Satan to succeed. The woman was tempted and fell, and in her fall tempted and drew in the man. But both fell wilfully and voluntarily, openly rebelled against the express command of God, and deliberately preferred to sin rather than to obey. This made the breach, set God and man at strife, and severed and separated, as with a deadly blow, the creature from the Creator. Thus "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that ["in whom," *margin*] all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.) Ever since then, there has been a strife between God and man—between the Creator and the creature of his hands. Now this strife or breach exists in the very nature of things. It might indeed have been prevented if God had so willed; but having once taken place, no power could avert the effects. It would not be consistent with the purity and perfection of God's character, that man should have sinned against him without a breach being effected. There is a natural, instinctive repugnance between what is holy and what is unholy; what is righteous and what is unrighteous; what is pure and what is impure. See how the chaste, modest female passes with an instinctive shudder of pity and horror by the street-pacing harlot. Look how a person neat and cleanly in person and apparel shrinks from the dirt and filth of the streets; and how his every sense is offended by the unutterable abominations

of a London alley! How a man sober and temperate loathes the brawling revel of drunkards! And how the honest tradesman, who strains every nerve to meet his engagements, and to whom honour and honesty are as his life-breath, would shrink from any association with a fraudulent and worthless bankrupt! Thus you see that in the very nature of things there is and must necessarily be a breach between good and evil—between what is pure and what is impure. If there were no such breach, purity would become impurity, sin would become confounded with holiness, and God himself cease to be God. Therefore, whilst the great and glorious Jehovah is what he is, so holy, pure, and righteous, there must necessarily be a breach between God and man. Now this breach, so far from becoming narrower, goes on increasing wider and wider. The more pure that God is, and the more impure man makes or manifests himself to be, the wider the breach becomes. This was shown at the deluge, at the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and at the destruction of Jerusalem. The greater the sin the wider the breach; and as the very nature of sin is to go on increasing, burning like a fire in proportion to every fresh accession of fuel, there is no hope that this gulf can ever of itself close up. Nor can all the skill, wisdom, or invention of men or angels combined do anything to heal the breach. Men think, in the darkness of their mind, that sin is but a little thing—a matter of very small moment; and they have therefore invented a number of words to palliate and soften it, so as to diminish its aggravated character. Satan has led them to reduce sin to a minimum, and thus persuades them that it is not that evil and dreadful thing which the word of God has declared it to be; at any rate, that they need not make themselves very uneasy about the consequences, as God is very merciful and will always accept a sincere repentance. Man may so flatter himself, and, being thus blinded and deceived, may go on heaping iniquity upon

iniquity; but he will find at last to his confusion and dismay that words have not altered things; that the wrath of God burns against sin to the lowest hell; that the justice of God is arrayed against the criminal, and that "every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense of reward."

As an evidence of this, see how society has armed itself against violence and wickedness. If a robbery, and especially if a murder, take place in any locality however solitary or remote, how society arms itself against the offender. Every policeman that we meet stands before our eyes as a witness and an instrument of the uplifted hand of the law, and says by his very garb, "Here am I prompt to act, eager to detect the crime and arrest the criminal." If it were not so, how could we sleep in our beds? Thieves may say—"How hard it is that we cannot rob and plunder with impunity! Why should we not be allowed to break into houses, murder people asleep, take away their property, and set their dwellings on fire? At least, what harm can there be in getting a little of their abundance? And yet if we take a trifle of what they can so well spare, and if denied use a little gentle violence, the police give us no rest, seize us in our very beds, and carry us off to jail. Why are we not allowed to do what we like in this land of liberty?" "No," says society; "we can not exist if you do: we must either put you down, or you will put us down." You see, then, there is an instinctive feeling in society that justice must have its sway, and that thieves' language may excuse crime among thieves, but that the law nevertheless holds on its stern course; for as the earthly vicegerent of God, it "beareth not the sword in vain." (Rom. 13:4.) So it is with the law of God. A company of sinners may argue like a company of thieves—"Why cannot we get drunk, if we like, or indulge in those passions which spring from, and are imbedded in our very nature? Is a cheerful glass a crime? Is love a sin? I own I am rather unsteady, but am I to be sent

to hell for a little unsteadiness?" "Why should I be hanged?" may the murderer with similar justice say. "In my passion I struck him rather hard, or grasped his throat too tight; but I never meant to kill him. How cruel to hang me for a mere fit of passion!" You see the folly of such excuses in a moment, and know that the law is deaf to all such futile pleas. And yet we see on every side a company of sinners arraying themselves against the justice of God, as a company of thieves may inveigh against the justice of man. Now which is to prevail? You say the law must. God says the same!—"I cannot live unless the law prevail. I must live as the great and glorious God, of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that cannot look on iniquity, or I cease to be." Thus we see the eternal justice of God, the holiness of his righteous character, the intrinsic purity of his very being, all arrayed against sin and the sinner. And we know who must come down in this warfare. We need no voice from heaven to tell us who is the stronger. The thief may escape immediate arrest, and spend in profligacy the gains of violence and crime; and the murderer may die in his bed; but not so the sinner. There is an eye that tracks him through all the shady covert; there is a hand that can and will in due time arrest and bring him to justice. However the long-suffering of God may wait, if he die without faith and repentance, the thunderbolt of divine wrath will one day light upon his head and strike him down into a justly deserved hell.

We are all without exception sinners before God. However we may seek to justify ourselves or palliate the case, it still remains a fearful fact—a terrible noose out of which we cannot by any art or craft, plan or policy, draw our head. We are thus like a man who has committed a dreadful crime: he may try to juggle with his own conscience, to evade the fact, to palliate the deed, to extenuate the circumstances, or harden himself against the consequences. Still there is the

dreadful fact: the crime has been committed; the deed of blood has been done; under yonder hedge, in that dark pool, the murdered victim lies; and every gaping wound cries out against the murderer. So it is in a spiritual sense with every one of us. We have all sinned against God; we have in innumerable instances broken his holy law; we have brought ourselves under its righteous sentence; we are, by original and actual transgression, exposed to its awful curse. Like the murderer, we may seek to palliate the case, but the fact still remains a dreadful reality. As then the commission of a crime makes a breach between society and the criminal, so the commission of sin has made a breach between God and us; and unless that breach be healed, God and we can never walk together. And what will be the consequence? Is it a matter of little moment? Hear the certain consequence. If God and we are never brought to walk together, God and we must be eternally asunder; and if eternally asunder, where is God? In the highest heaven. And where shall we be? In the lowest hell. If you had not been a sinner, you might get from under this dreadful conclusion, this killing, crushing fact. But conscience in your bosom will tell you, far more plainly and more forcibly than I, that sinner you have been, that sinner you are, and being such, that there is a breach between you and God, which breach must be healed, or you and God can never walk together, either in this life or the next, on earth or in heaven, in time or eternity.

II.—But let me now advance a step further in this field of heavenly truth, and show *how this breach is healed*; how a reconciliation has been effected, and thus an agreement has been made whereby ruined, guilty man may once more walk together with God. And to a sinner deeply convinced of his sins; to a guilty criminal under the law's dread sentence; to a miserable wretch stricken through and through by a sense of inward condemnation, what tidings can be so suitable or so

acceptable as a message of mercy from the very mouth of the Lord himself; a treaty of reconciliation held out to rebels and enemies; a means devised that his banished be not fully and finally expelled from him (2 Sam. 14:14); and terms of agreement propounded whereby God and man may walk together in friendship and amity? You may have heard the gospel so often that this message of mercy may sound in your ears as an idle tale. You may be even worse than that; you may be gospel hardened, so as to have no conviction of your personal need of it, or be built up in a vain, presumptuous confidence in the mere letter of truth, without any vital experience of its power. Still, the tidings are not robbed of their intrinsic blessedness by your carelessness or your presumption; still is it my place to proclaim them in your ears whether they be to you the savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death. It is still my office to sound the gospel trumpet, and that with no uncertain sound; to preach the truth boldly and faithfully; and then leave it in the hands of the Lord to apply it as he may see fit.

What a wondrous way, then, has God devised in his own eternal mind, that the breach might be healed; that agreement might be made; that sinning man might be reconciled to his justly offended Maker, and yet that none of his glorious perfections should be tarnished or impaired! And what plan was this? Hear it, O heaven and earth! That the Son of God—his Son by nature and essence his co-equal and co-eternal Son—should take into union with his divine Person a pure, sinless, and spotless humanity; for "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood," it was necessary that "he himself likewise should take part of the same." (Heb. 2:14.) This was the will of God which Christ came to do, as we read—"Then said I, lo I come; in the volume of the book"—that is, the book of God's eternal decrees—"it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within

my heart." (Psal. 40:7, 8.) God prepared for his dear Son a body, as the apostle says, quoting Psal. 40:6:—"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared ["fitted," *margin*] me." (Heb. 10:5.) This was a pure, holy, and incorruptible humanity—the body taken in the womb of the Virgin, offered as a bleeding sacrifice on the cross, but now at the right hand of God in heaven. Man had sinned, offended, gone astray, become involved in transgression. Before, then, there could be any healing of the breach, any reconciliation of man unto God, flesh and blood must be assumed, that in that nature an atonement might be made for sin, justice be fully satisfied, the law righteously obeyed, its penalty removed, and its curse taken away. This mighty work none but the Son of God could accomplish, nor he except by becoming man. As God, Christ could not suffer, bleed, or die. As God, he could not endure the wrath due to transgression, sustain the curse of the law, or work out an obedience such as it demanded. Deity can no more obey than it can suffer, bleed, and die. Yet there must be obedience, or the law cannot be fulfilled; there must be suffering, or the wrath of God cannot be appeased; there must be blood-shedding, or a sacrifice cannot be offered; there must be death, for to die is a main part of the sacrifice. If the surety take the place of the debtor, he must endure the penalty of the debt; if the substitute stand in the room of the criminal, he must suffer the punishment of the crime. O wondrous scheme, that the Son of God should take our nature into union with his own divine Person, and in that nature render an obedience perfectly acceptable to God; an obedience which must be rendered, but one that we could not render; an obedience exactly such as the law demanded: perfect in thought, word, and deed. Outraged Justice else might say—"Where is my victim? I demand a victim: it must be either the criminal or some one in his stead. I cannot waive my rightful claim. I must have it satisfied, or else I

should cease to be Justice." The blessed Lord comes forward and says—"Justice, take thy claim. Here is my innocent head: let thy thunderbolt fall upon it. Law, what dost thou demand? Perfect obedience. I render it. What dost thou inflict upon the criminal as the penalty of disobedience? The curse. I endure it. Holiness of God, what dost thou require? A spotless purity of soul and body, of heart, lip, and life; perfect love to God and man. Here I am: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law in its length, breadth, and spirituality, in its holiness, purity, and power, is in my heart." Thus by the substitution of the Son of God as rendering an obedience in our nature, all the perfection of God were glorified; all his attributes harmonised; justice was satisfied, the law magnified, and the holiness of God well pleased. Complete satisfaction being thus made to all the requisitions of justice, room was given for mercy and love, pity and compassion to fallen man to come into full play, through the channel of a Redeemer's meritorious sufferings and death. There was no other way whereby the breach could be healed; but by this divinely contrived plan it has been healed, and that most effectually. Many, perhaps I may say most, men are sensible that they are sinners against God. Their conscience, when not hardened, pricks them in their bosom, and they cannot deny the truth of that verdict which is so powerfully registered in that court of courts against them. But what course do they take to heal the breach? They feel that they and God are not friends; they dread him therefore as an enemy. As, then, age, illness, or death draw near, the judgment bar stands before them; and as they know they must appear there to answer for their sins, they are often filled with alarm and apprehension. How shall they heal the breach? How shall they satisfy the justice of God? How shall they obtain mercy? They know not. What then do they? They resort to many self-righteous devices, contrived for the express purpose of appeasing the cry of natural conscience,

and of supplying a dim hope that when they die they shall go to heaven. But ah! it is a garment too short—it is a bed too narrow. They will find to their confusion that these works of creature righteousness have not healed the breach; have not atoned for their sins; have not satisfied the justice of God; have not fulfilled the law; have not opened a way whereby love and mercy, pardon, peace, and salvation, can reach their breast, and at death open the gates of heavenly glory.

III.—But we will now consider what are *the fruits and effects* of this healing of the breach, of this agreement made, and how, by virtue of this reconciliation, the child of grace is brought to walk together with God. He, like others, was once dead in trespasses and sins; for he was by nature a child of wrath even as others (Eph. 2:1, 8); and he, like them, would have perished in transgression and disobedience, or in a vain attempt to establish his own righteousness, had the Lord not interposed in his behalf. But the Lord had purposes of mercy and love toward him, and therefore would not suffer him to ruin his own soul by sin or self-righteousness. What course, then, does he take to bring about that personal, inward, experimental reconciliation without which he cannot walk with God in sacred fellowship and holy communion? He shows him his state and condition by nature and practice. A divine light, and with a divine light a new and heavenly life comes into his heart, whereby he is quickened out of his state of death in trespasses and sins. He awakes, as it were, from a long and deep sleep; he lifts his eyes upward, and what does he behold? The offended Majesty of heaven. He finds what he never before found; he feels what he never before felt—that he has an immortal soul in his body—a soul whose fixed state at death must be eternal joy or woe. He finds and feels that he is a sinner before the eyes and in the hands of a holy God. Aroused by these new and conflicting feelings, he begins to look around and within him, and turns

his eyes, which were before fixed upon others, upon himself—from the world without to the world within. Light breaking in more clearly, he begins to see the state into which he has brought himself by transgression. The Holy Ghost who has thus begun, carries on and deepens the work; lays eternal realities with greater weight upon his conscience, convinces him more and more acutely of his sins, and terrifies him by a dread of the future consequences: stops his mouth from all self-righteous pleas, brings him in guilty before God (Rom. 3:19), and opens up the breadth, spirituality, and curse of that righteous law which condemns him as a transgressor. In this school of divine teaching he learns, it may be slowly and gradually, but always effectually, what a breach sin has made between him and God. He sees and feels that there is a wide and deep gulf between him and God, and that that gulf remains impassable until some mode be found whereby either God can pass over to him or he can pass over to God. But how shall *he* pass over to God? How shall he get across this mighty gulf, in which at times he may see boiling up the sulphurous flames of hell? How shall he bridge it over? If doings and duties could bear him across the gaping chasm, would he not still have to encounter on the other side the terrible Majesty of heaven, which might hurl him trembling back? To drop the figure, what means shall he take to reconcile himself to God? He knows not, but he will often attempt many. He will break off his old habits; give up his old companions; renounce his beloved lusts; go to church or chapel; repeat prayers, read his Bible, and do anything to get out of his conscience the stings of guilt that he feels to be there. He yearns for pardon, peace, and reconciliation; but how to obtain then he knows not. Thus he may go on, exercised in conscience, harassed in soul, and depressed in mind—it may be through ignorance of the way of salvation; it may be through unbelief, though salvation is set before him; it maybe through the temptations of Satan assailing him and

preventing him from receiving the Gospel in the love and power of it. But sooner or later the Lord the Spirit is pleased to take the veil from off his eyes and heart, and to show unto him the way of salvation through the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not say that every saint of God has so clear and powerful a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to his soul that he sees him, as it were, with the eyes of faith, bleeding upon the cross for his sins; or that every one who is blessed with living faith has such a full manifestation of his person, blood, and righteousness as to leave no doubt behind of his interest therein. Some of the Lord's people are so blessed and favoured, but by no means all. Yet all of them have the eyes of their understanding spiritually enlightened, and a spirit of wisdom and revelation given them in the knowledge of Christ, so as to know what is the hope of his calling them from darkness into light. (Eph. 1:17, 18.) All have, in God's own time and way, sufficient faith raised up in their heart to take hold of this way of salvation through the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God; and they have all-sufficient strength given to them to repent of their sins, to renounce their own righteousness, and to cast their weary, guilty, and naked souls upon the finished work of Christ. Or else where is the agreement spoken of in our text?

But many who truly fear God are in this state. They desire most earnestly to walk together with God. They feel they have walked long enough with a sinful world; long enough with Pharisees and legalists; long enough with the devices and follies of their own hearts; and now they would walk with God. They desire to have communion with the God of all grace. They long to have reconciliation, pardon, and peace spoken to their conscience. They would be friends of God instead of enemies; and would do anything to remove the burden of sin off their conscience, to get its stings and pangs

out of their soul, and to have a testimony that the Lord is their God. These yearnings after reconciliation; these desires for pardon and peace; these breathings and breakings forth of your soul, it may be in the midnight hour, that the Lord would have mercy on, and bless you with some discoveries of his pardoning love,—whence spring they? From the Spirit of God. And whence come your sighs, cries, prayers, groans, entreaties? From the interceding breath of the Holy Ghost, who intercedeth for us and within us, "with groanings which cannot be uttered." Your very desires for reconciliation, pardon, peace, and salvation, bespeak the work of the Spirit; are evidences of divine light; are signs and marks of the life of God within. After a time the Lord will be pleased to show you more plainly and clearly how you are to be reconciled. It may be that you have been looking too much to the law; depending too much upon your own righteousness; turning your eyes too much away from the only Object of a sinner's faith: and looking askance at something to be done by yourselves. Will God sanction this by his Spirit and grace? He will not. Therefore you are far from rest and peace. But it may be in some moment of deep distress, when all hope even of salvation seems taken away, that the Lord himself will break in upon your soul with a sweet and gracious promise, with the application of his atoning blood, and the revelation of his love. Then you will see the way of salvation and your interest therein; then behold the Son of God as your bleeding Surety; and then pardon and peace and salvation will be distilled into your soul as from the very mouth of God. Now you are agreed with God; and what are the points of your agreement? You could not agree with God whilst you were loving sin and living in sin; or whilst trusting to your own righteousness. God would not sanction such double dealing—would not smile upon such hypocritical conduct. But now that you esteem the Lord Jesus Christ, "the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," you

and God are agreed together in the high opinion you put upon his dear Son, and you and he upon that point are one. Now you agree. God smiles upon the agreement, and you begin to walk together with him, because upon that point he and you are of one heart and of one mind. As long as you were looking to yourself, you were secretly disregarding, slighting, and despising the atoning blood of the Lord the Lamb. You did not see the virtue and efficacy of that most precious blood. There was a secret leaning half upon that and half upon something of your own. But you are brought by the teaching of the Spirit of God in your soul to look to the atoning blood of Christ and no other; to his precious sacrifice and no other; and to hang upon his perfect obedience and no other. God and you are now agreed. You both see with the same eyes, feel with the same heart, and love with the same affection. He loves Christ: you love him. He honours Christ: you honour him. He has highly exalted Christ: you do the same by setting him upon the throne of your affections. You and God are now agreed.

So also with respect to the special *teaching* of the Holy Spirit in the heart. While you were looking to be made wise by your own exertions, you and God were at variance; but when you were brought to this point—"Let the Holy Ghost be my teacher; let me have what I have by his heavenly communication, and be what I am by his divine operation; let me be wholly the work of his hands,"—then you and God were agreed.

So, again, as to *thoughts and affections* about eternal things. There was a time when the world held in your heart the chief place. It was not so in God's heart. You and God were therefore at variance. But now, through grace, you are brought to make eternity your chief concern. You and God are agreed there; for in the mind of God, eternity as much

outweighs time as the stars in the midnight sky outweigh a grain of dust. There was a time when you loved the world and the things of time and sense; and earth and earthly things were your element and home. You and God disagreed upon that matter; because the Lord saw that the world was full of evil, whilst you saw it full of good. "The Lord saw the world under his curse, and you loved its favour and its blessing—seeking madly and wickedly to enjoy that which God had denounced: therefore you could not agree. Thus you see that in order to be agreed with God, we must have God's thoughts in our heart, God's ways in our soul, and God's love in our affections. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." But they must become such; and when once God's thoughts become our thoughts and God's ways our ways; when once we have the mind of Christ and see with the eyes of God, then God and we become agreed, and being agreed, we can walk together. What is it to walk together? Why it is to enjoy union, communion, fellowship, and friendship. You see two persons walking together in the street: they are talking to each other. They agree, else they would not walk together. But walking together, it may be arm in arm, you see that there is an intercourse, a fellowship, a communion established between the two. God adopts the figure: "Enoch walked with God;" that is, if I may use the expression, he walked arm in arm with Jehovah. God spoke to him. God poured his love into his ear and heart; and Enoch, like a little child, stammered out his love and affection to God. So they walked together as Father and child for three hundred years. Now as we are brought to agree with God, we walk with God. He has set up a mercy-seat on high, and when they thus agree, God and man may meet at the mercy-seat of the Redeemer. As the eyes are enlightened to see the truth of God; as the heart is touched to feel the power of God; and as the affections are drawn forth to love the things of God, we

meet at the mercy-seat. It is sprinkled with blood; it contains and hides from view the broken tables of the Law. There God meets man in gracious amity, and enables him to pour out his soul before him and to tell him his troubles, trials and temptations. And every now and then he sweetly relieves by dropping in a gracious promise, applying some portion of his sacred truth, encouraging him to believe in his dear Son and still to hope in his mercy.

But the chief way whereby we walk with God is by *faith*, and not by sight. Abraham walked in this way. Unbelief severs the soul from God. There is no communion between God and an infidel. An unbelieving heart has no fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ; but a believing heart has communion with him. It is by faith that we have fellowship with God and his dear Son; and you will find that just in proportion to the strength or weakness of your faith is your walking with God. If you have faith in blessed exercise, as you look to the atoning blood, you find that you can walk with God; you can pour out your heart before him, tell him all your concerns, spread before him the inmost movements of your mind, and look to him for peace and consolation. But when your faith is weak—when it gives way under trial and cannot take hold of the promises, then communion is interrupted; there is no longer a walking with God. But in proportion as faith is strong, so there is a walking with God in sweet agreement; for faith keeps eyeing the atonement; faith looks not so much to sin, as to salvation from sin—at the way whereby sin is pardoned, overcome, and subdued. So it is by faith, and in proportion to our faith, that we walk together with God.

But there is no keeping up faith except by prayer and watchfulness. As prayer declines in the bosom, so does the strength of faith. You may go on neglecting prayer and supplication until every grain of faith seems lost out of your

bosom, and may come at last to think you never knew anything of a work of God upon your heart, and have been deceived in believing there was any grace there. By watchfulness also is the love of God maintained. Unless you watch against your besetting sins, against the snares spread for your feet, against the temptations that daily and hourly beset your path, against being overcome by the strength or subtlety of your unwearied foe, you are sure to fall; and if you fall, you will bring guilt and bondage, darkness and distress into your mind, and cut off for a time all friendly intercourse with God. Therefore you must pray and watch; for without watchfulness, prayer is of little efficacy.

Then there is *reading the word*. It is in the Scriptures that the mind of God is revealed. There are the promises; there is the revelation of mercy; there is God's blessed truth discovered and made known. If we neglect the Scriptures, have no heart to read them, or read them carelessly, unbelievingly, they will do us little good. They must be read with believing eyes and heart, received as the revelation of God, and must be mixed with faith, or assuredly they will not profit us (Heb. 4:2.) The life of God is a very deep secret, and sacred thing in the soul. God, it is true, will maintain it; he will not leave his work unaccomplished. But still, unless we read and pray, watch and meditate, wage war against besetting sins, and seek the Lord's face continually, we shall find the strength and power of faith very sensibly decline; and if so, there is no comfortable walking with God.

Is it your earnest desire to walk with God; to have a scriptural evidence that you are one of his beloved family; that he is your Father and heavenly Friend, and that when you die, death will only be an introduction to his eternal presence? Are you sensible that sin has made an awful breach between you and God? Has that breach ever been

matter of deep and anxious concern to your soul how it is to be healed? Has it ever caused you a sleepless night or mournful day? Has it ever given rise to deep searching of heart? Have you ever seen by the eye of faith that there is a way whereby the breach may be healed?—that there is a mediator between God and man, an Advocate at the right hand of the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous? Have your eyes been enlightened by divine light to see; has your heart been touched by a divine finger to feel these solemn verities, so as to see the beauty and blessedness of them? Has that drawn up your faith and hope and love toward God? Is it no concern to you whether you are God's friend or God's enemy—whether heaven is to be your blissful home, or hell your dread abode? Every day is shortening the span of life, and some of you already have the snows scattered upon your head—snows which indicate the approaching winter—when you will have to stand before your great Judge. What then? Are there no anxious enquiries in your bosom, how the matter stands between you and God—whether you are reconciled, brought near, accepted, pardoned, and saved; or whether you are still in your sins, under their awful weight and dismal load, exposed to the wrath of God and the curse of a righteous law? You say "I am concerned; the things of eternity press very heavily and deeply upon me." Let us see the certain fruits and effects. If you are hungry, you do anything to get food; if thirsty, you do anything to get water; if you are poor you take any employment to procure the necessaries of life. Then are you thus exercised? Is your mind thus uneasy? What! no sighs nor cries for mercy? No supplications to the throne? But you have had something communicated; you have had some views of Jesus; mercy has in some way visited your soul, and peace and salvation have been in some measure imparted. But you have backslidden; you have got into a cold, careless frame of mind; your heart has wandered from God; you have brought

death and darkness into your soul. What then? Must all be given up? Must your profession be tied like a millstone round your neck, to sink you into a double hell? Not so. There is the fountain still open for all sin and uncleanness; there is the interceding high Priest, the ever living Mediator; there is the blood ever crying from the ground. There you must come; to that altar at which you once stood and there found atoning blood revealed; to that fountain which washed you once you must resort again, that the breach may be healed, pardon once more spoken, and your soul be enabled again to walk with God. And you will walk more carefully, watchfully, prayerfully for the future. As a burnt child dreads the fire, so your very backslidings may work for your spiritual good; and you may learn thereby to walk more humbly with God, and more tenderly and cautiously as regards yourself.

In this congregation we can have but two classes: those who are agreed with God, and those who are not agreed. Those who are not agreed must come to some terms of manifested reconciliation before death appears, or they will sink to rise no more. But there are those here who are agreed with God, through the Son of his love. The Lord will perfect his work; what he has begun, he will carry on and complete. And as salvation is all of his grace, it opens a way of escape for every sinner sensibly in his own conscience condemned by the law, and reveals a mode whereby God can not only save him, but be eternally glorified thereby in the Son of his love.